

Antoine

An executive pastor for 15 years, Antoine resigned his position after a painful and perplexing season of attempting to bring new life to the church and meeting increasing resistance. When his wife was let go from her role in a dishonoring way, Antoine endured a year of being torn between work, identity and family before finally letting go and entering a sabbatical season with no clarity on his future.



Son of my right hand;

Thank you for all the beautiful things you have done for me. Our conversation is a sweet fragrance I love to breathe. I am fitting you to reign and rule in heaven, and you are fit, because you understand my heart. Well done!

To fully understand this season of your life, you have to perceive it within the larger tapestry of my purposes: the infinite, interwoven cloth where every fiber is a life, and every set of fibers bundled into a thread is an organization, and all the threads and fibers woven together make up my purposes in history. Your experience isn't all about you, or all for you, although I make everything in it work for you.

I am working my good plan out for your Pastor and his wife, although at times they resist or fall victim to their brokenness. When an organization's thread will not work itself properly into my larger weave, I begin to separate out the individual fibers to change its course. It is painful to be unwoven, but the pain and the dislocation create opportunities for me to change hearts that weren't there previously. Monique's losing her role at Big Creek Church was a key fiber I unwound from the thread to start making it pliable again. Because she was woven to you in marriage, her thread pulled yours out as well. And because you were so needed and such an integral part of things there, removing your thread frays the whole organization. It needed to be frayed, and that was my hand doing it. It will continue to fray, but know that every pain and every dislocation caused by the fraying will be taken into my hand and leveraged for my purpose.

Every fiber and every thread must ultimately choose: to be woven into my purposes or to be a loose, stiffened strand protruding unused from the weave. My work is to overcome the resistance to change and bring every fiber and thread into its proper place

A major portion of the resistance you encountered is an idolatrous loyalty to what worked in the past. That idolatry also runs through your denomination. Hanging on to the past is about control and fear—fear of losing the good things I brought, and seeking to control me and my people to retain them. It doesn't work out so well for my children when they try to control their God, so I am being good to them by helping them become pliable and change direction. This process of fraying seems painful instead of pleasant, but it yields the fruit of being interwoven into my purpose when you submit to it. The fiber of your life is part of the much larger thread of your denomination, and your story is a small piece of my larger work pulling apart and repositioning the fibers there to move the whole denomination forward in my love.

Know also that I removed you for you. I love your pliability and your faithfulness—it is no wonder you were one of the first threads to be pulled. Know that while it is painful to be the first thread, it is much more painful to be the last. Those who cannot change experience the pain of every other thread that is removed, and

then must still bend to my will. You were interwoven with a fiber that had grown quite stiff, and I removed you so you would not need to be wounded by his pain in the bending process as well as your own.

Your leaving Big Creek Church does not represent the end of an opportunity there for change, but a step forward in bringing it. I have heard every prayer of yours to bring life at Big Creek, and since you made yourself available to me to bring change (thank you for serving me in that way!) I choose to use removing your thread to kick the process into a higher gear. Understand—I already have a five year plan for your church (actually, one that extends into eternity) and all the leaders in it. No matter how they respond, my plan will go forward.

My five-year plan for you starts with rediscovering your identity in me. The more I fill you, the less you will need significant work or being needed to fill that hole. And the more you operate out of fullness in me, the more content and powerful you will be.

At the same time, I am reactivating what was dormant in your DNA, so that the good of this last season can be married with that of the seasons before it. You must also come into a clearer, more specific knowledge of what you were born to do and be, and who you are called to reach. Reexamine your destiny, and become sure of it and familiar with its particulars—that will prepare you to take the risk and make the jump into the fullness of your calling that is coming soon.

*In this season, pay attention not just to my dealings and their outcome but **how** I get you to that outcome. The process I take you through is often a better teacher of who I am than the end result (which often gets attributed to human goodness or willpower instead of to grace). Take note of how I provided for you when you were on vacation—it will tell you who I am. Take note of the questions I answer and those I don't—it will tell you where my heart is focused, and what is most important to me. Take note of how this season has unfolded over time, study the lives recorded in my Word, and you will know my ways in dealing with my children. Take note of the gift I have given you in it, and what your life would be like if I'd withheld the gift, and you will know grace.*

The end result and outcome of all this is that you will know me, and knowing me, you will have everything you need. I am shepherding you, first because I love you, and second because being shepherded by the Great Shepherd will make you a great shepherd. Every bit of this is full of purpose. Drink what is in front of you today to the full—I've got your future in my hands.

Finally, son, I want you to know that you are an exceptional, treasured, approved son. A very good son. You have won the respect of heaven—the angels are moved to worship when they look on it. Your name is honored here, and I will celebrate and honor it even more highly when you come home to me. Well done!

With great respect and honor,

Your Father