

# PATH AND STEPS

40 DAYS LENTEN MEDITATION & PRAYER





# With Thanksgiving

Day

1

*Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise.  
Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.*

*Psalm 100:4*

How do we begin this year of 2020? How do we “enter” into this year? Borrowing the words of the Psalmist – with thanksgiving, of course. The Psalmist calls out to God’s people to trust their God for He is good and trustworthy. And He has prepared the best for His people, sometimes even beyond their expectations.

Sometimes, however, that is exactly what we need. We need to stop expecting God to give us what we think is best for us, and let Him decide what is really best for us. When the Psalmist said, “Enter into His gates...”, it suggests that God has prepared gates for his people to go through. A gate leads from one place to another. It is an opening to another thing, a new beginning. God has prepared many “gates” for His people. His desire is to lead us forward in life, so that we might walk into His destiny for us.

There is more than one gate. God leads us progressively. He leads us into different things in different seasons. It is when we live with a thankful attitude towards God, acknowledging Him as the giver of life and source of all blessings that allows us to remain under His guidance, in His leading and perfect will.

When we pass through those gates, we enter into His courts. A court is an enclosed area by fence or walls. It is a protected area, like a sheep pen, a village or a city. When we are in God’s courts, we are protected. Our loved ones and all that we have received from God will come under His covering and protection. That includes our health, our works, ministries, the wealth that we have received from God, our families and those under our godly authority. With praises in our mouth, declaring the goodness of God in our lives, we are ensured that we are well protected by our Faithful God and Father.

At the start of this year, determine to be a thankful person throughout. Decide to speak words of faith concerning your situations and our God. With thanksgiving and praises, let us enter into the gates of new breakthroughs and miracles of this year, into His courts of protection and His Presence. Where God’s presence is, there is joy, security, healing and freedom. Receive what He has in store for you!

## **Response**

Spend time praising God and thanking Him for all His goodness and because He is good all the time! Thank Him for the goodness you are about to receive.

## Angry No More

*For I will not contend forever, Nor will I always be angry; For the spirit would fail before Me, And the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness I was angry and struck him; I hid and was angry, And he went on backsliding in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will also lead him, And restore comforts to him and to his mourners.*

*Isaiah 57:16-18*

Lake Toba is located in Sumatra, Indonesia. It is actually a crater of a live volcano situated 908 metres above sea level. It is a huge lake which has an island bigger than Singapore in the middle of it! It is quite astonishing to see many people live comfortably around the mouth of a live volcano, and more amazingly, it is a tourist attraction which attracts people from all over the world.

The wrath of God against a sinful world can be likened to fire from a volcano. When it explodes, the lava and fire consume everything that stands in its path. Yet, when God shows His mercy, just like Lake Toba, He chooses to contain His anger. As many have found life-supporting environment around Lake Toba, many have found life in a merciful God. That's grace!

When we find ourselves living under God's grace, we must not take any blessing we enjoy for granted. They are not our entitlement. These blessings are granted to us by this merciful and gracious God so that we might know Him intimately and live out the purposes He has for us. When we know that we live under grace, we have all the reasons in the world to be thankful to God. We have all the reasons in the world to treasure what we have. It will be very easy for us to stop complaining and start appreciating people around us, and life in general.

You see, our loving God chooses to cease from His anger because He knows if He continues in His anger, we who are sinful and frail will not be able to stand before Him. He chose to send His Son, Jesus to take away the consequences of our sins, heal and restore us from the pain and destruction caused by our sins. He went ahead to do more: He gave us an abundant and fruitful life which we do not deserve, nor can we do anything to earn it.

In Christ Jesus, God is angry no more. His grace is amazing! Our response can only be thanksgiving and to share this hope, healing and restoration in a gracious God with others. Praise Him for His love for us!

### Response

Verbalise your thanksgiving to the Lord. Express your gratitude and appreciation to someone in your life today.

## Personal Door

*To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ....I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*

*John 10:3,9*

Isaac Newton, the scientist who discovered gravity, had two cats at one time. One big and one small. When they went outside of the house and then wanted to come back in, they will scratch on the door. Isaac Newton decided to make small trap doors for the two cats, one bigger door and one smaller one next to it. When his friends visited him, they asked Isaac Newton why did he need two doors? He replied because there are two cats. His friends laughed and commented that 'though the bigger cat cannot go through the smaller trap door, the smaller cat would have no trouble going through the bigger trap door! He needed in fact only one trap door that allowed both cats to go through.

Jesus in John 10 described Himself as "the door". He leads His sheep (plural), His Church out into her destiny. He speaks to His people, and by the awakening of the Holy Spirit, we hear His voice, His guidance and leading. Jesus has a mission for the Church. He envisions the Church to be His Bride, whom He cares, loves and protects jealously. The Church collectively is the Body of Christ, executing God's will on earth on His behalf.

Jesus also leads His sheep individually. A door opens up from one place to another. Without the door, there is no legitimate entry or exit. Jesus described those who do not enter by the door, but climb in by other ways as thieves and robbers. When we are at a crossroad, or at the end of a road, or confronted with a wall in our lives, look for the door. Only a door is an authorised passage to the next level, to the pasture that speaks of God's will and His place for us, His protection, provision and presence.

Jesus stands before you today as "the door". He has a corporate door for God's people, the Church. He also has a personal door for you. He wants to lead you, from where you are, into the next, so that you will be saved from the perils of the world and the snares of the devil, to find pasture! Perhaps, not quite for the same reason as Isaac Newton, He has a 'bigger door', and a 'smaller door', for us to enter by corporately and individually into His bigger redemption plan for the world.

### Response

Pray for doors to be opened before you this day that you might continue to grow from strength to strength, deeper into His purposes and destiny for you.

## Doors And Gates

*"blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies."*

*Genesis 22:17*

*"And they blessed Rebekah and said to her: "Our sister, may you become The mother of thousands of ten thousands; And may your descendants possess The gates of those who hate them."*

*Genesis 24:60*

Spiritual discipline includes patience to wait for doors to open with a word of God's wisdom for what to do, or not do in the meantime. But when it comes to the enemy's wiles, we do not wait. When it comes to the enemy, we deny him entrance, taking authority over open doors and possessing every gate.

We are the seed of Abraham, the innumerable descendants destined to "possess the gates of their enemies." Abraham's relatives, sending Rebekah to become Isaac's wife, blessed her, declaring these exact words: "And may your descendants possess the gates of those who hate them."

In daily life, we experience enemy spirits which desire to gain entrance to affect you. Instead of yielding to that opening—that gate—possess it! Your covenant with God includes authority over every gate. You have governmental authority to open and close them!

Take authority! Remove the thing that does not belong in your life. Now . . . close the door.

*Adapted from Shirley Weaver's Daily Devotional*

### Response

Ask the Lord to show you if there is any "open door" in your life that renders you vulnerable to the enemy. Take authority in the Name of Jesus and shut it. Possess the gates.

## The Journey Continues

*"And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."*

John 10:4-5

At the beginning of the year, students commence a new school term. They start something new that would lead them to the next level of learning. Students move into the door of the new term, whether they are ready or not. For them to progress, they need to have certain mindsets, guidance and determination, so that they will succeed.

When we enter through the "doors" which the Lord has opened before us, we too need certain mindsets, guidance and determination to reach the destination. Merely going through a door is no guarantee that we will reach our intended goal. We need to acknowledge that it is Jesus who has led us this far in the journey of our lives. He is the one who opens doors for us whenever we needed them. We need to recognise that we need His constant guidance every step of the way. Because He knows what is ahead of us, and we don't, we must learn to recognise His voice, because He leads us by speaking to us through His words and by the Holy Spirit. Once we position ourselves to hear His voice, by reading and meditating on His words, we will unmistakably hear His voice.

Sometimes the problems happen when God's children start their journey well but end it badly, all because they failed to heed the voice of Jesus. They have perhaps, inclined their ears to the voice of their own reasoning (without checking with other brothers and sisters in Christ), or the voice of popular culture of the world, or the voice of temptation, to take a shortcut. Whatever voice, any message or counsel that is not in line with God's words, or not aligned to the character of Jesus, we must reject if we want to stay on course.

Even so, having gone through the right door and on the right path, often still requires us to persevere to complete the journey. Diligence and determination are essential ingredients to succeed in the things that God is leading us to accomplish. It involves holding onto the promises of God in unwavering faith. It means working hard when challenges appear. It means not to give up when we know it is Jesus who is leading us.

The doors are open before us. The journey continues. Have a blessed and fruitful season ahead!

### Response

Pray for yourself, and someone you know, that they will cling onto Jesus on this journey of faith, so that you, and them, will not miss "God's best" and you will finish well.

## In The Footstep Of Jesus

*"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father."*

*John 14:12*

I was in Court to be part of the proceedings for 12 young lawyers to be admitted to the Bar. Among them, at least two have lawyer parents. Some of them, however, had a childhood dream or passion to study law, inspired by another. We sometimes observe children are inclined to walk into the professional footsteps of their parents, or at least in the similar fields.

Jesus had this to say about those who believe in Him: that we who are His disciples will continue the works of Jesus, and will do even greater works than He has done! This pronouncement was fulfilled soon after Jesus ascended into heaven. Peter in his first evangelistic meeting, saw 3,000 people become Christian! (Acts 2:41). The disciples of Jesus are given both the authority from God and the power of the Holy Spirit. What Jesus had been given and obtained through the Cross and Resurrection, we receive them by faith. We step into His shoes, so to speak, to carry on the work and ministry of Jesus on earth. And we have been promised that we will do "greater works.

We tend to emulate those who inspire us. We observe these people, and capture their passion or their cause. Their passion and their cause becomes ours. We walk in their footsteps. The disciples of Jesus follow Him. We need to know Him deeper. When we do, we will inevitably be inspired by His words, His love, His passion, His compassion, His wisdom and His cause. So much so that they become ours. Impassioned by Him to seek God's Kingdom and God's heart. That's the life of a disciple – to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. When we live the life of a disciple of Jesus, we will reflect the heart, character, passion and love of Jesus. We are to inspire others to want to follow Jesus. This is what we call sometimes, "witnessing for Jesus". When others are inspired, they too will desire what we have. Just like Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."

Let us aspire to inspire others to walk in the footstep of Jesus.

### Response

Remember those who inspire us in our journey of life. Give thanks to God for sending them into our lives. Ask the Lord to use you to inspire others to love Him and follow Him.



## Would You Still Follow Him?

*But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."*

*Acts 9:15 -16*

Paul had just had a powerful encounter with Jesus. He was completely overcome by the presence of the Living Christ. This was to be the turning point in his life, a new beginning to a whole new life. He must have been quite overwhelmed by his experience on the road to Damascus. To be chosen as God's vessel to bear His name before Gentiles, kings and the Jews must have been very flattering. However, what followed must have been very unsettling as well as "suffer many things for My name's sake."

I wonder how many would still want to follow Jesus if they heard similar things as God said to Paul. For Paul, the depth of that spiritual reality in encountering Jesus, far surpassed the pain of impending suffering for following Jesus. If pain is a problem in our lives, and averting pain is part of our pursuit in life, the devil would certainly play that into his advantage. He would certainly "offer" us the alternative of a painless and convenient life. Such would be a tremendous temptation to us, to choose the easy way out and abandon the Way of Life. He tried that with Jesus when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-12).

The key to overcome the control of the fear of pain and suffering is to seek a daily encounter with Jesus. Know His presence and His truth at the experiential level. Experience the reality of His love so much, so all other things in life pale in comparison. Such was the experience of Paul when he said, "What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:8).

The devil has no hold on us, when we refuse to yield to his threat and persuasion to have a pain free life. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death." (Revelation 12:11). Choose to follow Jesus regardless of the costs, and we shall walk victoriously in life.

### Response

Surrender to the Lord all fear of pain, sickness, failure, poverty, death, lack and suffering. Read Psalm 23. Pray through the verses of that Psalm and invite Jesus to meet you at your vulnerability.

## Seeking God

*And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered.*

*2 Chronicles 31:21*

In the animated movie "Finding Nemo", we saw the father clown fish going through tremendous challenges and hardship to find his lost son, Nemo. It is a fun family movie to watch. Propelled by the love for his son, because life was at stake, the father sought the son with all his might. He met with all kinds of obstacles, a fish's worst nightmare, but he was undeterred. In the end, he found Nemo.

God has, since the fall of man, been planning to reach out to man to save us. His effort is purposeful, single-minded, undeterred. That is the reason Jesus came, "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10). Since sin came into the world, there exist many obstacles between God and man. Sin multiplies itself, evolves and spreads like cancer cells. But our God, our Creator, the Father of life, longs to find us and establish an intimate relationship with us.

Perhaps some of us feel that God is so distant at times. Especially in times of trouble and defeats. There may be emotion of discouragement, feeling unworthy, despair, etc that hinder us from drawing near to God. These obstacles are meant to be overcome. Hezekiah made it the core motivation of all that he was doing. He was doing some very good things, but they were not the end he pursued. The ultimate goal of his pursuit and efforts was to seek his God. The Scriptures tell us that as a result, he prospered.

Regardless of our state at this time, whether we are feeling down, or we are busy doing God's things, be determined to make all effort to overcome every obstacle and inconvenience, to seek God. Make it our ultimate pursuit to encounter His presence. Set aside time. Seek the help of another. Come into the fellowship of God's people. Do whatever that is necessary to seek Him with all your might. Because life is at stake!

### Response

Make a conscious choice to seek God's heart and will in some major decision in your life concerning your future. Pray also for our leaders that they may make decisions that will have the best interest of the people in their hearts.

## God Never Fails

*The LORD is righteous in her midst, He will do no unrighteousness. Every morning He brings His justice to light; He never fails, But the unjust knows no shame.*

*Zephaniah 3:5*

When a student fails an examination, his progress in his studies is hindered. He will need to re-sit and pass that very examination which he has failed. Many of us learn from experience, when we encounter failure of some sort. Unless we overcome in the areas we have failed, our progress and advancement in life will be stunted.

If life and the growth of it depends on our ability to overcome every challenge at the first encounter of it, then we are somewhat walking on very shaky ground. Because man is capable of failing. If success or happiness in our lives is dependent on man (ourselves or others), then there is little guarantee that we will achieve them. Failure is defined, as I would put it, not achieving an expectation, or falling out of a continuous course, or ceasing from journeying down a desired path.

Thanks be to God that He is trustworthy and dependable. He never fails. Whatever He expects Himself to do and execute, He reveals that to us, through His words and by His Holy Spirit. Whatever He has promised or says He will do, He will surely do. He is our sure hope of maintaining us on a continuous path in life – our destiny in Him is secured.

The Bible tells us that God is love. And "Love never fails..." (1 Corinthians 13:8a). It means that His love never ceases from flowing. He will never stop loving us in the continuum of time. His righteousness never fails, it never ceases from flowing. His faithfulness is everlasting and will not be truncated at any point of time in our lives

Hold on to the One who never fails in the midst of man's failures (yours or others). Pray with hope and confidence in the One whose love, righteousness, mercy, grace and faithfulness never ceases.

### Response

Choose to forgive yourself and others in your encounter of failure. Release them (and yourself) into the hands of the One whose love never fails.

## The Biceps of Faith

*Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*

*James 5:14-16*

I once read a story about a man, who was struggling with some major issues in his life. He spent some considerable amount of time praying to overcome it. Asking the Lord to help him. However, his situation remained the same and he became discouraged. He had a dream around that time and saw a huge rock in front of him. He has been trying very hard to push the rock away but it did not budge. The dream resembled very closely what he was going through. He felt so disappointed and started to cry. The Lord then spoke to him in the dream, asking, "Why are you crying, my child?" He replied, "Because I could not overcome this huge rock in my path. I did everything you told me to do, to pray and trust in you. Why wouldn't you enable me to remove this rock from my path?" The Lord replied, "Indeed this rock is beyond your strength. You cannot remove it no matter how strong you are. But look at your biceps. What do you see?". The man looked at his arms and saw that huge biceps have developed over that time he tried pushing the rock. Then the Lord said, "I wanted you to develop your faith and trust in me, I wanted to build character in you. Now, watch!". The Lord lifted His finger and flipped the rock away!

Though it is just a story, nonetheless it shows us the purpose of faith in our prayers. Often we think it is our faith that moves a mountain. In fact, it is God who moves a mountain! Our faith, expressed in our prayers, simply draw us closer to Him. In intimacy with the Lord, we are transformed to be that righteous man and woman, whose "effective, fervent prayer" avails much. We utter the prayer of faith, it is God who ultimately heals.

God is interested in us personally. He is more concerned with our character than our accomplishment. Because when our character is Christ-like, He then can accomplish much through us. In this Lent season, allow the Lord to work through our weaknesses, and transform us to be that man or woman He wants us to be.

### Response

Have you an area in your life which you find struggling? Ask the Lord to build in you the character traits which are necessary for breakthrough.

## How Great Is Your God?

*And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace." And the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward. But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea."*

*Exodus 14:13-16*

God sent Moses to the children of Israel in Egypt. They were held in bondage under Pharaoh's power of darkness. All the physical sufferings, oppression and slavery had a spiritual root – the occultic powers of Egypt. The children of Israel came under such demonic oppression simply because the enemy and his kingdom are against anything connected to the Covenant and Kingdom of God.

God has stated it very clearly in Exodus 3:20, "So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go." He Himself will deliver Israel. When the children of Israel under the leadership of Moses were caught between the pursuing army of Pharaoh and the Red Sea, he encouraged the people that God would deliver and fight for them. Moses did as many of us would do in times of great difficulties – that is to cry out to God and ask for His help. However, the Lord rebuked Moses for crying out to Him. Instead He asked Moses to tell the children of Israel to step out towards the Red Sea in faith and He asked Moses to "stretch out his hands".

You see, that was not the first time God asked Moses to stretch out his hand or his rod. In fact, the Lord had told Moses to do so at least seven times previously! (Exodus 7:5; 7:19; 8:5; 8:16; 9:22; 10:12 and 10:21). And every time, God demonstrated His power. God was building up Moses' faith in Him progressively, preparing him for crossing the Red Sea and beyond. It was relatively easy to trust the Lord for doing "wonders" to demonstrate His power, but it was quite another to trust Him to deliver them from a life and death situation.

But God has promised His people that He will deliver and save them. He is great in power. But how great is your God in your own eyes? Have you been seeing "little miracles" in your life? Are you ready to trust Him to deliver to you that life and death miracle? If you are, then...

"Why do you cry out to Him? Stretch out your hands...."

### Response

Begin to stretch out your hands and speak in the authority of Jesus to the "mountains" and "Red Sea" before you, and step out in faith when the Lord tells you to.

## Condition Your Hearing

*"Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.... But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear."*

*Matthew 13:14, 16*

I often think that God reveals certain things through His Holy Spirit to certain people, more frequently than others. Yet, we read from the Gospels that Jesus spoke to everyone alike, to the multitude who came after Him, but the hearers' responses were all very different. The Pharisees completely rejected His teachings. The crowd found them hard to accept sometimes, e.g. when He said those who eat of Him, (as the Bread that comes from heaven), will not die (John 6:50).

To the disciples, Jesus explained everything to them. Yet, still among them was a traitor. But one of the criminals (yes, there were two, had very different responses) who was crucified along with Jesus, confessed his faith in Jesus on the cross. The opportunity to hear God is made available to all without partiality. The only difference is how we hear. Do we desire to hear Him? Do we desire to hear truth, even if it means it goes against what we do or believe, yes, even against our theological preferences? When God speaks, we must have the desire to hear. Just like Nicodemus, the Pharisee who sought Jesus at night. When he heard of Jesus, he went to Him to seek truth.

We can condition our spiritual hearing. We must not seek to hear God's words and attempt to understand them only through the lenses of our own experience and learning, or the lack of them. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to condition our senses, to sanctify them, in order we might hear with the senses God has given us. We must avoid the temptation of superimposing our own philosophy and experiences on the Word of God, less "seeing we do not see, hearing we do not hear."

### Response

Pray to the Lord to sharpen your spiritual understanding. Start reading through the entire Bible this year like a novel.

## Changed From The Inside Out

*But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

*Titus 3:4-7*

Jesus had this to say when He met with Nicodemus, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God". (John 3:3). The Kingdom of God is present but not obvious to all. To be able to see the Kingdom of God is not merely having knowledge of its existence, but the experience of its reality. 'Though the Kingdom of God fills the whole universe, its rule and reign does not extend to a sinful world and a sinful heart. The sinful world and the sinful heart come under the rule of the devil. They are blinded to the reality of the Kingdom of God.

To be born again is to be regenerated into a new creation. Regeneration begins the moment we acknowledge and accept the Lordship of Jesus into our lives. Just like creation, it is only the beginning. The regeneration process continues throughout our lives on earth, "the washing of regeneration". It is the work of the Holy Spirit in us. The more we are regenerated, the clearer we shall see the Kingdom of God extending to every part of our being.

What must we do on our part? We need to consciously and continuously permit the Holy Spirit to change us and transform us. The greater cooperation and obedience we render to God, we more we will experience the transformation of our "sinful hearts" into righteous hearts. When the sinful heart is transformed, righteousness will begin to flow out in our actions, behaviour, attitudes and into our relationships with our fellow man.

When the sinful heart is changed, the sinful world can then be changed – from the inside out!

### Response

Confess to the Lord any sinful attitudes and actions and seek His forgiveness. Ask the Lord to change you where you are powerless to change, and determine to change the parts of your life which only you can change.

## Latent Weakness

*Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron.*

1 Timothy 4:1-2

When I was seeking treatment for shingles at my doctor's office some time ago, she was puzzled how low my immune system was. She found no direct cause for the sudden compromise in my immunity. Then, she asked me how much "metal" I have in my body. It was my turn to be puzzled. She asked me to open my mouth, and counted the number of metal fillings in my teeth. She advised me to purposefully replace those metal fillings with enamel. She suspected the presence of metal in my mouth could have caused a compromise in my general immunity over time, a latent weakness.

The Bible quotation today speaks of a seared conscience. The conscience once seared will lose its ability to distinguish what is right and what is wrong. A seared conscience is unable to discern truth, let alone receive truth. It opens the door to the lies and deception of the enemy. Faith is built on truth. If lies and deception rule over a person, the foundation of faith is shaky and will not stand against the onslaught of the enemy. Many have departed from faith in the One True and Living God because of a seared conscience.

The conscience can be seared by willful disobedience and sins. It can be seared by refusal to choose what is godly and what is right, in our responses to adverse and painful experiences, in life decisions we make. The conscience can be seared when we allow little compromises into our lives, into our faith in Jesus. The seemingly unrelated, distant or insignificant choices we have made, or lies we entertained, could well become a latent weakness at the foundation of our lives.

What then, should we do? Perhaps like the Psalmist says, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."  
(Psalm 139:23-24).

### Response

Let us ask the Lord to search us, and reveal to us the latent weaknesses that may be in us, which we might not even be aware of. Surrender those weaknesses to the Lord and ask Him to lead us into His everlasting way.



## Overcoming The Flesh

*And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My men-servants and on My maidservants. I will pour out My Spirit in those days.*

*Joel 2:28-29*

Paul says in Romans 8:8, that those who are "in the flesh" cannot please God.

The flesh is very much part of us. At baptism, we renounce "the flesh, the world and the devil". The Bible speaks clearly of the need to crucify the flesh – put into death, render it powerless over our lives, yet without eliminating it from us. The flesh with its desire, is against everything of God and His Kingdom. The works of the flesh will go against the will of God. Little wonder why Jesus said those who desire to come after Him, must deny themselves and "carry their cross daily".

Carrying the cross daily is the only solution to crucify the flesh in us daily. The mark of the cross is our daily choice – to choose godly responses and godly actions even if it costs us something. In effect, it is the Holy Spirit who will take us above the power of the flesh in us, to begin to walk in the perfect will of God. The prophecy of Joel came to pass on Pentecost in the Acts of the Apostles. That fulfilment gives us a sure hope and marks a beginning that we can overcome the flesh.

If you have been struggling with the pull of the flesh in you, struggle no more on your own. With the best of our effort, we cannot prevail. We need to open our hearts to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Let the Spirit into "all flesh", and let Him take control. Let Him bring us into deeper communication with God and more intimate relationship with our Lord.

When the Holy Spirit comes upon us, God will be glorified in us. This is what every disciple of Jesus should be. Will you let Him come in?

### Response

Ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten you and expose the work of the flesh in your life. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you in all your decision-making today.

## More Than A Cause

*Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."*

Acts 9:1-6

Paul was a zealous Pharisee. He had found a worthy cause to pursue in his life. He had received a good education, he was up and coming in his career. However, in the course of pursuing his cause, he met with Jesus personally. That encounter with Jesus eventually turned him into the most influential person in his time. He no longer pursued a cause, but he pursued the heart of the Lord who had shown him who he really was and his real purpose in life.

We sometimes hear that we need a cause bigger than ourselves to find a worthy purpose in our lives. So, many people seek after a worthy cause to live for, a career, a pursuit, a ministry, a service, etc. All these we will eventually have, but none of these in itself will satisfy our quest for purpose and significance.

A person who lives outside his God-given purpose of life, no matter how successful he is, will always feel dissatisfied, unfulfilled. Nothing short of a personal encounter with our Creator, the One through whom all things were made, Jesus Himself, will suffice. He is our Creator, surely He knows best our purpose in life. Not just a moment of powerful encounter, but an ongoing experience in our every day life and existence.

Jesus does not only show us our purpose in life, but He is the Way. If we stay connected to Him, He will bring us on a purposeful, meaningful and fulfilling journey of life!

### Response

Pause for a moment and evaluate what you do. Pray that you will always be connected to the Lord, that He will keep you walking in the true purpose of your life. Pray for the Church, that she will live out her primary call and mission, undistracted.

## You And Your Household Shall Be Saved

*So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."*

Acts 16:31

The Lord is faithful and powerful to save. The jailer who kept Paul and Silas in prison experienced that first hand. Paul and Silas were falsely accused and thrown into prison. When the Lord shook the prison with an earthquake and forced the prison doors opened, the jailer thought that was the end of both his career and life! He thought once all the prisoners escaped, he would not be spared the gallows.

But Paul and Silas, and the rest of the prisoners did not take the opportunity to escape. It was a life-saving miracle to the jailer. He opened his heart instead to receive the gospel of Jesus and believed in Him. Because of his faith, he and his whole household were saved. What a tremendously powerful testimony! What a miraculous turn of events. From prisoners, Paul and Silas became the messengers of the Good News of Salvation.

The key to this turn of the table I believe, was the praise and prayers these two men of God lifted to God. In a most difficult place in life, they sang out their praises and worship to the Lord. These praises were brought forth with a price. They were sacrifices of praise. The prayers that they uttered were not uttered in a comfortable or convenient moment. They were in shackles. These were the fervent prayers of righteous men.

Such worship and prayers had transformed the spiritual atmosphere in that prison. It has opened a door for God's intervention into the circumstance. When God intervenes, He brings with Him His saving grace, and hearts will open, faith is lifted and His favour flows.

Whatever circumstance we may find ourselves in, where breakthrough is not in sight, lift up a sacrifice of praise (worship at a cost) and fervent prayers (prayer at our inconvenience), and begin to invite Jesus to invade into our atmosphere. Then, wait and watch the manifestation and outworking of His amazing saving grace.

### Response

Spend extended time to praise and worship God regardless of your circumstance. Pray to invite Jesus to invade into any situation that needs transforming.

## Why Do We Pray?

*So He said to them, "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

*Luke 11:2*

When Jesus was asked by His disciples to teach them to pray, He taught them to seek, first of all, these three things – God's Name be glorified, His Kingdom come to earth and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. It appears that these are the primary focuses the Lord asked His disciples to pray before anything else. These are of utmost importance.

Our prayers often are results of our reaction to immediate challenges or problems confronting us at the moment. I call them, "defensive prayers". These are problem oriented prayers, centred on our needs. They are effective at times, but mostly they are just fire-fighting. When our prayers focus on God's glory and His Kingdom, as Jesus has prioritised for us, we will first seek to establish His Kingdom in the arenas of our lives. We will ask the question: what would glorify His Name in that particular situation in which we seek breakthrough? Or when confronted with a problem, what is God's will in this?

The Kingdom of God is where God's perfect will is executed, His order is obeyed, evil is defeated, good emerges, His Name is honoured, justice prevails. Little wonder that Jesus told us to "seek first His Kingdom".

Why do we pray, then? It is because we see around us that the Kingdom of God is not established in its fullness. We pray that the Kingdom of God will come upon every situation where God's order is violated, His perfect will is not executed, there is evil, good is oppressed, His Name is dishonoured, injustice prevails.

When can we stop praying? As long as we do not see the Kingdom of God established in its fullness in our lives and our surroundings, we pray. We do not stop praying until we see, "His Kingdom come, His will be done, on earth as it is in heaven".

### Response

List down what is out of God's order in your life, family, school/university/college, workplace, community /church /society and nation. Spend some time seeking God's heart and will in all these areas, and pray.

## Prayer Changes Spiritual Atmosphere

*And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.*

Acts 4:31

Prayers that are joined with praises and declaration, create an atmosphere that is favourable to the execution of God's will. It changes the spiritual atmosphere of the Church, the family, the workplace, schools, the city and the nation. It raises the level of faith for those who are in the prayer meeting.

*There are circles of prayer—men and women, all ages, in unity, focused, concentrated, confident. The Lord speaks to those gathered, confirming direction for action. Their conversation is prayer, the priority of the day—strategic prayers, prophetic prayers. Situations they know about and many they do not. Such is the prayer of the Spirit!*

*Directed by the Lord, groups everywhere—circles of prayer—are on watch, declaring:*

*"We stand in prayer, watching the horizon where battles are joined. We exalt the Name of Almighty God and advance His Kingdom. His is an everlasting Kingdom, strengthened by those standing for the righteous cause. We establish boundaries and plant truth. We have strength within and His strength upon us to press against threat and push back advances of violent and ungodly men, and we mark cunning, crafty tricksters for exposure. We face the whirlwind coming over the horizon, discerning—whose wind is it, the Lord's or another? We identify dark forces and block the entrance to our region. We thrust with the Word against terror reports, declaring: No! Not here, not now, not ever. Instead we affirm . . . Yes! Lord! Here and now. Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory!*

*In circles of prayer we change the horizon today, then again tomorrow, again and again and again!"*

*Adopted from "Circles of Prayer", Shirley Weaver Devotion*

Consistent, fervent, Spirit-led prayers lifted up by God's people everywhere we are called, where we are positioned, will usher in the presence of God in a powerful way. We can expect to see lives changed – set free, healed, transformed. What is impossible to man, becomes possible when God invades into our atmosphere!

### Response

Bring our nation and society to the Lord today. Invite Jesus to come and establish His Rule and Reign over specific areas in the life of our nation.

## Weapons Of Our Warfare

*"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."*

*2 Corinthians 10:3-5*

Despite the advancement of communication technology, knowledge and increased connectivity in the world, we continue to see unrest and conflicts on the rise in the nations. It is no longer the poorer nations of the 'third world' that are plagued by such issues, even the more developed nations and societies around the globe are facing mind-boggling violence in public places, lawlessness and confusion.

In Church circles, we find no lack of Biblical scholarship, or a clear diagnosis of the world we live in. We could even pinpoint exactly where and what has gone wrong in the Church, sometimes more clearly when we are examining "our neighbours". There is no lack of analysis and wise sayings or suggestions we offer to a world filled with turmoil, or to part of the Church which has deviated from her calling, mission and identity.

Why, then, even with all the increase of resources both in the nations and the Church, are we not able to see significant improvement in our situations? I believe the primary reason is that we are not aware that we are engaged in spiritual warfare! If we think we are not at war with the devil and his armies, we will not consciously arm ourselves with the appropriate spiritual weapons. In any war, having powerful weapons is just a part of it. There needs to be strategies, positioning, and most important of all is: where, how, and when we engage with our enemies.

The Scriptures tell us that we cannot win wars of a spiritual nature with worldly weapons, no matter how intellectually sound and plausible they are. We need to know what spiritual weapons we have in Christ Jesus. We need to know where the battlefields are. We need to be trained and well equipped. Paul described these weapons as "mighty in God". To take these weapons and to be skilled in them, we need to rely entirely on the Holy Spirit and learn to flow with Him.

As disciples of Jesus, victory over the devil and all his works is yours. But what are the weapons of your warfare?

### Response

Ask the Lord to show you the spiritual significance behind every challenge you are facing. Pray according to what God shows you, and not your own presumption.

## Prayer Changes Spiritual Atmosphere

*So the angel who spoke with me said to me, "Proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "I am zealous for Jerusalem And for Zion with great zeal. I am exceedingly angry with the nations at ease; For I was a little angry, And they helped—but with evil intent." 'Therefore thus says the LORD: "I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy; My house shall be built in it," says the LORD of hosts, "And a surveyor's line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem." "Again proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "My cities shall again spread out through prosperity; The LORD will again comfort Zion, And will again choose Jerusalem."'*

*Zechariah 1:14-17*

The Prophet Zechariah, whose name means "Yahweh remembers", tells us about God's zeal and love for His people Israel, and He remembers the Covenant He made with Israel. God is faithful. He will not forget His people, nor their plight. Though Israel has sinned and hurt their God deeply with idolatry and immorality, which brought upon themselves the curses of sins, God still reached out to them in mercy.

The Lord does not only remember His people and care for them in times of troubles, He also remembers their enemies who have been merciless to them. It is so comforting to know that our God and Heavenly Father never forgets us. He is always ready to heal and restore us when we repent. It is even more comforting to know that He will not forget those who have touched His people and His anointed ones!

He is zealous for you! He loves you and will guard you jealously and will punish those who seek to harm you or destroy you. Be encouraged.

*When you were few in number, Indeed very few, and strangers in it. When they went from one nation to another, And from one kingdom to another people, He permitted no man to do them wrong; Yes, He rebuked kings for their sakes, Saying, "Do not touch My anointed ones, And do My prophets no harm." Sing to the LORD, all the earth; Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.*

*Declare His **GLORY** among the nations, His wonders among all peoples.*

*(1 Chronicles 16:19-24)*

### Response

Repent of the times when you have turned to other "gods" and leaned on them. Ask the Lord to defend you against the enemy.

## Gate Of Heaven

*Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it...Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!"*

*Genesis 28:12, 16-17*

Jacob was sent away from his home to Padan Aram because of his fallout with his elder brother Esau, after he has received the blessings of the firstborn from their father (Genesis 28:7). He had an extraordinary encounter with the Lord at Bethel in his journey (Genesis 28:10-22). It was at Bethel that Jacob received an affirmation of the promises of God made to his grandfather and his father. This was the first time that God appeared to him and conclusively affirmed His Covenant with Jacob.

Bethel was also the first place where Abraham built an altar to worship God (Genesis 12:7-8). Coincidence? I tend to think otherwise. Abraham upon hearing God's call to leave his father's house and headed towards Canaan, obeyed in faith and came to Bethel to build his first altar to worship God. That very act affirmed and sealed the Covenant he had with God. Every act of worship lifted in faith and in reverence to God, affirms our Covenant with Him. We who are redeemed by the Blood of Jesus have a more superior Covenant with God.

God remembers the godliness of man. The land where worship is offered, has "memory" of that worship. When worship is lifted to God, God remembers the land and will visit it with His manifested presence. When worship is offered to the devil, that land is spiritually defiled and opened to his works.

As Jacob exclaimed, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" Let us be encouraged that every time we come together to worship the Lord in church, God remembers. And He will visit us with His manifested presence, His shekinah glory. For the House of God is not merely a building, but a place where God is honoured and worshipped. Where the House of God is, there is the Gate of Heaven!

### Response

Pray for your church worship services that God will show up every time to touch people and change lives.



## Miracle Gate

*And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."*

*John 1:51*

*And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

*1 John 5:11-12*

One of the characteristics that marked the early Church was the occurrence of miracles in her ministry. While these miracles were not the end in themselves, God certainly performed them to testify to the message of the Gospel, to confirm His words. Miracles happened for a purpose – God's purpose, to draw man to Himself. They happened with the primary purpose of glorifying God.

Jesus, in the early part of His ministry on earth, had described Himself as the gate linking heaven to earth. He ushers in heaven-power and heaven-reality to earth, performing miracles over nature, healing diseases, expelling power of darkness and forgiving sins. This is the kind of life God wants us to experience and enjoy. When we have invited Jesus into our lives, the "Gate of Heaven" lives in us. When we live in submission to the Lordship of Jesus, miracles can happen in us.

God has established us as His Church, His people, a chosen generation to reflect His glory and declare His praises. He has called the Church to become a "Miracle Gate" wherever we are positioned. Christians are called to be "Miracle Gate" – a gateway between heaven and earth. As the Church collectively and individually worship God, serve Him and His purpose, live in obedience to His words, seeking His Kingdom first, following the example of Jesus, He will first do a miracle of transformation and healing in us. We then will become the connector of God's power to earth, truly touching heaven changing earth!

You are a "Miracle Gate"!

### Response

If your life needs changing, or maybe even an overhaul, invite Jesus, the miracles-working God into those parts of your life. Allow Him to sort out your entire life.

## Kingdom Provision

*Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.*

*Matthew 6:10-11*

Jesus in a few sentences, taught His disciples how to pray. He started their focus on the "big picture", focusing on the establishment of His Kingdom on earth. Because God's will is fully obeyed and executed in heaven, the next petition in the Lord's Prayer that follows, gives expression or description to what God's will looks like, when it is executed on earth: our needs will be provided for.

We often ask from the Lord provision that we can store up and draw from for a long time into the future. The Israelites were taught how to trust God for their daily provisions, having absolutely no guarantee except the unfailing words uttered by the Covenant-keeping God. They received manna fresh from heaven on a daily basis. They needed to learn to depend on God and trust in His love and faithfulness towards them. Only then, were they fit to conquer and possess the Promised Land.

*Likewise, Jesus told His disciples to trust the Father for provision. "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?... Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" (Matthew 6:26, 30)*

The Lord assures us that our Heavenly Father provides for us, His children, when His will and Kingdom comes upon us on earth. Therefore, He exhorts us "to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matthew 6:33). Conversely, when we struggle with provision, it is an indication that God's will is not fully obeyed or executed in our lives. The solution is to pray, "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"

### Response

God will provide us our needs on a daily basis. It means we will never miss a day of provision. If this is not so in your life, ask the Lord to show you where in your life is out of God's will. In the meantime, seek His Kingdom first, above all else.

## Mentored By Someone

*For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established— that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.*

*Romans 1:11-12*

We grow spiritually as we learn, and so, of course, every learning opportunity is valuable; but if I could choose between being taught just to gain knowledge, compared to gleaning from God-centred, mature leaders, I'd choose the latter, believing God for their impartation of wisdom and lifestyle qualities.

I believe Christian discipleship is precisely that way—mentorship with impartation, a critical part of Christian training, with maturity the understood goal. I also believe it's precisely the part needed to face hostility from the dark side, and by faith, turn resulting contests into a positive impact for all areas of culture.

That said, we need to acknowledge the blessing received from seasoned, God-focused mentors. Compare their instruction with teaching that doesn't focus on God's Word or prayer or Christian principles but draws instead from a humanist base where "knowledge" may be the only fruit.

"Above all, take up the shield of faith." Think of the shield as a word from God, able to quench Satan's strategies and methods. Apart from His Word our weapons of resistance are limited to human attributes—like positive thinking, personal goodness, or elaborate, often expensive human methods. Unfortunately, however, when Satan comes to steal, kill and destroy, those humanistic methods are powerless to stop the invasion.

In the battle, it doesn't matter who you are, what you do, or where you live. It does matter that you're armed with the Word of God to resist opposition to the word of the Lord. Today we need mature mentors who know how to give God's Word first place every time, and who mentor-teach us to do the same.

*Adapted from Shirley Weaver's Daily Devotion*

### Response

Pray and ask from the Lord:

1. A spiritual mentor for yourself
2. For someone whom you can mentor into spiritual maturity.

## Strength In Humility

*Peter said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be." Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." But he spoke more vehemently, "If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all said likewise.*

*Mark 14:29-31*

Peter must have felt that he was flying high on self-confidence. After all, he did have a pretty good track record. He knew Jesus well, witnessed His power, experienced the outworking of His authority when he was sent out on mission. And how many of Jesus' disciples have walked on water? He was pretty sure the strength in him would survive a little testing?

We know the rest of the story of his self-confidence. Pride, often exemplifies our strength and belittles the challenge. Pride goes before destruction. Taking pride even in the good things we receive from God, misplaces our confidence in the gifts of God, rather than in the God who gives good gifts. We should give thanks to God and rejoice in His gifts. But we must not lean on the gifts but fail to trust in the Giver.

Humility, however, sees ourselves as we are before God, with honesty. Humility exposes our vulnerability. It can be quite unsettling and scary. Am I ever good enough for God? Do I have what it takes to succeed? These are but some of the questions we might ask ourselves if we look at ourselves honestly. Humility does not deny our strength but it recognizes our weaknesses. It does not belittle our strength nor does it overrate the problem. It points us to lean on someone else for our insufficiency. Humility leads us to dependency on God. And that's the beginning of true strength!

Pride focuses on ourselves. True humility centres our lives on God, the God who loves us. Humility, recognizing who we really are before God, brings us to experience the unconditional love and acceptance of God. It draws us closer in an intimate love relationship with God. Peter's true strength began to emerge when he answered to Jesus' question, "Do you love me more than these?" by saying, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."

There is strength in humility. In humility we experience God's supernatural strength and intimacy.

### Response

Pray for all those in leadership – spiritual leaders, governmental leaders, parents, leaders in all spheres of life. Speak protection over them and bless them.

## Honoured By God

*Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.*

*1 Samuel 2:30b*

When a person is honoured, it brings encouragement and a sense of being appreciated to him. When we honour someone, it means we recognise the value of that person, or the contribution he brings to the community and others. Man seeks honour and praise from their peers, their superiors, for what they have done.

However, there are those whom we honour not for their actions, but for their personhood, for who they are. God commanded us to honour our parents not primarily for what they have done, but for who they are. Likewise, we are to honour God for who He is, not for the blessings and benefits we have received from Him or expect to receive from Him. We have been created in His image and likeness, in order to reflect His glory. To reflect His glory is to make His glory known, to worship Him and honour Him in our lives. To honour God means to take His Name very seriously, to take His concerns very seriously, to prioritise His agenda over ours.

God is tremendously pleased when His children honour Him over themselves. His desire is to honour those who honour Him. When God honours us, He affirms our identity, our value and our calling. When God honours us, He causes provision and recognition to come to us. When He honours us, man will give due honour to us.

Seek not honour from man, but seek first to honour God and His Kingdom. And allow God to honour us as He deems fit. That is the best way to live!

### Response

Pray for healing and restoration of relationships, that there be honouring in families and church, between children and parents, between worshippers and God, among one another. Pray for those who are abused in any relationship for healing of the person.

## Good Things Must Share

*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

*Matthew 28:19-20*

A life insurance agent once told me about the simple strategy to grow his agency: keep talking to people about the company's products. He also told me unless we are convinced about the products, we cannot be successful agents. The other key to successful "multiplication" is always mindful of the true needs of the clients.

That sounds like what we will hear from a school of evangelism! But we have a more superior message and a far much better "product" to share with others. It is something that will satisfy the real need of every person at any point of their life. The gospel message is a total package of what God has prepared for mankind. It is a gift we cannot afford to reject or miss. Yet, unless we are truly convinced of this message, we will not see this message being shared tirelessly.

If we receive some good news, would we not want to share it? If we have tasted a blessing, would we not want to spread it? The key question is: have we truly received it? Have we truly tasted it? Unless we encounter the reality of Jesus and His presence in our lives, every allegiance we pledge to Him is at best, an intellectual one. Only when we have encountered Him, we would share Him tirelessly with others.

The Great Commission Jesus commanded us to follow is also followed by a promise: His promised presence with us, till the end of age. It simply means that when we carry out this mission, He promises us He will not let us walk alone!

### Response

Pray for the Church that every member will encounter Jesus in increasing measure and depth, so that the Church ministry and evangelism will bear much fruit.

## Do Only What He Says

*His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it.*

John 2:5-8

In my Christian walk, I was taught not to do anything in the ministry unless I am convicted of it. It starts with the heart, convinced what I do is truly worth doing. That is without any shadow of doubt, sound advice. It is when our hearts are captured by the love of God, that service towards God can be rendered out of love and thanksgiving.

In the miracle of Jesus turning water into wine at Cana, there were at least two parties who did not have deep conviction about what they did. Jesus was not particularly interested in the problem at hand – the wedding banquet was running out of wine. Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." (John 2:4). There were the servants who filled the waterpots with water. It was not their problem, but the master's problem. Yet, their master was either not concerned, or simply did not know. When the servants obeyed Jesus' instruction, they had the opportunity of handling a miracle of God which I believe must have impacted their lives.

At times in our life, we feel unmotivated. Whether in the work that we do, or the ministry or service we render to the Lord. Instead of feeling discouraged, or sometimes even feeling pretentious in what we do, seek "instructions" from Jesus. Start by obeying the obvious instructions of Jesus. Among them are: love one another, preach the gospel, make disciples, abide in Him, etc. Once we do that, I believe we will experience the miracles of God firsthand in our lives.

If we obey His obvious instructions, we will clearly taste His supernatural working in our lives. Stay faithful and obedient to the Lord. He never fails.

### Response

Pray and ask the Lord to help you to make godly choices in every situation in your life. Pray for patience as the Lord leads you according to His timing.

## Light is Meant to Shine

*"No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light.*

*Luke 11:33*

When do we use a light? Isn't it when there is darkness? We light up a light so that we can see in a dark place. Darkness obscures the true situation from our view. Light, however, dispels darkness and reveals the truth for all to see.

Jesus declared, on the final morning of the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot), "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." (John 8:12). Jesus came into the world to dispel the darkness in us. (John 1:9) As we welcome that Light into our lives, we then can truly become the light of the world. (Matthew 5:14)

For light to shine effectively, illuminating darkness, at least two conditions must be fulfilled: the light must continue to burn. We must abide in the Light of the world, to walk in the light ourselves and continue to allow the Light to expose the darkness in us. The 2nd condition is that, the light must not be obstructed. A lighthouse is positioned strategically in an open space, most of the time, on higher ground, so that its light is clearly visible.

So, we as disciples of Jesus are called the light of the world, "a city on a hill" (Matthew 5:14). We are destined to shine – to bear witness to Jesus, His love, His grace, His power and His words. We do not need to "work" very hard to shine for Jesus. We need only to enthrone Him in our hearts, to let His Light shine in us and through us. We need to be willing to be positioned by Jesus wherever He chooses, because when we submit to His Lordship, we will certainly be in the most fulfilling state of life.

Let your light so shine and the world might see His Light!

### Response

If you are wondering about the direction of your life, ask Jesus to shine into your life to show you the way.



## Acceptable Sacrifice

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

Romans 12:1

During a prayer meeting, I sense the Lord was speaking to me concerning sacrifice. Every worship involves sacrifice. Every sacrifice made is directed to certain recipient. A sacrifice always enhances a certain aspect of life. It affirms the value we attach to the recipients of that sacrifice. If we make sacrifices for our children, their lives are enhanced. Subsequently, our relationship with them will also be enriched. The same applies to any relationship.

If we make sacrifice to either God or demons, it is worship. It forms bonds and covenant. Sacrifices made to either God or demons are prescribed by the recipients. The worshippers cannot determine on their own terms what should be sacrificed and how it is done. Paul says that our bodies are living sacrifices. We can choose to whom we will offer them to: God, demons, the world or the flesh. At baptism, we have renounced all the latter three. Still, our living sacrifice must be "holy (set apart specifically) and acceptable (as prescribed, as directed and required by God) to God. If we sacrifice to God something He does not require, it is futile and fruitless. If we withhold the sacrifice that God requires, our worship is compromised. Luke-warmness creeps into our spiritual life, and even our ministry.

How then, do we know the acceptable sacrifice? So that our lives will not be lived in vain, in meaninglessness? Paul says in Philippians 2:12-13, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for **it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.**" We need to allow God to first work in our lives, transforming us from the inside out. Let His will be our will, let His heart touch our heart. Then, we will know what work (sacrifice) we bring will please Him.

Do not sacrifice an unnecessary sacrifice, do not hold back the sacrifice required by God, in the calling and destiny of each one of us.

### Response

Have you sacrificed what is not required of the Lord? Have you withheld the sacrifice required of you, so much so it has hindered you from moving forward in the Lord? Repent and re-order your priority today.

## Eternal Life Begins Now

*Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"...Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*

*Mark 10:17; 21-22*

A young man, who was obviously a pious man, came to Jesus seeking eternal life. He had certainly found the Saviour of the world. But he went away sad. Because when he was asked to do something at that moment in time, he was not willing - to part with his possessions and give to the poor. Some translations say "he had great wealth". But the word "possessions" gives a more apt description. Possessions - what he owned, which were at his disposal.

Our possessions are not limited to money or properties, shares or crypto currencies, estates or jewelries. They also include all privileges, benefits, gifts, career, etc which we can choose to dispose of, or give up, if we so decide. There is absolutely nothing wrong or evil in all these things. In fact, they may well be blessings from the Lord. However, when these possessions become the source of our security, comfort and confidence, they stand in the way of us entering into the eternal life which Jesus gives.

The possessions which we are not willing to give up will "possess" us. Who then, is the possessor and the possessed? These which we cling onto may be lies from the enemy. It may be a pattern of fleshly, or even sinful responses to a situation, where we seek comfort and solace in the things which are ungodly, or even clearly sinful. To let go of these "possessions" is key for us to experience the abundant life which Jesus has promised.

Eternal life begins now. It begins with the abundant life which Jesus is so willing to give us, right here on earth. What are your "possessions"? Are you willing to surrender those in exchange for that eternal life which begins now and here? It may be uncomfortable, but you must choose if you want to inherit this eternal life. The choice is obvious.

### Response

Ask the Lord to reveal to you anything that might "possess" you. Repent of the way that you have made them your source of security and comfort. Make the Lord your security and comfort in times of needs.

## The Life Line

*Thus He showed me: Behold, the Lord stood on a wall made with a plumb line, with a plumb line in His hand. And the LORD said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said: "Behold, I am setting a plumb line In the midst of My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore.*

*Amos 7:7-8*

A plumb line is a line with a pointed weight at the end of it. A wall is built straight by the builder standing on top of the wall, holding a plumb line and measuring the vertical integrity of the wall. Whenever a plumb line or measuring line is mentioned in the Old Testament, it was often associated with the judgment of God on Israel.

However, it is really the grace of God for His people. Only with the plumb line of God, His ancient and eternal standard of righteousness and holiness, measured against our lives and everything in them, that we know whether we are walking in His ways. Anything out of order with His plumb line will be subject to His judgment. It also means that when we measure our lives, our work, ministry, relationships, family, government, culture, etc against the plumb line of God, then we know whether we are aligned to His will and purpose.

Just like a crooked wall cannot sustain a strong building, life which is out of sync with God's standard cannot sustain a fruitful and prosperous future. We are unable to pray and minister from a position of victory when our life is out of alignment with God. When the line is drawn, the choice is ours. We can choose to "toe His line" – walk in obedience and align our ways with His ways, or we can continue to ignore His warning. If we choose the latter, we will probably find ourselves moving in a repetitive cycle of frustrations and futile labouring.

The Lord is drawing a line among us. He is setting a plumb line among His people. He is revealing Himself, His standard and what He deems important to us. We need to choose wisely. God is no respecter of persons. He is impartial. When He reveals to us our failings, flaws and mistakes, He is extending His grace to us. He is extending a lifeline to us in the midst of our trouble and seemingly endless struggles. He wants to rescue us from our troubles. Grab that line! Choose His side, and we will find our breakthrough this year!

### Response

Reflect and measure against God's righteous plumb line in a) your personal life; b) family; c) work and ministry; and d) our nation. Pray alignment with God's standard into each of these.

## Seeing And believing

*"Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant"*

*Matthew 21:14-15*

Jesus just had a grand entrance into the city of Jerusalem. He was welcomed like a Jewish King, riding on a donkey. He went into the Temple and cleansed it from activities of greed and exploitation, overturning the tables of the moneychangers and traders who were taking advantage of the worshippers, and making huge profits out of them. He restored the right focus of the Temple, which is on worshipping God and being a house of prayer for the nations. He demonstrated what a worshipper can expect to see and encounter in the Temple – God's presence, mercy and grace. Jesus healed, restored hope for an abundant life, to those coming into the Temple seeking God. The children cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" which means, "God saves".

But the Pharisees seeing all these happenings, became indignant.

Seeing, sometimes may not be believing. It depends on how we see. If we see with certain biased expectations, we will not perceive truth. Only when we perceive the Truth, that we experience freedom. Only when we perceive the Truth, that we can hear God's voice. The Pharisees did not perceive the truth of the whole matter, therefore when they heard the people's praises, they did not hear God's approval on what Jesus did, instead, they were annoyed.

During this coming Holy Week, let us ask the Lord to show us His Truth – Jesus Himself. Let us cast away any personal preference or prejudice (if any), and ask the Lord to open our eyes to see who Jesus truly is, what He is doing, so that we might also hear what He is saying to us.

### Response

Spend this day worshipping and praising Jesus, the Son of David who has come to save us and gave us abundant life. Pray for those in your family, neighbourhood, workplace or school, to encounter Jesus and His saving grace as well.

## Connecting Heaven And Earth

*And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."*

*John 1:51*

Jesus said these words at the beginning of His earthly ministry. A bold and revealing statement concerning the essence of His mission. He came to deal with the one thing that separates man from God, and earth from experiencing heaven. All that Jesus has accomplished on the Cross is to restore man to the original intent and purpose for which he is created – to be reconciled to the Father, to reflect His glory and to rule with Christ.

Jesus described Himself as the connector between heaven reality and earth circumstance. The presence of the realm of God can be experienced on earth, evident in Christ and through Christ. Thus, we read from the Gospel accounts that Jesus healed, drove out demons, raised the dead, prophesied, revealed the person of God the Father and His truth. All these could not happen even with man's best efforts.

Prayer and praise enables us as the disciples of Jesus to tap into heaven reality. We who have received Jesus as Lord, we are given the right to be children of God. We have the "heaven-earth connector" in us. When we pray and praise, when we focus our attention on Jesus and His Kingdom, we activate that connector in us. That is why when we pray, healing occurs. When we pray and seek God's Kingdom first, He reveals Himself to us and adds to us more than we need or could imagine. When we pray and praise, we draw closer to the Father.

Only when we touch heaven, we can change earth. Only when we have an intimate, dynamic relationship with the "heaven-earth connector", Jesus, we can touch heaven. Only when we seek Him in prayer and praise that we can hear Him in His words, then we can know Him intimately.

### Response

Pray for yourself and others, that you may deepen your intimacy with God. Pray that all you know about Jesus will be part of the reality in your daily life.

## Close Encounter Of The Heavenly Kind

*And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."*

*Matthew 1:21-23*

Being a fan of science fiction movies, I recall the movie "Close Encounter of the 3rd Kind". UFO, aliens, and any outer space lifeform are a mystery to man, incomprehensible. Some asserted that they have "encountered" alien lifeforms through sight. Some went on to assert that they have communicated with such lifeforms. All these two types of encounter are still not conclusive evidence of their existence. So, in this movie, it was the encounter of the 3rd kind – physical encounter, not just sound and sight, which would conclusively confirm the existence of such lifeforms.

Many today have difficulties in believing in a God who is real, powerful and loving. At Christmas, we celebrate the 1st coming of Jesus. Jesus was named before His birth. But He was also accorded the name "Immanuel", which means "God with us". God in sending His Son on a mission to save mankind, has planned more than just a rescue mission to save man from going to hell. He has purposed that man should have close encounter with Him, experience His presence and love in every sphere of our lives and existence. That act of God's love ultimately finds its climax in the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus.

This Jesus whose birth we celebrate, wants to be personally involved with you. This Jesus who died for you on the Cross wants you to know His love in everyday life experiences. He is interested in every part of your life. He speaks to us through His words and speaks with us through prayers. He communicates with us through dreams, visions, thoughts, and the inner prompting by His Holy Spirit. Most of all, He wants to work and touch that part of your life that matters most to you. He wants to dwell, tabernacle in you and with you. He wants you to have close encounter with Him, the heavenly kind.

Open your hearts this season, let the Resurrected Christ dwell in your hearts, your home, your workplace, your health, your finances, your service, etc. Seek an encounter with Him that is both powerful and personal. Pray for those who are yet to encounter Him in this manner, that they too would have a heavenly encounter of Jesus!

### Response

Pray for a personal encounter with the Living Christ in, a) your life; b) lives of your loved ones; and c) those who are in need of Jesus.

## Do You Love Me More Than These

*So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs."*

*John 21:15*

Jesus did some spectacular deeds while He was with the disciples. Peter, was one of the recipients of the love of Jesus and he experienced the benefits of following Jesus. He was touched by Jesus, blessed by Jesus and restored by Jesus. Many today experience the goodness and love of God. That would normally mean the beginning of the Christian faith, at least for most of us.

Our experience of God's goodness and touch would naturally bring us to a place of worship and thanksgiving. We as Christians live a life of worshipping God, a life of dependence on Him and His provisions. Sometimes, "these" may become the main focus in our lives as disciples of Jesus. To this end, Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me more than these?"

Jesus wants us to live an abundant life. But He also wants us to live an others-centered life. "Feed my lambs", Jesus told His disciple, Peter. Don't live an inward-looking life, Jesus told His disciple. Live your life for the spiritual health and wellbeing of others. Build them up. Share with them what you have received from Jesus. This is the attitude we must hold as disciples of Jesus. I believe this preparation of the heart for Peter opened his heart to receive from the Lord the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, at the first instance of the Pentecost, Peter stood up and preached to thousands, testifying to the power of God and salvation that can only come through Jesus. He became Kingdom minded!

If the disciples of Jesus would heed His call, to put others' needs and spiritual wellbeing before their own, when the power of the Holy Spirit comes, they will be launched into an army of disciple-makers. Disciple-making starts with a shift in our attention, from focusing primarily on our own needs, feelings or wellbeing, to focusing on caring for others, nurturing them and building them up in the Word and in their God given giftings. Disciple-makers are spiritual shepherds to God's flock, spiritual parents to God's children.

### Response

Pray for those whom God has put under your care. Ask the Lord to show you how best you can nurture them.

## Moved With Compassion

*And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.*

*Matthew 14:14*

Jesus saw the multitude and perceived their real states and real needs. That moved Him with compassion for them. When we receive Jesus into our lives, we experience His personal attention. When we pray to Him, He listens to our personal plea. Having a relationship with Him is very personal.

However, the heart of Jesus is obviously for the multitude, for the nations. Little wonder He commissioned His Disciples (and the Church) to make disciples of all nations. While His eyes are on the multitude, His heart is moved when He sees them, and He cares deeply for the individuals in the multitude. It is the individuals that make the multitude. Likewise, when He calls us to reach the nations, we need to do it in like manner as He did. Having compassion for the multitude as He does, and reaching to the real needs of the individuals as He does.

How then, can we have His compassion in us?

Neuroscientists tell us that when a human being chooses a particular response to a set of information received, that choice, if repeated over a period of time, will determine our long-term attitude and emotional response to the same information. If we choose to love the unlovable every time, compassion will have a better chance to take root in our attitude and response to the unlovable. We are what we choose. We need to pray for God's supernatural compassion to be poured out by the Holy Spirit into our spirits. But we still have the responsibility to choose – to love or not to love. If we choose "to love", we are in fact co-operating with the Holy Spirit. Loving individual disciples make a loving Church. A loving Church reaches out in mission and ministry to a multitude lost, in pain, in bondages and without hope.

Start choosing love!

### Response

Remember the Cross today and give thanks to the Lord for loving you even when you were "unlovable". Pray for the compassion of Jesus to fill your heart that you might love the lost, others and the unlovable with that same love of Jesus.



## His Government Increases

*For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.*

Isaiah 9:6-7

When the Son of God came into the world, He ushered in the Kingdom of God into our entire existence and atmosphere. This Kingdom is invading upon every sphere of the Kingdom of Satan, wherever it is found. His Kingdom is His Rule. When we allow Him to rule in our hearts, His Kingdom, His Government is upon our lives. And His Government is increasing in us.

*"In your spiritual life, what you face today is not a repeat of something earlier, regardless of the similarities. It's not the same because you are not the same. The last time you experienced this you were not as mature as you are today—not spiritually, emotionally, or in any sense. God's strength in you plus your revelation and understanding of His will in the situation have increased.*

*Isaiah prophesied the Lord's government rests on the shoulders of Jesus and that government doesn't remain the same but is always expanding. His followers are transformed by the Spirit of the Lord—faith to faith, strength to strength, and glory to glory.*

*The Lord's government in the situation is continually increasing. Your authority in the situation is increasing as well. In fact, the only thing reduced is Satan's part—his interference lessens with every pass. In your spiritual life, each day you are more, and you have more. God-level integrity saturates you. Others observe your rise.*

*Today you are not the same as yesterday."*

**Adopted from Shirley Weaver's Daily Devotion "Not the same"**

Today, His Government continues to increase in you.

### Response

Take heart and rise up! Speak strength, hope, fruitfulness, abundance, victory, life and love in faith, into your future. Declare it aloud!

## Bearing Witness To Resurrection Power

*"And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all."*

Acts 4:33

The story of the Resurrection of Jesus was hardly allowed to be told in the 1st century. Even if it was told, it must have appeared to have been a far-fetched story, a sort of old wives' tale, hard to believe. So, how did that story continue to be told for the past 2,000 years? Why have so many believed it?

The Power of Resurrection is real, it can be experienced and witnessed. Jesus' disciples experienced the Resurrected Christ and His Power and they were changed. They went around bearing witness to that Power through their words, their testimonies and their changed lives. The disciples and the early Church were a display of the reality of Christ in their day. That whole experience of the living and loving God was passed through succession in the Church. Others who saw their message exhibited in their lives, were drawn to Jesus and they in turn experienced that same Resurrection Power. This process is called: discipleship.

More than signs and wonders, the greatest miracles are liberated souls, healed and transformed lives. Those are the powerful testimonies of the gospel. Lives in bondage were set free. Broken hearts were healed. Sin and its consequences cancelled. Bitterness removed, peace and joy restored. Self-centeredness turned into selfless love. Works of the flesh crucified, fruit of the Holy Spirit grows. The list just goes on.

This is the call for us: come to the Cross of Jesus today, and encounter this Christ who has died and now lives forever! Let us come and experience afresh the Power of Resurrection in our lives. So that our lives may be living testimonies to this Jesus who alone can save, free, heal and restore.

Blessed Resurrection Day!

### Response

Pray for the Church and all disciples of Jesus, that our lives may be a continuous experience and display of Christ's Resurrection Power.

