

'Building Cathedrals' can be useful guide on life's journey

"Where there is no vision, the people perish." — Proverbs 29:18.

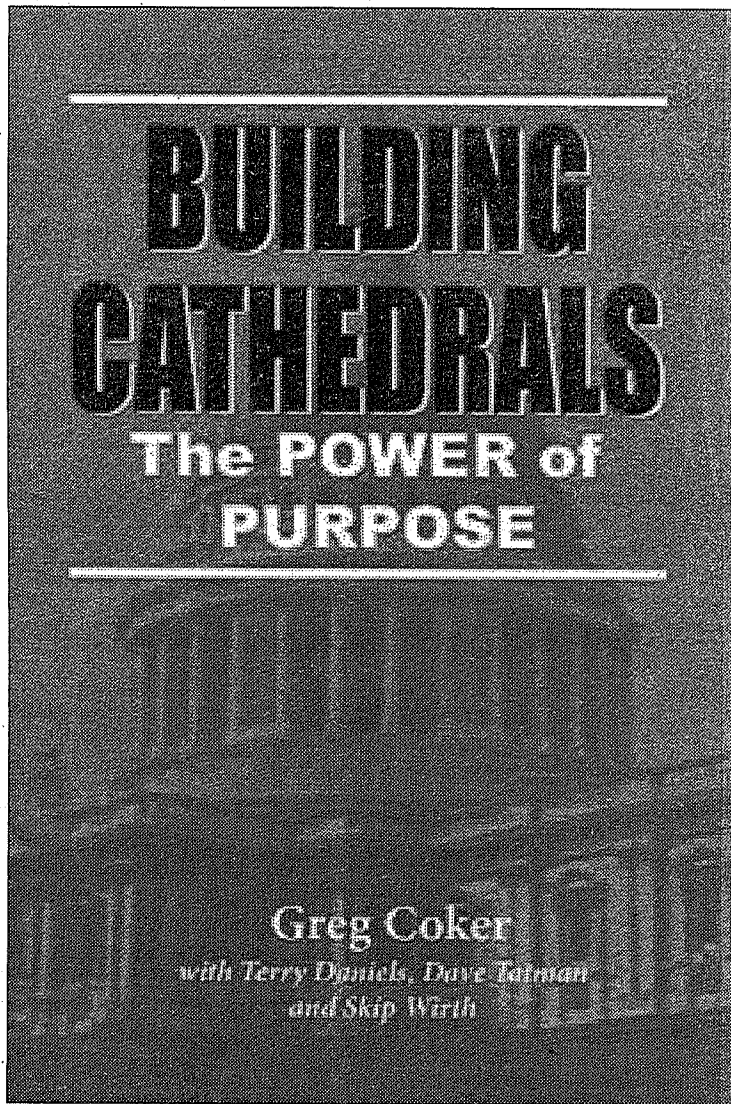
This quote is found near the beginning of "Building Cathedrals: The Power of Purpose," the new book Greg Coker wrote with three colleagues, Terry Daniels, Dave Tatman and Skip Wirth. As the reader soon discovers, it encapsulates a sentiment that permeates virtually every page of this uplifting treatise on the inherent resilience and potential of the human spirit.

"A cathedral is a powerful metaphor, with its stained glass and polished stone each telling a story and often taken for granted for their beauty," the authors note. "Most of us have and can identify with our own personal Cathedral that provides the motivation to keep us going and working toward something bigger than ourselves. A Cathedral, as we define it, is something that adds purpose to our lives, something that gets us out of bed each morning."

On the surface, "Building Cathedrals" is a fascinating story of the work of Christopher Wren, the world-renowned architect who was commissioned to rebuild St. Paul's Cathedral in London after the city was devastated almost 350 years ago. "The great fire of 1666 began early on the morning of September 2nd at a London bakery," Coker writes. "The fire spread extremely fast, as most homes and buildings were made of a very flammable wood-pitch combination and were built dangerously close to one another. And while the loss of life was amazingly low (less than 20), the loss of property was astronomical. Four hundred thirty acres, 13,000 homes and 89 churches were totally destroyed, leaving thousands homeless and financially ruined."

On closer examination, however, it is evident that the true scope of the volume extends far beyond the remarkable events that form the architecture for this inspirational handbook on how to live life and conduct business. "Building Cathedrals" is as much about individual renewal as it is about organizational efficacy. One of the more interesting features of the book is the inclusion of "Questions for Consideration" panels that are liberally scattered throughout the main text. These serve as reflection points for the reader — a way to illustrate how core concepts can be applied in a pragmatic and meaningful manner. In Chapter 22, for example, the authors discuss the work of Jim Collins, author of the seminal best-seller, "Good to Great." After being provided with the particulars of his well-known "bus analogy," the following questions are presented for consideration: "How can getting the wrong people off the bus improve the Cathedral?" and "Does the culture of your company value results over cultures? If so, how does this impact Cathedral Building?"

"Building Cathedrals" consists of 31 relatively short chapters arranged in nine major sections: Leadership, The Fire, After the Fire: The Rebuilding Begins, Cathedrals, Modern-Day Cathedrals, The Bricklayers, Tools to Build Your Cathedral, Developing



"Building Cathedrals: The Power of Purpose" by Greg Coker (with Terry Daniels, Dave Tatman and Skip Wirth). Louisville: Clark Legacies, an imprint of Integrated Media Corporation, 215 pages, \$20.

a "Life of Purpose," and Conclusion. Some of the shorter segments could probably have been combined into longer chapters, although brief installments do lend themselves to daily readings. It is beautifully illustrated by Faye Christian Phillips, a member of Oil Painters of America, the American Impressionists Society and the local Artworks organization. The visuals she provides serve to notably enhance the book's overall appeal; they help the reader achieve a more in-depth appreciation for the significance of the ideas being presented.

When I first started reading "Building Cathedrals," I was a little skeptical of the overall premise. To be completely honest, it seemed a little cheesy to me. But the more I immersed myself in what Coker and his contributors were actually saying, the more intriguing their work became. By the time I got to Chapter 18, "Someone Has to Tell the Story," I realized that was immersed in something powerful and potentially life-altering. This brief section of the book was written by Matthew Young, director of education at the National Infantry Foundation in Columbus, Ga.

After a brief overview of the military contributions of his family predecessors, Young comes to the following conclusion: "It's the stories of the men and women who served that make the museum, not the building itself, a true treasure. And while I couldn't serve in the military, it is an honor to tell the

story to millions of people each year. One of the most rewarding feelings is to see the eyes of a child light up as he or she begins to comprehend the principles of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, integrity and personal courage."

For the record, Coker is the founder of The Cathedral Institute, a consulting firm specializing in "empowering people, building teams, transforming organizations and changing the world." He travels extensively conducting seminars and workshops; he and his family live in Franklin. Daniels is the human resource manager for ITW in Gallatin, Tenn. He and his family reside in Bowling Green. Tatman is plant manager of the General Motors Bowling Green Assembly Plant, the only facility that produces the Corvette. He has two grown sons; he and his wife reside in Bowling Green. Vincent "Skip" Wirth is the director of sales and marketing for First Choice Home Medical in Bowling Green. He and his family also live in Bowling Green.

If you are one of those introspective folks who seems on an endless quest to uncover what really matters in your life and work, "Building Cathedrals" could prove to be a useful guide for your journey. So pick up a copy and find a quiet place to contemplate what Coker and associates have to say. You won't be disappointed.

— Reviewed by Aaron W. Hughey, Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, Western Kentucky University.