FROM GOLD TO BRASS

Rediscovering Reverence for the Sacred in a Secular Age

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WOT PUBLISHING

Published by WOT Publishing

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Second Edition

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Published by WOT Publishing

www.wotpublishing.com

Cover Design: WOT Publishing

Interior Formatting: WOT Publishing

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Contents

Introduction: The Crisis of Familiarity in Our Walk with God 1

Chapter 1: When Familiarity Breeds Contempt – The Danger of Taking the Sacred Lightly 5

Chapter 2: Service Without Heart – When Serving God Becomes Routine 10

Chapter 3: The Influence of the World – When Secular Thinking Invades Holy Ground 15

Chapter 4: Guarding the Sacred Relationship – A Renewed Reverence for Leaders and Fellow Believers 21

Chapter 5: Lost Wonder – When Worship Becomes a Habit Rather Than a Sacred Encounter 27

Chapter 6: Holy Giving – Restoring the Joy and Reverence in Giving to God 33

Chapter 7: The Word of God – Rediscovering the Sacredness of Scripture 38

Chapter 8: Faithfulness and Accountability – Walking in Honour of the Sacred Daily 43

Prayer of Salvation 48

About the Author 49

About the Ministry 51

Other Books by Pastor Dr. Emmanuel Mukisa 52

INTRODUCTION

The Crisis of Familiarity in Our Walk with God

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
— Matthew 6:21

In today's world, where convenience, comfort, and routine often take precedence, a troubling shift has emerged within the lives of many believers. Sacred things—those gifts, callings, relationships, and responsibilities set apart by God—are often treated as common or ordinary. What once inspired awe and devotion is now approached with casualness, even entitlement. This crisis is subtle, often creeping in quietly, but its effects are profoundly visible across churches, ministries, and personal lives.

There was a time when many longed for God's presence with undivided hearts, viewing even the smallest role in His service as a privilege. They honoured their leaders, respected the sanctity of the church, and treasured the Word of God as the very breath of life. Yet, as blessings and freedoms they prayed for become accessible, something alarming can occur: familiarity. Proximity to the holy can lead people, over time, to lose reverence, treating what is sacred as though it were merely part of the ordinary.

In the Bible, we see the danger of this firsthand when Jesus, the Son of God, visits His hometown of Nazareth. Instead of marvelling at His wisdom and miraculous power, those who had known Him from childhood dismissed Him as "the carpenter's son." The tragic outcome was that Jesus could do "no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them" (Mark 6:5). Their familiarity with Jesus, their failure to honour the sacred, prevented them from experiencing the fullness of God's blessing.

This book, *From Gold to Brass: Rediscovering Reverence for the Sacred in a Secular Age*, is a call to awaken the hearts and minds of believers to the dangers of treating the holy with indifference. It's a call to return to a place of reverence and commitment, recognising the immense privilege of being children of God and serving Him. The goal is not to criticise but to inspire

—to help readers see how treating the sacred as secular limits spiritual growth and hinders the work of God in and through them.

The Need for Reverence in a Casual Culture

Consider, for a moment, how people respond to matters in their everyday lives. For events deemed significant—flights, meetings with respected individuals, or job interviews—many prepare with care, arriving early, fully focused, ready to honour the time they've been given. Yet, when it comes to church, prayer, or service to God, there is often a tendency to approach with convenience in mind. Some arrive late to services, attend irregularly, or offer their time, talents, and resources half-heartedly. In place of gold, they've settled for brass—a lesser substitute, something that might look shiny on the outside but lacks the weight and value of the real thing.

This tendency is not new. Throughout Scripture, God calls His people to guard against treating His blessings, His presence, and His Word with casualness. In Malachi, we see God's frustration with those who bring blemished offerings, giving to God what costs them nothing (Malachi 1:6-8). Similarly, Jesus warns against those of whom it is written, "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" (Mark 7:6). These warnings, though written long ago, speak directly to the attitudes seen in many lives today.

Recognising the Signs of Secular Influence

In a world that constantly promotes self-interest, it's all too easy for secular mindsets to seep into one's approach to the sacred. Many have lost the sense of awe they once held for God's Word, treating it as just another book on the shelf. Others, because they now have access to leaders and the church, have lost the honour they once held, replacing it with criticism or a spirit of control. And, perhaps most troubling, some approach their faith with a

consumer mindset, asking, "What can I get out of this?" rather than, "How can I honour God with my life?"

This is why, when COVID-19 hit, many leaders and congregations felt a kind of spiritual paralysis. Fear overshadowed faith, and reverence was replaced with a secular mindset of self-preservation. Many churches closed their doors, not just out of caution but sometimes out of fear that showed a deep spiritual vulnerability—a symptom of having treated the sacred with secular indifference for far too long.

Returning to a Life of Reverence

The purpose of this book is to remind you of the call to treat every aspect of your relationship with God as holy. This includes worship, time in the Word, service, giving, and relationships within the church. Each chapter will explore an area of life where you may be tempted to substitute "brass for gold," settling for less than God's best by failing to honour what He has made sacred. You'll be invited to reflect on biblical examples, examine your own heart, and consider how you can return to a life marked by awe, obedience, and reverence.

As you journey through this book, approach each page with a prayerful heart, asking God to reveal areas in your life that may need a renewed sense of reverence. This journey is one that seeks to reclaim the sacred, not only in your heart but in every thought, action, and relationship. The goal is to rise above the tendencies of a secular culture, choosing instead to walk in a way that brings honour to the One who has set you apart.

So, may you begin this journey with humility and a deep desire to honour God in all things. May you rediscover the beauty of the sacred in a secular world, renewing your commitment to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. And as you do, may you witness the mighty works of God in your life, your church, and your community.

CHAPTER

1

When Familiarity Breeds Contempt –

The Danger of Taking the Sacred Lightly

"So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.'"
— Mark 6:3-4

In the realm of human relationships, access and familiarity can sometimes lead to a diminishing sense of respect. This is especially true when it comes to sacred relationships, both with God and those He appoints as spiritual leaders. In the Bible, we see this problem surface repeatedly, and it serves as a warning for believers today. Familiarity with what is holy often leads to contempt or indifference, robbing individuals of the blessings and transformation God intends.

The Loss of Reverence in Jesus' Hometown

One of the clearest illustrations of familiarity breeding contempt can be seen in Jesus' own life. When He returned to Nazareth, the town where He was raised, people saw Him as the carpenter's son, the child they once knew, and nothing more. In their eyes, He was no prophet, no teacher, and certainly no Saviour. Their lack of reverence and unbelief became a barrier, preventing Jesus from performing the mighty works He did in other places. Scripture tells us plainly: "He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief" (Mark 6:5-6).

This response from Jesus' hometown is a sobering reminder of what happens when the sacred is treated as secular, or worse, as common. What could have been a moment of powerful transformation became one of limitation, simply because the people could not see beyond their own assumptions. They missed out on miracles because of a mindset that dismissed Jesus as familiar, ordinary, and unworthy of honour.

Many believers today face a similar temptation. When someone grows accustomed to God's presence, to the teachings of a familiar pastor, or even to the gifts they once prayed for, there's a risk of slipping into complacency. The awe that once marked their faith can fade, and what was once a living relationship becomes a mere routine. They may go through the motions, attend services, or read Scripture, but without the honour, hunger, and expectation that receive God's power in their lives.

The Trap of Proximity without Reverence

The story of Gehazi, Elisha's servant, provides another powerful example of familiarity without reverence. Gehazi had the privilege of serving under Elisha, a man anointed by God, yet his heart was not aligned with the holiness of that role. Gehazi's greed and selfish ambition ultimately led him to betray Elisha's mission and compromise his own integrity. In 2 Kings 5, after Elisha healed Naaman and refused payment, Gehazi saw an opportunity for gain, thinking, "Look, my master has spared Naaman this Syrian, while not receiving from his hands what he brought" (2 Kings 5:20). Gehazi's familiarity with Elisha led him to take liberties, disregarding the sacredness of his service. The outcome was tragic: Gehazi's life was marked by the leprosy Elisha pronounced on him (2 Kings 5:27).

For those who serve closely alongside leaders, pastors, or mentors, Gehazi's story serves as a reminder of the dangers of proximity without reverence. Serving in close quarters with God's anointed should inspire humility and honour, but without a heart of reverence, proximity can breed entitlement, pride, and, eventually, disobedience. Many believers begin their journey with sincere respect and gratitude for those who teach and guide them, but over time, some fall into a trap of comparison or self-promotion. They begin to believe they deserve certain privileges or recognition, forgetting the sacredness of their calling to serve humbly.