

The Story

by David Orton

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David & Jenny @ home, Cape Schanck

As a *prophetic parable* David and Jenny Orton's life together has played out with an emerging and increasingly definable design and message.

Their personal history falls distinctly into four decades representing four phases of development and fulfilment of their life-assignment:

Formation: 1971-1980 Christian Faith Centre, Sydney.

Expansion: 1981-1990 Logos Foundation, Blue Mountains (also Perth, Vancouver, Toowoomba).

Focusing: 1991-2000 Christian Revival Crusade, Melbourne.

Fulfilment: 2001-current Lifemessenger, Melbourne.

Each of the first three decades was marked off by significant 'divine contacts', a major ministry crisis, an unsolicited invitation, and a geographical move. Without any human orchestration a boundary line formed in the last few years of each decade where questions were being asked and the quest for the reality of God's kingdom was reignited. This was soon followed by a sovereignly opened door and a new beginning.

These first three decades clearly reflect the three major stages of development in the life of a leader: Formation, Expansion, and Focusing, leading to the fourth, Fulfilment.

- *Formation* phase builds sovereign foundations, develops inner-life, and moulds personality: [The First Decade \(1971-1980\)](#).
- *Expansion* phase is a ministry growth and life-maturing phase: [The Second Decade \(1981-1990\)](#).
- *Focusing* phase is a life-maturing phase through very specific processes leading to spiritual authority and a unique role/ministry: [The Third Decade \(1991-2000\)](#).
- *Fulfilment* phase is one of convergence where life-maturation, special guidance, and 'divine contacts' intersect as God grants greater spiritual authority and destiny fulfilment: [The Fourth Stage \(2001 - current\)](#) and [an Epilogue Into the Future](#).

In the preparation of his servants God sovereignly uses events, people, and significant circumstances. Each decade of David and Jenny's story shows new and highly significant 'divine contacts', people who were influential in the impartation of values and perspectives or opening doors.

The First Decade: Formation (1971-1980)

Sydney, 1972

David and Jenny came to the Lord together as teenage sweethearts in 1970. They met on the 28th November 1969 at a 'rock dance' which was unfortunately closed down by the police! It had been sponsored by the local Methodist Church! Not only that, Jenny's Dad was one of the bouncers!

David experienced a powerful conversion, turning from the eventual nihilism and despair of the **hippie and counter-cultural movements** of the late 1960's to a relationship with the living God.

They were immediately connected to the catalytic centre of renewal for Sydney,

Wedding, Sydney, 1974

Christian Faith Centre, pioneered by [Paul and Bunty Collins](#) from New Zealand. By 1972 David found himself in Bible School having been deeply impacted by a supernatural encounter with God on the first *Youth With A Mission (YWAM)* Summer of Service in Australia (summer 1971-72).

Jenny also entered Bible School in 1973. They were married in 1974, both serving full-time with *Christian Faith Centre*. Jenny as a receptionist/secretary and David in a youth and training capacity.

Ministry Training School, Sydney, 1973

This first decade exposed them to the worldwide outpouring of the Holy Spirit across all the denominations which became known as the [Charismatic Renewal](#). More significantly, they were also deeply impacted by the positive effects of the mid-twentieth century spiritual renewal known as the **Latter Rain revival** through such teachers as **Peter Morrow (NZ)**, **David Jackson (Aus)**, **Kevin Conner (Aus)**, **Ralph Mahoney (USA)**, and also through the writings of Bill Britton and George Warnock.

It was also during these years that **Bob Mumford** and **Ern Baxter** came to Sydney invited by Paul Collins. A relationship between Australia and the five lead teachers of *Christian Growth Ministries*, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, or what became known as the *Discipleship-Shepherding Movement* ensued (Bob Mumford, Derek Prince, W. J. Ern Baxter, Charles Simpson, Don Basham). But more of this in the second decade.

From 1972-1974 David received powerful prophetic confirmation of the call of God on his life. Through prophecy and the laying on of hands the prophetic nature of the call was made clear and the many difficult turns in the road that were yet to come were foreshadowed. This laid the foundations for certainty in perplexing times.

During these years their church pioneered in the areas of worship, intercession, renewal conferences and publishing. What later became known as *Restore Magazine* (affiliated with [New Wine Magazine](#) in the USA) came from the loins of *Christian Faith Centre* which by the 1980's enjoyed the largest distribution of any Christian journal in Australia at the time. It was instrumental in promoting the teaching of **restoration**, and also **kingdom and covenant theology**, to the larger body of Christ in Australia. Through the interplay of intercession, praise and worship, and leadership training *Christian Renewal Centre* was also planted by Paul Collins and his team in Manila, **Philippines**, which became highly influential in spreading the Charismatic Renewal in that nation. In addition, through the experience of intercession at *Christian Faith Centre* the Australian prayer movement was born with the formation of *Intercessors for Australia*, also founded by Paul Collins and pioneered by Noel Bell, one of the church elders.

However, in 1973 the church purchased an office building to house all that was happening. With this and the undermining of the founding vision and leadership of Paul Collins, by 1975 the ministry was pushed into a financial crisis. What was one moment a highly catalytic ministry impacting the spiritual climate of a city, with an unquestioned ripple-effect across the nation, was in another moment self-destructing! While the church in some measure survived, it never recovered momentum, nor fulfilled its destiny.

As junior team members, David and Jenny found themselves on the street, without a job and without a ministry. David sold life insurance for a living and Jenny became a receptionist for an architectural firm. For another five years they stayed with the ship under different leadership. The founding vision, anointing, and momentum were lost prompting David to ask many questions.

Increasingly dissatisfied with a more traditional Pentecostal ethos under the new leadership, the decade came to a close with an unsolicited invitation. This came from **Howard Carter**, a Baptist pastor also from New Zealand, who was associated with *Christian Faith Centre* and Paul Collins, but had moved to the Blue Mountains with the ministry of *Logos Foundation*.

Paul Collins had founded this ministry and brought it to Australia from New Zealand in 1969 where it had been influential in spreading the Charismatic Renewal across the traditional denominations. Its main foci were renewal conferences, seminars,

and publishing.

The Second Decade: Expansion (1981-1990)

The farewell from Sydney was 23rd March 1980, David and Jenny's Wedding Anniversary. They built a home in the **Blue Mountains** where Logos Foundation was headquartered, lived in it for five weeks and promptly moved to **Perth**, Western Australia with Howard Carter and a team to plant a new work.

Logos Bible School, Perth, 1981

Howard's invitation the previous year was to be mentored by him. He had initially come into relationship with [Bob Mumford](#) and then in 1976 with [Ern Baxter](#) from *Christian Growth Ministries* based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Howard sat on the international council of the [Shepherding Movement](#) providing apostolic leadership in both the Asia-Pacific region and areas of North America. The invitation was to spend one year with him in Perth and then relocate with him to Vancouver. This open door was the stuff of dreams come true. Additionally, through Ern Baxter, the ministry developed a close association with [R. J. Rushdoony](#) and the [Reconstruction Movement](#), bringing him to Australia for conferences and as a star witness for Christian school court cases. Additionally, during the 1980's, out of its commitment to Christ's lordship over all spheres of life, **Logos Foundation** launched successful campaigns into the public square, defeating the Australian Labor government's **secular-humanist Bill of Rights and national ID card**, as statist intrusions upon historic civil liberties. Logos Foundation also published R. J. Rushdoony's book, [The Atheism of the Early Church](#), as the fruit of his conferences in Australia. Also, in association with *Christian Growth Ministries* and *New Wine Magazine*, Logos Foundation's magazine, **Restore**, became the largest Christian magazine in Australia at the time, disseminating the teachings of Bob Mumford, Ern Baxter, Derek Prince, Charles Simpson, Don Basham, and Rousas Rushdoony. As mentioned before, the magazine was instrumental Australia-wide in promoting **Christ's lordship over all spheres of life** and cultural engagement by Christians.

These men, among others, were the heroes of the Renewal throughout the 1970's and 1980's. The [Shepherding Movement](#), while flawed and highly controversial, was motivated by a genuine search for an authentic Christianity, gathering an amazing and unprecedented groundswell. It provided a generation an opportunity to experiment with a more radical **lifestyle of discipleship**. It was an attempt to free Christianity of the enculturated reductions of a more traditional and consumerist religion. Integral to this was the restoration of the *ecclesia* as a covenant community. However, with its emphasis on delegated authority and pastoral accountability the movement was open to abuse. Spiritual hunger, meteoric success, mixed motives and the inexperience of new leaders all coalesced to form a dangerous mix. Many of God's people were spiritually abused with fallout that continues to this day (For a fuller analysis see [Christianity in Crisis: A Personal Journey; The Shepherding Movement: Controversy & Charismatic Ecclesiology](#), by S. David Moore).

Logos staff, Blue Mountains, 1982

David and Jenny were not exempt. What began as a warm invitation to be mentored by a senior leader became a cold and manipulative relationship. Within a short while they were manoeuvred to the periphery both relationally and functionally. The cold comfort was that this became increasingly the pattern for several other prophetically wired leaders within the ministry.

Logos Bible School, Vancouver, 1985

From being a fulltime staff member David found himself on the margins selling life insurance again to support a young family, but without the Lord's release to leave the movement. With the 'help' of those in the authority structure over them they searched their hearts for the 'fatal flaw' in their characters that caused such divine resistance. Darkness and a heavy despair blanketed their lives. For another eight years they remained faithful, including the selling of their home to fund a return to Bible School. This time it was a Leadership School raised up by the *Shepherding Movement* in **Vancouver**. With a three-month-old and an eighteen-month-old in arms they flew to Canada with high hopes.

On their return to Australia, however, David went back to life insurance building a business for the third time from scratch (ultimately he will return to the insurance industry a fourth time when they relocate to Queensland in 1987). In addition, while supporting his young family he laid the groundwork for restarting *Logos Bible College* in the **Blue Mountains** and in addition delivering half the teaching load. He continued in this for the next five years.

Logos Bible School, Blue Mountains, 1987

During this time he was asked by Howard Carter to come back on staff. Upon selling his insurance agency to free himself and signing a contract not to re-enter the insurance industry in that locality he was told there was no money for his appointment. The next week another staff member was put on.

The wisdom writer aptly says that, "*Hope deferred makes the heart sick*". David by this time had been promoted or demoted in his leadership roles no less than five times. Finally, in frustration he gathered several of his peers who were in senior leadership in the movement to ask their advice, the response of one being, "*If the call hasn't come to pass by now it never will.*" It was now 1989—seventeen years after the initial call.

At the same time David began to dialogue with the 'shepherd' over him in the structure concerning some of the shepherding practices. This continued until 1990 when through a set of providential circumstances, including several 'words of knowledge' and amazing 'coincidences' Howard Carter was exposed for a twenty-year pattern of immorality. In consultation with Ern Baxter he was publicly stood down by the local leadership team and was taken from this life twelve months to the day with seven tumours on the brain.

Within three months of Howard Carter being exposed and stood down David received an unsolicited phone call from **Melbourne**, Victoria. It was an invitation to raise up a ministry training college for a Pentecostal denomination.

Another decade closed with another move.

The Third Decade: Focusing (1991-2000)

Pacific College of Theology, Melbourne, 1992

January 1991 saw David and Jenny with their young family arrive in **Melbourne** to serve with Christian Revival Crusade (CRC), a home grown Pentecostal movement founded in the 1940's. David's brief was to raise up a state ministry training college.

The very first CRC State Council Meeting attended by David was not a positive one. In fact, it dissolved into a factional debate between state and national interests. Unfortunately for David the issue was the training college—his job! It was deferred for a year and so David and Jenny survived by licking stamps and filling jiffy bags for a year. They serviced the CRC mail-order Video Bible College. Finally, after that year the movement presented seven students for a full-time one year training programme which David facilitated during which he received an invitation to join the pastoral team of one of their leading churches; thus, their relocation to the beautiful Mornington Peninsula on the south eastern edge of greater Melbourne.

However, by 1993 it became evident that a dysfunctional situation had existed in the leadership dynamics of the church for some time. With David's presence in the mix, plus a significant outpouring of the Spirit, the awkward peace was jolted. Apart from human frailty and issues of control a clear ministry values conflict between *programme* and *presence* emerged.

Peninsula City Church, Melbourne, 1997

This continued for another five years, finally ending in David's forced resignation of January 2000.

The irony of the situation was that while this division was occurring in David and Jenny's own backyard David was being used to catalyse pastoral unity across the nation. Starting in 1994 he had drawn together a strategic gathering of senior ministry leaders from across Melbourne with a common heart for relationship and unity in the larger body of Christ.

From these beginnings, in 1996 they launched ***Pastors' Prayer Summits*** across six of Australia's major cities. These were a four-day no-agenda **citywide gathering of pastors and spiritual leaders** to seek the face of God. Hundreds of pastors from more than twenty denominations were deeply impacted with annual summits still continuing in many of the cities ten years later.

Even so, with David's pastoral resignation in 2000 a shift was signalled. With leadership tensions also emerging in the

Australian pastors prayer movement, in consultation with his associate [Terry Dirks](#) of [International Renewal Ministries](#) (Multnomah Seminary, Portland, Oregon), David also resigned his leadership with pastors prayer summits and his citywide roles in 2000.

Another watershed at the end of another decade!

The Fourth Stage: Fulfilment (2001-current)

Melbourne, 2004

This became their darkest hour. David and Jenny were dislocated from their church, ministry, livelihood, and friends. While the financial settlement from the church was generous they carried some ministry debt personally which in time had its effect. They went into financial melt-down and survival mode. For five years they were laid low. Despite knocking on several doors nothing opened.

However, through a providential connection with a consultant/coach they took time to refocus on the original call, tracing their time-line, noting the formative events and crises, decisions made, and values proven by those decisions. Through this and the many prophetic words over their lives they were able to focus and articulate clearly their life-assignment. The confusing 'Babel' of circumstances, the many perplexing twists and turns of the road began to make sense. They were not crazy, or fatally flawed after all! God had called them. He had sovereignly overseen the journey to work deep within them something of Himself. And thus they had, in this new phase of destiny fulfilment, finally become in some measure the message they were to proclaim.

This enabled David to put pen to paper, writing the book, [Snakes in the Temple](#). At the same time their paths crossed with [Marc Dupont](#), a prophetic minister instrumental in the [Toronto Blessing](#). Marc became a friend, kindly introducing David to the publishers and writing the foreword for the book. While immediately accepted for publication, even this was not released for another year. In 2002, soon after finishing the book's first draft, another strategic development was David's entry into internet publishing, releasing fresh teaching articles. Apart from this they remained in a posture of 'waiting for the Lord'. This was done in what became known jokingly as the 'bat cave', David's study. Only one faithful intercessor prayed with David and Jenny throughout the whole five years. All that could be done was to wait for the release.

This finally came in February 2004 with David and Jenny miraculously convening the [Open Heavens Over Australia Conference](#) with six supporting churches and the simultaneous release of the book. The conference was held at the convention centre of Melbourne Park, home of the Australian Tennis Open, with people gathering from every state of Australia, and also from New Zealand, Africa, and USA.

Epilogue: Into the Future

Cape Schanck, 2011

From 2004 until 2010 there was a convergence of lives and vision to where David and Jenny found themselves surrounded by a new team. Prophetic people, intercessors, pastoral people, creative people, and ministries of support were drawn together for a new season.

Over that time *Leadershift* connected hundreds of leaders and influencers electronically and through regular gatherings, with a core team emerging. *The Gathering* (Melbourne) was also pioneered to prototype an 'organic' expression of the church of a city. Multiple schools/seminars/prophetic worship days were convened, and numerous conferences and church services addressed, covering six states. A prototype 'simple church', *The Vine*, enjoyed the journey together during the same season and an estimated 15-20,000 people continued to be reached through regular internet teachings.

Daniel's MPhil graduation, Oxford, 2014

Through four decades God has been patiently moulding a man and a woman for destiny fulfilment—to embody a particular message. Through divine delay, various disappointments, and tested relationships they have been required to lay their 'Isaac' – their ministry – on the altar and trust God for the outcome.

In the same period God was also at work with the family. Both Daniel and Virginia began to find their true north. Virginia moved to England to train with Youth With A Mission (YWAM) and then staffed and reached into India and Europe for the next several years before returning to Australia to pursue theological studies. And Daniel also relocated to England to pursue studies in Medieval English at Durham – where he found his future wife, Charlotte – and then to Oxford for his MPhil. He is currently a Clarendon Scholar at Oxford, writing his DPhil dissertation.

Cultural impasse of the West

Melbourne, 2016

2012 signalled a season of new alignment as David and Jenny Orton continued to pursue God and his call on their lives. As various projects came to a conclusion they were released to **refocus on the message**. This has taken much reading and reviewing not only their personal journey but also more significantly, the state of the **Western church and culture**.

The current impasse that the West finds itself in, politically and economically, is merely the reflection of its deeper cultural and intellectual gridlock. And underlying the latter is the loss of its own soul as an historically Christian culture. It has suicidally rejected its own identity.

Virginia's Graduation, St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, 2016

Defecting from the living God, she has fallen at the feet of the colossus of **Enlightenment Humanism** (includes pantheism, existentialism and scientism). The road back demands not only a “rending of the heart” but also a “renewing of the mind”. For Western culture to flourish again it will require a Christian intellectual renaissance—a learning to “think the thoughts of God after him” (Johannes Kepler).

To this end *Lifemessenger*, as a teaching ministry, is refocusing. Feel free to hit the [Message](#) and [Mandate](#) to discover more.

Home @ Cape Schanck, 45th Wedding Anniversary, 23 March 2019

After 5 years of theological studies, **Virginia** Orton joined the team in 2016 to take the ministry into the next phase of the journey. She is now a PhD candidate with Whitefield Theological Seminary in the USA and will pursue a dissertation on the environmental crisis considered through a covenant lens. It is entitled, *Pollution in Paradise*, and will be published as a book.

David is also pursuing a doctoral dissertation with Whitefield Theological Seminary, toward book publication, entitled, *The Blind Servant: Re-envisioning the West as God's Servant—A Blueprint for Civilisational Renewal*. He is also currently writing a commentary on Romans, entitled, *God's Manifesto for Paradise Restored*.

Read more: [Christianity in Crisis: A Personal Journey](#)