

# WHERE LOVE AND EQUIPPING FUEL HIS MESSAGE

**Charles Halley** 



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# **Chapter 1**

#### Searching for Jesus' House

John, Lynn and Sam gave their lives to Jesus on the same day and when they did, everything changed.

All three were students at the same school and because of this shared experience, a deep bond was forged between them that would last for years. During these early months of walking with Jesus, they frequently got together to share what they were learning. There were lots of things to talk about.

From the very beginning, each was deeply stirred as they heard Jesus through His "still, small voice" and the four Gospels. Following their new Lord and Savior seemed to catalyze multiple places of breakthrough every day. All were thrilled to begin experiencing freedom in areas of their lives where longstanding lies had taken them prisoner.

John, Lynn and Sam were awed by all that they were learning and experiencing. As they continued to share life together, their conversations kept coming back to three foundational truths about Jesus.

Each was learning about the immeasurable depth and breadth of Jesus. An all sufficient Lord who is worthy of worship. A Teacher whose redemptive message was unlike anything they had ever heard. Jesus' claims of deity became more believable every day. Not to mention that Jesus was also a master communicator; He used just the right words at just the right time. And not only was Jesus His Father's anointed spokesperson, He was a Friend with whom each could share their daily life.

They were also learning about Jesus' never-ending capacity to genuinely love them and all peoples of the world. Their Savior was authentic and gentle and patient and so many other facets of love. Even when others plotted Jesus' demise or betrayed Him, He did not return evil with evil, but extended grace and forgiveness. Each of them craved a community where they could live life among Jesus-like people where each could be themselves and feel safe. They were tasting it during this season and wanted more.

Finally, they were discovering what a great leader Jesus was. As they learned and processed how He influenced others, they were deeply impressed. The three had had multiple bosses and agreed that none of them were like Jesus. He possessed so much clarity about His mission and was more than patient as He equipped and empowered His follower's God-given capacities. Each was wowed by how Jesus always invested more into His disciples than He asked from them; how novel compared to the world they had grown up in.

As this learning process unfolded, they also started to encounter Jesus in one another and in the community of disciples all three had joined. For the first time, they felt the presence of God in a larger context – the power of Jesus' message together with lifegiving worship. The unconditional acceptance and encouraging words they received from older

believers were an unexpected blessing. What a counter-cultural experience: a community of loving relationships in contrast to the selfish network of friends each of them had grown up with. Last but not least, they were more than surprised to find themselves being empowered to help lead. All three were excited to jump into ministry to a nearby neighborhood.

Their shared experience within this house of Jesus marked each of them deeply. The combination of Jesus' message, selfless love and equipping-based empowerment had catalyzed the power of God's Spirit in and around them in ways that were beyond words.

As John, Lynn and Sam approached graduation, they met together one last time. Together, they recounted the amazing journey they had had with one another and with Jesus; what a ride! As they said their goodbyes, they made a heartfelt covenant with one another: Wherever God leads, each of us will find an established house of Jesus; a gathering of followers where Jesus' life-giving message is fueled by His selfless love and equipping-based empowerment.

As they went their separate ways, they assumed that it would be relatively easy to find Jesus houses that would be like Him, but that was not their experience.

John's path led to graduate studies in accounting and a related calling to avocational ministry in the marketplace. As his life unfolded, he kept walking with Jesus and made a real effort to find a Jesus house in keeping with the covenant he had made. John visited numerous churches and kept finding the same problems. In each place, the preaching content

sounded like the Master and the life principles shared were spiritually relevant, but significant elements were always missing. These Jesus houses consistently lacked His relational values and warmth. And more often than not, they seemed to value centralized power and control more than His equipping-based empowerment. John appreciated his time in these *Jesus' Message houses*, but kept looking for one that was more like Him. His discouragement became debilitating; never quite finding what he had experienced with Lynn and Sam.

After graduation, Lynn pursued an international vision she had had for years. Her studies had focused on global marketing and like John, she felt called to share Jesus through her marketplace career. In time, she was thrilled to accept a new job, move to an international hub and launch her dream.

The first Jesus house she visited in this country made a positive first impression. She quickly connected with its participants and was very encouraged initially. But within a few weeks, Lynn realized that the message of the Master was missing. His truths were almost nowhere to be found and instead, replaced with a mixture of cultural jargon, personal stories and human wisdom. Lynn's heart was warmed by these relationships, but the absence of Jesus' redemptive Gospel was both shocking and frustrating. She also noticed that this church's leadership quickly empowered its people, but not like Jesus; there was little to no equipping. Lynn knew she needed to keep looking for an authentic Jesus house that was more like Him, but all she found were Jesus' Love houses. And like John, she grew increasingly discouraged. She was not finding any Jesus houses intentionally aligned to His life-giving message, selfless love and equipping-based empowerment.

Sam's journey after graduation was very different than John and Lynn's. He had completed a degree in psychology, but had never had their clarity of purpose and direction. Without any clear calling, he starting working in short-term jobs while he continued to prayerfully seek God's guidance. In time, Sam discovered the Father's best through the eyes of others and a confirmation from God's Spirit: a calling to full-time, vocational ministry.

After an extended season of preparation, Sam received an invitation to serve a Jesus house as one of its pastors. It had been a lengthy discernment process, but Sam was fully confident that he had found a Jesus house that was committed to saying what He said and living like He lived.

As Sam began his ministry, it did not take long for him to affirm that this Jesus house was a spiritually vibrant community. He so appreciated its commitment to preaching Jesus' Gospel with passion and clarity. He could see the impact the house had made and was making in their city.

He was also encouraged by the humility, authenticity and generosity within this community. House leaders had been working diligently to prioritize loving relationships in spite of numerous cultural challenges. The percentage of broken families in Sam's new city was staggering. So he was greatly encouraged that leadership had launched a holistic outreach to address these significant needs; lives were being changed.

But later that same year, John began getting in touch with his growing frustrations with the house's leadership culture; a sharp contrast to Jesus' equipping-based empowerment. He liked and respected many of the leaders and had initially been so encouraged to find this *Jesus' Message and Love house*. But all of its good qualities were being drowned out by wave after wave of leadership dysfunction. As an insider, he now had a front row seat to see the leadership's values, norms and behaviors: power plays, people being used, sexism, manipulation, micro-managing and more. Given the sales pitch he had heard before joining the staff, this reality was a stunning and devastating discovery. Now what?

John, Lynn and Sam stayed in touch through these life transitions, though nothing like what they had enjoyed in school. Unexpectedly, they met up at a friend's wedding almost exactly 5-years after meeting Jesus. They were thrilled to see each other again and have some time to catch up, and that is what they did. Late into the night, they shared story after story about their life with Jesus, His houses and what they had been learning.

Simultaneously together, they encountered a moment of Holy Spirit revelation:

Every Jesus house they had visited these past five years had a common flaw. Each had unknowingly imported one or more values from the surrounding culture, rather than be fully aligned to Him.

How obvious in retrospect!

Every geographical context they had lived in is marked by deep-seated, worldly values, voices and behaviors that are at war with Jesus' message and culture—arrogance, pride, racism, abuse, control, selfishness, sexism, greed, pragmatism etc. To be sure, some settings are more difficult than others, but every imperfect human brings the world's toxins with them into Jesus' house.

After the wedding, they once again said their goodbye's, but Sam just couldn't stop thinking about their collective stories, experiences and "a-ha" moment. All the way home, he kept meditating on several relevant Bible passages: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts and your ways are not My ways." "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than Christ." Sam was desperate for clarity and answers.

The first morning home, Sam opened the Bible and a journal and invited the Godhead—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—to show him the way. For days, he scribed all that he was learning about Jesus' house and on one, ordinary morning, another light bulb went on. Finally, the pieces of the puzzle were starting to fall into place and he started typing an e-mail to John and Lynn entitled *Today's Convictions*:

Dear friends,

So great to see you both last month! Since we met up, I haven't stopped processing all that we discussed and the insights we had together.

Is 55:8-9

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Col 2:8-9

As able, I'd love your input on my new insights below.

Love you both, Sam

A faithful house of Jesus keeps striving to ...

- #1: Make Jesus the Cornerstone to which everything is aligned
- #2: Say what He Said (An incarnational testimony of God's grace)
- #3: Be who He Was (A selfless love for others)
- #4: Do what He Did (A passion for equipping-based empowerment)

Jesus is honored by John, Lynn and Sam's desire to align their lives to His thoughts and ways.

Jesus lived in their world and is well aware of its brokenness.

Jesus is all too familiar with conflicted "houses" like the ones they have experienced and knows that these communities cannot prevail (Mt 6:24).

After the Spirit's arrival on Pentecost, the leaders Jesus had mentored followed His example, and a catalytic move of God was launched (Acts 1-2; 4:11). These are the kinds of Jesus houses that John, Lynn and Sam have been looking for!

Unfortunately, worldly values, norms and behaviors have neutered the house of Jesus for centuries.

I also relate easily to these three friends, especially Sam.

I have worshiped in and served Jesus houses like the ones they have experienced. These challenges have fueled my relentless pursuit to understand what it means for Jesus to be a house's cornerstone.

Jesus has taught me in depth about the power of clarity and how to accelerate a community's alignment to His relational and equipping values.

I have led conflicted communities to places of greater unity, faithfulness and effectiveness. None became perfect; all became more aligned to Jesus' words and ways.

I have mentored hungry leaders like John, Lynn and Sam for more than twenty years.

I have pondered and researched Jesus' culture of selfless love and equipping-based empowerment for decades. I wrote on this subject awhile back and am doing so again in hopes of providing better resources for communities choosing to plant and accelerate Jesus' houses.

I will be utilizing **HouseofJesus.net** as a platform to provide individuals, teams and communities with multiple paths for ongoing learning on this book's themes.

# Windows into My Perceptions

Here are a handful of stories from my own life that echo the experiences of John, Lynn and Sam:

# **Beginnings**

I was naïve when I first started vocational ministry.

I had recently completed a multi-year training process to be a pastor that included an internship. This intentional preparation had given me a measure of confidence in my God-given capacity to help people understand and experience His grace. Along the way, I had also been apprenticed in how best to communicate with people and build teams. The result: my vision for serving students in my new, Midwestern hometown was pretty clear and I had a general strategy for how to get there. But what I did not yet understand—nor did I even have a grid for—was the clash between God's values and His enemy's within the local church.

This first pastoral role was located in a region dominated by large-scale manufacturing. The vast majority of people living in the area were employed by an industrial giant or one of its suppliers.

For many years, this company had created a work culture of control, distrust and manipulation. Predictably, I continually ran into obstacles as I began to define and build Kingdom culture within my ministry area. My Gospel ideals kept getting blocked by long-standing, worldly behaviors that had taken root within the house of God I served.

What an eye-opening season that was for me. For the first time. I had a front row seat to witness how the values of

the surrounding culture can infect the body of Christ. But I also learned about the power of God's Spirit and His ways in that same setting. My leadership team persistently affirmed and modeled a new culture of Christ within our student ministry that broke ranks with the past. Honor, authenticity and empowerment gradually became the new reality and set the stage for a vibrant ministry.

Serving in the midst of this congregational duplicity was hard, but the lessons I learned through it have never ceased to inform my ministry leadership.

# Andy's Story

Nothing prepared my friend for what transpired after he was hired to serve as a Lead Pastor for the first time.

From the outset of the interview process, Andy and his wife were encouraged by their time with church leaders. The search committee seemed so clear in their hopes for the future and easily articulated desired outcomes for their leader. Ultimately, the committee came to the same conclusion my friends did: this church home and Andy were a great fit.

Once Andy began his new role, the initial months reinforced his first positive impressions. Toward the end of the first year, however, reality of the community's disunity reared its ugly head. It became increasingly clear that Andy was serving a divided house with two, competing factions.

The trigger for this open conflict was his work with church leaders and congregants to affirm written statements detailing the community's vision, mission and values. I had been coaching Andy and his team through each step. Unfortunately, my upfront warning was spot on: The process of clarifying vision and values sometimes exposes disunity.

Long story short, this initiative had revealed a sizeable portion of the congregation who did not affirm the Great Commission as the defining purpose of the church. How painful it was for Andy and his wife to discover that a fierce battle between the values of consumerism and God's priority for reaching the lost was taking place inside the congregation. And it was even more painful and challenging when many within this faction left in a huff.

After several grueling years, a unified, Jesus-aligned culture emerged within that household that in turn set the stage for an effective ministry that transformed lives. Andy and I both learned a lot through this process.

# David's Challenge

As soon as my friend David challenged me, I knew God was calling me to go.

In my mid-forties, I sensed that it was God's plan for me to write a book and capture what I had been learning for the past twenty-plus years. Staff leadership positions in multiple churches, heading up a business turnaround, graduate degrees in theology and business, plus external consulting experiences with a number of churches had resulted in a handful of strong convictions about the power of a clear Kingdom culture.

Throughout the writing process, I kept getting good feedback from David. Shortly after a full draft was completed, he called me and asked if I could meet him at a local coffee shop. I always enjoyed our conversations, but this huddle ended up being quite a surprise.

David cut to the chase quickly and shared that he was moving to a nearby city to be the Lead Pastor of a large congregation that was fracturing. Having detailed his mission to reestablish a God-honoring culture, he popped the question: "Charlie, would you be my Executive Pastor and partner with me in this journey?" Almost immediately I said, "Thanks but no thanks," but his retort rocked me spiritually. "Now that you have written a book on Kingdom-based strategies that renews the house of God, you need to walk the talk in order to validate them. Here's your opportunity!"

Seven months later, our family moved to engage this crisis that became an eight-year mission.

This season in my life confirmed both my book's premise and my life experiences to date: a Christian community whose identity is persistently aligned to Jesus' grace and values catalyzes godly unity and sets the stage for the Spirit's renewal. Day after day, week after week, month after month, we kept pounding Jesus' core values deeper into the community's culture and tried our best to collectively walk them out. This life experience confirmed like never before that God accomplishes immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.

# New England

Sean and the first pioneers arrived in New England in 1998 to launch a church planting movement. Fifteen years later, he and the Elders graciously invited me to jump in as a leader. The goal of their open door was to add a missing gift-mix to the lead team as well as a seasoned perspective in ministry. This new opportunity was everything I had expected and more: challenging, invigorating, heart-stretching and deep learning experience.

As I partnered with Sean, we were constantly learning from one another as "iron sharpens iron" and that reality continues to this day. As it relates to Kingdom culture, listen as Sean describes several insights he gained from our many discussions on godly leadership.

"Intuition is a common leadership quality within our movement and my circle of church planting friends. It's hard for me to even imagine not having this capacity that includes easily seeing the big picture and future possibilities. This "six sense" has also been invaluable in picking up the heart cues of those I serve every day. At the same time, it has also created its own leadership challenges which in turn, has triggered multiple learnings.

First, I now understand more fully that the vast majority of people are not as intuitive as me. That's not a bad thing; I benefit tremendously from my friends and co-workers who are wired to be detail oriented and practical. Where would I be without them!

But I have also learned that most of these people cannot easily decode my intuition. Too often in the past, I have assumed that my staff, leaders and church family fully understood my core values for ministry when in fact, they did not.

More than ever, I appreciate the frustration my lack of clarity created and am very committed to codifying Jesus' ways. In fact, Kingdom culture and what that means and looks like has never been clearer within our Boston-based movement. I am seeing signs of increased harvest as a result. Thank you, Lord!"

### Tom and Judy's Story

My friends Tom and Judy spent their fifties serving Jesus in several Asian countries. Recently, they returned to one of them to be training facilitators for a week in a Northern region they had never visited before.

Their goal was straightforward: to provide new and seasoned pastors with a basic, biblical template for serving their communities. All in all, it was a fruitful week of ministry and participants were very grateful for Tom and Judy's leadership. But my friends witnessed one very interesting cultural obstacle as Judy later described.

"Charlie, on the third day of our training, one of the more seasoned pastors present had an amazing breakthrough. His story really underscores the need for the stated Kingdom values you champion.

It was clear to us that this pastor's understanding of God's saving grace was rock solid and firmly grounded in the Bible. In fact, this was one of his greatest strengths. But at the same time, it was also obvious that his leadership style mimicked the culture of indigenous religions in this country combined with a sprinkle of 19th century Western missionaries. Bottom line: He expected his faith community to revere him and approach him as though he was a guru.

The focal point of our teaching that morning was Philippians 2; a powerful picture of Jesus' humility and sacrificial service to mankind. As the group processed these verses and mined its implications, he was shaken to the core. In the hours that followed, his whole philosophy of pastoral leadership changed. His self-centric attitude which had been undermining his ministry gave way to selfless humility.

It was a beautiful transformation that once again highlighted that wherever you serve God's house on this globe, the cultures of our world always war against Kingdom values."

## Aligning a House to Jesus

Like Sam, I've been writing down what I have been learning. And if I were sharing a quick summary with you over coffee, here are the four, foundational steps to begin aligning any house to Jesus.

#### #1: Make Jesus the House's Cornerstone

Peter and Paul agree with Jesus that He is the definition of plumb for His houses. This process will include steps like:

- House leaders collectively affirming and maintaining the supremacy of Jesus' words and ways;
- An ongoing discipline of training that enables leaders to understand and articulate what it means for Jesus to be the cornerstone of a house;
- A relentless passion among leaders to root out any worldly values that are hindering Jesus' house.

# #2: Incarnationally Testify to God's Grace Say what He said!

The "manifold wisdom of God" is that through Jesus, we can approach the Father with freedom and confidence (Eph 3:10-12). This process will include steps like:

- Leaders modeling daily intimacy with Jesus;
- Worship that honors the Father's extravagant grace;
- Contextualizing Jesus' message through being His hands and ambassadors;
- Apprenticing disciples in spiritual warfare.

# #3: Catalyze a Jesus-Aligned, Relational Culture Be who He was!

Love is primary for the Father and Jesus, and so it always leads the way. This process will include steps like:

- Persistent intercession for godly relationships and unity;
- · Teaching and modeling what loving relationships look like;
- Establishing transferable cornerstone values for selfless relationships;
- Embracing ongoing alignment to these values and related heart discipleship.

# #4: Catalyze a Jesus-Aligned, Equipping Culture Do what He did!

The Father and Jesus equip and empower faithful disciples for opportunities to serve that have been prepared in advance (Eph 2:10). This process will include steps like:

- Persistent intercession for God to send workers into His harvest field;
- Teaching and modeling what it looks like to walk in our God-honoring anointing;
- Establishing cornerstone values for godly equipping-based empowerment;
- Embracing ongoing alignment to these values and related ministry discipleship;
- Forming a decentralized leadership community among all leaders and their apprentices.

**The House of Jesus** is primarily focused on these last two points: *How can a disciple catalyze a Jesus-aligned culture of relationships and equipping that fuels His Gospel of grace?* 

### **About the Author**

As followers of Jesus, we want our community to feel and run like His house.

Charlie Halley has spent his adult life trying to wrap his mind and leadership habits around Jesus' culture of love and equipping.

The Kingdom culture insights he teaches and writes about aren't just theory. They've been honed through a decades long journey of discovery, confession, breakthrough and influence.

He has tasted the joy that comes when a group of people invites Jesus to transform their culture and structures, but he's also felt the pain of brokenness when these biblical strategies were ignored.

Rooted in God's Word, the values and methods Charlie discusses have been validated within the Jesus houses he has served either on staff or as a consultant and coach. He's also written an earlier book on these themes: *The Heart of the Matter: Changing the World's God's Way* and holds graduate degrees in theology and business.

Outside the Kingdom, he spent a season catalyzing culture in the marketplace. As president/general manager of a multimillion-dollar retail business, he revitalized a failing 60-year-old enterprise and established a value-based culture aligned to its new ownership.

Most importantly, Charlie has been married to his wife Mary Lou for 42 years, and they've raised three great sons in Charles, John, and Thomas.

To learn more about Charlie, you can visit HouseofJesus.net.

First, thanks for reading this synopsis of **The House of Jesus**! I hope it helped you reflect on your own understanding and journey with Jesus.

I have two big questions for you, as we wrap things up. The first is...

# 1) Does Your Experience Resemble an Authentic Jesus House?

Did you identify with John, Lynn, or Sam in my fable?

Have you been searching for a Jesus house where the Master's message is fueled by His culture of selfless love and equipping-based empowerment?

Or do you have vision to transform your current culture so that it is more aligned to Jesus' ways?

If you've been searching for a process to accelerate Kingdom culture in your own setting, then my next question is this...

### 2) Want to Continue the Journey?

We are building a learning community among people who are committed to catalyzing Jesus-aligned cultures: *Being who He was and Doing what He did.* 

Visit us at **HouseofJesus.net** to find a link to secure the full book *The House of Jesus* (this synopsis was just the first chapter).

You'll also find resources to help you transform your current culture, find available coaching and training to go deeper in these truths and meet like-minded believers.

Take the next step. The door is always open at the House of Jesus. I look forward to seeing you!

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### **Endorsements**

"I spent approximately 20 years working as a church consultant. During this time, my efforts were focused on training church leaders to function as equippers. Among all the pastors and leaders, I had the privilege of relating to, Charlie Halley proved to be an "All Star." I watched him relate to those he led in a way that enabled them to soar in their respective roles. When it came to equipping others for Kingdom service, Charlie simply "got it." He now writes a book forged in real life experience and I highly recommend it to anyone who wants to lead as Jesus did."

#### **Don Cousins**

Lead Pastor, Discovery Church (Orlando)

"I have always loved Charlie Halley. Reading his latest book made my admiration for him grow even more. This book truly reveals the Charlie I know—a man zealous to help the Church operate in a manner worthy to be called the House of Jesus."

#### **Branson Sheets**

Lead Pastor, Covenant Church (Greenville, NC)

"Charlie Halley has found a narrative that is much needed within the body of Christ. The balance of personal learnings and real-life stories found a way to connect me to a challenging truth; our church culture must be aligned to the leadership of Christ. This book finds a way to challenge us not only in what must be done, but in how to do it. Filled with tools and additional resources, "The House of Jesus" will change how we equip and live out Jesus' mission for us. Reading this book taught me, but more importantly challenged me and gave me the resources to act."

#### Brian Zehr

Founder, Intentional Impact

"I highly recommend 'The House of Jesus' as a powerful resource for anyone seeking to rediscover the beauty of a healthy church. I've witnessed firsthand, in a variety of different situations, the power of these insights at work in local congregations as we learn how to align to Jesus".

#### Drew Steadman

US Director, Antioch Movement (Waco, TX)

"Charlie's simple frameworks presented in this book provide an excellent guide for leaders to use as they invest in others and I should know. I have personally benefited from Charlie's mentorship and am eternally thankful for his paradigm shifting investment in me as a leader. As the overseer of Engage the Crisis (a project where 2,000 volunteers were sent to serve during the European refugee crisis), I leveraged Charlie's tools to guide our leaders for how to identify giftings on their teams, apprentice team members into needed roles, and coach them into effectiveness. The project was greatly aided by his innovation".

#### Chris McBride

Task Force Director, 24:14 Coalition

"I have known Charlie Halley in the context of a consultant, a mentor, a co-worker and a caring friend. In all these settings, his driving passion remains the same: to emulate God's way of doing ministry and then equip others to do the same. Charlie and his insights in "The House of Jesus" will greatly benefit all those who are eager to learn how to equip the saints for the work of ministry. With fresh and timely perspective, this book profoundly answers the question—"how does God do ministry?"—in a deeply biblical yet highly practical way that will be useful for all who read".

#### **John Prickett**

Director of Ministry, Antioch Community Church (Boston)

"Charlie's commitment to the church and passion for a community based in grace and empowering leadership is inspiring. I appreciate the attention to detail to unpack the church as a home that is congruent with its designer and chief cornerstone".

#### **Justin Dorroh**

Director, Antioch Discipleship School

### Table of Contents for the Full Book

#### Acknowledgements

Chapter One Searching for Jesus' House

Chapter Two Cornerformity

Section One Catalyzing a Jesus-Aligned Culture of Love

Chapter Three Love Leads the Way

(a biblical review of Relationships)

Chapter Four Establishing Cornerstone Values for Love

Chapter Five Aligning a Culture to Love

Resources A Related Value Statement,

Case Study and Survey

Section Two Catalyzing a Jesus-Aligned Culture

of Equipping

Chapter Six The Father's Equipping Values

(a biblical review of Equipping)

Chapter Seven Establishing Cornerstone Values

for Equipping

Chapter Eight Aligning a Culture to Equipping

Resources A Related Value Statement,

Case Study and Survey

**Final Thoughts** 

Bibliography

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**Don Cousins** 

LEAD PASTOR, DISCOVERY CHURCH (ORLANDO)

"The House of Jesus is from the heart of a leader who has built it and has learned the hard work of implementing Jesus' value of equipping through diligence, patience, and love. Every pastor, staff, and board member need to read Charlie Halley's book to pray, and commit to building Jesus' houses His way!"

Bruce Bugbee

BRUCE BUGBEE AND ASSOCIATES

Has your community struggled to be fully aligned with Jesus and the Kingdom culture He modeled?

Have you ever felt the pain caused by its conflicted priorities? Ever wondered if there was a process to overcome this problem?

If you've felt that the Church often struggles to be fully aligned to Jesus and His ways, Charles Halley understands. He's tasted this kind of brokenness and the resulting pain. More importantly, he has learned how to realign communities to Jesus; a process that has been validated within the Jesus houses he has served either on staff or as a coach. If you are ready to be a part of the solution, this book is for you.