

Your

WORD

Is

Strength

VOLUME FIVE

A LIFE-APPLICATION DEVOTIONAL

BY BROTHER JONATHAN

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1. WHEN IT IS *YES* TO SAY *NO*

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17).

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When God says *no*, we must say *no*. When He says *yes*, we must say *yes*. But when we turn His *no* into *yes* and His *yes* into *no*, we get into trouble. In fact, the fall of man was a result of saying *yes* when God said *no*.

Sure it takes boldness and strength to say *no*, but when God says *no*, it is *yes* (that is, alright and right) to say *no*. The devil and the flesh like to turn God’s *no* into *yes* and His *yes* into *no*. James 5:12 tells us, “...let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and *your* “No,” “No,” lest you fall into judgment” (NKJV). If we are people of integrity, we do not have to swear to make a promise. If we are people of our words, we will honour commitments even when it is costly to do so.

Some of the greatest men and women of God have short-circuited their callings and ministries because they have been surrounded by folks who could only say “yes”. Do we have friends or loved ones who fall into error and we are not willing to confront? Are we our brother’s keeper?

No, I am not saying that we should go around pointing fingers at people for their mistakes but that we should speak the truth in love and humility to them, “BRETHREN, if any man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such as one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1).

How about learning to say *no* to the flesh in our own personal moments? For example, when we are at home reading a magazine or watching television (by this, I am not referring to those with sensual and sexual contents) and in the midst of it, we sense the drawing of the Holy Spirit to pray, will we rise up, walk away from these natural activities and commune with Jesus instead? I

am not saying it is wrong for taking time off for relaxation but I am saying that when the Holy Spirit invites us to say *yes*, will we resist Him and say *no*? Another example of failing to say *no* to the flesh for some of us could be buying things without the peace of God in our hearts to do so. Have we ever bought something against a “check” in our spirits only to regret later on? Do you know that the Spirit of God wants to give us joy, peace and wisdom in making the right decisions while shopping or doing whatever daily activities? True spirituality is not just about being diligent in prayer, worship and the Word, it is having communion with the Holy Spirit and partaking His Presence every moment of the day. The true measure of a person’s spirituality is not just who he or she appears to be in church but the fruits and motivations of being Christlike in every part of his or her daily life. It is not a legalistic, religious force to take the fun out of our social lifestyle but a liberating rest of faith when we are able to sense His Presence influencing our daily decisions.

Obedience begins with opening our hearts to His voice at all times, not just during times of devotion and prayer, “ ...Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22). It is not a religious rut of routine but a relationship with a rich reward.

“Father, give me strength to say *No* to the devil and the flesh. Let me say *Yes* to Your voice. I ask this in Jesus name.”

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2. GOD’S COVENANT OF PROMISE

“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee” (Genesis 17:7).

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A covenant is an agreement, contract and commitment between two or more parties based on a mutual relationship.

In the case of God’s covenant with Abraham, it was a promise that he would have descendents that He would bless and also, they would become a blessing to many others. Even though the act of circumcision served as an outward sign of this covenant, God was also looking for faith and obedience in the hearts of His people. Just as baptism without repentance or marriage without love are pointless, physical circumcision must be accompanied by spiritual consecration.

Through his life of faith and faithfulness, Abraham became the father of the family to the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. Because of God’s covenant blessing and promise, salvation and healing are available to all who call on the name of Jesus, “Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things *are* of God, who have reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:17-18).

“Father, thank You for Your covenant blessing. I now receive full salvation, healing and prosperity in the name of Jesus.”

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3. COMMITMENT OR CONVENIENCE?

“And it came to pass after these things, that his master’s wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master’s wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what *is* with me in the house,

and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; *There is* none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou *art* his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, *or* to be with her. And it came to pass about this time, that *Joseph* went into the house to do his business; and *there was* none of the men of the house there within. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out” (Genesis 39:7-12).

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Joseph fled fornication and adultery when Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce him. In spite of temptation and testing, he believed God’s sovereignty and sufficiency to bring success on his life in the end.

Remaining faithful to God and uncompromising in all our relationships in times of adversity can be difficult. It takes commitment to develop our character. Convenience says there are “pleasures of sin for a season” (Hebrews 11:25) but commitment expresses faith in God’s promises beyond the present scene.

Without a revelation, we will “cast off restraint” (Proverbs 29:18 *NKJV*) but when we are loyal and steadfast to a vision, God will realize His purpose through us.

“Father, I ask that all things will work for good as I remain faithful to Your calling and purpose for me. In Jesus name.”

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4. ZIP YOUR LIPS AGAINST YOUR ACCUSERS

“And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye

have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace” (Exdous 14:13-14).

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Church history has shown that crisis either breaks or makes a man or woman of God. Sometimes false accusation, jealousy and persecution happens even to those in ministry. When a person makes a bold stand for Jesus and against the devil, persecution will rise up against him or her, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:2-5).

When the Pentecostal movement began earlier in the century, portions of the denominational world fought against the revival of the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. Yet out of this stream saw the rise of the Divine Healing revival, the Charismatic renewal, the Jesus movement and other new waves of restoration since. Religion and tradition are some of the greatest enemies to Holy Spirit revelation in every generation! When I speak of “Holy Spirit revelation”, I am speaking of the reformation and restoration of Biblical truths that have been neglected or even lost as a result of spiritual backsliding in segments of the Church. However, the danger of new revelation, if not handled with spiritual maturity, could end up in error as well. For example, during the late seventies and early eighties, when God restored the ministry of intercession, some believers allowed that to be their total focus and neglected other forms of spiritual disciplines. The same could be said of the revival of praise and worship just a few years ago. I have even heard that some have predicted in effect that the future of church services will consist almost entirely of praise and worship with little time for anything else. Of course, I pray there will be times when the glory and Presence of God is so strong that the preacher should not preach at all but to say that this is the case all the time could be assumptions. Apart from being in line with God’s Word and the

leading of the Holy Spirit, we must be careful not to judge the methods or style of the ministry leader. God is the One who plants and uproots people in ministry and I believe there is wisdom in listening to the advice of Gamaliel who said, “ ...Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men ... And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God” (Acts 5:35, 38-39).

Perhaps, some of you reading this are not the accusers or the persecutors but instead feel that you are the victim of lies and slanders against your life and ministry. The important thing is, Keep your life clean. Search your own heart against any ambition. Choose to walk in love and forgiveness. Stay strong in the Word and the Spirit. Do not retaliate against your accusers. Pray for opportunities to be reconciled and united with them. Surround yourself with Godly people who will not gossip about fellow believers. Continue to be faithful in your calling. For a season, you may still feel the attack of critics or slanderers bothering you and wished you had defended yourself against them but remember, you can fight in the flesh and become a fool or you can choose to rejoice in God who will reward you with the riches of His glory reserved for those who are reproached for righteousness sake, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye*; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified” (1 Peter 4:12-14).

“Father, restore Your church. Unite our hearts in one accord that the world will know that we belong to the Lord. In Jesus name.”

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5. THE CLOTHES OF CONSECRATION

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Si-nai” (Exodus 19:10-11).

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To be set apart for God is to cut off the carnal and casual communication and communion we have with the world. It does not mean that we should immune or isolate ourselves from associating with unbelievers. On the contrary, we are called to impact and influence their lives with the light and life of Christ in us, “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15).

Consecration means that we do not conform to the outward conduct of the present godless world system. Rather, we commit ourselves to the conditioning of the Word of God for every aspect of our Christian life, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2). Some Christians have debated on the permissive and perfect will of God. For example, divorce was never God’s intended order but “For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept” (Mark 10:5). As far as I am concerned, why settle for the permissive option when we could have the perfect will of God? Since Jesus came that “[we] might have life, and that [we] might have *it* more abundantly” (John 10:10), don’t we dare let the devil steal the best from us by having only the good. Whether we are choosing a business or marriage partner, we need to mediate on the Scriptures, especially on the Book of Psalms and Proverbs; as well as the various Epistles in the New Testament, in order to discern who is the “best” for us. Consecrating ourselves to wholly follow after God’s ways and will can save us from a lot of confusion in making these lifetime choices.

Yes! It's time to separate the men from the boys, the wise from the fools. Whether we are deciding on a career, a mate, a ministry or whatever, we desperately need to distinguish between the Spirit of God, the flesh or the devil. When we walk in the Spirit and live a holy life, the peace and Presence of God will guide us into all truth. Hallelujah!

“Father, as I cleanse myself from worldly lusts, I seek Your ways and will to walk in Your perfect plan for my life. In Jesus name.”

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6. THE CALLED AND CHOSEN CLUB

“Then the LORD said to Gideon, By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the *other* people go, every man to his place” (Judges 7:7).

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Total dependence on God is the key to spiritual victory. Availabilty to God's working power, rather than ability of natural strength, is the trait of humility.

When we come to the end of ourselves, we can either deny God's presence or draw to seek and search for Him. Our resources and talents can cause us to be rigid and set in our methods of ministry. Success from previous experiences can even become fleshly unless we recognize that it is His power and wisdom that is working through us, “Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3).

Do we want to accomplish result that will bear fruit for God? Then we must rely upon the power and Presence of the Holy Spirit to energize any and every effort to fulfill His call and commission for our lives.

“Father, purify my heart and perfect my love for You. I pray this in Jesus name.”

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7. THE DECEPTION OF DELILAH AND THE SNARE OF SAMSON

“And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of So’rek, whose name *was* De-li’lah, And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength *lieth*, and by what *means* we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred *pieces* of silver” (Judges 16:4-5).

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Samson was mightily anointed of God. Yet anointing without the authority of the inner man to be disciplined and the ability to resist temptation can still cause a person to fall. We need a committed character and a strong spirit to stay in step with the Word, “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Joshua 1:8).

All of us face “Delilahs” in life. For Samson, it was a woman but for us, it could include lust for money, power and other fleshly desires too. We can be public success and yet a private failure if we fail to exercise the right principles and the solid foundation of holding on the Word of the Lord during times of temptation and trial, “Blessed *is* the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (James 1:12-14).

Inward character is built by by abiding in Christ, “I AM the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit” (John 15:1-2). The Lord wants to prune away our fleshly

strength and purify us with the fire of His Spirit, “that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man” (Ephesians 3:16).

“Lord, my life is in You. Let me flow with You. In Jesus name.”

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8. ARE YOU A DESTINY SETTER FOR JESUS?

“...thou art come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?” (Esther 4:14).

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The story of Esther is a story of dedication to the highest degree. A dedication to God and His people. A dedication to prayer and fasting that has changed the destiny of a nation. A dedication that has impacted and influenced not only the people of her time, but generations after too.

David was another person who has lived to serve his generation as well as affect the destiny of the future ahead, “For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on asleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption” (Acts 13:36).

We are now living in the most adventurous time of the church and the world. The spiritual climate of nations and cities are changing. Even though persecution of Christians is intense in various places, new doors of opportunity are opening up for the spread of the Gospel.

God is positioning the Body of Christ to get the job of reaching the lost in our community and city done before us. Some are being called into the ministry of compassion and mercy to feed the hungry and the poor. Some are being challenged to give sacrificially in finances to churches and missions organizations. Some are being chosen to lead praise and worship. Others are being commissioned to work with children or youth. Whatever our calling, we must be committed to be destiny setters for Jesus!

“Father, I want to make a difference in my world. I want to invest in the Kingdom and influence lives for You. I ask this in Jesus name.”

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9. THE POWER OF THE PEN

“MY heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue *is* the pen of a ready writer” (Psalm 45:1).

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We are what we say and do. Though appearances and claims can be deceiving for a season, our words will eventually follow where our hearts are, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Luke 12:34). The fruit of our lips either portray or betray us, “For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh” (Luke 6:43-45).

Know that action begins with a thought, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he... ” (Proverbs 23:7). If we are seeking after God with all our hearts, His thoughts and plans will give us a future and a hope, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jeremiah 29:11). God has the power to prosper us spiritually, physically and emotionally, “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 John 2). Prosperity is not just material success, it is having all our thoughts and actions being in line with God’s Word. It is the result of commitment and dedication to the will of God.

One of the ways to live by faith is to document the things that the Lord has promised us. When a verse or a passage of Scripture quickens our hearts, we

can record it down and then meditate upon it, “And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make *it* plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry” (Habakkuk 2:2). For over ten years, I have recorded and written messages of exhortation to people and have described the ministry of the media and the printed page as such: “It has been said that the pen is mightier than the sword but as for me, it is the Sword of the Spirit (the *rhema* Word of God) that gives the pen the cutting edge”. To God be all the praise and glory and thanks to people who have helped me to fulfill a part of my call in these last days!

“Father, I surrender my life to do Your will. Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be stirred by a noble theme. I ask this in Jesus name.”

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10. WHEN HE FORGIVES, HE FORGETS

“As far as the east is from the west, *so* far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12).

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To be forgiven is to be pardoned and be relieved from the burden of one’s offense. Not only does the Lord forgive, He forgets our sin, “ ...I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:34).

Forgiveness comes from God. It is a benefit of His covenant. We cannot earn our rights to be forgiven. Only in Christ can we receive the provision for being restored back in fellowship with God. We need to break the shame barrier, to be reminded that the Lord has removed the bondage of our past, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1).

When we repent, God eagerly and willingly forgives and forgets our iniquities, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7).

“Father, I acknowledge my sin. Forgive and cleanse me from all unrighteousness. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation. I thank You in Jesus name.”

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11. THE VITAL ROLE OF VISION

“In the year that king Uz-zi’ah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 6:1-5).

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Vision is one of the ways God calls people. Isaiah saw the glory and holiness of God. Moses beheld God from a burning bush (read Exodus 3:1 to 4:17). Samuel heard God calling him while he was asleep (read 1 Samuel 3:1-18). Paul (then called Saul) heeded the voice of the Lord near Damascus (read Acts 9:1-16). Though the methods of calling are different, each of them responded to fulfill God’s mission for their lives.

A vision is a revelation or divine insight that can be seen or perceived. It can be an inward, open or night vision (or a dream), but it must be sovereign and not something we seek for. Not every dramatic experience is of God. We need to check and judge it by the Word. Usually, a true spiritual vision will reveal

the glory and holiness of God; our sinfulness and also, the need to answer His call.

If it is a God-given dream or vision, it will grow stronger in our spirits with time. We will begin to hold on to the Word, pray fervently about it and then run with it in the right place and season.

“Holy Spirit, let Your outpouring fall on me. Lord, I live by Your Word and walk in the Spirit. In Jesus name.”

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12. THE PROCESS OF SPIRITUAL PASSION

“Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged” (Isaiah 6:6-7).

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We need more than a spiritual vision to fulfill a God-given mission. After receiving a divine revelation, we need a heart transformation and spirit operation before we can be moved into our final destination of accomplishing God’s plan and purpose for our lives.

Spiritual passion is about getting our hearts, minds and spirits to seek the Kingdom of God, “But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you ... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Luke 12:31, 34); “IF ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:1-2).

How do we develop spiritual passion? We need a contrite heart and humility in the Presence of God; acknowledge our need for cleansing and hunger for a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit.

“Father, I consecrate myself. Let me be wholly set apart for You. I ask this in Jesus name.”

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13. MOVING ON IN MISSION

“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me” (Isaiah 6:8).

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Knowing our spiritual calling and ranking is essential to effectiveness and success in ministry. Like an army, there are positions and posts that we must occupy until God promotes us or move us into another role in the church.

We need to understand the difference between the believer’s primary call and specific leadership commission. I am convinced that the primary call for believers is to “stand in the gap”: to interceed and evangelize to our unsaved friends and loved ones. At the same time, God does specifically commission “some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11). However, these spiritual leaders serve as equippers and servants so that the general work of the ministry is done by most Christians who are committed to their local church. We will fail if we assume a calling God has not ordained. For example, if someone claims himself or herself a prophet or prophetess when God has not called as such is to be led astray by one’s own ways and wills. In the Bible, Saul was a king but he tried to be a priest and end up being destroyed. On the other hand, I see David as a shepherd boy who was faithful in his duty before he was anointed to become king. Likewise, there are some preachers today who were previously working as an engineer, a farmer and a teacher before God called them into positions of leadership in the church. Some people may have multiple gifts and callings but the important thing is to keep in rank and not move outside of our God-given gifts and callings at any time. Whether we are a preacher or a church member, the highest calling is not to be popular in ministry or be powerful in spiritual giftings; rather, it is to “let your light so

shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

I believe God is still calling and moving some individuals into the five-fold ministry offices but for the majority of believers, we need to be committed and dedicated to one another in the church without trying to assume positions we have not been called to stand. Remember, unless it is God’s calling, we can cast out demons, heal the sick or operate in the prophetic and still end up in hell.

The question is, Do we know God so intimately that we can say as Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” (John 5:19). You see, a good idea is not necessarily a God idea when it comes to spiritual mission. Likewise, a burden is not necessarily a call. A burden can be a fleshly zeal or soulish desire but a call is like fire burning within our bones. For example, there have been times when I have a burden to see more Christian schools being established but it might not be my call to build one. If it has not been birthed in the Spirit and developed through prayer in the first place, then I should not simply go ahead and start one. But when you receive a call of God, it grows on you. It burns within your heart. You might even try to run away from the call but the inner voice will still arrest your attention, whether you like it or not.

“Holy Spirit, let Your fire burn deep within my soul. Take control of my heart and spirit. I want to do Your will. In Jesus name.”

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14. THE TIME OF THE END

“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, *even* to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (Daniel 12:4).

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The natural and spiritual worlds have never been so climatic as this century has been. Wars, riots and demonstrations have occurred like nothing the world has ever seen before. In the spiritual realm, the Pentecostal, healing and Charismatic revivals have also been some of the most sweeping events of all church history. And now, we are standing on the threshold of reaping the greatest harvest of souls as the new millennium approaches.

Jesus said that the time of the end would be marked by spiritual deception, wars and rumours of wars, nation rising against nation, kingdom against kingdom, famines, pestilences and earthquakes (according to Matthew 24:4-8). I also believe that the book of Daniel gives us further insights into the times we are living in which is characterized by an increase in travel and knowledge. The growth of air flights, cars, books, radio, television, Internet and all kinds of transportation and media point to the time of conclusion.

Time is running out! All over the world, people are fearing that our economic and social world could soon collapse. But friend, the same book in Daniel gives us the faith to live victoriously in these troubled times, “And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do *exploits*” (Daniel 11:32). Jesus is coming soon! The reason why we are still alive and living today is because He is saying, “But go thou thy way till the end *be*: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days” (Daniel 12:13). What is “thy lot” (or “your inheritance”) that He is speaking of? I sincerely believe that our greatest treasure with God is this, “Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine INHERITANCE, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession” (Psalm 2:8); “To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins,

and INHERITANCE among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Acts 26:18).

“Father, we ask for nations as the inheritance of Your Son. We pray for the harvest of souls to be ushered into Your Kingdom. In Jesus name.”

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15. OBEDIENCE OVERCOMES OFFENSES

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:43-45).

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Are there situations in our lives where we have felt betrayed and offended? Have we been attacked and persecuted by others?

Well, Jesus said that in the last days, many will be “offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another” (Matthew 24:10). When we have the opportunity for being offended, we can either react in foolishness or release forgiveness. We could view ourselves as victims or become vessels of victory by walking in love and forgiveness. It isn’t always the easiest thing to do but when I realize that if Jesus was “oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7), then I have no right to hold on to offenses. To allow anger and bitterness is actually pride and self-righteousness. If Jesus had insisted on His rights, He could have called down fire from heaven to blast His enemies or summoned the angels to rescue Him from temptation. He could have chosen not to go to the cross and none of us would be saved today. Instead, Jesus chose to yield His rights and

gave Himself in complete submission, “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do...” (Luke 23:34).

We cannot avoid the way people may be offended at us but we can decide to bless and love others in the midst of conflict. Do not allow offenses or hurts to distract us from serving Him freely and fully, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:21).

“Father, I love You. Hold me close and let me walk in Your love. In Jesus name.”

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16. A CALL TO COMPASSION

“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly *is* plenteous, but the labourers *are* few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:35-38).

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Love and compassion marks the ministry of Jesus. What is our motivation for ministry? Is it for show to commend ourselves or for a sign to confirm His Word? Is it to promote our ministries or to point men and women to the Master Himself?

If we want to preach or sing publicly for anything other than for the glory of God, we have mixtures God will judge if we remain unrepentant, “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment” (James 3:1 *NKJV*). God has high standards for leadership.

He deals with us not so much on our performance in public as much as our personality in private. We are known not by our charisma but by our character. It is not functions but fruits that we will be remembered by.

Power, positions and performances do not impress God. But passion for Jesus and compassion for the lost will qualify us for the work of the ministry.

“Lord, give me a passion for You and a compassion for the lost. In Jesus name.”

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17. BLEED TO BLESS, LOSE TO LOVE

“He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 10:39).

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True discipleship is to give our lives to God above all other human relationships and earthly pursuits.

Following Jesus can cause us to bleed over all our selfish ambition in order to bless Him and others He call us to. The demands of discipleship will cost us to lose our own interests to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37). One measure of devotion is to be willing to forsake all other achievements to where knowing Christ intimately becomes our consuming desire, “Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ” (Philippians 3:8).

Are there relationships that hold us back from pursuing the high calling of God? Do we place Jesus the highest priority over all other interests of our lives?

“Father, do not let compromise or distraction detract my loyalty to You. In Jesus name.”

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18. HOLY DETERMINATION

“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matthew 11:12).

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We need to be militant in faith and aggressive about serving Christ and reaching our world for Him. The violence here is not about being brutal with people but having action in invading the the kingdom of darkness and reclaiming the territory that rightfully belongs to the Church.

No longer can we be defensive, we must enter into an offense against the strongholds of the enemy. The greatest battle for us as believers is to overcome the works of the devil and get people saved with the Gospel, “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Are we hungry to see souls enter the Kingdom of God? Then we need to get “violent” with a holy determination in showing forth the power of God from praying and preaching in the Spirit, “And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:4-5).

“Father, enlist me as part of Your victorious army. I want to be trained to march forward in advancing Your Kingdom. In Jesus name.”

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19. ARE YOU A GLADIATOR OF THE GOSPEL?

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matthew 24:14).

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We are living in the last days. We are the generation that will see the greatest demonstration and manifestation of God’s glory and grace. We have a ministry of reconciliation, not just a message of reformation.

God has commissioned us as His witnesses, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Sa-ma’ri-a, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). This is our finest hour. This is the church’s final destiny to be a witness to all nations. Never has there been such doors of opportunity to declare and publish His Word like we have today. We have the technology and tools through books, Internet, radio, television and other methods to proclaim the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ in a year what could have taken a decade only earlier this century.

Time is critical. We must discern God’s perfect plan and timing in ministry. Churches and ministries can no longer be built on natural factors. To be on the cutting-edge of what the Holy Spirit is doing, we need anointed believers and ministers who are supernatural gladiators.

“Father, raise and train me as a warrior of faith and a gladiator of the gospel for such a time as this. I ask this in Jesus name.”

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20. SPIRIT DEMONSTRATION FOLLOW SOUND DOCTRINE

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16:15-18).

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Deliverances, signs and wonders confirm the preaching of God’s Word, “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen” (Luke 16:20).

Sometimes we seek signs when we should be teaching the Word. On the other hand, there are some religious people who fight every supernatural signs and wonders. Just because there are counterfeit miracles do not negate the legitimate. God wants both the Word and the Spirit working together. When we hold fast to sound doctrine, we will have the “demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Corinthians 2:4). When we are equipped by the Word and guided by the Holy Spirit, we do not have to fear false manifestations.

Our world is looking for truth and reality. People are looking for supernatural power in operation. The devil is happy to answer their quest through cults and the occults. As Christians, if we do not demonstrate the power of God through the message of the cross, we become a people “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof... ” (2 Timothy 3:5). We have a ministry of reconciliation, not just a message of reformation, “And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18). God is still in the miracle-working business today but He needs you and I to fervently declare “his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people” (Psalm 96:3).

“Father, we declare Your majesty and glory. Send Your Word and deliver the nations from darkness to light. In Jesus name.”

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21. ARE YOU A HOLLYWOOD SUPERSTAR OR A “HOLY WOOD” SAINT OF GOD?

“I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

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God is looking for holy and yielded saints to use, not popular superstars. Many people are seeking a platform to promote their ministries when God wants to pour Himself into and through vessels that will give Him all the praise, “that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified” (Isaiah 61:3).

We can be superstars of the church world and yet miss out as a servant of the Commander-in-Chief. Spiritual prosperity is paying and praying the price for purging ourselves from the profanity of the flesh and be prepared for the Master’s profit, “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, *and* prepared unto every good work” (2 Timothy 2:20-21).

Ask ourselves, Are we submitting ourselves completely to the Spirit of God? Power comes with persistence in prayer, not playing religious politics. Purity comes through partaking in the Presence of the Almighty, not performing pious but powerless projects. We must position ourselves to a place wherby

we will produce the proof of the Person of the Holy Spirit pouring Himself through us, His people.

“Holy Spirit, pour out Your anointing as we yield completely to You. In Jesus precious name.”

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22. COMMUNITY IN UNITY WITH A MISSIONARY AUTHORITY

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:41-47).

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The early church in the book of Acts was a community in unity brought about by the Holy Spirit. It stood boldly as a testimony of the ministry of Christ as He said, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Sa-ma’ri-a, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Today, we are the continuity of this community that was missionary and visionary, “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39). What is the model of the church that is on the cutting edge of what the Holy Spirit

wants to do through us to bring salvation to the nations? It is when we understand that we are called, challenged, charged, cherished, chosen, commanded, commissioned, committed, compelled, conditioned, confirmed, connected, consecrated, convinced and covenanted to go forth in Jesus name!

We are called as disciples who may be ordinary yet serving a God who is extraordinary. We are challenged to walk in spiritual authority and to show forth divine activity. We are charged to combat apathy and to culture people to live mightily and victoriously. We are cherished passionately by the Almighty to lovingly and prayerfully touch hearts to call on Him freely and fully. We are chosen to conquer attitudes of negativity and to champion Godly values positively. We are commanded to destroy the works of the enemy and to claim new territory. We are commissioned with the responsibility to take every opportunity to turn lives from spiritual captivity to liberty. We are committed to bringing the ministry of reconciliation to people who want to remove their sin's history and be released to fulfill their destiny for eternity. We are compelled to close out earthly superficiality and open up Heavenly reality. We are conditioned by the Word to be holy, move powerfully and successfully in this journey of mercy. We are confirmed to actively and forcefully advance the Fatherly Kingdom spiritually, not activate ourselves carnally to assault any personality or worldly kingdom academically, militarily or politically. We are connected to operate in the realm of the Holy Spirit with such accuracy, sensitivity and tenacity that many hearts will seek the Lord with much expectancy. We are consecrated to communicate the Gospel through methods that are relevant and contemporary to our generation without compromising the message of Biblical authenticity and fidelity. We are convinced that Jesus is the only way to walk in honesty, integrity and prosperity and to live abundantly and fruitfully. We are covenanted with Him as Lord over us preeminently and supremely.

God wants us to be believers of quality. He is looking for our availability more than our ability. Let us serve Him diligently, faithfully, fervently, obediently and steadfastly, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth

through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently*” (1 Peter 1:22).

“Father, let Your people arise and shine. Make us a praise in the earth. In Jesus name.”

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23. HOW TO BE FERVENT WITHOUT FEELING FEARFUL AND FLAKY

“Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord” (Romans 12:11).

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We can be fanatical in the flesh without being fervent in spirit. We can be showy and yet not strong. We can be loud and yet not legitimate. We can be active and yet not anointed. We can have a facade of religion and yet not have faith in God’s righteousness, “For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge” (Romans 10:2). Faith is activated by God’s Word and the Holy Spirit, which purify our hearts, feed our spirit and fan the flame within us to be passionate for Jesus and others, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently*” (1 Peter 1:22).

To be fervent, we need to understand God’s righteousness is the basis for fully functioning in prayer and worship, “Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). Without a right standing with Christ through faith, we will try to impress people by our long or loud prayers and worship without impacting and influencing principalities and powers in the heavenly places. True spiritual zeal is to see God’s glory manifested and demons defeated without concerned with being multitude motivated or people persuaded, “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men?

for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10). Jesus Himself reflected this fervency when his disciples remembered that it was written, “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up” (John 2:17; with reference to Psalm 69:9).

Let’s ask ourselves: Are we going through the motions or are we making divine connections? Are we running what I call “Charismatic legalisms” or subduing kingdoms? Are we seeking human approval or crying out for a Holy Ghost revival?

“Lord, I give You my heart and soul and strength and mind to worship You in spirit and in truth. In Jesus name.”

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24. SEX IS NOT JUST PHYSICAL MECHANICS, BUT SPIRITUAL DYNAMICS AS WELL

“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make *them* the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:15-20).

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Sex is a celebration and communion of lives within the bonds of marriage. It is more than a biological act, but has spiritual effect as well.

When a man and a woman unite themselves in holy matrimony, it becomes a precious gift and a powerful symbol of love. However, any sexual union between two people not married to each other becomes destructive.

We cannot answer the desire for sex the way we satisfy our appetite for food. The reason is that sexuality reaches into depths of our spirit and involves the exchange of our whole being. To violate this arrangement is to dishonour God and bring confusion to our lives. Illicit sex is not God's order. Marriage is the only place that sex becomes a blessing and joy. Let us reserve sex for marriage. "Lord, I belong to You. I give my body a living sacrifice. In Jesus name."

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25. DO NOT LET PEER PRESSURE ROB YOU OF PURE PLEASURE

"But I speak this by permission, *and* not of commandment. For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn" (1 Corinthians 7:6-9).

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Paul is speaking from personal preference when he wished that people could remain celibate, "And this I speak for your profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction" (1 Corinthians 7:35). He challenges that marriage will not only bring tremendous spiritual significance, but social and economic considerations as well. In light of the need to balance the believer's calling and earthly responsibilities, one must seek the wisdom and benefits of either matrimony or celibacy.

However, Paul also makes it clear that to remain unmarried is an individual matter and is in no way more moral or noble than being married. It depends on one's ability to control his or her sexual passion.

Of course, for most people, there are the realities of stresses of the sexual drive that marriage seems to be more ideal. The purpose of this message is not only to present you God's Word concerning making your choice to either be single or married, but it is also my prayer that as the people of God, we will be propelled and be prepared to practise powerful principles of permanent partnership with a passionate pursuit. Whether single or married, we need Godly passion and purity in all our social and spiritual relationships, without being proud, prude and promiscuous. We need to exercise responsibility and discern His timing concerning God's purpose and promise for sex if this is the order He has for us. Do not let peer pressure rob us of pure pleasure. Pride and peer pressure will drive us to boast of sexual conquest. Promiscuity will cause us to behave in a way that is not right in God's eye, breaking His heart and ours.

On the other hand, Godly passion and purity will give us the desires to influence others to fulfill their potential according to their God-given gifts and talents and to be blameless in our emotions, thoughts and words even when no one else is watching.

“Father, I ask for Godly passion and purity. In Jesus name.”

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26. ARE YOU A CLANGING CYMBAL OR A CHAMPION OF CHARITY?

“THOUGH I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13:1).

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If we are not careful, we can exercise the gifts of the Holy Spirit and still get into a religious rut. If we are not motivated by love for those to whom we minister, we become a semblance of appearance without substance.

Without love, all our gifts and services mean nothing. It is not the amount of books we write or the number of people we minister to that is our greatest treasure; rather, God measures us according to our heart and spirit in knowing, loving and serving Him and the people we attend to. The true test is whether we place spiritual relationships above superficial reputations. For example, I want fellowship and friendship with people who will sharpen me like iron rather than those who will only flatter me in my face and then stab me in the back. Over the years, I know of some people who have given me Godly counsel which I didn't like then but have become invaluable to me now. Who are our friends? Is it soulish or divine relationships? Is it based on natural interests or spiritual pursuits? Ask ourselves, Do we envy, boast, get proud, become rude, self-seeking and easily angered; or are we patient and kind toward them?

“Father, I ask for grace and wisdom to walk in the light of Your love. In the mighty name of Jesus.”

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27. THE PURPOSE OF PROPHECY

“But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort” (1 Corinthians 14:3).

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Prophecy is not just foretelling the future by a word of wisdom. In the New Testament, the purpose of prophecy is to build up, encourage and comfort believers in the church. It is given to prepare the the Body of Christ to walk in our high calling and divine destiny.

Even if a prophecy involve a word of chastening, correcting, rebuking and warning, it is so that we will change what is necessary in our lives in order to be ready for what God is going to do, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Revelation 3:19). The message must based on love and mercy, not judgment, “So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewd no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (James 2:12-13). The bottom line is that our hearts are restored and turned to God and the church is strengthened. We need to judge and test prophecy by the Word of God, “Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21). The peace and the Presence of the Holy Spirit must be present in the church meeting, “How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If any man speak in an *unknown* tongue, *let it be* by two, or at the most *by* three, and *that* by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If *any thing* be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints”(1 Corinthians 14:26-33).

Many times, prophecy is only part of the whole counsel of spiritual guidance. We should not depend on prophecy as the only way God leads. The restoration of the apostolic and prophetic anointing of the present day Church does not mean that words of knowledge or wisdom should be the main focus of a service. God can also lead and speak through the Word, the inner witness, the conscience, the voice of the Holy Spirit and visions. Without proper training in the Word and prayer, we can fall into counterfeit and erroneous operations. The other vital aspect of flowing in the prophetic is to learn to discern the spiritual atmosphere and timing. In other words, we should only step out and move in this realm by the Holy Spirit unction in the right place and hour, not because of public expectation or personal pressure.

Now I love to flow in the prophetic but I must put a “check” in my spirit to know if I follow the Word and the Spirit above all else. Let me give a personal example. Actually, in wanting to be careful and sure that I am administering from the Holy Spirit’s direction instead of the flesh or soul, I have even shut down the legitimate before. At other times, the fear of man has kept me from releasing words of exhortation. In this process, I have committed spiritual abortions and have quenched the Spirit of God to strengthen others.

I’m not writing this message to cast doubt and create fear concerning the prophetic. Rather, I want to encourage you to develop your life in the Word, faith, prayer and the Holy Spirit so that you will avoid the pitfalls of the prophetic and move accurately in this gift.

“Holy Spirit, flow through me. Turn our hearts to You and prepare us to do Your will. In Jesus name.”

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28. PRACTICAL PERSONAL PURITY

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

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Godly purity produces exemplary behaviour and manner of life. The quality of our spiritual life is defined by the obedience of our heart in a relationship with Jesus, not a system of works.

Proverbs 4:23 says to “keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life”. We are to protect our emotions, thoughts and words against any hint of immodesty and immorality; to conduct ourselves blameless in every detail of our life even when no one else is looking.

To have a pure heart is to be disciplined in body, soul and spirit, “Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

“Father, I long for a pure heart and a strong spirit. I ask this in Jesus name.”

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29. FROM MILK TO MEAT

“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:12-14).

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Applying God’s Word is essential to growing in spiritual maturity. The Bible is food and nourishment for our soul and spirit.

As we grow in the knowledge of the Lord, we will develop spiritual senses to discern between sound and false doctrine and between righteous and wrong conduct. If we are to live in His Kingdom, we must accept our Father's correction, discipline and training, "My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth" (Proverbs 3:11-12).

Are there any practices in our lives that are grey? Do we struggle with willful sin? Then receive God's Word with a hearing ear and the right attitude of heart which will produce the fruits of righteousness, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:11).

"Father, train me to live as Your child. Correct and discipline me to bring me to spiritual growth. In Jesus name."

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30. BUILDING AN ARK THROUGH FAITH AND PRAYER

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; but the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Hebrews 11:7).

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Many people believe only what they can see, hear and feel. As Christians, we must build our lives on the solid foundation and the spritual truths of the Word of God.

When God speaks, it will not always sound right to our human understanding but obedience to Him bring victories, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart;

and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6). Consider the way God told Gideon that he should downsize the army. Natural thinking would say that God must be mistaken to think the army was too big. But Gideon followed God’s Word and experienced victory over the Midianites. Another example was when God told Joshua to have the Israelites march around the wall and blow their trumpets. Common sense would say that this was unbelievable but obeying God’s instruction brought them success.

Building an ark when there was no rain seemed foolishness to the people of Noah’s days but when the floods came, it made the difference between life and death. Heeding the call of God in our lives can mean hatred and persecution from people but it will bring blessings in the end. I believe we are now living in the last days where believers who are bold and strong for Jesus will be scoffed by unbelievers and even sometimes from fellow Christians who are carnal and compromising, “But as the days of No’e *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that No’e entered into the ark, And they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:37-39).

Today, the ark we are called to build is one of faith and prayer, “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost” (Jude 20). The ark represents the Presence of God in our lives. Are we full of Jesus and strong in the Spirit? Are we ready for the coming of the Lord? Are we prepared as a Bride for our Bridegroom? We may not know exactly when the rapture takes place but what is important is that we will be found committed to His plan and purpose when He comes, “And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out and meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps” (Matthew 25:6-7). Are we brightly burning with the oil of the Holy Spirit today?

“Holy Spirit, burn it deep within me. Let Your zeal and fire ignite my love for You. In Jesus name.”

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31. WINNING OVER THE WEARINESS AND WEIGHT OF WORRY

“Humble yourself therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:6-7).

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There is heaviness in worry. Jesus said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). Why do we get anxious about things? When we really get to the root of the issue, it is because of pride. Pride is not being able to humble ourselves and submit to God for answers to life’s problems. It is not trusting Him to provide for us our needs.

In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus gave us the key to overcoming anxieties, burdens and worries: that is, to be meek and lowly in heart. Humility cures strife and worldliness. The book of James chapter 4 begins by saying that our selfish nature cause us to depend on earthly wisdom to figure out what we want. Then we worry that we do not receive. In contrast, the passage goes on to say that submitting to God and resisting the devil will produce victory in our personal spiritual warfare (read James 4:7-10).

True humility is casting all our cares upon our Father who is deeply concerned for us through supplication with thanksgiving which will enable us to rejoice under all circumstances, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made

known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7). True joy in the Lord is based on an inward decision, not because of outward condition, “I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need” (Philippians 4:12).

Why do we fret? Are we holding on to things in our own hands when it should be laid down before our Father whose heart of love will “supply all [our] need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19)? Could it be that we are proud, selfish and ungrateful? We need to confess and “draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded ... Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (James 4:8, 10).

“Father, I confess my sin of worry. I long for a heart of humility, purity and thanksgiving. In Jesus name.”

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Your WORD Is Strength

The Bible is the most important book in the entire world.

Though authored by men, it is the Holy Spirit who inspired every thought and word, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21).

It is God’s letter to us, the book of divine instructions. Through its pages, we find rebuke for our sin and comfort in times of sorrow, “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It is the means to know the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, “IN the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

As we walk with the Lord, we will learn to hear His voice and seek to do His will, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Unfortunately, many believers neglect faith, prayer and the study of God’s Word. This results in boredom, dryness and emptiness, etc. There are no “quick fixes” in receiving from God. We need to wait in His Presence and devour His Word, not just read “how to” books on Christian living. I ask that the Holy Spirit will awaken you to “draw nigh to God” (James 4:8) and know the true source of strength for your every need as I say this, “As precious and as important as it is, it is not enough to just hear sermons from some great preachers or read books of some dedicated men and women of God telling us about their experiences, we need to be lost in the awesome wonder and glorious riches of Christ ourselves as we feast at His table in the secret closet of prayer”. He is the manna from on high, the Bread who satisfies us completely. Birthed out of my own desperate cry and need for more of Him, I pray that this volume of writings will encourage you to enter into “the school of the Holy Spirit” yourself. Don’t depend entirely on some book, tape, counsellor, shepherd or pastor for answer and wisdom. Instead, get on your face before God and the Holy Ghost will be your true Comforter and Preacher. It is He who brings the Scriptures alive to you and enables you to apply His truth in your everyday life as you hunger for Christ and Christ alone.

Jonathan

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