

DO YOU WANT TO BE LESS ORDINARY? KARL MARTIN USES SOUP, SWORDS AND TRIANGLES TO SHOW YOU HOW

Let me tell you about a soup company. It's called Elephant Juice and it is run from a very cool, 1940s Citroen van. The soup is fantastic, but the philosophy behind it is kingdom class: every soup bought buys a meal for a child in Kenya. Elephant Juice Founder, JP, is a member of our church family and his 'start-up' was dreamt up in a 24/7 prayer room lock-in. JP was a lawyer with a great career plotted out for him, but God got hold of his heart for justice and his head for business. At no stage did JP ask for permission, he just did it.

Two swords

Now let me take you to a moment in Israel's back catalogue – 1 Samuel 14. The Philistines have invaded the land and are holding the nation in bondage. They control all the power and, cunningly, all the blacksmiths. This was so that any equipment that needed sharpening – ploughshares, axes, swords – had to be sharpened by the enemy.

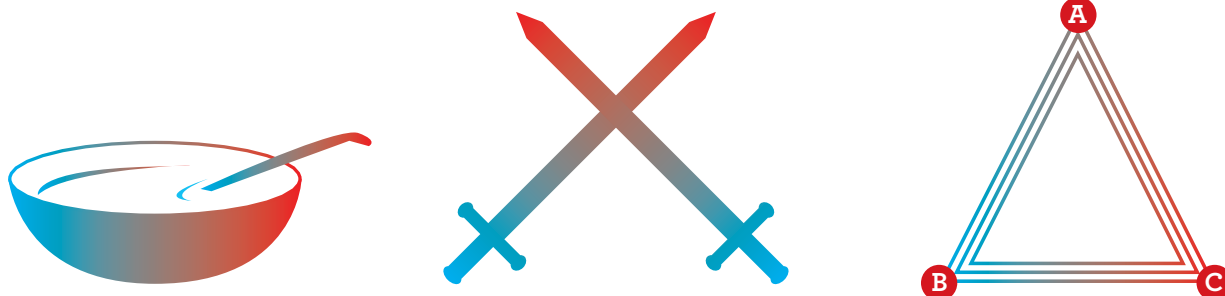
Israel has just two swords – Saul's and Jonathan's. Saul takes himself and his sword and sits under a pomegranate tree with his leaders – presumably to talk about how desperate things are, how good things once were and what might be done about the situation. Jonathan, with the other sword, takes to a hill. He defeats the enemy and restores the nation. Jonathan speculates on the power of God and finds that God is able. He doesn't ask permission, he just acts.

Take a hill

I wonder if it might be time for the Church to take a hill or two. Time to stop huddling around ecclesiastical pomegranate trees, moaning about our lack of swords and talking about what the Church could look like. Time to stop waiting for permission and to start to speculate, to stand upon the power and grace of God, to get out of our buildings, embrace the kingdom of God and become like Jesus. But *without* permission, isn't that dangerous? It could be, but we already have all the permission in the world, all the commission of our Heavenly Father to go and make disciples, to bear his image, to participate in his mission and to love his people.

Permission granted

So what are we waiting for? Are we telling ourselves 'they won't let me' or 'they won't like it', when in truth we are just fearful? Inhibition is infinitely more limiting and suffocating than prohibition. There is a time to sit under a tree and plan, but I don't believe that is now. The battle is being lost and the name of God is being dishonoured. What is needed is a generation of Jonathans – men and women who will not wait for permission to do what is already the will of the Father.



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Make way

There has been a tendency in the contemporary Church to look for strong leadership. Unfortunately, strong leadership has sometimes warped into strong control, with senior leaders insisting on attending all meetings and having all decisions passed through them. But this monopolises vision, shrinks potential, chokes creativity and frustrates emerging leaders. I have had nothing directly to do with the most innovative and redemptive enterprises in our church family. All I have done, through the Lord, is to provide space and inspiration, and, when it's needed, a little encouragement.

Bold hearts

Our missional communities are led by men and women of courage with full freedom to run with the dream that God has placed in their hearts. Groups like Soul Surfer with their VW Camper, living the Kingdom among the surf community in Scotland. Square Wholes running ceilidhs among adults with learning difficulties. Centurion loving our armed forces and communicating something of God's love. These and so many others all came out of the bold hearts of Jesus' followers. This is a call to leadership of a different kind – Kingdom leadership. It's a call to boldness, to take a stand, take up your sword, and take a hill.

Kingdom entrepreneurs

We stand in a long line of bold sons and daughters. German monk Martin Luther's hill was a corrupt church and his stand was to nail 95 points of protest to a church door in Wittenberg. Italian preacher Girolamo Savonarola's hill was an abusive government in pre-Reformation Florence, the evil of the Medici family, and a stake. Martin Luther King Jr's hill was Washington DC, a dream and an assassin's bullet. God is drawn to courage. This world needs Kingdom entrepreneurs who use what is given to them and make a difference. We need the creativity, integrity and courage that God's children bring to the table.

Triangulation point

How do you find your hill? It's not rocket science. God's will for your life is surprisingly broad, fully empowering, and highly dynamic. The Holy Spirit has a surprising way of making it clear. You have to find the triangulation point between:

- A Your greatest complaint.** Vision flows out of complaint. God will break your heart for something you believe is wrong.
- B The world's greatest need.** You work it out.
- C Your greatest gift.** If you don't know what this is, ask!

This will set in motion a series of divine events. God gives you a complaint, something you oppose, something that needs to be better. Then, if you ask, he will give you a picture of what could be – a vision. If you press into this, he will give you a plan of how it could be – a strategy. At some stage, the vision will appear to die. This process is absolutely essential for reminding you of whose vision it is and for whose glory. Then it will come back. And if you ask and work and cast this vision, he will surround you with a team who can make it happen.

Getting ruined

This pattern and rhythm is essential. As we push deeper, embracing the Kingdom in this world, we are constantly disturbed by the Spirit in us. We'll jar, grate and grind up against value systems and practices that grieve the heart of God. Bold men and women cast such a compelling vision that it eclipses fear and releases the dreams that God has placed in the hearts of his followers. This process will ruin you for the ordinary. It will propel you into extraordinary Kingdom living. And in turn, you will inspire this process in others.

Doing it is doing it. Talking about it is talking about it.



Karl Martin

Karl Martin is Senior Pastor of Central Church, Edinburgh. His heart is to see the Church wake up and become the people of God that they have been called to be – passionate, relevant, creative, different, missional and alive.

Listen to Karl's talks from this year's Retreat to Advance in the Free Teaching section of www.new-wine.org/resources