

**Interview with Danny Silk** — by Jay Zinn • 1/20/12

In January of this year, I attended a conference called, “Honor and Empowerment” at Bethel Church in Redding, California. Danny Silk, the primary speaker in the conference, graciously set some time aside to answer these questions for our KRC readers.

**KRC:** Danny, you’ve written a profound and impactful book called, “Culture of Honor.” The principles you present in your book about leadership, authority, and church discipline would serve to help every pastor and church. How did you come by this understanding of “honor” —through trial and error, or some process of osmosis under the leadership of Bethel Church?

**Danny:** A little bit of both. Obviously, it’s from being around Bill Johnson for twenty-eight-years plus, just learning how he thinks, and benefitting from his culture—osmosis-wise—and then lots of practice within that. My background, too, is social work where I’ve been involved in working with people for almost thirty years.

**KRC:** Many people have been hurt by churches and pastors who lead through shame-based, fear tactics rather than inspiring people to serve God through freedom and love. What would your advice be to church leaders about leadership styles that diminish or enhance a culture of honor?

**Danny:** There’s always going to be people who don’t want to honor. They just don’t, so, I think as society evolves, people begin to be drawn to environments of freedom and autonomy and connection and love. And people are repelled by places that disallow that. So leaders, more and more, are going to find themselves having to decide if they’re going to have fewer followers or if they’re going to change and learn how to create environments that people need.

**KRC:** What would you say to those who have vowed never to return because they experienced “church” as an unsafe place?

**Danny:** It’s really dangerous to make lifelong vows like that. I would continue to shop around because there are very few things as delicious as a loving community—and they’re all over the place.

**KRC:** In your book you talked about the key characteristics found in an environment of honor. This has obviously taken years for Bethel to develop. What can you say to those who don’t experience a church like Bethel, but want to see these things happen in their community? Can they create an environment of honor and culture in their own sphere of influence?

**Danny:** I would say that there are some really amazing things happening at Bethel, but it’s not the only place in the world where amazing things are happening. So you’re just looking for some key ingredients where there is a faith that is attracting the supernatural, there is a freedom that is bringing out the best in people, and there is a love that is creating a safe place to be yourself. So if you can learn more about how to do that, and become a leader in it, then your community now has one of those places.

**KRC:** You mention the importance of apostles and prophets in the foundational structure of the church and the unique graces and gifts they bring to the table for revival. For many this is a new concept. Even pastors have their own views on whether those gifts still exist. You make a great case for this in your book, but how many apostles and prophets do you believe are out there whose gifts lay dormant under the veneer of denominationalism? And how does one find their path towards seeing these gifts discovered, empowered, and released when the vast majority of Christians don’t believe they exist today?

**Danny:** There are many undiscovered gifts and talents because there’s only so many allowed in denominationalism. But for true apostles and prophets to come into power, it requires the people to allow that. People have to invite an apostle, they have to invite a prophet—you have to receive a prophet in the name of a prophet and, likewise, receive an apostle and the ministry of an apostle within that same authority in your life.

Apostles have to be able to not be pastors. They have to be able to be who they are and that's only going to happen when the people say, "That's what we want." When you create a pastor/teacher environment only, you teach everyone in that environment that this is what the church is supposed to look like. But when you experience an apostle and a prophet led environment, you think this is what the church looks like, this is what the New Testament looks like. This is where there are signs and wonders and miracles, the spirit realm is lit up, my spirit is alive, and worship is passionate.

There is a very different set of priorities that vary among denominations and so their teaching says, "This is what the church is supposed to look like." But the experience in places of greater freedom says, "This is what it's supposed to look like." So for people to leave, they have to violate their own understanding of what's right and wrong, and almost rebel to get over to this free place. And the leaders, if they don't make this paradigm shift, they just intensify their efforts to control the people leaving to these other free places, which is what is happening. People are flocking to free places and the pastors and teachers are scared that they're going to lose this influence and their following—and they're right—they are going to lose, because people are attracted to free places. Jesus caused the same problem when he was here.

**KRC:** You effectively present the differences between the [Ephesians 4:11] five-fold gifts in your book. Would you tell us how each five-fold gift can honor and value the other four gifts, rather than be annoyed by the emphasis each gift brings to the body life of a church?

**Danny:** Well this is a culture of honor right here [in Bethel]—learning to listen, learning to disagree and continue listening. Learning to need different things and be willing to meet the needs of somebody else. It's really a successful marriage. A successful marriage is about needing very different things, and so I stay open to valuing what you need because I value you. I'll learn to supply you what you need, at the same time, I have needs as well. So that happening back and forth between all the five-fold gifts, and among those who support them—that's a culture of honor.

**KRC:** How can we best honor others who see things differently in the Bible than we see them?

**Danny:** I'm always going to exalt relationship above theology. I'm always going to exalt love and connection above agreement. So as long as I can do that, then we can disagree just fine.

**KRC:** How can we honor those who fail, fall into sin, and don't repent when confronted? Doesn't honor belong to the wise, rather than those who persist in doing foolish and sinful things?

**Danny:** We honor all people no matter what. People who refuse to repent are going to end up with limits on their choices and limits on their access to the vulnerability and the freedom of the people who are valuing love and relationship. So people who will not protect this core, find themselves removed more and more and more. We still honor you, we still value you, but you're not as powerful in this community because you won't protect it. The honor we show them is in respecting their freedom to choose to repent or not. That keeps them powerful and keeps us powerful.

**KRC:** In what way can men honor their wives or wives honor their husbands when they've grown so familiar with the quirks and weaknesses they see in their spouses?

**Danny:** This is where I would be looking for what's wonderful in you [the spouse]. This is where I would be prophesying the destiny and the greatness that never gets stale, that never stops growing. And the more that I focus on your beauty and the wonder, the more I see of that. Commonly, when married couples focus on their quirkiness and their familiarity, they see more of that. So really, whatever you look at grows.

**KRC:** In what way can parents honor their kids without spoiling or overprotecting them?

**Danny:** They honor them by teaching them to think, to problem-solve, to take responsibility, to clean up their messes, and to manage their freedom. So, learning how to *invite* children into that is far more powerful than trying to *direct* children to do that.

**KRC:** So how far do you think we should extend the rope for our children's freedom?

**Danny:** I think that every child is going to be different. It's really more about, how much respect do you have for your child's self-control? It's not my job to teach you [the child] to do the good things that I told you to do; it's my job to teach you how to control yourself to make good choices. Because after you leave my supervision, that's what your whole life is about. Your whole life is about the choices you make that will lead to the quality of your life. And I'm not going to be there to make those choices for you.

**KRC:** Honor can be exploited by leaders who expect their congregations to do special things for them which express respect and appreciation for the office. What would your thoughts be in the matter of showing honor to spiritual leaders in a balanced and appropriate way?

**Danny:** The first thing I would say is that honor comes from me. I honor you. And then other people, doing the same thing, is what leads to a culture of honor. Obviously, leaders and people who have greater responsibility need more authorization, more authority, more power—and that's how people honor them because they empower them at a greater level than other people are empowered to influence them, to effect their lives and that sort of thing.

I guess the dangerous part of taking honor is that I intimidate you, I teach you to believe that I can control you. And that's where so-called honor gets abusive. I'm afraid you're not going to give it to me, so I take it from you, and you end up with no power, and I end up with all the power. That's where authority gets abusive.

**KRC:** What is the best way to confront sin and bring judgment and restoration to a sinning member in the church? How can honor and dignity be maintained through the process of confrontation?

**Danny:** The keys to confrontation are that I am able to create a safe place to where there's trust, and that is the place where truth can flow back and forth. I'm going to approach you in a Galatians 6:1 way, in a spirit of gentleness where I don't need control of you and I'm not here to control you.

Then I am going to be very effective in asking questions to allow you to think and partner with the Holy Spirit, to take responsibility for things that you really need to take responsibility for, and allow for you to come out with a solution or come out with a decision that's really yours. And you're going to stay powerful throughout this whole confrontation because I'm going to respect your self-control, respect your freedom, and I'm going to respect the fact that you are a responsible, caring, loving person even though you have made a mistake.

**KRC:** When someone walks into your church service for the first time, what do you think they experience or see that causes them to grasp that they are in an environment of "honor?"

**Danny:** That it's a safe place where people can be free and they can happen. It's contagious. They don't feel very much control. They feel safe because there is clear leadership, but they feel very free in that clear leadership. There are boundaries, and there are standards here, but you don't run into those first, you run into the opportunities first—you don't run into the limitations first.



Danny Silk serves as a senior management pastor at Bethel Church in Redding, California. He is the primary developer of the Bethel staff, overseer of the Transformation Center, and frequent guest lecturer in Bethel's School of Supernatural Ministry. He is an extraordinary communicator with gifted insight, and is also known for his practical and humorous style of teaching. Danny and his wife, Sheri are the founders of Loving on Purpose Educational Services, Inc., a ministry to families and communities worldwide.