

From Field To Factory

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Speaker: **Nathaniel Bronner Jr.**

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I have to preface today's message because it is a little unusual, but this is perhaps a little bit more unusual than normal. To just give you a couple of examples...on this past Friday, my son George does his Imagination Station on the fourth Friday of every month. I was eating lunch downtown and I was on the phone talking to someone about business. I heard God speak that they needed to come to hear George that night. They had never been to anyone of his programs. I told them that I was hearing God speak that you need to come and you need to hear whatever George has to say tonight. I said you need to be here at seven o'clock because he is very very brief and he may be finished at 7:05. So you need to be here on time.

They were here. When George got up to speak that night, he said that he really didn't have anything. He was very very brief and he gave a couple of examples. He called up some people and he said that God hadn't just given him anything, and it was last minute and he just didn't have anything. I was sitting there and I said that God had told me to take up a collection every time he spoke. But I said that he didn't prepare for this worth a hoot. I said this doesn't need a collection tonight. So I told them no collection tonight. I said he really didn't prepare for this and there shouldn't be a collection tonight.

After the service, the person whom I had told needed to be here walked up to me and said "Man, that message tonight was so powerful. That message was for me. I am glad God told you to have me here, because I needed to be here." They emailed me and that email came in the middle of the morning when I read it. They said I have been up all night long. That message has just shaken me to my core. I have done three things as a result of that message. That message was so powerful! So I have to apologize to George. Because God told me when I asked from the beginning should I train him, he said no I will train him. So George even though you may have thought you didn't have anything, God first of all had the person here whom he wanted to hear what you had to say. You spoke a word into their life that shook them to the core. I have learned even in ministry, sometimes a message can be for one person. Just like Jesus went to the pool of Bethesda, and there were five porches of sick folk. The Ark has literally five levels in it.

There were five levels of sick people. Jesus healed one man. Left all those five levels of sick folk there, and stole away. Sometimes the word of God, it comes for one person and one person only. I learned the lesson and I told George I have to find out whatever has been the biggest collection that he has ever received. And daddy has to put that in to give that to you, because daddy made an error. I have learned that when God tells you to do something, you just need to do it. You can't figure that stuff out. I have learned that over and over and over and over again. Just be obedient. You can't judge it. Every mess up I have seen has always been because we really didn't do what either was in wisdom or what God told us to do. If we just followed that we would be alright. So here I was because maybe the message didn't

relate to me, but just because it doesn't relate to you doesn't mean it doesn't relate to somebody else.

It doesn't necessarily have to be long to be powerful. A few months ago I received a call at the office, and they routed it through. It was a gentleman on the other end. He said Pastor Bronner I need to come talk to you. I said most of the time I really don't have in-person conversations. I need to handle this over the phone because it is more efficient. I don't have time to just have in-person conversations. I just don't. I just have too much stuff to do. It is not that I don't want to; I just don't have the time. So they told me: I need to speak to you and it is only going to take me three minutes. They said I have a check I need to give you. That's a good message you want to hear. They give me a little of the background. They came out and we sat down. He said 10 years ago you sat down with my wife and me, and we had a business question that we wanted you to answer.

He asked: do you remember me and my wife? I said no, I don't remember you. He said do you remember the conversation. I said no, I don't remember. I talk with so many people, and people will come up to you and tell you that you spoke something into their life years ago and it changed their life...and you don't even remember it. That's why I say if I ever speak something to you, write it down; don't come back to me and ask me because I don't know. So I didn't even remember the meeting. He said you told us, we brought you three business ideas, and two of the ideas you told us to put those ideas in the trash. You didn't just tell us to put them in the trash; you told us why we should put them in the trash. But you said this third one...put all of your energy, and all of your focus, and all of your time on this third idea. This one could work.

He said we did exactly what you told us to do. You didn't spend but about 15 minutes. We did exactly what you told us to do, and in the first year we made a profit of \$80,000.00 It has been 10 years ago, and God has been on me. He said as a matter of fact, I am a leader in my church that I attend. We came to you because of your business wisdom. But I am a leader and a tither in another church, but God has been on me. He said I am bringing to you personally the tithe from that first year, and he laid on the desk a check for \$8,000.00 I heard God speak "Go put this in your account today." That is exactly what I did. But it was 15 minutes, so sometimes it doesn't take a whole lot of time. It may not be for a whole lot of folk, but when God has ordained it...and sometimes people, the reward takes some time to get back to you.

There will be some things that will come into your life, good and bad, and you don't even remember the root of the thing. But there is always a root and there is always a fruit. God is not mocked, be not deceived; that which you sow thou shall surely reap. None of this stuff is accidental. So it may take some time for the thing to come back, and when it comes back you don't even recognize where it is coming from. So

it may not be quick, it may not be for everybody, and most of the people may not either know about it, or even understand. For today's message, a few weeks ago we have a study at the house a few days a week, and I played for them a video presentation that I had done 25 years ago about my father. I heard God speak: "When you finish the series of the Disciples Commands, I want this video to be the sermon on the next Sunday after you finish that series."

I finished that series last week. So we are getting ready to see the video. I heard the prayer today as Brenda was praying, and she was praying for a fresh word. I did this 25 years ago, but the bible is a little old itself. So for some of you who have never seen this before it will be fresh. Most of you may say why in the world did he even play that. But I have without question the knowledge that for at least one, it is going to be like that person who came to George's thing. For at least one, it is going to change some things. Now always open your mind and your spirit, because it is like the couple who I spoke to over 10 years ago. I talk to a lot of people...the key is not the wisdom. They did what I told them to do...that is the difference. A lot of time you can speak all kinds of wisdom to folk. In our company we brought in an efficiency expert, real expensive but we wanted to turn some things around in the company and change some directions.

He told us when he got there: I am going to tell you right off the bat; I have done over 300 companies. I can turn some stuff around. I can tell you what to do. He said that is not the problems with most of the companies. The problem is they don't want to do what I tell them to do, because universally it is painful. They don't want to do what I tell them to do because universally it is painful. Because if it felt good and was what you wanted to do, you are already doing it. So without question what I am going to tell you to do before I even analyze anything, it is going to be some rebellion in this company because folk are not going to want to do what they need to do. The man was expensive, but if we did what he told them to do, he would pay for himself every two weeks. Just by doing what they told us to do.

So in this video, it is called From Field To Factory, for those who are watching electronically or if you are watching by television, we will actually have a link to the video on the website at www.BrothersOfTheWord.com When you pull up the sermons you can just pull up From Field To Factory, and you will be able to watch the video in its entirety. But this is 25 years old. It is about my father, but I don't know any other earthly man who I know personally who has done as much in as many areas. In all of what I call the balanced areas of life. I know men who have more money, but not who have lived a balanced life in all the areas of life. So for whatever reason, God wants today for you to see this video. This is the program from 25 years ago.

[Audio of From Field To Factory video (narrated by Nathaniel Bronner Jr.)]

[Nathaniel Bronner Sr.] And the time had arrived, as Dr. King says: “Nothing in all the world is more powerful than an idea whose time has come.” [Nathaniel Bronner Jr.] This is the story of Nathaniel Bronner. He has many names, N.H., The Professor, Uncle Prof, The Black Jew, The Black Hair Care King, A Genius. He has deserved all of these names, as you will see in the life and times of Nathaniel Bronner. But the one name in perhaps in its simplest form, sums up the essence of Nathaniel Bronner...he is A Man.

[John H. Johnson] I came down here today to pay tribute to Mr. Bronner for 40 years of stewardship. I came because I know the trouble you have seen. [Lerone Bennett Jr.] I am not speaking tonight. As a matter of fact, I didn't come to Atlanta to speak. I didn't come to Atlanta to get an award. I came to Atlanta to pay tribute to Mr. Bronner. [Michael Lomax] Nathaniel Bronner is a unique individual. He is charismatic in a way; he is in a very low key way I might say, but he is a strong, forceful personality. At the same time he is a very caring and compassionate, and thoughtful kind of guy. He is very...he is a sales man. [Reporter] Nathaniel Bronner Sr., the Founder and President of Bronner Brothers began business in 1947.

[Reporter] Tell me just a little bit, how was it...your first encounter with him. Did you know he was going to be able to sustain this business for 40 years? [Esther Wiley] I had confidence that he would, because his approach to life was one of the sustaining periods and ideals of our times. He was always positive about everything that he undertook and he always put God first. [Lerone Bennett Jr.] As an ignorant young black boy in Atlanta in the 40's, I had a chance to see the beginning of the Bronner dream. Mr. Bronner was one of my heroes then. He is still one of my heroes. I came to Atlanta today to say how blessed we are to have his light and his spirit. And that we shall not overcome in this land unless we hold onto the horizons of our mind. The sacrifices he and his generation made and the dream they have put before us.

[Nathaniel Bronner Jr.] The dream of this man began a long time ago. And it began first with the dream of another in a small Georgia town 60 miles from Atlanta; Kelly, GA. James Bronner decided it was time for another member of the family. It was a warm sunny Spring day, March 31st. The midwife announced: It's a long skinny baby boy. Emma looked lovingly at James and asked: What shall we call him? James said: We shall call him Nathaniel. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God.

Nathanael began to hear a different drumbeat likened unto Abraham. God told him to get up, leave his home, and go into a land thou will show thee. And in going I will bless you, I will bless your seed and I will make you a blessing. Nathanael from his

early infancy was different, and the prophetic words that Jesus spoke to Nathanael in the bible came true with Nathaniel Bronner. This is where he was born; not a mansion by today's standards, but in those days it was. And even though it may not have had the towering white columns of the plantations of the Old South. It had inside, a richness of heart and spirit and love that he still carries with him. That he instills in his family, and that he brought from that house to his house. And it had inside...Nathaniel Bronner.

His father James taught him well. By age six, Nathaniel, like his older brothers could give the meaning of the words from can't to can't. From when you can't see in the morning until you can't see at night. He learned the value of hard work early. He could ride a horse, plow, and feed the chickens and hogs. Do all the home chores, being industrious at an early age, he learned the value of marketing and the value of honesty. As a matter of fact, James was so prosperous and such a black businessman, that at 3:00 am one morning the Ku Klux Klan set fire to their house. And James and his wife Emma and all the Bronner children had to flee for their lives because of the evil that existed. But they learned never give up, never stop. When right and God is on your side, there is no failure.

The smoke and the flames took away the old house, but it did not take away what has been known as the Bronner spirit. And that spirit still burns alive in N. H. Bronner. Even in the structure of the old house which was rebuilt, but it was rebuilt over 60 years ago; and it became worn and dilapidated as you see here in this photograph. Did Nathaniel Bronner bulldoze it down? That's what he did with his own money; even though no one lived there he rebuilt the old family homestead. And James Bronner owned over 150 acres of land. People wanted to buy it. It was divided up among the relatives through the inheritance, and they all wanted to sell. Nathaniel Bronner said that before he would allow the land that his father had bled and sweat over to fall into the hands of the very people who burned them out, he would buy every single grain of sand himself.

That land is still in the Bronner family. He has always believed that a race without history is like a tree without roots. He would not allow his history to remain dilapidated or to go up in smoke; or to be sold. At the age of 16 Nathaniel Bronner heard another voice calling. It said it is time for you to leave the farm. It is time for you to leave Kelly, GA and seek your future and your fortune in the bright lights in the big city of Atlanta. He left home in Kelly and headed for Atlanta, but he did not leave alone for with him he took his marketing skills, his home training, his family church and his God. His mother had taught him three eternal principles: 1) Work hard. 2) Keep good company. 3) Be honest.

With these universal tools he arrived in Atlanta quite in contrast to Eddie Murphy's Coming To America. Eddie Murphy arrived as a Prince with a fortune seeking a bride; Nathaniel Bronner came seeking a fortune then a bride. He followed his big

brothers and started selling the Atlanta Daily World newspapers. He had just finished grade school as Valedictorian in the one room school house across from the county church. He enrolled in David T. Howard High School, but transferred and graduated from Washington High. Still selling the Atlanta Daily World, he attended Morehouse College and in 1940 at the close of the Depression he graduated from Morehouse.

Upon his graduation he noticed a sign that stuck in his mind forever, and would impact the course of his life and many others. The sign said: Beauty...the Depression proof business. But there was another drumbeat destined for Nathaniel's future. This drumbeat, one that was imposed upon him by his country, it was a military cadence. In 1941 with his degree fresh in hand, Nathaniel Bronner was drafted into the United States Army. But he has always been one to say don't worry about any bitter lemons that life may deal you. Simply take those lemons and make lemonade from it. He took the opportunity of the Army, and learned additional promotional skills. He learned to type and he became one of the Army's best P.R. men. Organizing dances and social clubs, and keeping the troops entertained, he began to develop his immense skill as a promoter.

Taking an inopportune situation and turning it around into an advantage, Nathaniel Bronner served his four years in the military. When he marched out, he marched out not only a soldier and a man, but a promoter. Upon returning from the Army, he worked in his sister's beauty salon. While in the beauty salon he operated a fruit stand outside of the salon. He sold fruit, women's hosiery, and the Atlanta Daily World newspaper. Mr. Bronner, then affectionately known as N. H., started servicing three beauty salons from his bicycle, along with the cosmetics that he sold to his newspaper customers. He noticed that his newspaper customers paid him better for the cosmetics than they did for the paper that they read, and for the food that they ate.

The sign that had so impressed his mind before his entering the Army came back. Beauty...the Depression proof business. From a bicycle and a paper route, came the beginning of the Bronner Beauty Empire. His next step was to move from a bicycle to a station wagon. From the station wagon he serviced more and more and more beauty salons. He moved from the fruit stand operation to his first store at 28 Butler Street, and took on his brother Arthur as a partner, thus forming Bronner Brothers. That store at 28 Butler Street, at the corner of Butler and Auburn Avenue, still stands today and it is still in business and operating as Bronner Brothers. By working hard and giving strict attention to business, Bronner Brothers was growing so rapidly that in 1948, the two brothers increased employment by bringing in their sisters: Mallory, Juanita, Katherine, a brother-in-law Henderson Lewis, and several other personnel.

Time passed by swiftly, and Nathaniel wanted to balance out his life. He remembered a quote from the bible in Genesis, when God looked down and saw Adam and said it is not good for a man to be alone. Nathaniel had found his fortune and now he was in the position of the prince. It was time for him to seek his bride. Nathaniel decided that he would go to Atlanta University. He enrolled and decided to take what he jokingly calls a fresh air course in Audio Visual Aids. As he stood in the line, his eye caught a glimmer in the corner. He turned and he said in his heart and in his mind, there she is. He tiptoed over and looked over her shoulder, and copied down her name and number from her registration form. Little did she know that over her shoulder was looking her future husband. He tapped her on the shoulder and said excuse me my name is Nathaniel Bronner, and I would like to see you again.

It may not have been exactly like that for he was indeed a dashing debonair young man. Salesmanship has many uses. It blossomed into a romance and into a marriage that has lasted over 35 years. The woman that he looked over her shoulder became Mrs. Robbie Bronner. Their marriage became one of the most stapled and history making unions the world has ever seen. Nathaniel Bronner had found his bride. It was no accident that the same June day Nathaniel decided to go to AU and search for his bride, Robbie Rutland had just finished Fort Valley State College, and her mother told her you will not stay here in this small town of Forsyth, GA. You must go to school in Atlanta where you can meet your husband. She and her sister arrived at Atlanta University and were among the last to register, and there Nathaniel saw her.

When he copied her name from her paper, he discovered that she was from Forsyth, GA. Being a wholesale distributor he knew beauticians all over Georgia. He called the name of a leading beautician to check her references, for Nathaniel always believed fruit will never fall very far from the tree. When she said yes I know the Rutlands and I know Robbie, and she is indeed from fertile and rich soil, and she is a fine woman. He knew that she was The One. The words "I would like to see you again sometime" blossomed into "I would like for you to be my wife". As Nathaniel sat and talked with her, Mrs. Bronner recalls the words, and she recalls the intense look on a young man's face as he told her: "I need one person in this world to think as I think. If I have one person to stand by my side there is nothing that the two of us cannot do." He told her: "I believe you are that person."

She smiled and something inside of her heart said yes this is the man. She was half his age, but love transcends age. She could feel that this man had a direction. That this man had a warmth, that this man had a strength and a wisdom that she had seen in no other. In 1955 Robbie Rutland became Robbie Bronner, and within the year a son. And Nathaniel being Nathaniel, could only name the first born Nathaniel. Five years later another son, Bernard. A year later, another son Darrow. And while another son was still in Robbie's womb, fate dealt a harsh blow. In 1962,

with three children, Nate Jr. 7, Bernard 2, Darrow 1 and the Reverend Dale Bronner still in the womb.

Nathaniel and Robbie had returned from a two day trip to Birmingham seeking Jackie Robinson as the keynote speaker for the Bronner Brothers Beauty Show. For then it was not international, and the night of their return Nathaniel went out to service several beauty salons. That same night sitting in the living room, children in bed, Robbie began to question Nathaniel. She asked: What would happen to the business if something happened to you? He said you and Arthur would have to carry the business on, and they changed the subject. That very same night Nathaniel suffered a massive heart attack. In a hospital room she went to see him. He projected himself as well, but she later said I never saw him as sick, and that attitude caused faith to rise up in me. I was young, three children and a fourth on the way. Nathaniel was taking care of his mother who lived with us. The business was in a serious struggle, for prior to his heart attack the salesman had just skipped the state with \$2,000 worth of merchandise.

Those were lean years and \$2,000 was a fortune, but through it all God brought Bronner Brothers, and Nathaniel and Robbie, and the children through. Tragedy was no stranger to the Bronner family, for prior to that in 1956 on the eve of the Bronner Brothers Show, the Bronner sister Emma Lou, in whose beauty salon the Bronner Brothers was born, died instantly of a heart attack. Strength and almighty God enabled them to produce the show, with the sister in the funeral parlor and grief in their hearts. Nathaniel has always believed that some of the greatest tests in life come at times when we least expect it, and when we least want it. The second Bronner sister died in Atlanta in 1974, and before she could be funeralized, the second eldest Bronner brother died in Chicago.

Leaving the funeral of a sister to catch a plane for the funeral of a brother, a troubled employee came to confess that she was the one who had stolen several thousand dollars from one of the stores. Nathaniel had to take a signed written confession as he headed for the plane to his brother's funeral, again with grief in his heart and business worries on his shoulders. These were the low depths in his life, but Nathaniel has never allowed excuse nor circumstance to stop him, and has believed that even death itself will stand still for a sufficiently determined will. He has never been stopped. Bronner Brothers continually prospered. Bronner Brothers went from being one of the most successful distributorships in the country, servicing beauty salons over a six state area with a fleet of trucks. He was Persulan company's number one salesperson and distributor.

In 1978 Bronner Brothers opened their first manufacturing plant at 110 Selig Drive, and two years later developed the BB Cosmopolitan Curl which swept the nation. In 1983 Bronner Brothers opened their second manufacturing plant in the West End area of Atlanta at 600 Truss Co Way. Each vat makes over 100,000 jars of

products; over \$18 million dollars a year in sales for Bronner Brothers. It is a long way from a bicycle, but there is one thing about Nathaniel Bronner, that no matter how far he has traveled from the red clay of Kelly, GA, he has never forgotten or sold his roots.

As Nathaniel Bronner the businessman, he is world renowned. As Nathaniel Bronner the father, he has reared six sons: Nathaniel Bronner Jr., Director of Manufacturing and Chief Chemist for Bronner Brothers, and Founder and President of Century Systems Inc.; Bernard Bronner, President of Bronner Brothers and Publisher of the national magazine Upscale; Darrow Bronner, Director of Professional Salon Marketing for Bronner Brothers; the Reverend Dale Bronner, Founder and Pastor of the Word Of Faith Family Worship Center; the Reverend C. Elijah Bronner, Founder of Disciples; and James Bronner, student at Georgia Tech. The sons reflect the training of the father. It is no accident that among his children you will find no drugs, no alcohol, not even so much as a cigarette.

Nathaniel Bronner has proved to be an example for not only his children, but countless others; men and women that he has influenced along the path of health, along the path of financial prosperity, along the path of family unity, and along the path of entrepreneurship. Some say that Nathaniel Bronner should have been a preacher, but most say that Nathaniel Bronner is a preacher for he has changed more lives than many in the pulpit. He has walked with kings; he has been crowned a king. He has sat with presidents, he is a president. He is young, yet he is wise. He is serious, yet full of fun. He is a financial genius, and yet he has bailed many out of financial ruin. In a recent incident of where the nationally known black farmer, Oscar Lorick, was about to lose the land that had been in his family for over 100 years. Nathaniel Bronner saw and recognized the plight of a man trying to hold on to his heritage.

Because of the man, Bronner Brothers spearheaded the drive to buy him equipment and to save his land. N. H. Bronner donated \$15,000 to help a black man keep his land. Oscar Lorick became not only the first black farmer, but the first farmer in the country to have his farm saved from foreclosure. From a bicycle to a beauty show that draws over 50,000 people a year, the largest show of its kind in the world. To a hair care company with sales over \$18 million dollars a year to souls saved, and over 500 jobs...Nathaniel Bronner. He has been called many names: Uncle Prof, N. H., The Professor, The Black Jew, The Black Hair Care King, A Genius. He has deserved all of these names, but the one name in its purest form, and in its highest manifestation that sums the essence and the life of Nathaniel Bronner, he is A Man.

[Nathaniel Bronner Jr.] Amen. That is the sermon for today. I would like for my mother to stand. You don't have to say anything, just stand. For whatever reason, God just wanted someone to see that today. There may be something in that that will impact. There just may be a key that will help your life. Often, you don't know

what can be done until you see it, and then sometimes you don't know what folk have gone through. People often see Bronner and they think that we have had it so easy. You don't know what folk have gone through. Two things about it, number one: You don't know what folk have gone through and you don't know what folk are going through. So just because stuff just looks easy and it looks like they have got it all under control, you don't know what people have gone through. Because I can guarantee you that every story of the appearance of success has had mountains that they have had to climb.

Usually they have had multiple things to happen all at one time. There have been major stuff that has had to be overcome. I saw throughout my life so many of the struggles that my father had to survive. I am not just talking about even prospering; even survival was a challenge for all types of external forces that will come at you. He taught us about having simply the tenacity. He quoted us over and over the long speech of Winston Churchill when he had gone through World War II. Churchill and Britain, and the United States had defeated Japan and the Germans, and all of the super technology and forces had come against them. Churchill at the victory speech stood up and said: Never give up. Never give up. Never give up. And sat down.

Never give up. No matter what things look like. No matter what has happened in your life, or what has happened in your life now. When the house was burning down and it looked like everything was lost. Never give up. When God has empowered you to do something, there may be mountains in the way, and as a matter of fact the next series that I am led by God to begin is a series simply called Hills. Hills. Not the heal. Hills. Hills. Mountains. Challenges that we face in life and how do we get through the hills and the mountains and the roadblocks in life. If you are going to have success, you are going to have hills and mountains. We will begin that series in the next message.