



# **EAGLE SAINTS**



**in a chicken world**

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# EAGLE SAINTS IN A CHICKEN WORLD

God has likened His people, in the scriptures, to many things. For example, they are described as being like branches on a vine, trees by a river, a light on a hill, sheep, salt, a runner, a wrestler, a soldier and as I noted in last week's message, an eagle. As I noted last week, Isaiah 40:31 says, **“but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”**

Psalms 103:5 adds that the Lord **“satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.”**

For your information, the Bible mentions this bird thirty-two times.

Today, I want us to focus our attention on some facts that I've gathered about eagles and their unique way of life. I think, in the process, we will discover some important spiritual truths that will help us live like Eagle Saints in a Chicken World.

I was recently reading a column from the BBC. The piece pointed out that presently there are somewhere around 10,000 different bird species. Aren't you glad that the Lord chose to identify us with the eagle and not one of the other birds? Take the chicken for example. I know something about chickens. Let me give you some chicken facts:

- There are more chickens in the world than any other domesticated bird. In fact, there are more chickens than there are human beings. That equates out to a lot of hot wings.
- Speaking of eating, Americans consume 8 billion chickens a year.
- In Gainesville, Georgia - the chicken capital of the world - it is illegal to eat chicken with a fork!
- In 2002, the PBS documentary *The Natural History of the Chicken* revealed that “chickens love to watch television and have vision similar to humans. They also seem to enjoy all forms of music, especially classical.”
- By the way, do any of you have Alektorophobia? That is the fear of chickens.

Then too, chickens are crowd followers. If a chicken sees a bunch of chickens running across the chicken yard, he will take off after them. It doesn't matter that he doesn't know where they are going or why they are going there. He follows along because he doesn't want to miss out on anything.

Chickens just naturally "squabble and fight". They can and do literally peck one another to death. Interestingly enough, if one chicken finds something to eat, immediately they all want it. They will chase each other all over the place trying to take it away from each other. Odd, isn't it? They can walk all around a bug or a grasshopper and not pay any attention to it. However, if one of the birds decides that he or she wants it, at that moment, they all decide they want it and the chase is on.

I have also discovered that they have no interest in anything above and beyond their own little chicken coup. They are perfectly content walking around with their eyes on the ground. They have no real “vision” or ambition. By the way, the longest recorded flight of a chicken is thirteen seconds. They are earthbound birds. They never ever dream of soaring into the heavens. The thought of spreading their wings and rising above their smelly old barnyard never crosses their little chicken brains.

Hey, before I move on, I have to tell you this. While I am not all that sure you are going to believe me, this story I am about to tell you is tell. A chicken named Mike once had its head cut off and yet lived to tell about it for over eighteen months. As you can see on the screen, I even have some pictures of the headless chicken including one of him being fed with a eye dropper and one of his grave.

I think you can see now why I'm convinced that living the chicken life can never compare to living the eagle life. Chicken living is so limited - so confining - so predictable and so boring. It is so... so **CHICKEN!**

### **LET US NOW LOOK AT THE EAGLE**

What comes to mind when I say eagle?

- Many of us would immediately think of this graceful bird soaring high in the heavens effortlessly riding the wind currents.
- We would think of his majesty.
- We would immediately think of him as the King of the Sky; the master of his domain. Right? Right.

Proverbs 30:18-19 notes, **“There are three things that are too amazing for me, four that I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a maiden.”**

Do you realize that an eagle can effectively see a rabbit two miles away, swoop down on it's prey at speeds of up to 100 miles an hour, snatch up its meal with it's sharp strong talons, and then glide back to it's nest at a leisurely 30 miles an hour? The bird can soar at altitudes of up to one-half mile high.

A full grown female eagle can weigh up to 12 pounds. However, it's massive 7 feet wing span can enable it to carry one-half it's body weight while it is flying. Again, the writer of Proverbs said that he was impressed by **“the way of an eagle in the sky.”** I too am impressed. Aren't you?

There is something special about the eagle. It has been recognized by nations, kingdoms and empires as the king of the birds. It's image has been reproduced on coins, seals, emblems, medals, and flags. We even have a professional football team that calls itself the Eagles.

Eagles mate for life – or until death separates them. Then the surviving eagle will mate again.

In the eagle family, the female eagle is bigger and stronger than the male. The female may lay from one to three eggs and raises one brood a year. If these eggs are destroyed the female may lay more eggs. It takes 4-5 weeks for an eagle egg to hatch. Both parents sit on the eggs, guard the nest, feed and also train the young. To the eagle, raising a family is a responsibility that belongs to both parents. Does God expect less from His eagle family? I don't think so.

I want us to now look at...

### **THE EAGLE'S DIET**

A description of a new born eaglet is almost like describing a new born Christian. He or she is born with its eyes and mouth wide open. It sort of looks like a mouth that's been attached to a bunch of fuzzy feathers. The parents are kept busy keeping that mouth filled because the eaglet has an insatiable desire for food. The eaglet knows when it opens its mouth, dad and mom eagle are going to fill it with good things.

Now God is like those eagle parents with His eaglets. He tells His eaglets in Psalms 81:10, **“I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it.”** Folks, I've spent most of my Christian life going around with my mouth wide open crying out to my Heavenly Father, “Feed me, feed me!” Just as mother and father eagle know what baby eagles need to eat in order to grow, so it is that our Heavenly Father also knows what we need in order to thrive as His children.

Bald Eagles normally eat fish, but they will feed on almost anything that they can catch, including

ducks, rodents, rabbits, snakes, and smaller birds. Eaglets are fed strips of meat, torn up by their mother.

Without the proper diet, the eaglets will become weak and sickly and eventually die. So it is with we who are God's eaglets. You and I are to feast on God's eagle food:

- His Word,
- Christian fellowship,
- Prayer,
- Being in His presence.

Now I love babies, I think that most of them are cute. I also enjoy little toddlers. It's great to watch them crawl and waddle around at 6 to 18 months of age as they learn to explore their world. I think we all like that time of their lives. However, no-one thinks it's cute when a person remains a baby for too long.

- If a child never learns how to walk or talk,
- if it never figures out how to dress itself
- if it never outgrows its need for diapers - that's a sign that something is terribly wrong.

If your teen-agers were still acting as immature as they did before turning five, you'd be on the phone looking for professional help. Why? Although we love babies, we expect them to eventually grow up. God is no different. He doesn't want any of His children to remain baby-like forever. He wants His children to mature. He wants them to advance from milk to meat. Eaglets begin feeding themselves at about 7 weeks. Eventually, a baby saint is to learn to feed himself or herself as well.

### **NOW, I WANT US TO LOOK AT THE NEST.**

Bald eagles construct the largest bird nests in the world. The mother does most of the work in constructing the nest. A typical nest can be built in a week. She starts off, as strange as it sounds, with thorns, broken branches, sharp rocks, and a number of other items that seem entirely unsuitable for the project. But then she lines the nest with a thick padding of wool, feathers, grass, and fur from animals she has killed, making it soft and comfortable for the eggs.

She and her mate will actually return to the same nest year after year adding fresh sticks and greenery until the nest may weigh over a ton, have a depth of twenty feet, and measure nine feet across! An eagle's nest was once discovered in Ohio that weighed over two tons – four thousand pounds. Wouldn't you hate for that thing to fall out of the tree onto your head?

Again, in about 35 days the eggs hatch and the young eaglets begin to adapt to their new home. Life in the nest is so wonderful, so cozy and so comfortable.

- The young birds open their mouths and bingo, in drops a fish or some other delicacy.
- The nest is safe.
- At night, the eaglets can nestle up under the warm wings of dad or mom eagle.
- In short, their every move is watched and every need is supplied.

Psalms 91:1-2 (*New King James Version*) speaks of this scene; **“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.’”** Hey, that is pretty much a picture of the early life of an eagle.

The baby eagle will stay in the nest until about 11 weeks after hatching. It is at this time that the mama eagle begins **“stirring up the nest.”** Deuteronomy 32:11,13 fits here. **“Like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries**

**them on its pinions. He made him ride on the heights of the land and fed him with the fruit of the fields.”**

Let me explain what “**stirring up the nest**” means. Simply put, mama eagle begins to remove all the padding of rabbit fur and animal skins. As she does so, this brings all of the sharp rocks and broken trigs to the surface thereby making the nest uncomfortable and miserable for her little ones. Think pin cushion.

Then too, she stops bringing food to them every time they open their little eagle mouths.

The growing eagles begin to wonder what has happened to mama? Is she losing her mind? Did they do something wrong? Is she mad at daddy eagle? What gives? They love mama eagle but now they aren't so sure that she loves them.

Let me interrupt myself for a moment and ask you some very important questions. Saints of God, could it be that you are beginning to identify with the little eaglets "stirring of the nest" experience?, Have you found yourself lately experiencing the discomforts of the stirring of your nest?

It can be about anything that is bothering us:

- An ongoing temptation.
- An unfulfilled dream.
- Conflict in the home or on the job.
- An illness
- A fear.
- A sin

We find ourselves thinking, "One of these days I'm going to have to start working on that." The trouble is, like the eaglet is reluctant to get to close the edge of the nest, we, too, are reluctant to move out of our comfort zone and face whatever it is that we need to face.

This is, again, God stirring up our nest. He's getting us ready for change. He wants us to face something we've not faced before. In order to accomplish His will, He makes us uncomfortable.

Perhaps He wants us to face our neglected finances. Maybe it is a relationship he wants us to mend or maybe even one He wants us to break off. Whatever the case, there is a growing discomfort and uneasiness in us that is hard to ignore.

You know, the sad thing is that some people live their entire lives in this stage. They cling to their nest like terrified eagle chicks, afraid to do anything about their problem. They'd rather live with discomfort than risk flying. "At least the discomfort is predictable," they think. "If I were to change, who knows what might happen?"

Young person, let me talk to you about this point as well. I well remember my parents stirring the nest. Finally it got to the point where my dad asked me, "Mike, don't you think that it is time for you to move to the dorm?" (I was attending college at the time.) When he put it that way, I realized that it was time for this kid to learn to fly. I said yes, packed my bags, and I moved on campus. I never moved back home, either.

The stirring of the nest at home can take on the form of increased conflict between parent and child.

- Such conflict can revolve around who is going to be in charge?
- Whose values are going to be followed?
- How much independence can the child have?

In practical terms:

- The parents complain about the music being too loud.
- Curfew becomes more of an issue.
- Dad starts talking about his wanting you to pitch in a little money to help with the expenses.
- Mom reminds you of the amount of laundry that she has to do for you.
- You are told “no” one to many times.
- Discussions become disagreements.
- You use to agree on nearly everything; now you cannot agree on anything.

In time you start to wonder, what in the world is going on? Is everyone, but you, losing their minds? Home used to be so fun, so comfortable. Now it is just crazy.

Remember this. Maybe no one is going crazy. It could simply be that God or the parents are starting to tear up the nest in order to get you to fly.

### **WHEN THE NEST STARTS TO BE STIRRED, THEN IT IS TIME TO FLY.**

Male eaglets make their first flight at about 78 days while on the average females fly at 82 days.

Mama eagle watches until she thinks they ready. It is then that she begins the process of helping them develop strength in their wings. Again, as Moses pointed out in Deuteronomy 32, she hovers near the nest and begins flapping her wings furiously. At first this is fun. Free air-conditioning. Then it turns serious. Let me explain.

According to the book *“The Way of the Eagle”* by William F. Dankenbring, “Not only has mama started tearing up the nest, now she begins to flutter her wings at the youngsters, beating on them, harassing them, and driving them to the edge of the nest. Cowering before such an attack, the little eagles climb up on the edge of the nest.”

It is at this point that the mother eagle lets out a certain scream. She then takes one of her babies in her mouth and starts soaring into the skies. I can just hear the little eagle say, “Oh mama, this is so much fun. I love this. Mama, can we do this again tomorrow?” The eagles seem to be flying straight for the sun. Up, up, and way:

- 100 feet,
- 200 feet,
- 500 feet,
- 1,000 feet.

Now the little hitchhiker is beginning to get a little nervous. “How much farther?” He asks.

- 1,500 feet,
- 2,000 feet. Whoa!

No chicken has ever flown this high.

At 2,500 feet, nearly one-half mile high, mama eagle does a sharp roll to the right and in the process, she pitches her little passenger out into thin air. At long last, the eaglet is on his own. He falls like a rock. Somewhere between 2,000 feet and 1,000 feet, the little bird gets saved, sanctified, filled with the Holy Ghost, and starts speaking in tongues. At 500 feet the eaglet cries out, “O God I will become a preacher; I’ll do anything. Just don’t let me hit the ground.” It is flapping it’s wings. It is counting beads. It is screeching to high heaven.

Now when mother eagle pitches the little one loose, she doesn’t say, “Well, you’re on your own now, see you around,” and then she flies away. No. She slowly begins to circle around the surprised little eaglet keeping a concerned watchful eye on him as he flounders and flutters trying to fly for the first time. Furiously, he flaps his wings, he turns somersaults, he does everything to try to stay aloft, but in spite of his best efforts, he begins to lose altitude. When mother eagle sees her little one get

dangerously close to the ground, she swiftly swoops underneath him and gently snares him with a taloned claw.

**I TELL YOU THIS MORNING THAT GOD CALL FLY FASTER THAN YOU CAN FALL AND WILL BE THERE TO CATCH YOU WHEN YOU NEED HIM THE MOST!**

“Oh, thank you, mama! Thank you, thank you, thank you. I knew that you would catch me. Oh, I love you mama. I have never been so scared in all my life. Are you alright mama?”

All the while, the little eagle fails to notice that once again mama is soaring toward the sun. Up, up, up they go and then once again she pitches him off into thin air. He screams, “Oh maaaaaaa!” as he plummets toward earth once again.

- Mama, don't you love me?
- Mama, are you trying to kill me?
- Mama, have you lost your mind?
- Mama, this is no longer any fun.”

Then in just the nick of time, she reaches out and catches him once again.

The little 78-day-old bird doesn't know what to think. First, his mother starts tearing up the nest. Then she nearly beats him to death with her wings. Next, she tries to starve him to death. Finally, she flies him half-way to the moon and then drops him into nothing.

The little bird stays out of the nest for two days. He wants nothing to do with his parents. Finally, mama eagle comes over to him and asks, “Do you want to go for a ride?”

The baby eaglets say, “I am not going to let you do that to me again. You are going to take me up there and drop me. I know what you are going to do. Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.”

Finally, though, he gives in. Immediately, she starts to climb. Upwards she soars as the little eaglet prays, “Oh God, please don't let her drop me.” Sure enough though, she takes him higher still and drops him again.

This goes on for about five to eight times.

Finally, the frustrated mother eagle squawks to him,

- “You are not a chicken waiting to become a special at KFC.
- You are not a turkey just being fatted up for somebody's table.
- You are not a buzzard looking for some dead smelly carcass.
- No. You are an eagle. If you will spread your wings, you can fly. You are an eagle. Awwak, awwak.”

Finally the little eagle's wings begin to do what they were created to do and he begins to ride the air currents with the same ease as does his parents. He is flying!

Unfortunately, some little eagles never do learn to fly. They stubbornly refuse to use their wings, and fly on their own. Despite numerous attempts by the mother eagle to teach them to “fly,” they rebel. Flying is not for them! They will just stick to the nest, and depend on others to do their “flying” and “thinking” for them.

In sheer exasperation, the time finally comes when the mother realizes there is no hope for such a child. So she takes him one last time, soars high into the air, and with a wild screech of

disappointment and pain, she dives out from under him and flies away, leaving him to his fate -- either fly -- or die.

Fly -- or die. That's it. The little eagle either catches himself, and begins to fly on his own, or he is a "goner." If he doesn't fly this time, he will surely crash and smash upon the rocks below.

The adult eagle can teach her young to fly but she cannot fly for them. They must do it. Have you ever seen two adult eagles flying piggy-back? Neither have I. It doesn't happen.

### **IN CONCLUSION...**

It is true that chickens and eagles are both birds, but a chicken is an earth bound creature. It can flop and fly a little, but it can scarcely get its feet off the ground. The Lord does not want us to just be barnyard animals.

A barnyard to the believer is:

- Any attitude,
- Any mindset,
- Any lifestyle that restricts us from being or accomplishing all that God has purposed for us to be or do in life.

Our barnyard is that comfort zone we like to live in because it makes no demands of us that will challenge us to change. The Lord calls to us in our barnyard and challenges us to spread our wings of faith and fly, to soar!

Isaiah 40:31 again says, **“but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”**

How long has it been since you soared? How long has it been since you soared above your circumstances and rode the currents of God's blessings higher and higher?

Saints, you are not a turkey, a chicken, or even a buzzard. You are an eagle. You are an Eagle Saint in a Chicken World. Now fly; now soar!