

CHAPTER TWO SUMMARY

Popeye People

If you haven't actually read this chapter, it's worth spending the time to read through. We'll summarize the points, but it is filled with stories that illustrate what it means to follow your holy discontent.

The American Red Cross is one of thousands of organizations that are volunteer-driven. People respond to disasters without receiving anything in return. They even volunteer for these high-risk, high-stakes endeavors joyfully!

Pursuing Our "Ought-ness"

"Martin Luther King Jr. became famous because of what he couldn't stand. A pastor by occupation, he wound up being one of the greatest volunteers the world has ever known. The racial oppression he saw all around him in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s ripped him apart. ... He wanted the lynching of black people to stop. He wanted segregation banished. He wanted justice to be served so that his kids could grow up in a different world than the one he was living in!

The day finally came when that which King *couldn't stand* simply got the best of him. The holy discontent he felt in the depth of his being brought him to the point where he must have said in the privacy of his own soul, "God, that's all I can stand. I can't stand any more." It was this Popeye moment that launched King's movement toward racial equality.

King lived the rest of his brief thirty-nine years with ravenous passion for seeing a new civilization ushered in - one characterized by nonviolence, freedom, and justice. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize at the University of Oslo in 1964 for his tireless efforts to that end, and during his acceptance speech, he said **"I refuse to accept that the 'is-ness' of a man's present nature makes him morally incapable of reaching up for the eternal 'ought-ness' that forever confronts him."** Friends, *this* is what it looks like to live from a place of holy discontent - where *ought-ness* simply overtakes *is-ness*." - *Holy Discontent*, p. 32

What would it take for each of us to leave a legacy like King's? Is his holy discontent yours? Can you not stand people being treated like second-class citizens because of something as trivial as skin color?

Hybels then gives another example of someone following their holy discontent: Mother Teresa. Before she was Mother Teresa, she was a

geography teacher in Calcutta. She'd walk by the poverty every day, until one day her "Popeye moment" got the best of her. ("That's all I can stand! I just can't stand this anymore!") She quit her job, rallied people, and began serving the poor.

Is your holy discontent inequality? Poverty? Kids who have no one to care for them? What hits you like nothing else? Sometimes a holy discontent is built in boredom - like growing up in a children's ministry that was irrelevant and boring and then wanting to do something different for the kids who are in church today.

What can't you stand?

Hybels gives examples of many ministries at Willow Creek that were built out of people's holy discontents. From people taking care of single moms' cars to caring for people with AIDS overseas, the ministry that flows from a holy discontent can and will look different for each person.

"Truly there's nothing more inspiring than a person who transforms something he just can't stand into the kind of positive energy that advances restoration in the world," he writes (p. 41).

When Hybels was speaking to a group of doctors, his talk on holy discontent connected with them as well. They were required to be at the meeting, and most didn't want to be there. But he led with a simple question: "How did you wind up in the field of medicine?" "I know about a dozen other professions that are a heck of a lot more lucrative and far less demanding than the one you are in. ... Why this profession?" He went on to talk about the holy discontent - a powerful inner force that made them want to help people - a force that's strong enough to sustain their work even today.

The story and ideas connected with the group of physicians. They were tuned in. He was bombarded with people after his talk who wanted to share the holy discontent that drove them to do what they're doing. From siblings with cancer to friends with Parkinson's, there was always some "Popeye moment" that drove these men and women to action. And when they tapped into that holy discontent once more, they became reenergized and refocused on their work and calling.

What can't you stand? "I hope that by now you know your answer to this all-important question, because you will never make as meaningful a contribution as when you operate from the energy of holy discontent."