Flood Gates excerpts & memes – Sue Nilson Kibbey

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(Excerpt from *Flood Gates,* Chapter 5)

CONFLUX MOMENTS

*The important thing is to be able at any moment to sacrifice what*

*we are for what we can become.*

*—Charles Dubois*

Have you ever studied Acts 2 in detail? The descriptive images provided

there of the church of Jesus Christ reveal a full-voiced, perpetual orchestra

of rich spiritual growth. The early gatherings of Jesus followers continually

multiplied in number, with newcomers chiming in to active prayer, Bible

study, sharing of blessings, and worship. Passionate, sold-out leaders emerged

from the rich environment of ubiquitous discipleship, and some boldly took

the message of Christ outward and replicated new symphonies of fresh and

maturing followers likewise immersed in God’s word, prayer, scripture, sharing

of blessings, and deep discipling relationships. The worship gatherings

you and I attend today as followers of Christ represent the legacy of countless

faithful and fruitful leaders before us. For more than two thousand years, our

predecessors have diligently attempted to replicate the Acts 2 model of what

it means to choreograph the progressive germination and blossoming of vital

lives of faith, producing a next generation of leaders with the courage to step

out and also lead spiritual reproduction.

Except . . . why is it that some churches or ministries today, rather than

offering ongoing concerts of inspiring, rousing, holy-momentum-fueled, soulfeeding

discipleship that fertilize spiritual growth and replicate leaders, instead

more closely resemble a group of people all huddled around a single virtual piano—

waiting to hear a spiritual keystroke every so often to remind them that

there is, indeed, a Master Conductor? It’s because pastors and church leaders

do not always understand or practice the Flood Gate I call Conflux Moments,

which are what transform your church from a place of occasional keystrokes

into that irresistible, captivating, spiritual-growth-motivating concerto of discipleship

resourced by the Holy Spirit and described in Acts 2.

Let’s define this Flood Gate more specifically. A conflux moment represents

a combustive, synergistic intersection—a living encounter—between you and the

heart of God. It’s a converging moment of new, divinely communicated clarity,

a mini or major breakthrough, that can be almost visceral (and is, for some).

Some conflux moments, your encounters with God’s presence, result in small

yet clear shifts of your spiritual landscape, pushing or leading you forward a step

or more along your discipleship continuum of spiritual maturity. Other conflux

moments may rive soul and spirit deeply with such motivating conviction that

a whole chunk of immediate inner spiritual transformation follows.

Some examples? A conflux moment might present via:

• cognitive learning: new, life-changing, conviction-prompting

information from scripture, reading, or listening

• intellectual insight: new, dawning discernment that has to do

with faith, God, or Jesus—sometimes happening in the midst of

grappling with a decision, crisis, or challenge—resulting in your

forward spiritual movement

• heart conviction: new, piercing perspicacity of belief at the

emotional or intuitive level, changing your choices or behavior

• a spiritual nudge: a brief moment when you experience awareness

of God’s tangible presence, or a Spirit-prompted emotion,

such as tears, happiness, hope, penitence, joy (Spiritual nudges

may not be prolonged or pronounced enough to provide momentum

for a next step toward spiritual maturity, but are sufficient

for God to get your spiritual attention for a short time.)

Special note here. A conflux moment is a momentum-creating God

encounter that must be additionally fueled in order to continue moving you

along the path of spiritual maturity. No matter how strong an initial conflux

moment jolt might be, like a single kick to a soccer ball you will gradually roll

to a halt without another, another, and another to continue your velocity. A

person who has developed deep spiritual maturity has traversed a path punctuated

with conflux moments that have been tended rather than ignored.

For active discipleship movement and growing spiritual maturity to occur

in your church, the stage must be set for conflux moments to arise in

three places: at the level of personal spiritual life, in the collective lives of

groups, and through various aspects of congregational life including worship.

That’s what’s happening in the descriptive images of the early church in Acts

2, and that’s what opening this Flood Gate is about.

From *Flood Gates*, Chapter 8: Stratagem for Storms)

The Value of Storms

“I’ve shepherded this church for seven years and up till recently it’s been

a wonderful, gentle ride,” Pastor Quinn related. “I’ve often told others that

my congregation has the kindest, most loving

people in it imaginable. I’ve seen them do anything

to help each other out in times of crisis,

emergency, grief, and celebration. They have a

true Christian spirit.

“So when we made a change and replaced

the attendance sign-in pads traditionally passed

down the pews each Sunday during worship

with new, individual ‘Connect’ cards that could

be completed and placed in the offering plate instead,

I was completely unprepared for the negative

reaction. Why, I witnessed a new side of my

members I’d never seen before. Critical, selfish,

hateful comments toward church leadership and

especially towards me. Unbelievable! I just about

didn’t recognize my own congregation anymore.

“A small group of longtime members

even came early one Sunday morning, hunted

through the closets, found the old sign-in pads,

and defiantly put them back in the pews. I received

e-mails and letters threatening to curtail

giving, with some following through on their

threat. A few said they would leave the church

if we continued to use the Connect cards—even

though the card makes it far easier for us to follow

up with first-time visitors and their informational

interests.

“I’ve explained the reasoning for the cards both verbally and in writing

time and again. But it’s going on four months now and the active disapproval

continues. I’m really tempted to return to the traditional sign-in pads. It’s

not worth it to have to try to figure out how to help the congregation get on

board with the change, too bumpy a ride. I want this church to return to who

it really is, the loving and kind fellowship of Christians that it always was till

now.

 “Yes, I know that we’ve been training on how to make a case for change,

leverage primary leadership components to release logjams, and all the rest.

But I’ve always believed the bottom-line evidence of good church leadership

is to keep conflict and disruptions at a minimum—or better, to avoid them.

Calm waters are much better, and bring out the best in all of us.”

I’d like to name what might be for you a new truth. “Holy momentum” will bring change . . . which will bring

unexpected storms. Are you willing to let go of any previous presupposition

that an absence of storms is evidence of good church leadership?

Here’s more about this new truth. Some growth does happen when it’s

smooth sailing. But it is in the transformational storms of change where genuine

spiritual growth takes place. It’s in the unanticipated storms along the way

forward where you discover who you really are as a leader, and what kind of a

team and church you have built and discipled around yourself.

When a storm mushrooms within your church or ministry, pay attention to your and your team’s

natural reactions. For example, Pastor Quinn’s response was to survey the

congregation and conclude that the storm of a change had turned the membership

into other than who they really were. If they just reverted back to the

pew pads—the past—and kept hanging on, the congregation would then

hopefully return to “normal.” What is it that somehow deludes us into thinking

that who we show ourselves to be in a storm isn’t really “us”? Does a storm

actually reveal who we truly are, and give God a chance to help us grow and

mature in faith?

The spiritual journey of following Christ together includes the reality

that there will always be at least a little wind. Eventually you learn that this

means you are either in a storm, heading into one, or coming out of one. I’d

like to help you prepare yourself and your team for weathering any blustery

congregational atmospheric conditions that will occasionally punctuate your

change-filled progress ahead.

Your responsibility as leader is not to avoid storms at any cost. Rather, it’s

to have a stratagem for storms prepared and in place so that when the unexpected

blows in, you and your team can navigate successfully through. Here

are five powerful ways to help you find your way.

Sue Nilson Kibbey…. *Flood Gates: Holy Momentum for a Fearless Church* – quotes from book

(FROM THE INTRO PRE-CHAPTER)

My definition of a fearless church is one that does not let fear of an uncertain or unfamiliar

outcome hold it back from taking the next faithful step. And no surprise—

using this same definition, fearless churches are led by fearless leaders. You

can choose to become one.

(FROM THE FLOOD GATE #1 CHAPTER)

Authentic *coachability* in a leader has three ingredients that must

all be present for your overall release and movement forward (and your

church along with you): *teachability, actionability,* and *accountability*.

Have you considered that your spiritual path following Christ is intended

to guide you to face your fears as part of your transformational process, not

to protect you from them or to help you avoid them?

God may be answering your prayers for spiritual growth toward

Christlikeness by allowing opportunities for you to grapple with and triumph

over your fears in order to move into greater missional usefulness.

(FROM THE FLOOD GATE #2 CHAPTER)

Is your church simply snacking on

prayer, or feasting on prayer?

Prayer is the continual, central, simple exercise of offering everything to the

supernatural grace of God.

(FROM THE FLOOD GATE #4 CHAPTER)

Making an urgent case for change proactively leads people

to leave an unacceptable present and move forward toward

an irresistible future.

(FROM THE FLOOD GATE #5 CHAPTER)

Conflux moments are what transform your church from a place of occasional keystrokes

into an irresistible, captivating, spiritual-growth-motivating concerto of discipleship

resourced by the Holy Spirit.

 The Flood Gate of recrafting your own personal life and the life of your

church in order to create an atmosphere for ongoing conflux moments can

offer a whole new potential blaze of spiritual movement.

(FROM THE FLOOD GATE #8 CHAPTER)

But it is in the transformational storms of change where genuine

spiritual growth takes place. It’s in the unanticipated storms along the way

forward where you discover who you really are as a leader, and what kind of a

team and church you have built and discipled around yourself.

The spiritual journey of following Christ together includes the reality

that there will always be at least a little wind. Eventually you learn that this

means you are either in a storm, heading into one, or coming out of one.

Consider the hope of your calling in Christ as a divine invitation to a feast of miraculous resources. All abundance

for what you need to lead will be provided. (Ephesians 1:18)

A hero’s journey includes both the ability to make an urgency-filled case

for change, and also courage to trigger the change’s launch.

Why is it that personal pride and need for

approval can render a leader precariously on the

edge of losing focus if a few arrows of verbal affront

come zinging past?

Your leadership is to be defined by far more than

a debilitating preoccupation with those on board who don’t seem to like you

while the boat of your congregation is bobbing along through a gale.