Destiny Image Books by Corey Russell

The Glory Within: The Interior Life and the Power of Speaking in Tongues
ANCIENT PATHS

REDISCOVERING DELIGHT IN THE WORD OF GOD

COREY RUSSELL
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Daniel Paravisini: I want to thank you for running with me and getting down everything the Lord is releasing. I couldn’t have done this without you. You have been a true “Baruch” to me.

Jane Harris: You are amazing. Your faithful diligence, servant heart, glad spirit, and ability to labor with me to bring forth this material is truly amazing. Thank you for everything.
ENDORSEMENTS

I believe, without question, that the greatest need in this hour is the knowledge of God imparted into us through times of long and loving meditation in the Word. Corey Russell, in this book, awakens us to the hour we are living in, and then with profound clarity and authority equips us with a vision and tools to go deep in the Word of God. Corey is a faithful man of prayer and the Word, and this book comes out of countless hours in God's presence. It is a must for those who want to go deeper in God.

Mike Bickle
Pastor at International House of Prayer, Kansas City
Author of Passion for Jesus and Growing in the Prophetic

The greatest necessity of the human heart is the ability to hear God. This is the foundation of personal transformation and corporate revival. Throughout redemptive history, God has sent His messengers to call for a return to the precepts of the Word, a return to hearing—illuminating the way to experience abundant life in the Scriptures. Corey Russell’s wisdom and practical insight flow from a life rooted in meditation, and his message
concerning the need for fresh encounter in the Word of God has never been more relevant than it is today.

**Allen Hood**
Associate Director, International House of Prayer,
Kansas City;
President of International House of Prayer University

Rarely have I read a book that I feel is so prophetically relevant. *Ancient Paths: Rediscovering Delight in the Word of God* is a clarion call back to the Word of God, to the Word who is God. Those who know their God, as He has revealed Himself through His Word, will emerge as the leaders and the lights in the hour of crisis our world is facing. I strongly urge everyone to read this book.

**Stacey Campbell**
Author of *Payers of the Bible*

For those longing for a deeper life in the Word of God, Corey Russell offers one of the most passionate, comprehensive, and practical treatises in contemporary Christian literature on spiritually engaging Scripture. In an age when hearing God’s Word is all but lost, Mr. Russell systematically challenges us to face this crisis on a personal level. In doing so, he confronts our excuses and lethargy while at the same time exhorting us to join him on the humbling spiritual journey to find Jesus Christ in the pages of holy canon. This is a must read.

**Charles A. Metteer, Ph.D.**
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The very first verse that Corey Russell highlights in this book is Jeremiah 6:10, and God’s pain over not being able to speak to anyone because their ears are uncircumcised. I can so identify with Jeremiah and his generation as I feel an even greater crisis mounting in the nations, and my own inability to connect and hear Him like I want. I’m finding myself crying out to God like never before to hear, to perceive, and to connect with His heart. This longing has grown over decades, and has expressed itself in many ways (lots of broken cisterns, see Jer. 2:13), but the longer I’m on this journey, the more I’m realizing how simple, and yet profound the answer is. It sounds so cliché, but the answer to our plight of deafness and my own gnawing pain to hear Him and to discern the hour correctly has been boiled down to one thing: long and loving meditation on the Word of God.

Nothing has changed my life like taking my Bible, closing my eyes, and singing and speaking those phrases back to God. Those words have changed me, convicted me, confronted me, resisted me, washed me, cleansed me, freed me, empowered me, delivered me, and have set me on a course for the rest of my life.
God’s words get in my mouth and I speak those words over my heart, I’m changed. It’s bit-by-bit, day-by-day, but I wake up 15 years later and begin to realize that I’m a different person.

This is not a new discovery, but has been the consistent cry and experience of all of God’s friends throughout history. We are hearing so much in our day of the “new move” that will shake nations and bring in the revival (and I want it!), but I’m truly coming to the conclusion that the only way forward for our generation is to go back, to go way back, and rediscover how our fathers of the faith found Him, and live accordingly in this hour. The title of this book, Ancient Paths, encapsulates this reality better than any phrase or verse I can think of.

I’ve known and run alongside Corey Russell and his family at IHOP-KC for the last 12 years, and in that time I’ve witnessed a man who embodies the pages of this book. He is a man who’s gripped with the urgency of the hour, and gripped even more with a love affair with the Word of God. He has found a place of true joy, delight, and fascination in the Word, and after reading through this book, I’m convinced that the very passion that he has will be imparted to you as you read it. Not only does he stir up within you a passion for the Word, but he also gives so many profound, practical ways to meditate and to connect with God through the Word. Corey has such an ability to equip this generation in the deeper life, and, without question, this book is a must if you seek to go there.

Misty Edwards
At the beginning of human history, in the Garden of Eden, God made it clear: Eat from this tree and you live; eat from that tree and you will die (see Gen. 2:15-17). His words to Adam and Eve were not suggestions or ideas; they were the difference between life and death. When God called Abram to leave his father’s house, his response determined whether or not he would experience eternal separation from God. His life was dependent on his response to the call of God (see Gen. 12:1-3). In the wilderness, God made it clear to the children of Israel that the only way to inherit the promises given to their forefather Abraham was through learning to live by every word that came from the mouth of God (see Deut. 8:3). The Word of God isn’t casual and it isn’t an option. It is everything.

To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Indeed their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot give heed. Behold, the word of the Lord is a reproach to them; they have no delight in it (Jeremiah 6:10).
God has always been looking for those to whom He can speak, those who will hear Him and live. When Jeremiah wrote these words, Jerusalem was on the brink of destruction. The Babylonian invasion was around the corner, yet the people of the day were blind to their peril. A century earlier the northern tribes of Israel were defeated and dispersed in a season of judgment, but Judah was miraculously spared. Because of this previous divine intervention, the people were convinced that God would spare them again. They were confident in their nationalistic pride while the religious leaders of the day bolstered their confidence further by declaring that God would defend His Temple.

In this context, God went on a search throughout the nation, looking for someone He could speak to and who could speak for Him. God visited and apprehended Jeremiah with a message that was completely different from his contemporaries. This young man from nowhere boldly stated that the people must tremble and rend their hearts. He warned them not to misinterpret the season and mistake God’s mercy for indifference. God wasn’t overlooking their sin; He was asking them one final time to honestly confront their sin. If they did not, an army was coming from the north as an agent of divine discipline.

The prophet Jeremiah highlighted the crisis of the hour (see Jer. 6:10). He told the people that their inability to hear God and correctly interpret the season was due to the fact that they did not delight in His word. Though they assented to the spiritual laws and reforms being implemented by their leaders, in their hearts they really did not want to hear what God had to say. There was a lack of the word of the Lord in the land. It is interesting to realize that out of all the things Jeremiah could have emphasized in the hour of crisis, he emphasized the people’s lack of delight in the prophetic word of the Lord. They did not love God’s word, they had not learned to recognize His speech, and they were not vulnerable and tender in their response to Him. In fact, the word
of the Lord had been completely forgotten and lost. That was the greatest crisis of Jeremiah’s day, and I am convinced it is the crisis of our day as well.

THE CRISIS TODAY

The book you are holding in your hands is not primarily about giving you tools to make your quiet times more bearable. It is about the rediscovery of hearing, delighting in, trembling before, and obeying the Word of God. It is a matter of life and death. I believe we are living in days similar to those described in 1 Samuel 3:1, where it says “the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation.” In that context God raised up a young boy who heard His voice. The Bible says that God “let none of his [Samuel’s] words fall to the ground” (1 Sam. 3:19b). Years ago the Lord spoke to me in a prophetic encounter and said that He was about to rip the feeding tube out of the mouth of the church and teach us how to eat His Word. I believe the current political turmoil and economic shaking in our nation is part of this process. Though it is clear what we are experiencing now is only the beginning of a much greater crisis, the government and the church continue to assert that we should maintain business as usual, and that peace and prosperity are right around the corner.

What many fail to realize is that the last decades of the 20th century—a period in our nation marked by a booming economy and a comparatively peaceful political landscape—produced a new generation of believers who find themselves unequipped for the current crisis. The church today is filled with people who are spiritually starving while “stuffed” with every physical comfort. We have fattened bodies and famished souls. Our hearts are dry, broken, defeated, and deteriorating. Many of our marriages are in shambles. Our children are addicted to video games, movies, and entertainment, and they have no desire for God. Our lives
are consumed by the demands of work and the need to pay for the stuff we have accumulated. We have neglected our calling and failed to respond to the simplicity of God’s word: Do this and live. Do that and die.

The crisis of our day is the product of many factors, but the one I want to highlight throughout this book is the loss of intimate communion with the Word of God. This fundamental breakdown within the church has now permeated society, and as a result the Word is no longer held as the absolute truth. We, as a people, have not come underneath the Word and have asserted our own ideas, opinions, and desires above God. The question Pilate asked Jesus 2,000 years ago has become the question of the hour: “What is truth?” (John 18:38). The belief that God’s Word is true and provides the absolute standard of righteousness and morality is no longer widely held. Truth has become a matter of individual ideology and preference, subject only to political correctness. And those of us in the church who continue to affirm the truth of the Word often fail to exhibit that truth in our lives. We preach truth without conforming to it; our values, thoughts, and actions have not been changed and transformed by what we preach. Therefore the power of Scripture is being undermined in our own lives due to our ability to speak the truth without living it. Art Katz describes this phenomenon in his book, *The Spirit of Truth*:

> It would be a grave mistake to think that quoting scriptures correctly or subscribing to the right doctrines wholly constitutes walking in truth. A man may be saying all the right words, yet be contradicting his words by the insincere manner in which he says them. You hear him, and while your intellect is saying “true,” your spirit is saying “false.” It is possible to know the truth yet not walk in it, and the truth is really in us, and we in it, only to the degree that we actually walk in it.²
This is not only a secular and personal crisis; it is also an ecclesiastical and pastoral crisis. In many denominations, truths that have been upheld for centuries by faithful believers are being questioned and the Word of God is being twisted to fulfill human desires. This trend is evident in many of our nation’s seminaries, which have become a primary battleground in the war against the authority and truth of Scripture.

The place that is meant to prepare the next generation of leaders is in many places stripping them of their faith and sending them out with stuffed minds and atheistic hearts. A good friend of mine likes to say, “We are living in a day and age where people are confused [about] the deity of Christ but completely clear on the ordination of homosexuals.” During his years at school, he was taught that the Bible was merely a history of man’s attempt to understand God, a document that contained kernels of truth; but it was not absolute truth. Increasingly, in academic and clerical circles, the Bible is being forced to bend to human desires and individual lifestyle choices. The secularization of our culture is creeping into the church at ever-increasing rates.

Due to the loss of delight in the Word of God, we as the church have invented new ways to capture people’s attention. We have replaced the power of the Word with a convenience driven, seeker-friendly church culture. Don’t get me wrong—I enjoy a quick Sunday service that lets me out early so I can spend more time with my family. But the truth is that there are many believers who have little heart-connection with the Lord. The entirety of their religious life is relegated to a 45-minute service once a week, while they spend the other 6 days, 23 hours, and 15 minutes of the week tragically disconnected from the life of the Holy Spirit and the power of God’s Word.

At its core, this 45-minute expression of Christianity worships the god of convenience. Again, I like convenience—I like wireless Internet, I like good coffee, I like drive-through meals—but when
the culture and mentality of convenience seeps into the church it produces selfish, lazy believers. Congregations live vicariously off of the man or woman in the pulpit, and individuals no longer feel personally responsible for deepening their relationship with God and growing in their knowledge of His Word. Sadly, the same realities are true among the shepherds. Many of us in leadership have spent more energy and resources on the expansion of our spheres of influence than on the expansion of our hearts.

The crisis related to the Word of God has touched the core of our hearts. The culture of convenience has produced a generation that is enslaved to instant gratification and to comfort: we refuse to invest in anything that costs us time and energy. Our souls are addicted to the things of the world, and because of this the chaos and traffic of the culture has permeated our internal lives. Materialism has drowned and crowded out the still, small voice. Our hearts are surrounded on every side with images, voices, and busyness that have choked the Word in our hearts. Jesus said, “Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful” (Matt. 13:22). As a result, we have lost the ability to hear and the simplicity of delighting in the Word of God.

Faith rests on our ability to hear God’s Word (see Rom. 10:17). As we lose our ability to hear, we begin to fall into unbelief. Stephen Charnock coined the phrase “practical atheism” to describe believers who verbally assent to the existence of God but whose hearts have ceased to love, believe, and follow Him. In Psalm 14:1, the psalmist declares, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” Notice that the fool doesn’t say it in front of other people. Rather, he says it in his heart—by the way he lives, by what he does with his time and his money. He may outwardly confess God, but inwardly he is an atheist. This is, in my opinion, the primary reason for the absence of living faith in our lives, our
families, and our expression in the earth as the body of Christ. We may have all the facts and statistics down, but the power of Christianity is found when the information makes the journey from the mind to the heart. The ultimate aim is the impact on our hearts, which then transforms what we do with our time, money, and energy. The Word is meant to abide in us and transform us from the inside out.

**THE SOLUTION TO THE CRISIS**

Hans Urs von Balthasar\(^5\) says in his wonderful book on prayer, Harassed by life, exhausted, we look about us for somewhere to be quiet, to be genuine, a place of refreshment. We yearn to restore our spirits in God, to simply let go in him and gain new strength to go on living. But we fail to look for him where he is waiting for us, where he is to be found: in his Son, who is his Word. Or else we seek for God because there are a thousand things we want to ask him, and imagine that we cannot go on living unless they are answered. We inundate him with problems, with demands for information, for clues, for an easier path, forgetting that in his Word he has given us the solution to every problem and all the details we are capable of grasping in this life. We fail to listen where God speaks: where God’s Word rang out in the world once for all, sufficient for all ages, inexhaustible. Or else we think that God’s word has been heard on earth for so long that by now it is almost used up, that it is about time for some new word, as if we had the right to demand one. We fail to see that it is we ourselves who are used up and alienated, whereas the word resounds with the same vitality and freshness as ever; it is just as near to us as
it always was. “The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart” (Rom 10:8).  

My desire in this book is to speak to those who, if they are honest with themselves, admit that the Word of God is one of the most frustrating and boring places in the world. I want to take you on a journey from the pain of barrenness into the joy of breakthrough by sharing keys that will unlock the Word of God until it becomes a place of delight, pleasure, fascination, correction, and transformation. The book you are holding is about recovering our love for the Word of God and rediscovering the power of Scripture and its impact on the human soul.

Jeremiah the prophet indicts the people and says that the word of the Lord is not a delight to them (see Jer. 6:10). Then, several verses later, he calls them to the ancient paths:

Thus says the Lord: “Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths [ancient paths, ESV], where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16).

It is clear from the context of this passage that the “ancient paths” refer to the simplicity of delighting in the Word of God. In every hour of crisis, God calls His people back to love of the Word; He calls them to silence the other voices in their lives and cultivate hearing hearts. And though it has been 2,500 years since Jeremiah cried out to his generation, the ancient paths remain the clearest solution to the crisis of our day. The only way forward is to go back. Just as the fathers of our faith sought God through their simple lives, so we too must seek Him. We have lost the inner sanctum, the place of communion where we can hear God, and so we must reclaim the ability to withdraw inwardly and, as A.W. Tozer says, “meet God in adoring silence.” Only then will we experience the restoration of our hearts, our lives, and our
ministries, and reclaim the ability to rightly discern the hour we are living in.

The question we now face is this: How do we find these ancient paths and return to the place of communion, the place of hearing? The answer is found in Jeremiah 6:16. We are given two clear commands in this verse: stand and ask. Standing places us in a position of active determination. It requires strength to resist the current of the culture and the pull of our own nature. When we stand before God, we cease looking for answers within ourselves. Instead, we begin to turn to Him for answers. We must take the time to stop in the midst of our crowded lives and ask God what these ancient paths look like in our 21st-century Western context. Asking places us in a position of humility before the Lord. It brings us to our knees in prayer and requires us to acknowledge that we will not succeed in our own strength.

If we stand and ask for the ancient paths, the promise is that we will find rest for our souls. The rest described by Jeremiah is not a siesta or a break from real life—it is a place of peace in the midst of the storm. True peace is a rare thing. We are surrounded by hundreds of reasons to be anxious. Our lives are driven by the demands of work, finances, and relationships—each more stressful than the next. And when our circumstances are momentarily peaceful, we are faced with the restlessness of our souls. This is why supernatural peace is the greatest need of the hour. When our souls are at rest, we are able to sleep in the stern of the boat though it is tossed by the wind and waves (see Mark 4:35-40). We are able to hear God clearly regardless of the trials and pressures we face. In the midst of personal and national crises, the ability to rest will be our greatest refuge and anchor. This is why it is so critical to seek the ancient paths.

There have been many seasons where the Lord has used Jeremiah 6:16 to call me back to the place of hearing Him. I remember the first time I experienced the desire to retreat from a
crowded life, a crowded soul, and a culture that was choking the Word in my own heart. I stumbled upon the Desert Fathers—men (and women) who retreated into the wilderness of Egypt in the third and fourth centuries in order to escape the increasing synchronization of the church and culture. In his book *The Wisdom of the Desert* Thomas Merton describes the belief of these early contemplatives:

> Society...was regarded by them as a shipwreck from which each single individual man had to swim for his life.... These were men who believed that to let oneself drift along, passively accepting the tenets and values of what they knew as society, was purely and simply a disaster.⁸

The parallels between their day and ours struck me: after centuries of persecution, Christianity was finally given political approval and protection by the Roman Emperor Constantine. While this might sound like good news, to the Desert Fathers it was cause for concern. They understood the dangers of integrating faith and culture. They knew that, at its core, Christianity was at war with the ways of the world, and if the external expression of that war was removed, believers would be lulled into a false sense of peace, eventually falling into compromise. As Henri Nouwen states in the introduction to his book on the Desert Fathers, “If the world was no longer the enemy of the Christian, then the Christian had to become the enemy of the dark world. The flight to the desert was the way to escape a tempting conformity to the world.”⁹ And so these early contemplatives chose to purposefully seek out solitude and silence. They knew that by retreating to the wilderness, their hearts would be prepared to once again hear the Word of God.

When I first read about these men and women, it produced the desire within me to separate myself from the distractions of my own life. I realized that I desperately needed to internally change;
somehow I had to pull away from the tentacles of the culture that had ensnared my heart—the media, the music, the images, and the voices that daily surrounded me. As I learned more about the contemplative lifestyle pursued by the Desert Fathers, I realized that though my context was radically different from theirs, the heart realities produced through long and loving meditation on the Word of God were still available to me. And not only were they available—they were absolutely necessary.

We are in danger of drowning on the open sea, and God’s word is the rope ladder thrown down to us so that we can climb up into the rescuing vessel. It is the carpet, rolled out toward us so that we can walk along it to the Father’s throne.¹⁰

God’s Word is His invitation to be with Him where He is. From before the foundation of the world it has been His desire for us to be with Him, to know His heart, to experience His emotions, to be filled with His thoughts, to be transformed into His image, and to live in unity with Him. Beloved, the fulfillment of this desire is found in His Word. We’ve looked everywhere else—we are dry, tired souls and we don’t know where to find true transformation. But God has extended His invitation and the carpet is rolled out. Over and over in the Scriptures we see Him visit the thirsty souls and offer them water that will quench their deepest desires.¹¹

Today I believe the Lord is visiting our generation. He is alluring us and wooing us in this season to hear again, to come again, to believe again. The Lord is calling the dry, tired souls back to the place of rest. Jeremiah’s words are as alive today as they were thousands of years ago. We want to respond to his cry and begin to ask God for the ancient paths—for the paths of prayer, for the paths of the Word, and for the paths of silence, meditation, and contemplation. It is our desire to rediscover the place of inner
quiet where the Word of God can speak. We want to go on the journey of rediscovering the ability to hear.
Chapter 1: Ancient Paths

1. For the full narrative see Second Kings 18-19.


the existence and attributes of God (accessed February 15, 2012).

5. Hans Urs von Balthasar, along with the other Catholic writers and mystics quoted in this book, should be read with caution. While I do not agree with all of his theological positions, I do believe that the content I have chosen to highlight in this book carries valuable spiritual truths.


**Chapter 2: Jesus the Word**


About the Author

Corey Russell has served on the senior leadership team of the International House of Prayer (IHOP-KC) for the last 12 years. He is the Director of the Forerunner Program at the International House of Prayer University (IHOPU), discipling and training young preachers and leaders. He travels nationally and internationally, preaching on the themes of the Knowledge of God, Intercession, and the Forerunner Ministry. He resides in Kansas City with his wife, Dana, and their four children: Trinity, Mya, Hadassah, and Nash.

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