

## At the Heart of Open Heaven

### Why do we have a ladder?

Just before the birth of Open Heaven, in March 2012, we went to a training conference in Bath for Bethel Sozo with the founders from Bethel doing the teaching. It was an honour to hear from Dawna de Silva and Teresa Leibsher.

During the final session, we were taken on a journey, in the divine imagination, and for me personally, it was a powerful encounter. Towards the end of the session, I was given a gift from Papa. I had prepared myself to receive a large box beautifully wrapped and finished with a huge bow, that I would pull the ends of and it would open magically! But it wasn't to be like that at all, and what Papa handed to me was, a plain, but good-sized, wooden ladder. To say I was disappointed is an understatement, until I questioned Him as to why He had given it to me. He said I was to use my ladder to access Heaven any time, any place, anywhere. I could ascend my ladder and bring to earth all that was in Heaven. Pretty good eh?!

The Ladder has become a key visual aid for Open Heaven – it represents our DNA if you will. It incorporates our foundational scripture (Genesis 28) and also the original things that God downloaded to us when we started in 2012 (although the way of describing these has changed somewhat over time!). We felt God show us that we could use a Ladder as a way to communicate the things that are integral to Open Heaven.

### What do we mean when we talk about DNA?

In order for Open Heaven to flourish in the way that we feel God is leading, it is important that everything that happens at Open Heaven is based on our DNA. Interestingly when you look at a picture of DNA the double helix is just like a ladder, but one that spirals around! What if Jacob's stairway was a spiral one going up into the heavens, with angels ascending and descending, rather like the way galaxies appear as spiral structures in space?

DNA is at the core of who we are and what we represent and is the thing that makes us unique and distinctive. As you are no doubt aware every church or stream has its own DNA. Many of you are part of other church streams and you will probably have been given information about your church and its values. Our DNA helps us define the new wineskin that we believe God wants to build in understandable ways.

## For us, at Open Heaven, some things are simply not negotiable

We have found that there are other things not so easily identified (and often things that we each carry without even knowing it) that will cause us to feel that we “connect” with some people or churches more than others. It's much more than simply the style of service or meeting. It really pulls on our heart revealing things we are passionate about. Here are our core beliefs that we feel fit into this category:

- God is good! Not relatively but absolutely: it's who He is. Therefore anything not good does not come from Him! He is incapable of doing or giving bad stuff!
- Embrace the mystery if you don't understand something that does or does not happen. Don't change your theology to match your experience!
- Great big God, teeny-weeny devil. We choose to always focus on what the Trinity is doing and intentionally partner with that. We deal with the other when it comes up but we don't look for it or spend time talking about it and we aim to deal with it swiftly if and when it emerges.
- Value His Presence above all and always ask for more.
- Give Him time, absolute freedom and liberty to do what He wants. If your agenda goes so be it. It's all about Him not you!
- Be utterly abandoned in worship. Expect encounter and to be changed. Always! Focus on Him.
- Let Jesus build His Church: He's rather good at it! You go after Kingdom.
- Honour and love everyone. Always look for the gold.
- Always seek to edify and encourage. When you can, allow people to practice and release their gift.

## The Ladder Rungs themselves

So; onto the ladder rungs themselves. Note: we are climbing from the bottom up like you climb a ladder!

### 1. Safe place

One of the many surprising things God did as we started was to make Open Heaven a safe place for everyone who comes along. We never set out to do this: but it's definitely one of the supernatural things that God has done! It definitely continues to this day. We provide a "covering" (please try to see covering like an umbrella keeping the unhelpful elements away from us rather than as any kind of controlling, hierarchical or legalistic structure) for all those who want it. This provides a place for us to practice loving each other well and even make mistakes without it mattering! We will always ask you to respect this in any Gathering.

On another occasion we will cover guidelines about the prophetic and prayer ministry which we have found essential, but for now, what we do ask is that if you feel you have a word for someone, or for the gathering itself, please run it past one of us first; and if you have a personal word for an individual, please take one of us with you. It helps keep things safe and everyone accountable in some way. We have witnessed the good, the bad, and the ugly in this kind of ministry and we really want to ensure that it is good as far as we are able!

### 2. Love and Honour

Is a key attribute of Family and Community. It's what Jesus did and now does through us and one which we feel we need to intentionally practice too. Treating one another with honour and in love makes everyone feel special and important and we believe it is a key part of Kingdom culture which represents the new wineskin Papa wants to build.

We want to ensure that people are never left feeling discouraged so will actively look for ways to encourage one another, by "seeking out the gold" within each person. Everyone has gold in them, even if it doesn't appear that way initially. The challenge will be encouraging those who have hurt us or offended us in some way, but even those people have good things hidden in them and it's our goal to find it and bring it out. People will begin to glow and beam just like gold if we search for those hidden gems within them, and then they will begin to behave differently.

*Book: "Culture of Honour" – Danny Silk*

### 3. Family

God has set the lonely in families (Ps. 68:6). We were not created or called to be alone. In the natural, family is how we bring up children and how we learn to relate to Grandparents, Mums and Dads, Brothers and Sisters, Sons and Daughters, friends and neighbours. God is relational and in the Trinity has given us a model of how to do family: each member of the Trinity are “in” the other always loving, honouring respecting and preferring the other: this gives us a great model to follow! Through Jesus we are now “in” this family too and we get to participate in this Divine dance particularly when we do family together. We appreciate that not all of us have a good idea of what family is or how it operates particularly if we come from a difficult background where family was not modelled well. But here we have a chance to help each other gain a proper understanding of family and begin to “do” it well.

*Talk: “The power of community” – Banning Liebscher*

### 4. Freedom and fun

We should be the most joyful people on the planet (OK we appreciate we sometimes are not!). But we do have the greatest good news to share and we believe we need to be joyful while we are doing it! After all, joy is 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the Kingdom message (Rom 15:13: “Now may God, the inspiration and fountain of hope, fill you to overflowing with uncontainable joy and perfect peace as you trust in him” TPT). We are actually allowed to have fun and this can include all sorts of crazy things as well as deeply significant things such as eating together – food and drink was a big part of Jesus ministry too. We try to do things that you don’t always get to do in “traditional” church but which we feel are definitely part of the 3 F’s (Family, Freedom and Fun!).

## 5. Renewed thinking

We take very seriously the messages based around Rom 12:2 and believe they are key to helping transform our thoughts and belief systems about ourselves, our relationships and especially about God. A key part of this for us is discipleship and equipping programmes such as Firestarters and Foundational Cultures. These give us the “bedrock” if you will for what we believe and this will in turn influence and impact on our actions as we look to make a difference for the Kingdom of God. Much of our teaching and understanding has been informed by Bethel and particularly by Steve and Wendy Backlund who remain dear friends of this house.

We can teach on this but it also needs revelation by Holy Spirit along with some self-discipline to really change the way we think. In Romans 12:2 Paul tells us to "Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think". It is a supernatural work of God but we have the choice to co-labour with Him or not. We need to learn to live on earth but with heavenly mind-sets, thereby bringing Heaven to Earth.

*Book: [Supernatural Power of Transformed Mind](#) – Bill Johnson & Kris Vallotton*

*Talks: [Relentless Mind Renewal](#) – Steve & Wendy Backlund*

## 6. Sons and daughters

We’ve already touched on the identity piece but it’s vital we know Who we are and Whose we are before we know what we are called to do and can do! Much of our discipleship has been aimed at teaching and reinforcing this message and also things such as our Life Transformation inner healing ministry help us to shake off past wounds, lies, strongholds and belief patterns and start to breakthrough to be the children Papa God has called us to be!

*Talk: [Receive Your Upgrade](#) - Leif Hetland*

## 7. Miracles, signs and wonders

Jesus walked the earth and demonstrated signs, wonders and miracles, but it was not just something that He did in the Bible! It was a demonstration of the Power of God that is available to all who believe. We are called to Re-Present Jesus, which means we are called to be like Him and that includes doing all that He did: Jesus is perfect theology (He re-presents the Father perfectly). The Bible tells us that we have been given the same power and authority that Jesus has to perform signs, wonders and miracles.

## 8. Heaven to earth

As we engage in the previous elements of our DNA, we will automatically begin to pull Heaven to Earth – it's about His world invading ours! Sometimes we need to be intentional about doing this and remembering the power and authority we have as well as all we have access to in Heaven.

*There are three books that will help enormously in understanding this and they are:*

- *The Supernatural Power of the Transformed Mind – Bill and Kris*
- *When Heaven Invades Earth – Bill Johnson*
- *Victorious Mindsets – Steve Backlund*

Then as we said we need Holy Spirit to begin the process of re-wiring our brains so that we begin to think in new ways that are Kingdom based.

## 9. Hosting the Presence

This will always be our number one focus, as we know that when we do this in a way that pleases Father, He will come and change lives. We will continue to teach and model this to the best of our abilities, but our heart is that everyone who is connected with OH will also 'catch' this for themselves as being the number one priority in our lives as Christians. We have consistently seen lives changed over the last 10 years as we regularly encounter and enjoy God's Presence together in various times and places. It's very surprising how God does this as we seemingly do simple (or even crazily daft) things together but it's true nonetheless! His Presence is always wonderful, always varied, always surprising and we continue to put this at the top of our ladder/DNA!

Actually I believe that as we do the rest of the things on the ladder rungs, as we climb the ladder if you will, this will happen almost without us realising! Not that we should ever be complacent about His Presence, far from it, but it will become a natural part of who we are and what we do!

Talk/Book: [Hosting the Presence](#) – Bill Johnson

## The Lighthouse

This was part of a vision God gave me very early on in the Open Heaven journey, and accounts for why we have a table lamp that is a lighthouse and a picture that I found in a shop window in Cornwall that seemed like a pretty accurate replica of the lighthouse I saw in my vision!

One thing for certain is that it's function is definitely about drawing people to it, not warning people away, and the light is the thing that does that.

“The Revelation Light” Luke 8:16 (TPT)

“No one lights a lamp and then hides it, covering it over or putting it where its light won't be seen. No, the lamp is placed on a lampstand so others are able to benefit from its brightness.”

A Lighthouse is also a safe place!