

## Families that Thrive

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### Getting Unstuck

We were both amused. I received a call from our daughter Jaime. She had just rented a U-Haul truck to move some things. As she drove, the entire truck was shaking. It reminded Jaime of a California earthquake. Needless to say, she wondered what the problem was. Finally, she noticed. She had failed to release the parking brake. When she did so, things were fine, and the truck ran smoothly.

Through the years, the Blackwells have learned that like Jaime's rental truck, relationships can struggle to get on the move. Worse, we can get stuck. Things can then get still worse if we don't know how to release that pesky brake. We know what it feels like when things are running smoothly, and we thrive when our relationships are "running on all cylinders." But when we're stuck in the quicksand of frustration and miscommunication, things can rapidly deteriorate.

How do we release the brake? How do we get unstuck?

Years ago, I read an important book by Joseph Jaworski, entitled *Synchronicity*. Learning from his experience, he made an important discovery: we can get unstuck and in sync with each other by shifting our thinking. The shifts are simple, and there are only three of them. The **first** shift involves recognizing that we're never at a dead end. We always have options. We aren't trapped. There is a way out and a way to get to our destination.

The **second** involves recognizing that the foundational constituent of life is relationships. This is true on every level—the quantum level (which is too small for us to sense), the macro level (that we can sense with eyes, ears, nose, hands, and mouth), and the cosmic level (which is too large to get our minds around). Everything that exists involves relationships. To put it another way, we are created *by* relationships, *for* relationships. In other words, relationships count. They are fundamental.

The **third** shift involves recognizing that we are all essential for what God wants to unfold in the world. There are things that God wants to unfold through each of us. Each of us is essential for the unfolding of God's cosmic order. You are just that important, and there are no exceptions.

This also means that our relationships are essential. Not only do you and I count, *we* count as well.

When Jaworski made these three shifts in his thinking, two things always followed. The first was that the right people gathered. The people who were supposed to be there for what God wanted to unfold through Jaworski would show up. The right people would get connected to each other. Essential relationships would form. The second thing that happened was that the right doors always opened. Moreover, Jaworski learned that we can recognize the open door and take the courage and will-power to walk through the opening.

We discovered that we could put Jaworski's insights into practice as a family. Like all of us, we Blackwells would get stuck from time to time. This usually happened when one or two of us started trying to force things to happen instead of opening ourselves to what was trying to emerge. On the negative side, we discovered that the

truck remained in park when we tried too hard to make things happen. There's a saying: "If it doesn't fit, force it!" It's funny, but it isn't true—at least, not for relationships. The paradox is that the harder we try, the worse things can become.

What helped us the most was to take the pressure off, to lighten up. We tried to allow things to unfold gently. Someone would then step forward and remind us that we are never at a dead end. Relationships are fundamental. And each of us is essential for what is supposed to happen.

It was then a matter of waiting in passive expectation. Invariably, the right people would begin to come together, and doors would open. And somewhere in that process, the parking brake would release, and we were on our way.