

# Chapter 5

## My Covenants with God

*1 If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. 2 All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God: 3 You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. 4 The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock--the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. 5 Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. 6 You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.*

**Deuteronomy 28:1-6**

# New Covenants With God

## Exodus 20:8-10

*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work,<sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work*

There was another secret to this transformation. It came from Scripture. God gave it to me as a promise when I rededicated my life to the Lord. It was this, *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.”* I took that to heart. The Lord was to be first thing every morning, to spend time alone with him. Thus, I started a life-long discipline of daily personal devotions of Bible reading and prayer every morning.

Another discipline came at this time as well. I felt a strong conviction that I should dedicate every Sunday to the Lord. After all, it is called the “Sabbath Rest” and “The Lord’s Day.” So, I took God at His word from Isaiah 58:13-14,

*“If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD’s holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.” The mouth of the LORD has spoken.*

I took that to heart. I felt as if the Lord were saying this directly to me. I was to set apart the Lord’s Day to be His day, and not my own. How was I to do that?

First, I had the habit of procrastinating doing my homework assignments until Sunday afternoon, then I would rush and cram to get it all done, sometimes until late at night. The Lord said, “No more. I don’t want you to study on the Lord’s Day. Get it done by Saturday night”

With that deep conviction I began this new discipline of no school work on Sundays. If there was any one thing I did to change my grades it was this. All my homework, reading and written assignments were to be done by Saturday night so the Lord’s Day could be my Sabbath Rest. The result was my grades improved and my Sundays became a delight to the Lord.

The other delight was to find a friend at church who had a likeminded spirit. His name was Rex Jones. Because I had no homework to do on Sunday night Rex and I would attend the evening service and often we would end up talking after the service then walking home as we fellowshiped together. Those years were delightful and I always looked forward to Sundays as a day of rest. This also afforded me the opportunity to participate in nursing home ministries, which I never had done before. This discipline gradually included no playing baseball or football on the Lord’s Day. I am not implying by this that for others to do so is sin, it is not. But for me *“He that knows to do good and does it not, is sin.”* (James 4:17)

## The Test of My Sunday Covenant

### Isaiah 58:13-14,

*If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD’s holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the LORD,*

Shortly after graduating high school I decided I would have to work a year to earn enough money for college. I got a job working at Chrysler Engine Plant in Trenton, Michigan where many of my friends and family also worked. They seemed to love working there. It was great pay and there were usually opportunities for overtime. On my first day in that huge engine plant I had to walk a half mile in a closed building to get to my assigned department, which happened to be the piston rods area. I was given my assignment of stamping a pedal that reamed out burrs on the rods as they came down the assembly line. It was a dreary, brainless, monotonous job in a noisy factory. I said to the Lord that day that if He hadn’t called me to be a missionary I would never ever want to work in a factory.

I worked there in the fall and all went well. The money was great. I was able to buy my own car and pay it off. I was able to accumulate my savings for college. Then came the day we were informed that production was picking up and we would have to work on Saturdays. That was no problem and it paid time and a half. A month later they said we would be going to 12 hours a day 7 days per week. We would have to work Sundays. There was a rule at the factory that everyone was required to do overtime or be overlooked for any extra hours. When they came to me to ask me to work on Sunday I graciously refused telling them that my Sundays were the Lord's Day and by my spiritual covenant that day belonged to God. The foreman wasn't pleased. He reiterated that all employees were required to work overtime and Sunday was no exception. If they made exceptions then half the work force wouldn't want to work seven days a week. I told him that this was my commitment to God and I was fine doing all the overtime they could throw at me, but not on Sunday. I would work 12 hour shifts and even put in double shifts if necessary, but I would not work on Sunday. He said he would have to talk to his manager and the general manager. I remember the divisional foreman came to talk to me as well telling me that if I did not work Sundays then I would not be offered any overtime. I told him that was fine with me but Sundays were out, even if it meant losing my job. The next day the foreman came around giving overtime slips and said, "LaFountain, you are to work on Saturday, but you are exempt on Sunday." Wow! I was amazed and delighted.

Soon word got out that LaFountain didn't have to work on Sundays. Guys would come to me and ask what made me so special that I didn't have to work on Sunday. I told them of my commitment to God and said that I was sure if they made that commitment they wouldn't have to work on Sunday either. I remember another Christian guy looking at me for a long moment then he said, "Nah, I love the money too much to give that up." So it was that I was not required to work on Sunday though everyone else had to. God is good.

# Keeping the Covenant in College

## Ezekiel 20:19-20

*I am the Lord your God; follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Keep my Sabbaths holy, that they may be a sign between us. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.*

I have endeavored to keep that covenant with God through the years, even in college. I remember one occasion in college that I had been working a fulltime job and dedicating Friday night and Saturday to the Lord in evangelistic ministries. I worked in an inner city mission in New York City every weekend. This particular week had been difficult and I had many assignments due on Monday. I had worked hard to complete all my assignments on time, but there was a speech due for Dr. Lias's class on Monday morning and I wasn't ready. The professor had said that if you were called on to give a speech you must have it typed out and then given orally that day. Well, I didn't have that speech ready and it bothered me all weekend that I could not work on it because of ministry. Sunday was off limits for that kind of thing. I told the Lord this was not working well and I needed to study that Sunday. The Spirit of God convinced me to keep my covenant with God and not do homework on Sunday.

There was an unwritten rule at Nyack college that if a professor did not show up within the first ten minutes of class, the class would be dismissed. Yet, everyone knew that Dr. Lias never was late and never ever missed a class. I knew I was only half ready with that speech, so I prayed, "Lord, you know I have obeyed and put you first, and I am willing to get a zero on that speech if that is your will, but I ask you to do the impossible and make Dr. Lias late for class."

The class bell rang that Monday morning and Dr. Lias was not there. There was a buzz of excitement in the air. Would Dr. Lias be late? Five minutes went by, then six, seven and eight minutes passed. Some students went out to the parking lot to see if he was coming. He was not. Nine minutes passed. Would he come? Then at the ten minute mark the whole class cheered and began filing out. On our way down the hallway Dr. Lias showed up, but he was too late and class was dismissed. Evidently he had been held up due to a traffic accident. This is the only time in all the years of college that Dr Lias was late for a class. God had done it. By the way, two days later I was called on to give that speech as I would have been called on Monday, but this time I was ready. He gave me an A+ and even applauded everything about that speech. God is good.

## Special Gifts From God

### 1 Corinthians 12:31 & 14:1

*But earnestly desire the best gifts. Yet I show you a more excellent way. Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy*

One of the things that bothered me in my teens was that I had no spiritual gift from God. Other friends could sing, play instruments, speak in public, and demonstrated different levels of giftedness, some natural talents and others special gifts for serving God. I had none. This was not just my perception; this was the opinion of others.

I sought the help of spiritual leaders such as Sunday School teachers, pastors, my favorite aunt, and even my mother. They looked at me and tried to evaluate where they saw giftedness. They all failed to point out anything special about Dick LaFountain. My mother, bless her heart, searched for something I did well. Finally she quipped, "Well, you made a wonderful little bird house." (That bird house was crooked and fell apart.)

I began to pray about this. How was I to serve God when I had no talent or spiritual gift? My brother Dave had a beautiful bass voice and was highlighted in church and high school productions. I had no voice. In fact, it was my reality that I sang in monotone. I sat next to a friend in our church and we sang together making joyful noises, but it was hardly singing in tune. It was more of the droning of one or two notes, then falling silent as we attempted to reach those high notes.

### A Dream Changed It All

One night before going to bed I told the Lord that I envied my brother's ability to sing and that if He would give me the gift of singing I would only use it for him. That night a wonderful thing happened. I dreamed of singing with a choir and for the first time in my life I could hear the different parts of the song. I heard melody and harmony. I had never been able to distinguish that before. I guess I was not only color blind, I was tone deaf.

Then I woke up. I went down to the kitchen for breakfast. Mom always had a Christian radio station playing music in the mornings. I was shocked I could hear the melody and harmony! I remember it was the golden voice of Solomon King who was singing. I could sing along with him and it didn't sound bad. Something happened in my brain, my ears, my voice, and my spirit. I could sing!

That changed everything. I started to enjoy singing at church. Listening to music took on a new dimension. It was like having no taste buds, then suddenly being able to taste the different flavors. I didn't join the choir or sing solos or duets like my brother, but I began to really enjoy praising God in song.

In fact, God began putting songs in my heart to sing to him. Almost every day of my life the Lord gives me songs to sing. My wife will attest to the fact that I wake up with a song in my heart that echoes from my lips. That was a new thing and that was a wonderful gift from God.

## **The Brooklyn Gospel Team**

### **Zephaniah 3:17**

*The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.*

A few years later while attending college we were riding in a van returning from a ministry in Brooklyn, New York singing songs, hymns and choruses as we traveled. Suddenly the leader of the Brooklyn Gospel Team, a gifted musician, turned to me and said, "Dick you have a wonderful bass voice. You should join our ensemble. We are going to be traveling during Easter vacation and singing in churches every night."

I tried out with fear and trembling and they accepted me into the group. What was really shocking to me was that in one of our numbers they asked me to sing a solo. That was a first! God did a wonderful thing for me.

It was on that tour group where my wife, Marilyn, and I began to fall in love. She was in that musical group as well and our hearts melted and molded as we sang.

In our first pastorate people found out that we sang together and we were asked to be the special music for several revival services. I remember one song we sang while still in college titled *It's Not an Easy Road*. We were rehearsing the song when it occurred to me that it sounded like we were singing, "*It's Snot an Easy Road.*" We burst out laughing and could hardly ever sing that song without laughing at our diction.

# Revival Breaks Out

## Psalm 96:1-2

*Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.  
Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day.*

Many years later as I served as a missionary in Brazil I traveled to Uruguay to preach a series of meetings in a large church on the border with Brazil. As I was about to stand up to preach God began tugging on my heart. I felt him whisper, "You gave your voice to me, now I want you to stand and sing a song." I was terrified. Here I was an American missionary speaking Portuguese to a Spanish speaking church and God wanted me to sing to them. I thought that was very odd and maybe it wasn't the Lord speaking at all, but as I pondered that inner voice the assurance came that it was indeed God speaking and I was to stand, not to preach but to sing a song.

But what do I sing? Immediately I was given the song in my heart. It was "*No One Ever Cared for Me Like Jesus.*" The words are, "*I would love to tell you what I think of Jesus, since I found in him a friend so strong and true.*" I stood to the microphone, not even knowing if I would start on the right note, opened my mouth and sang. It was beautiful, right on key.

As I sang I could see their eyes light up. They knew the song in Spanish and began to sing along. As we sang people started to weep and some came running to the altar. I don't remember that I even preached that night but a revival broke out in the midst of that church that was inexplicable, except God gave a monotone boy a gift beyond music, a gift of the Spirit that moves hearts toward God.

Other gifts of the Spirit would follow at different times in my life and ministry. Usually the gift would show up at unusual times and places when it was most needed and would surprise me. Now many years have gone by and I often hear people say, "Pastor Dick, you have been gifted by God in so many wonderful ways." When I hear that a smile comes to my face and a tear to my eye as I remember this was the boy who had no talent or gift. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!