

HEAR GOD'S VOICE

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CONTENT

CHAPTER 1

My life was instantly changed

CHAPTER 2

The Creator God became my Father

- I. Repented of my sin
- II. Accepted Jesus as my Lord
- III. Received Holy Spirit inside and upon me
- IV. Baptized in water

The Good News of God and His promises

CHAPTER 3

My Journey in Him

- I. Know the God loves me (and you)
- II. Love God

CHAPTER 4

Prayer

- I. I love Him
- II. His presence is the power

Benefits of prayer

CHAPTER 5

Who do I pray to?

How to pray?

Avoid prayer traditions

CHAPTER 6

Types of prayer

What are tongues?

- I. How I started in tongues
- II. Yes Holy Spirit speaks through me
- III. General Q&A

CHAPTER 7

Hearing God's Voice

- I. Testing 1, 2, 3
- II. Identify the signs of His voice

CHAPTER 8

Barriers to answered prayer

CHAPTER 9

Want break through prayer – Live a surrendered life in Christ

- I. Fasting unto Him
- II. Spending time with Him in prayer
- III. Focusing on Him and His desires
- IV. Having our direction founded in Him
- V. Trusting in Him
- VI. Being grateful in Him
- VII. Knowing who He is and not how He will

HEAR GOD'S VOICE

CHAPTER 1

Twelve years old, in Cape Town, standing at the edge of a cliff, a steep drop and rocks scattered below. Staring at a cliff 1.5 meters adjacent from me. I think I can make it. If I jump, I think I can. If it was on flat ground I definitely could, it would be a stretch from a near standing position, but I could. Why am I hesitating? Is it that the cliff on the other side isn't flat but round, no place for a foot hold? And the wet looking sand looks a little slippery. Come on I can do it! As I pondered jumping I felt uneasy inside. Oh that must be my nerves, I thought. But what happens if I don't make it, and miss. I looked down again. What's the big deal, I die, I die, so what. It's not like I'm important or valuable. I had a deep void inside me that I couldn't explain. Anyhow, I thought, there is a high probability I can make it. So I jumped, my foot gave way as I jumped and missed the distance. I slammed against the rock knocking my air out, and started to slide down, scrambling, to no avail. I literally had flashes of my brief life before my eyes and in desperation called out to God.

Up until that point, I had prayed on and off to God but I never had an intimate relationship with Him. As I sped downwards I stopped abruptly, as if someone stopped me. And then whoever stopped me preceded to push me back up the cliff. Nearing the top I scrambled to safety and then looked around to see who it was. No one was there. I knew that God had just saved me. As I walked away, pondering on just being rescued from death, I couldn't help but ask the question. Why? "I'm not valuable to You, why me? I'm not going to amount to anything, I'm too shy, too scared, too short, too stupid, I'm always the last pick for anything.... There must be something You want from me." I heard a voice inside, clearer than any audio voice, saying, "You are important to Me and so are your children." And as I walked on I believed God had intervened through the prayers of those who were praying for me, my Parents, my Oupa and Ouma.

From time to time I reflected on that day and wondered if God would speak to me again. Or if I would have the pleasure of hearing His voice again. But my journey for the next 12 years wasn't in the Lord's direction, but in my direction. I still had this dark inner void that I tried to fill, it was like an endless pit. I tried to fill it with experiences, acceptance from others, popularity, getting the hottest girls in school, getting money or drinking alcohol. Whatever it was, it never filled the void but made the void more hungry for more of anything. But anything couldn't fill it. I had people come across my path telling me I was going to Hell because of the way I dressed or the way I acted. I didn't care about Hell because as I rationalized it, I wasn't as bad as some and if God was there, He would take that into consideration. Well, so I thought.

MY LIFE WAS INSTANTLY CHANGED

One day after mocking a TV Evangelist, like I had often done, something like a hot iron pierced my soul. I felt instantly judged for what I had said. I left the room quietly not to alarm those sitting with me, went into another room, dropped to my knees and with a transparent heart said, "God if you are out there please reveal Yourself to me, I don't want to live without knowing

You?” I got up, it felt like nothing happened but something did happen that day. I had this hunger to seek for God, more like getting to know Him. I started reading a book of the very TV-Evangelist I was mocking, this book challenged me. I was always taught that God was distant, somewhere over there, everyone had the same God but called Him different names, and basically all religions were good if the principles were followed. Yet God was distant from all of them, they all varied in the way they showed love, and none had a guarantee for the afterlife. However this Evangelist painted a picture of God that was very different from what I had been taught. He said that Jesus was the only way to have intimacy with God and He is closer than the air we breathe. What? God is right here in front of me, NOW. And He wants to talk with me, NOW? For the first time in my life this void on the inside of me was excited, like it could only be filled by Him.

After taking 2 months to read a 200page book, I went down on my knees to talk with this Jesus. I didn't know how I was going to hear His voice. And frankly if He spoke audibly I think I would have died. But nevertheless I was going to speak with Him not in my mind but with my words. How would I know if He was speaking with me? And what could I ask Him that would convince me that He was listening? Well, if He responded to the very things I asked for, then ... that would be a good indication. So if He is the only way to God, He literally can do the impossible, right?! So I couldn't ask Him for something that was possible, neither was I going to say something like, “Make that table fly.” I thought it was senseless and if He was going to respond to me it needed to be in a way that would be meaningful and beneficial to me. So I did.

Without giving you the background of my “poor” story - the discrimination I faced because of the color of my skin, couldn't find a job to match my need for over 2 years, going from agency to agency, leveraging connections to no avail, etc. I asked Jesus for 4 things, 3 related to a job i.e. amount of money, type of work and the flexibility; and 1 related to having the opportunity of going overseas, to a certain place I always dreamt about. Within 2 weeks I received a call for an interview, by this stage I had been to many different companies and even though I didn't want to go because I knew how they always ended up, I went.

Sitting in the office and listening to the person, he offered me a position - playing out exactly what I had asked Jesus 2 weeks earlier. How did this person know, or how was this job available? The person proceeded to tell me that there was a potential problem – would I consider transferring abroad for a few months, all expenses paid. This was the exact same place that I had asked Jesus for. Now I was beyond stunned. Driving home that day I spoke with Jesus and thanked Him, yet my mind was telling me it was a coincidence. I turned to my mind and said, “Why didn't the coincidence happen in the last 2 years before I asked Jesus? This is truly impossible, the odds of it happening exactly what I had asked Jesus for, is astounding. Put a mathematical equation on that! Besides I promised that I would follow Him if He did it.” Arriving home, I was happy about the job but even more excited that I knew Jesus was there and that He actually cared for me by listening to me.

CHAPTER 2

THE CREATOR GOD BECAME MY FATHER

Why the inner void, emptiness, the inner uneasiness? One word – SIN, and the consequences of sin. Now I didn't really know what sin was when I was growing up. Only when I accepted Jesus and His Word as my ultimate authority did I understand this void and the sin that caused it. What is sin? "Sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). Lawlessness is rebellion against God and His will, just like Satan (1 John 3:8). I was doing this unknowingly. I later found out in the Scripture that whether I knew it or not, it made no difference to the fact that I was guilty. Whether I knew about the consequences or not, I reaped the consequences (Lev. 5:17). Ignorance isn't bliss.

If a baby crawls off the table, whether he knows about gravity or not, he will fall and receive the consequences. How many times must the baby crawl off the table to recognize it? This accounted for the inner emptiness I sensed every time I sinned. No matter how many times people around me said, "It was right, everyone is doing it and you are not hurting anyone". My mind convinced me that it was good but inside I had turmoil. When I tried to listen to the inner voice and not sin, I sinned even more! It was hopeless, I was a hopeless sinner but I didn't know it, nor could I help it. My life was like driving a car on a road filled with potholes that people said weren't there; as I miss one I hit another. So I just got used to it and started to enjoy the bumps in the road. But the void was still there and I couldn't escape it, I just became numb to it.

It will be worse for a sinner to be in the presence of God than in Hell because God is Holy and sin separates, tears us away, from Him (Is. 59:2). Therefore unless sins in the hearts of people are dealt with, those people go to Hades or Death, away from God. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23; 1 Kings 8:46). So no matter how many righteous works we do, our works are but filthy rags before Him (Is. 64:6). It's like having a big bucket of pure water. And everyday I add pure water to it (righteous works) hoping to have the perfect bucket of water at the end of my life. But one day I drop a grain of poison (sin) in it by accident, the bucket of water is no longer pure. Even if I add more pure water to it, it is still contaminated. The only solution is to empty the bucket and start again, but what are the chances I will drop something else in and contaminate it? Infinitely high. I am the bucket, my righteous works are the water and the poison is my rebellion against God (sin). My righteous works will never be able to get me into Heaven because they are contaminated. Jesus declared, "For if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24).

I. REPENTED OF MY SIN

Now I realized my deprived state, but also I didn't need to be perfect to come to Him (Matt. 11:29-30). Therefore I admitted that I was a sinner, it wasn't hard when I realized my efforts were futile. "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). "Therefore, repent and turn back, for your sins to be blotted out, so that the times of refreshing would come away from the face of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

There are three types of repentance that are engaged at different times. The first type of repentance is engaged when I forsake my worldly or traditional thinking and soften my heart to God's Word (Matt. 3:2; 4:17). The second type of repentance is engaged just before I accept Jesus Christ as LORD, and ask Him to forgive me for my rebellion in not believing in His Son, Jesus Christ (John 16:9).

The last type of repentance is engaged any time I sin during my Christian journey, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:8-10). Repenting is asking God to forgive us with an honest heart and then seeking to do what is right according to His Word (Rev. 2:5). It is not just saying sorry but actually being truly remorseful, wanting to make it right. Also I continually need to remind myself that God will only forgive me if I forgive those who hurt me, sometimes this is tough but I have to obey because He said so, period (Matt. 6:14-15).

II. ACCEPTED JESUS CHRIST AS MY LORD

After coming back from signing the employment contract, I went down on my knees and kept the promise I made to Jesus Christ weeks earlier. I repented for my sin and accepted Him as my Lord and Savior with the words of my mouth (Rom. 10:9; John 1:12; 3:16; 1 John 5:10-12). I found an old Gideon New Testament to read more about this Jesus who was now my Lord. All I knew about Jesus was what I was taught or watched on TV - born in Bethlehem, died on a cross for sins, was resurrected and went to Heaven the 3rd day, and He was called the Son of God. That was pretty much all I knew. Now I had discovered that Jesus was actually alive, cared about me and wanted me to follow Him. I wanted to know more about Him, what He likes and dislikes, what He wants and doesn't, what He wants from me and why He wanted me to know Him. The New Testament suddenly became alive, I couldn't put it down. It was a major contrast to my earlier years, when I had attempted to read the Bible, stopped after the first few chapters being bored to tears. Now it was alive!

Jesus words, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). So what is my primary task? Some Pharisees asked Jesus, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent" (John 6:28-29). It is that simple. And this life I now live, I promise to live in Him by doing what He said (Matt. 7:20-25; Luke 6:46; Ps. 18:2; Eph. 3:19-21; Ps. 62:6). "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). "Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

God "is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9; Matt. 18:14). For "he who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may

know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:12-13). “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” (Titus 3:5). “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). “He who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame” (1 Peter 2:6; Rom. 9:33).

So what did it mean for me? Well, I stopped focusing on life preservation as if I would live forever in this physical body. I stopped spending all my time focusing on how to get more money, more influence, more education and started actually living through Him. Not time focus but Him focus. His desires became my desires, His words became my words and when I mess up (which happens), I try to remind myself to stop beating myself. Repent, take it as an opportunity to learn through and move on. He paid the price for me. Thank You Jesus.

III. RECEIVED HOLY SPIRIT INSIDE AND UPON ME

On 31 January 1995, when I accepted Jesus as my Lord, Holy Spirit entered me (Eph. 1:13). I didn't feel anything except that inside I knew that something was different. The void that I had my whole life was no more, and an inner peace existed. It was Holy Spirit, at the same time He imparted the blue print of Christ in me so that I “be conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom. 8:29). I found myself calling, actually crying out to God, as my Heavenly Father (Rom. 8:15). Then as days and weeks went by, He taught me about One Topic in the Bible. It was as if I couldn't read anything else and had to go back and re-read. The Topic was Jesus Christ, what He did, what He said and what authority He left for me (John 14:16-17, 26; 16:14-15). So that I can walk as He walked, do what He did, say what He said and have the power He walked in (Mark 16:15-18). Like Paul said, “Imitate me just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). And “no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3).

A couple of months after accepting Jesus Christ as my Lord, I was in awe at another miracle that I had just asked for, something extraordinary. I raced back to my room in Germany and said, “Jesus.” When I said Jesus I fell onto my knees and it felt like fire was all over me. Inside and out, I shook uncontrollably and remember looking at my hands moving back and forth, thinking, “What is happening to me? This is not real! This is not happening.” You need to understand I am a scientist/logical thinker and this wasn't logical for me. All of a sudden I sensed someone in the room, about 2meters on my left but I didn't look because I was too scared to. At the same time I felt this indescribable love that brought me to tears.

I wanted to thank Him, but as I started speaking my words didn't come out right. It was more like stuttering gibberish so I kept quiet. Later I discovered that this was what the Bible calls, “Tongues.” I closed my eyes not wanting to see who was there, and then everything went back to normal. As I lay on my bed pondering what had just happened, I picked up my Gideon New Testament and started reading the Gospels again. It was as if liquid gold jumped out of the pages into my eyes and filled my body. Like the early disciples, I had received Holy Spirit inside me

when I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord (John 20:22) and now He was upon me (Acts 2:4). Jesus said, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:8).

There were times when people received Holy Spirit inside and upon them at the same time, e.g. Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44-46). Also there were times when people received Holy Spirit inside them but only later Holy Spirit came upon them. Holy Spirit came upon them as a result of them thanking God for Jesus or when someone who was completed in Holy Spirit laid hands on them to receive Holy Spirit. The Disciples received Holy Spirit inside them before Pentecost (John 20:22) but later when Pentecost came, they received Holy Spirit upon them, completing them (Acts 1:8; 2:2-4). And those at Pentecost, who hadn't received Holy Spirit inside them, received Holy Spirit both inside and upon them, that's why the Greek word, Plēthō in Acts 2:4 literally means “completed, fulfilled” (not filled). This completion, inside and out, is known as the baptism of Holy Spirit.

Another example is Acts 8:12-17 “when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized (baptized in water). Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done. Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen UPON none of them (Holy Spirit was already inside them because no-one can call Jesus Christ Lord except by Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3) but He was not upon them). They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit”.

A few months later devastation happened, my step dad died at the age of 47. We lost our house, dogs and were basically on the street. Obviously questions arose like, “Lord, why did you take him? What is my mother going to do? What are my brothers and I going to do?” I discovered years later that it was Satan who killed him and not God (John 10:10). My step dad wasn't guiltless, he had smoked a lot in his life and carried a lot of stress upon himself. But why didn't God help him? I am sure He did, I don't know those details, I don't know if he was warned time and time again, I don't know if he prayed for healing or just to accept the sickness, I don't know if he wanted to leave the earth. All I know is that based on the scripture God doesn't want Christians in Heaven now but wants them on earth to do His will. There is nothing for them to do in Heaven. Jesus praying to the Father said, “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world” (John 17:15). God wouldn't go against His Son's word by taking them out prematurely. He has established the natural time period for human life 120 years (Gen. 6:3) and 70-80 years (Ps. 90:10) for Israelites under Moses who wandered 40 years in the wilderness. So why settle for anything less.

After a week of mourning, I was surprised I had peace that surpassed all understanding. I couldn't explain why I had this peace, this situation should have caused fear and panic in my very bones. Even though I didn't know what would happen to my family, or how we would survive, I had this peace. It was as if Holy Spirit was literally carrying me from within and I was like an observer. My life as I knew it was broken apart and in many pieces. And it would take me forever to think where each piece would go, what to do next and if I made the wrong move it

would've been more devastating. But somehow I picked up the right piece at the right time without logical thought but more of knowing it is right – it was Holy Spirit who helped me.

IV. BAPTIZED IN WATER

Now one year after accepting Jesus Christ as my Lord, I became increasingly pressed from within by Holy Spirit and the scripture to be water baptized. Initially I was hesitant because I believed that I had already been baptized as a baby. But the more I tried to disprove it from scripture the more convinced I became that I needed to be. I could have taken the cowardly route and defaulted to, “my priest says I don't have to therefore I won't.” Then the word of God would be like a buffet, picking and choosing what I want. It was salvation that inspired water baptism and not baptism that inspired salvation (Acts 8:26-39). And just like the early church, the Apostles and especially like my Lord Jesus, I needed to make the choice to be baptized (Matt. 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22). Something that every new priest needed to do, every believer is a priest (1 Peter 2:5; Lev. 8:6). An infant is not a priest.

Seeing that I had already repented, accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord, the only logical next step was to be water baptized. It signified the burial of my old ways, and the raising up out of the water was Christ's life living through me. A physical action done to let the physical and spiritual world know that I am not ashamed of the good news that Christ reconciled me back to God and He has ordained me as a priest.

Therefore I encourage you all to “repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38-39).

THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD AND HIS PROMISES

“I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:1-4). To show us clearly who He is so that we can take confidence in the fact that He is the only way to the Father. His blood and body paid the price for me (Matt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:6). I am reconciled to God because the Blood of Jesus Christ has washed away my sins and the Body of Jesus Christ is what gives me life, sustains me before Him. And for this reason Holy Spirit entered me and remains in me forever; helping and empowering me to live in Christ's authority. Is there any better news than this!

Purely to elaborate on the impact of this: I automatically please God and my sins are washed away (Rom. 5:17; 8:38-39; 10:9; John 6:28-29; Heb. 4:14-16; 8:12; 10:11-12; 11:6). I am

considered by God as righteous (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 8:12). He calls me His child, and Holy Spirit who now dwells within me reminds me of this, where I call upon God as my Heavenly Father (John 14:16, 26; Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 1 Cor. 3:17; 1 John 2:27; 4:4; Gal. 4:5-7; Rom. 8:13-15; Matt. 6:5-9; John 1:12). Holy Spirit helps me love (Rom. 5:5), teaches and comforts me in all that Jesus has given me (John 16:14-15). He has enabled me to ask my Heavenly Father anything and He answers me, maybe not the way I want but He answers (John 11:22; Matt. 7:7). Therefore I am no longer a victim of situations but am more than a conqueror (2 Cor. 1:20; Phil. 4:19; Matt. 6:33; John 15:7; Rom. 8:35-37; 1 John 3:21-23; Ps. 91); including over sickness (Mark 16:18; Matt. 8:17; 1 Peter 2:24; John 10:10).

I live with this deep inner peace that surpasses all understanding (Phil. 4:7) so that I can be an effective ambassador for the Kingdom of God, which I belong to (Phil. 3:20; Phil. 4:7; Luke 17:20-21; Rom. 12:4-9; John 15:1-10). And when I die one day or go in the rapture, I will instantly go to Heaven (2 Cor. 5:1-8; Phil. 1:23; Matt. 25:45-46; John 3:15-18,36; 5:24; 6:28-29, 35-40, 47-48; 10:28-30; 17:20-24; 1 John 2:25; 5:11-12; 1 Peter 1:3-5, 8-9; Acts 7:56-59). All because of Christ in me. "For indeed all the promises of God in Him - Yes, and in Him - Amen, unto the glory of God through us" (2 Cor. 1:20). "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Eph. 3:20). "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 1:24).

CHAPTER 3

MY JOURNEY IN HIM

I remember sitting in a church service and the minister asked the crowd, “If you could ask God for one thing and know that you would get it now, what would it be?” It was an interesting question and I gave it some thought. The minister went around the room with his microphone getting responses. I heard someone say, “Healing”. Others said, “Wisdom”, “House”, and “Car”. As I listened I was amazed that no one asked the question I so desirably wanted to know, “LORD, what do You want me to do? Tell me what it is so I can do it?”

So I had two questions 1) What is my unique purpose? And 2) How to hear You? The microphone never came to me but these questions never left me. I asked people who I perceived to be “stronger in the faith”, and they responded with, “Just pray and ask Him”. That seemed simple enough “but how do I know when He responds?” I wanted a clear answer, “Go here, and do xyz, then next week do abc...” Was I asking for too much? Or should I just do what I think and hope He would guide me from within?” This is what this book is all about – How to Hear Him and do what He has called us to do.

One night as I pondered on this question I went on my knees and I asked my Heavenly Father, “What do You want me to do?” I was expecting an audible voice and was also scared just in case He did respond. Imagine kneeling next to the bed with the lights off, the house quiet, and the only sound is the sound of your breath in the silence. I remember thinking at the time, if God spoke audibly, whether it was soft or loud it would have made no difference, I would literally have fainted.

There was no audible voice, yet I felt a sense of peace as if He was standing in the room with me, as if He had given me the answer. For months my prayer included, “Tell me what You want me to do.” I kept listening for His audible voice but heard nothing. I soon became despondent and said, “LORD are you there? Show Yourself to help me believe”. The next day while I was reading the Bible I came across a passage where Thomas asked for the very same thing I had asked the previous night and Jesus responded, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29). I don’t believe in coincidence and He had answered my question about seeing Him. But what about my original question, “What do You want me to do?”

I kept asking and looking for direction, HIS DIRECTION, not mine. When I made important decisions I knew when they were right or wrong - but I couldn’t explain nor understand how or why. I just knew. Whether it was immigrating to another country, changing careers, changing jobs, finding a spouse, choosing friends, buying a house or car, I always asked My Heavenly Father, “Is this Your Will?” I never received an audible response, neither did someone tell me, “Thus says the LORD.....” nor some special feeling. Now sometimes, on the rare occasions, I opened my Bible and the answer was in the very passage I was reading but this wasn’t the norm. I typically received a “Yes” and “No” witness from within, and most times I couldn’t back it up with logic. I knew it was right but didn’t exactly know how or why I knew. Years later I realized how God had spoken to me, and the importance of being intimate, transparent and honest with Him.

Instead of taking me on a journey to discover my purpose, He took me to the root of all questions and motivations. God was saying, “Know that I love you. Do you know how much I love you?” Then the questions He asked me, “Do you love me? How much do you love me?” “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). “Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height--to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:17-19).

I. KNOW THAT GOD LOVES ME (AND YOU)

God loves us very much and He expresses this in so many ways (Is. 54:10-14). Either in the stillness of our prayer, or in the peace that surpasses all understanding, or when we look at love through the eyes of a child, or by showing us a beautiful sunset, or by hearing the rain drops fall outside or But the way that is beyond our imagination is when He sacrificed His Son to reconcile us back to Him through the blood of His Son. “For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:10). Therefore “I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38-39).

God loves us so much that He will not forget us and will do everything possible to bring us to Him. But He will never violate our freewill, our will of choice (Is. 49:15-16). He even knows the number of hairs on our head (Matt. 10:30). Oh “how precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand. When I awake, I am still with You” (Ps. 139:17-18).

Does God love me any less if I sin? When my children go against what I have just told them - do I love them any less? No, but I am disappointed and sometimes they reap the consequences of their own doing but I love them just the same. As a parent I don't want them to suffer but can't continually protect them for their recurring bad choices. If they injure themselves, do I leave them outside to suffer when they are knocking to come in? No. Or if they are struggling to do something and when they turn to me for help, do I ignore them? No. If they want a car, will I give it to them without knowing or testing them to ensure they are ready to drive and not hurt themselves? No. Do I want to see my children, suffer, sick or poor? No. “What man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being EVIL, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!” (Matt. 7:9-11).

So does God love me any less if I sin? NO, for we have all sinned (1 Kings 8:46; Rom. 3:23; 5:12), and if some say they have not sinned they lie (1 John 1:10). It is the goodness and mercy of God that led me and others to repentance (Rom. 2:4). “God demonstrates His own love toward

us, in that WHILE we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8; John 3:16). So in spite of my sins, He died for me to reconcile me back to Him because He loves me. All I needed to do is repent and accept His plan. What a deal!

Some people have the mistaken impression that God is standing over them with a whip, waiting for them to do something wrong. I found that the opposite was true, God is quick to forgive, quick to show mercy, quick to reward, and slow to anger (Ps. 145:8-9; Lam. 3:22-23; Ps. 103:8). His word is good, to help us. His Word is His love in action but why do I sometimes resist or fail? Could it be that I love myself more than I love Him?

As a father, I tell my young children, “Don’t touch the red plate, it is hot, it will make you sore, don’t touch it!” To a young child it looks enticing, so red and brilliant looking, it isn’t a fire so it can’t be that hot. I repeat myself because I love them and don’t want them to get hurt. The first born says okay while thinking I’m a spoil sport, I’m ruining her fun but she won’t touch it just in case Daddy reprimands her. The second born says okay, but think she knows best and when I’m not looking she touches it – then screams in pain thinking I was the one who did it. The third born will continue to nag, please, please, please for 45 minutes until I say, “Okay, okay, touch it, but daddy has warned you”. Then I turn down the heat while trying to protect him from the full impact – so he feels some of the pain without the full consequences. Then he still blames me.

Now you are probably thinking what kind of Parent are you? One who loves my children and wants the best for them. The point is – the root of their response is that they believe; that they know more than me, they trust themselves more than me because they LOVE THEMSELVES more than me. Am I not the same towards God, my Heavenly Father? Do I resist His Word or hesitate to obey? Do I look for loop holes trying to avoid parts in His Word? Let me pause here and ask you – what kind of child are you with God? One who believes God’s Word is sapping your fun? Or one who believes God’s Word is a suggestion with lots of elasticity in it? Or one who believes God’s Word has no impact on the current situation? Or one who trusts God’s Word beyond natural comprehension and is happy for it, knowing that He loves and wants the best for you (Jer. 29:11-13).

So how much does God actually love me (you), what is that level? He is in my midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over me with gladness, He will quiet me with His love, He will rejoice over me with singing (Zeph. 3:17). Jesus confirms that His Father loves Christians (Christ ones) just as much as He loves Jesus Christ Himself (John 17:23). Is there any greater love?!

II. LOVE GOD

Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is: “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart (your passions and desires), with all your soul (your decisions), with all your mind (your thoughts and understanding), and with all your strength (your effort and time)”” (Mark 12:29-30). “Therefore you shall love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always” (Deut. 11:1). For love for God is the basis for our obedience. When I

love someone, I want to make them happy by doing the things I know pleases them. If this is common sense how much more with God (Ps. 119:7-10).

How can I love God? Know He loves me and surrender my heart to His Son, Jesus. He will help me love. What does surrender to His Son look like? Give my ambitions, hurts, desires, passions, to Him. Jesus said, “He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matt. 10:39). When we are prepared to lose our life in what Jesus wants then we find it. Jesus is the key to loving God and feeling His love – so how much should we love Jesus, what is that level? Jesus said, “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26-27).

I remember the very first time I met my wife and how I tried to find out everything about her so I could impress her. My mind was consumed by thinking about her but as the years went on not as much. Yes, my love for her was deeper, but she wasn't continually on my mind as at first. You're probably laughing because you are there too. However Jesus tells us to remember Him as our first love (Rev. 2:4). Why? Because if Jesus is our first love we will continually be thinking about Him, then we will automatically do the will of God.

As I searched the scriptures asking, “How can I prove to God that I love Him?” Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments... He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him” (John 14:15, 21). “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love” (John 15:10). “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are NOT burdensome” (1 John 5:2-3).

Makes sense, if my motivation is to love God I will automatically walk in His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21) and walk expanding the Kingdom of God (Matt. 28:18-20). Thus doing His will is more our pleasure as this is what we have been designed for (2 John 1:6; Ps. 119:47).

What about “the FEAR of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments” (Ps. 111:10). Fearing God is not a quivering tone when we speak to Him, nor is it some kind of “holy fearful” look. It means giving Him the honor and respect because He is the Creator and our Heavenly Father. I didn't create myself nor can I determine when I'm going to die. Also I would be arrogant and a fool to put any respect for others or myself above Him, He who created me. Fearing God is loving Him so much that we hate everything He hates and love everything He loves (Prov. 8:13). I am so honored when my children do the things I do and say the things I say. I don't mind them asking, “Dad what do you mean by this, or how should I do this?” This means they care about what I'm saying and want to know more. But if they disregard my words and speak contrary to them, they dishonor me.

Is the way I feel any different to the way God feels when I discount what He says? For example, I know the Bible says, “Abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well” (Acts 15:29).

Is it bad to drink blood or eat wet bloody meat or? Do I ignore it because I like medium rare steak or do I try to find other scriptures to support my liberty in Christ – picking and choosing what I follow, or do I abstain from it until I truly find out what God wants whether I like it or not (respecting God’s word). This is just an example.

Another example, do I help the poor or point my finger at them as if they deserve it (Is. 58:1-12)? Do I see myself as God sees me, as His Child, or do I see myself as the world sees me (Gal. 4:1-7)? Am I more than a conqueror in Christ, or a victim of situations (Rom. 8:37)? Do I know God loves me as much as He loves Jesus, or do I hope He loves me (John 17:23)? Do I do what Christ says like carrying the burdens of Christians or do I keep focusing on my own burdens (Gal. 6:2)? Am I continually listening to His Word or continually listening to the advice of others? May I be a hearer and a doer of His Word, both are important (James 1:22-24; Ps. 119:45). Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (John 10:27).

- A side note: It is imperative to use a good study Bible that is more focused on translation and less on interpretation. When there is a deviation from the Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic words then those words are italicized to help the reader know what’s been added. Another factor to consider is the source from which the New Testament is translated. Some 4-5th Century sources such as the Critical Text leave out approximately 3000 Greek words. However these same words that are missing are actually found in even earlier manuscripts: Aramaic text (Peshito & Peshitta both 2nd Century) and the Latin vulgate (4th Century). And the same verses, such as Mark 16:9-20, are quoted in part by some of the early church leaders e.g. Papias (100AD), Justin Martyr (151AD), Ireneaus (180AD) and Hippolytus (190-227AD). Thus the closest Greek source Text that represents this early period is the Received Text. Therefore I recommend the following Bible translations: King James Version (KJV), YLT, LITV, NKJV and Tyndale.

CHAPTER 4

PRAYER

Prayer is not a one-way conversation, but a two-way conversation with God. This involves speaking out loud, listening and responding. Some folks say, “Am I praying with God or with myself.” Well it depends who you are directing your prayer to – is it self or God. King David prayed, “My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; In the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up” (Ps. 5:3).

There was a Shepherd; some would call a simple Shepherd, who loved God and accepted His Son, Jesus Christ as his Lord. He loved speaking with God as He took care of his sheep He regularly prayed on behalf of his employer and neighbors (called intercession), and earnestly asked God for the protection of the sheep against the ferocious wolves on the hill (called supplication). There were times in his day that he erupted with praise and thanked God for the water, the grass, the sun, the rocks, the sheep, food, employment, and all the wonderful things He created and provided (called thanksgiving). But what he loved to do was to honor God for who He is and spoke those things that were dear to God’s heart (called prayer). Sometimes he didn’t have any words to express how he felt, he just surrendered and spoke sounds of adorations to Him. Most times he didn’t understand those words called tongues.

One day a priest was making his rounds and overheard a jolly Shepherd speaking to God. He went closer to hear. As He listened He was shocked at how informal and casual he was speaking. He was speaking as if God was right there, saying things like, “I like the way You did.... Let’s do this....” So he called the Shepherd over, “Whom are you speaking to?” He said, “I’m speaking with Him, my Heavenly Father,” and pointed up. “Show respect,” the Priest said, reprimanding him, and then proceeded to tell him how to pray. The Shepherd listened, but looked confused. So the Priest decided to give an example, “God You are real. We are not worthy to call upon you. If You want the sheep protected, then let it be done if it is Your will...”

The Shepherd shook his head, “Why are you saying, “God You are real” Are you trying to convince yourself that He is? And didn’t Jesus make us worthy to stand before God, and isn’t His will His Word...” “Don’t interrupt me,” the priest said, “What qualifications do you have? I’ve been to the best schools and studied theology, you should honor those the Lord has appointed and listen. I am trying to help you.” The Shepherd submitted and the priest continued to say a few rehearsed words, it sounded so grand, like poetry as he increased and decreased his voice. Lots of posed “Lord” and “God” this and then ended off with an Amen. The Shepherd said, “Sounds very eloquent, I don’t know if I can ever get there, maybe I have upset God by the way I speak with Him and that’s why He sent you across my path.” He thanked the priest for helping him and went back to work.

The Shepherd wasn’t his jolly self, could he ever match up and remember all the things the Priest had said? So he looked to heaven, sighing, “Sorry Father”. He tried rehearsing what the Priest had said but it didn’t really come from his heart. His prayer was like driving a car with flat tires and a dirty windscreen – it was frustrating, empty and directionless. Eventually after a week of

struggling he stopped speaking WITH God and started speaking TO God, as the Priest pointed out. He stopped dialoguing with God but said what he needed to say and stopped with an Amen.

A couple of weeks went by and the Priest happened to be walking by the Shepherd's field again and saw how miserable he looked. Two weeks ago he was beaming from ear to ear but now he sighed as he worked. The priest wondered what was wrong, and just then the Lord spoke to him, "See what you have done? Go back and undo what you told him." After a rebuke from the Lord the Priest repented, rushed over to the Shepherd and apologized. He then proceeded to tell the Shepherd what the Lord had said and then asked the Shepherd to teach him how to pray. As the Shepherd shared, the priest listened attentively and said, "That is exactly the scripture! How did you know how to do that?" "I didn't," said the Shepherd, "I just spoke from my heart and reminded myself to be grateful and know that He loves me." The humble priest thanked the Shepherd for teaching him.

One of the things the Shepherd taught him was that prayer was verbal or an action, it was not in the mind. This is how we release our authority. Scripture is filled with verbal prayer and there are only two places in ALL of scripture where verbal seems to be questionable. One was with Hannah because Eli didn't hear her, but that didn't mean she didn't speak (1 Sam. 1:13). Her lips did move because she probably spoke softly. The point is Eli didn't hear her but God did. The other was Abraham's servant (Gen. 24:45), but what was interesting is that before he had finished speaking in his heart it came to pass. So his prayer had nothing to do with the outcome but it was God who had revealed it to him. He was just praying in his heart what God already told him. Also some would argue that the scripture says "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17) is in the mind because it is impossible to pray out loud without ceasing. But it is also impossible to pray in the mind without ceasing! This scripture is reminding them to continue in prayer, like continue to praise God or continue to do good to others, not praying and doing nothing else.

So out of all the cases of prayer in scripture, including all the examples of the prophets, apostles and Jesus; all spoke with God verbally or by some action like writing it down, not done in the mind. And meditating on God's Word is not praying. So let's follow their example and speak out loud with God. "Now it came to pass, as He (Jesus) was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." So He said to them, "When you pray, SAY,..." (Luke 11:1-2). When Jesus prayed, He spoke and lifted up His eyes to Heaven (John 17:1; 18:1). We are to do the same, stop these mind prayers.

WHY PRAYER

I. I LOVE HIM

One day when I came home I spoke with my wife for 5minutes, gave her my undivided attention, asked questions and when the time was up, I dashed out to complete the tasks that I remembered on my drive home. I did this for just under a week, after sometime I was surprised by some

things she said, decisions she made. I gave her my 5 minutes a day but it obviously wasn't working, it felt as if we were drifting apart and it was only 5 days.

I remember going out with her to buy something and was surprised by the choice she made. Historically, when we went out we knew what the other would buy before they bought it. But now, our relationship was slightly different. And it taught me a valuable lesson about love - if I love her I will communicate with her regularly. I may think I know everything about her but the present is not the past. The present dictates the future. If we stopped communicating our relationship deteriorates. Similarly with God, do I really love Him? If so I will communicate with Him all the time (1 Thess. 5:17). So when I pray, I must focus my attention on Him and stop my mind from wandering (Rom 12:12). Now I don't communicate just once a day but throughout the day, at different times (Ps. 72:15). "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8). Christ has given me personal access to God, so I must use it, and so must you (Heb. 4:16).

II. HIS PRESENCE IS THE POWER

Everyone on earth is looking for power – power to do what they want, when they want it, power to overcome fear. There are 5 primary fears that people have, there are more but these are the primary ones upon which all fears rest: Poverty, Sickness, Abuse by others, Loneliness and Fear of the unknown (e.g. future, demons, death etc.). And the foundation for these 5 primary fears is suffering. For this reason many people seek money, for they believe money gives them the power to overcome these fears. More money means prosperity to avoid poverty, better doctors to avoid sickness, picking friends at will to avoid loneliness, buying protection to avoid abuse, and somehow money can improve the odds regarding the future. It makes sense, well so I thought.

I met a man who seemed to have it all, he was somewhere between a millionaire and billionaire, seemed to have the perfect family. But one day our paths crossed and after talking about his Ferraris. I asked a question, "Are you happy? Do you have peace?" He confessed to me that he was very lonely, his wife and he had separated, someone in his family was very sick and all the doctors that money could buy couldn't help them (I can't remember if they eventually died), and someone in his family had faced abuse (some legal battle going on).

I said something stupid and insensitive like, "But you have so much money surely you can get people to solve your problems. You should be happy." He turned, and his response was like a piercing sword, "The happiest time of my life was when I didn't have money. It wasn't the money that brought happiness, neither was it the lack of money that brought happiness, it was however a sense of purpose and love that brought me happiness. Money helps some things but not the important things in life." He basically went on to tell me that when he put his hope and focus into getting money that is when he lost control of his life.

Years later as I was reflecting on this, I realized how true it was. That it wasn't about avoiding sickness, poverty, loneliness, abuse or the unknown future, it was about embracing the life that God has given us, living with love and living with a purpose. In Him these obstacles are

automatically destroyed. He conquered all, even death. When I plugged into Him, my focus moved from fears to living life in Him. And money just became one of the many tools that I use. My dependency is on the Lord.

Jesus said, “No one can be a slave to two lords. For indeed either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will support one and despise the other. You cannot be a slave to God and mammon (Mammon was a common Aramaic word, which literally means “wealth-focused, materialism”). Through this I say to you, BE NOT ANXIOUS about your soul, what to eat or to drink; nor about your body, what to be clothed with. Is not the soul more than food and the body more than clothing? Look on (look attentively) to the birds of the air; because they neither sow, nor reap, nor bring together into granary and your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not more value than them? Now which from you by being anxious can add one cubit on his stature? And why be anxious concerning clothing?

Consider carefully the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, nor do they spin. Now I say to you that neither Solomon in all his glory was clothed as one of these. Now if God in this way clothes the grass of the field, which today exists, and tomorrow thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, little-faiths? Therefore be anxious not, saying, What will we eat? Or, what will we drink? Or, what will we be clothed with? For indeed all these the nations crave for. For indeed your Heavenly Father knows that you have need of all of these things. Now seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these will be added to you. Therefore be not anxious into the next day; for indeed the next day will be anxious about itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil of it” (Matt. 6:24-34 - Holy Gospels in One).

The quest for power is in everyone, something that we all crave for. It is good, it shows that we are not all powerful and that something is missing. We are like an electric blender, beautiful, lots of buttons, we put things in, push the buttons in the perfect sequence but NOTHING happens. Why? Because it is not plugged into the source of power, the source of love. Jesus Christ is the source through which the love and power of God flows. We were designed to be linked to God, not to be on our own. When we plug into Jesus then look out, we are more than conquerors over these situations (Rom. 8:37; Eph. 3:20). If the electrical socket that the blender plug is plugged into is like Jesus Christ, and the power that flows through is Holy Spirit, then prayer would be like the “on” switch that enables other switches, like words and actions, to work with power (Ps. 91). Paul said, “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory (His riches in His presence) by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19).

BENEFITS OF PRAYER

Prayer is a major part of walking in the Spirit and critical to living life as God intended (Mark 14:38; Rom. 1:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; Jude 1:20). It is His presence that makes us bolder (Acts 4:31), and because of Holy Spirit inside us, we pray (cry out) to God as “Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15). God actually delights in our prayers, wants/desires to have communion with us (Prov. 15:8). Those who succeed in their prayer life, succeed in life. And those who fail in their prayer life,

fail in life. Those who kneel before God stand before kings. Prayer is not optional but mandatory to living life as God intended.

Prayer enables God to provide for the needs and desires of self and others (Ezek. 22:29-31; John 15:7; Matt. 7:7-11), including delivering and honoring us (Ps. 91:1, 15), protecting us against temptation (Matt. 26:41), giving us supernatural wisdom (James 1:6), healing (James 5:15-16), long life (Ps. 91:16) sending out laborers to bring people to Jesus (Matt. 9:38), protection of other's faith (Luke 22:32), to receive the empowerment of Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15; Luke 11:13) and many more.

CHAPTER 5

WHO DO I PRAY TO?

“My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; In the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up” (Ps. 5:3). Who do I direct my prayer to? This was a question I’d had for some time. Do I pray to; God the Father? His Son - Jesus Christ? Or Holy Spirit? Or all of them at different times? Or do I just speak with the LORD and all three are covered? Am I getting too technical? But if I wanted to know God more intimately, I needed to know. The words of Jesus resonated in my being, “Seek and you shall find” (Matt. 7:7).

Jesus told us that God is our Heavenly Father (Matt. 6:12; 23:9; John 20:17; 8:42). The reason we can pray to God as our Heavenly Father is because Jesus Christ made it possible to have direct access to Him (John 1:12; Heb. 4:16) and it is Holy Spirit who actually helps us (Rom. 8:26; Jude 1:20). “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father”” (Rom. 8:14-15; Gal. 4:7). It is clear from scripture that we are to pray to Our Heavenly Father, He being the primary focus of prayer, the one we direct our prayer to. Paul said, “Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me” (Rom. 15:30).

I speak with God, my Heavenly Father, my Abba, about anything and with all types of prayer and supplications in understanding and with the Spirit/non understanding (tongues). Asking, talking and thanking Him for whatever is in His heart and my heart.”

Now is it sin to speak to Jesus or Holy Spirit? If we are able to command demons to leave (speaking negatively to them) and this isn’t sin, how is it wrong to speak with Jesus or Holy Spirit who are also in the unseen? So absolutely not! True there aren’t many examples in scripture where people spoke to an unseen Jesus and Holy Spirit but there are some:

- Jesus is my Lord (Owner, Master). Paul prayed to the “Lord” Jesus 3 times when he was being persecuted (2 Cor. 12:8-9). Throughout 2nd Corinthians the Lord is referenced to as the Lord - Jesus, and God - as our Father (2 Cor. 1:2). Now there are exceptions, like when Paul quoted the Old Testament but most times it is in reference to Jesus Christ. Similarly, I generally speak with my Lord Jesus regarding persecution, especially when I am being persecuted, and I continually thank Him for what He has done for me.
- Holy Spirit is my Teacher, Helper and Comforter. Jesus said that He would send His disciples another Helper, like Him, a Teacher (John 14:16). If Holy Spirit was their Teacher like Jesus then they would obviously speak with Him like they had spoken with Jesus (John 14:16-17; 1 Cor. 2:13). Holy Spirit spoke with Peter and he obeyed (Acts 10:19-20), and so should we (Acts 13:2). There is also evidence from scripture, when decisions were made by the early Church that the Apostles, Elders and Brothers interacted with Holy Spirit. The Apostles, Elders and Brothers wrote a letter to the Gentiles and said, “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things...”

(Acts 15:28). They knew what seemed good to Holy Spirit because they knew the difference between Holy Spirit's will and their will. They were in consistent communion with Him and thus were able to speak on His behalf. Paul finished off the letter to Corinthians with, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor. 13:14). So I generally speak with my Teacher and Helper Holy Spirit when I'm trying to understand something in the scripture or general chit chat about things (2 Cor. 13:14).

HOW TO PRAY?

There are corporate prayers, where we pray together for a certain outcome (Matt. 18:19; Acts 14:23), and there are corporate prayers where we are assembled together but we pray individually (Acts 12:12; 2:1; 20:36; 21:5). There are also prayers we pray on our own, this is what I want to elaborate on.

Jesus said, "When you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him" (Matt. 6:5-8).

The key ingredient of Prayer is having the right heart, the right motivation before God. So am I grateful or always complaining? Am I transparent before Him or hiding something? Am I honoring Him all the time or only when it is convenient? Do I really believe He responds or am I just hoping, covering my bases? So what is the right heart? Having an inner zeal to expand and help His Kingdom, and living in Christ's Righteousness (Matt. 6:33; 2 Cor. 5:21). This results in being grateful, transparent, honoring and knowing He is listening. True prayer can only take place when we set our religious eloquences and rehearsed repetitions aside and pray like David did, from the heart with total reverence (Ps. 19:14). It is better to have a few words from the heart than ten thousands of words without heart.

When the Disciples asked Jesus how to pray, Jesus answered, "When you pray, say, Our Father, who is in Heaven, Hallowed is Your name. Your Kingdom come, Your will be done also on the earth as in Heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for indeed we also forgive all who owe us. And bring us not into temptation, but rescue us away from evil" (Luke 11:2-4). "Because Yours is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, into eternity. Amen. For indeed if you forgive men their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. Now if you forgive not men their transgressions, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions" (Matt. 6:13-15 - Holy Gospels in One). The pattern the Lord showed us here; is to honor our Heavenly Father, to seek His Will to be done, to be His example, and to depend upon Him. And this pattern is seen in the prayers of both Jesus (John 17) and the early church (Acts 4:24-30).

AVOID PRAYER TRADITIONS

- Try not to command demons to leave while in prayer with Him, do that before or after. There are no examples in scripture of people commanding demons to leave while they were in prayer to God. Unless directed by God, don't do it.
- Don't say, "You are real," or things like this! He is more real than you are, so act like it!
- Don't hide behind prayer by using prayer as a tool to preach to people. If I do this, then I am being deceitful and not directing it to God. I should rather just tell them what it is I want to say and pray to God from my heart.
- Don't brag by quoting reams of scripture in prayer but rather use the scripture to back up what is being prayed.
- Reflecting on self first is mandatory, and repent if anything comes to mind (2 Cor. 13:5).
- Pray in confidence that He hears you (Mark 11:24; 1 John 3:19-24).
- Try limiting the amount of words used in prayer by praying from the heart.
- Stop throughout and listen (Ps. 46:10; Num. 9:8).
- Remember "Amen" shouldn't be used as a "Goodbye", but rather use it to confirm what is being said, "I am in agreement!", "Let it be done!"

CHAPTER 6

TYPES OF PRAYER

The Priest - Shepherd illustration covered some of the general types of prayer listed in God's Word. But all his prayers stemmed from his humble submissive heart to God, words spoken out loud, directed to God, listening and knowing that God loves him. Do the same and you will automatically cover the different types of prayer.

To enable understanding of the different types I will "briefly" explain them. Paul, writing to Timothy said, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men" (1Tim. 2:1).

- **Prayer** "proseuchē, proseuchomai" (G4335/6) – means to worship God in what you are saying to Him. Showing Him respect, honouring Him, focusing on His kingdom and submitting to His Word (Matt. 6:8-12).
- **Supplication** "deēsis" (G1162), comes from the Greek word "deomai" (G1189) which means to urge God's blessing, request earnestly for self or others (Rom. 10:2 2 Cor. 1:11) e.g. Zacharias was childless and he made supplications to God for a child (Luke 1:13). Often times Prayer and Supplication are used in one sentence to re-enforce the importance of all types of prayer (2 Chr. 6:29; Acts 1:14; Eph. 6:18; 1 Tim. 2:1; 5:5).
- **Intercession** "enteuxis" (G1783) – literally means to visit God on behalf of someone else. Either by finding out from God how to help another, or by God moving on our heart to pray for someone/something else, regardless of knowing any details (Rom. 8:27, 34; Ezek. 22:29-31).
- **Thanks giving** "eucharistia" (G2169) – means expressing a grateful attitude with words to God.
- Often the following Greek words are translated in English as Pray when speaking to God – "Parakaleō" (G3870) means to "call near, urge to come" (Matt. 26:53) and "erōtáō" (G2065) means to "ask" (John 14:16).

The types of prayers listed above are either:

- 1) Spoken with our **understanding**; or
- 2) Spoken **without understanding** the situation yet through a sense of need, an inner compulsion; or
- 3) Spoken in a spiritual language we don't understand called **tongues**.

The first two are self explanatory so let's elaborate on tongues.

WHAT ARE TONGUES?

The tongue shapes the sound/air that is pushed out by the diaphragm into a language(s) – thus any language is known as a tongue and languages are known as tongues. Tongues are used to communicate something to the hearer. It is important that the hearer understands the language but it is not important that the one speaking the language understands it. E.g. if a Russian wanted me to give a message to another Russian, in Russian, they would only need to teach me how to say the sounds. It would not be necessary for me to understand what I am saying. I can still speak it but I won't understand it. And understanding it isn't important because the message is for the Russian not for me. Similarly with a spiritual language (Tongues), I may not understand what I am saying but it is a message from Holy Spirit to God through me. He understands it.

Let me give some context by taking a slight detour. The life (spirit) of Mankind from the beginning started with Adam. And he passed life down through his sperm from generation to generation. It is the male who carries the life (spirit) to the next generation. The sin affected the life (spirit) from the very beginning and it needed to be renewed. Therefore the Messiah (Jesus) couldn't come through Adam's life (the sperm from man) but from His Heavenly Father or else He would have had sin from birth (Rom. 5). When the sperm (life through man) meets the egg (life incubator of the woman) the soul is instantly created.

What about Jeremiah, I hear some say, wasn't Jeremiah around, like in Heaven, before God created him? The Lord said to Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations" (Jer. 1:5). Notice it didn't say Jeremiah knew God before he was formed, but that it was God who knew Jeremiah. So we can't use it to support the fact that we existed before we were born. Let's interpret scripture as it says. God knew what He wanted in Jeremiah and formed what He wanted in Jeremiah from the womb. Jeremiah didn't literally exist but existed in God's mind and God formed him.

When the sperm or body dies then the spirit (life) goes back to God, because it is on loan. For without the spirit this body is dead (James 2:26) but the soul stays alive for eternity. It either goes to Sheol or goes to Heaven based on the choices it makes. From conception, when the soul is created, the person can talk, it may not be understood by those around but God understands. The embryo expresses how it feels, in a totally transparent spiritual language not a learned language. As the child develops they learn how to speak to those in the world and guard themselves. Those who speak to the world speak a learned language and must guard themselves. However, those who speak to God must speak a heavenly language and must be transparent before Him. "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

I could say that an infant speaks more in the spirit than in the flesh because they are unable to speak in a learned language and they are more transparent in expressing their heart. However the

infant spirit has been damaged from the very beginning through the sin in the world. Their spiritual language to God will not be that effective as they are lacking the truth and understanding of the perfect will of God. They need Holy Spirit inside them in order to teach them God's Will. But once they are completed with Holy Spirit (inside and out), they are made a new creation (Eph. 1:13; 2 Cor. 5:17). They have the ability to speak in unlearned tongues by Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; 8:19; 10:46; 19:5-6). It is Holy Spirit who guides their "tongue", helping them pronounce words (Acts 2:4). Just like an infant who surrenders their voice by speaking from their heart and ignoring learned languages so are those who are guided by Holy Spirit. "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful" (1 Cor. 14:14).

I. HOW I STARTED IN TONGUES

As mentioned, a couple of months after accepting Jesus Christ as my Lord, I had an encounter with God. I shook uncontrollably at the name of Jesus and when I wanted to speak, my words sounded like stuttering gibberish, this was tongues. However what I didn't mention was that for the next 6 years I didn't speak in tongues. Why? Well I didn't know it was tongues or how to speak again. The road block was my thinking – I was waiting for another shaking experience, like what happened at Pentecost. I was expecting a spiritual lightening bolt to hit me and I would automatically speak in tongues without my involvement, like autopilot. Now I had read about tongues many times in the scripture; had heard people speak in tongues, and I wanted to speak in tongues. I became very frustrated because I couldn't, well I thought I couldn't.

In those 6 years, I went to prayer meetings where people laid hands on me to speak in tongues, nothing happened. I read a number of "how to" speak in tongues books. One said they were fasting and praying then they started speaking and Holy Spirit just took over. This seemed pretty simple for me to execute, so I fasted for 24-36 hours, no food, just water. Locked myself in a room and prayed, and prayed. I think I even said to God, "I will not leave until I speak in tongues." I broke that vow a few hours later and left not speaking in tongues. I remember telling God in my frustration and "pride", "I fast and pray and more than many of these people and they speak in tongues. It is unfair! Why them and not me?!" So I gave up.

I tried to disprove my initial understanding of scripture that "every Christian can speak in tongues". But as I went through the scriptures, people could see when someone was baptized in Holy Spirit. How? It was an outward evidence, something took place that others witnessed. Those who were baptized in Holy Spirit spoke in tongues, a spiritual language sometimes understood by others and sometimes not, but it was never understood by the person speaking unless they could interpret (Acts 2:4; 8:17-19; 10:44-46; 11:15; 19:5-6; 1 Cor. 14:14-15). So was I trying to disprove scripture based on experience? Honestly speaking, yes!

I went through the Old Testament looking for the gifts of the spirit and those who had them. When trying to understand interpretation of a law, phrase or word, always start at the first place it is mentioned in the scripture. Jesus used the same principle when speaking with the Pharisees regarding the first case of marriage, "...it was not so from the beginning" (Matt. 19:8). The first mention of tongues is Isaiah 28:11 in reference to a future time (1 Cor. 14:21 references this).

The fulfillment took place at Pentecost (Acts 2:4). However before Pentecost, there was a distinct difference between those who had Holy Spirit inside and upon them.

Those who had Holy Spirit inside them, had supernatural wisdom, understanding and knew what and how to do the will of God (Ex. 28:3; 31:3; 35:31; Luke 1:15, 41, 67; 2:40 etc.). And those who had Holy Spirit upon them, had supernatural power like prophecy, boldness, miracles and healing. It wasn't a result of their understanding but the power of God working as they stepped out (Num. 11:25-26; 24:2; 1 Sam. 10:10; 1 Chr. 12:18; 2 Chr. 24:20; Matt 3:16; Luke 3:22 etc.). But no one under the Old Testament (as far as I had studied) had Holy Spirit inside and upon them except Jesus Christ.

Recall Holy Spirit was already IN Jesus from birth (Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 2:40) but only came UPON Him after He was baptized in water (Luke 3:22). Now Jesus was completed to start His ministry. Later, after Jesus was resurrected, His followers also received the completion of Holy Spirit in and upon them. All the gifts of Holy Spirit could be found in the Old Testament, every one of them, except tongues. Tongues is the only one that is unique to those under the New Testament. Why? Because the New Testament in Christ offers a deeper intimacy with God, and enables us to pray at this deeper level without needing understanding.

Again I went to services where people prayed for people to speak in Tongues, just like those I had been to previously. They prayed for me and kept praying. They said just speak. "How can I just speak?" "Say abba, repeatedly". I did, but it sounded so silly. "Am I saying it right? Is it abba or abra or ...? I can't it is not coming." I wanted the formula, I wanted the flame from Heaven to hit me. Eventually after 10minutes or so they gave up on me and moved on to the next person who spoke in tongues. I was frustrated because I knew it was my covenant right, it must be important and I wanted it (Mark. 16:17). So I resorted to – maybe God is not giving it to me for some reason, just accept it.

After 6 years, from the decision of accepting Jesus Christ as my Lord, I went to a Bible conference on how Christians should work in the work place. The Pastor made reference to speaking in tongues. So after the meeting I went to the Pastor and told him I wanted to speak in tongues but couldn't. He asked me some questions regarding my faith in Jesus Christ and about Holy Spirit – basically wanting to know if Jesus was my Lord and if I knew anything about Holy Spirit. Then he said, "You can speak in tongues! Why aren't you?" I said, "I told you I can't, I obviously don't have Holy Spirit." He said, "Yes you do, but you don't believe the scripture. Why don't you just speak?"

After seeing he wasn't getting anywhere with me he pulled out the Bible and said let's settle this once and for all. He turned to Luke 11:13, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the HOLY SPIRIT to those who ask Him!" So he asked me if I believe this, I said yes. If you don't believe you have Holy Spirit ask – so I did. Okay so based on the Word of God, God the Father has given you the Holy Spirit. Remember no one can say Jesus Christ is their Lord and that the Word of God is true without the conviction of Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). Now I will lay hands on you just like the apostles did to receive the completion of Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17). So he did. Still nothing, I still couldn't speak in tongues. It was just like before.

He then asked me, “At the day of Pentecost who was doing the speaking – Holy Spirit or the 120?” I said, “Holy Spirit.” He replied, “No, read it again.” Acts 2:4, “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” I said, “Okay they spoke but Holy Spirit gave them the utterance, the words.” He responded, “Yes they spoke, but Holy Spirit helped them pronounce the sounds they were making. They had to do the speaking. It was their choice, just like Paul did later (1 Cor. 14:15). Holy Spirit won’t go against someone’s will if they don’t want Him to speak through them. Speaking in Tongues is by faith, you step out of the boat of understanding and speak, Holy Spirit will help you. Do you believe He is your helper?” Yes. “So stop focusing on your understanding, just speak glorifying Him with sound and Holy Spirit will take over.”

Driving home in the car with my wife, I told her the conversation and she said, “So why don’t you just speak and not use words but love upon the Lord.” I couldn’t. Then I felt a check in my spirit saying, “Is it that you can’t or that you won’t? Does believing in Jesus Christ as your Lord make any sense in your natural understanding? Does laying hands on someone to be healed make any sense? Get off your understanding and step out!” So right there in the car I started loving upon the lord just speaking sounds, glorifying Him. My mind said, “What are you doing? What are you saying? It is senseless? Are you offending God? It is coming from your mind not your spirit!”

As soon as I had these thoughts, there came a flood against it – like there was a war going on inside me – my mind vs. my spirit, “How can I have a conversation about this and still speak? If the words were coming from my mind then surely I would need to think about the sounds to say them? How is it I can think about other things? If I spoke in English, I can’t have a completely different conversation in my mind like I am having with you now.” “But you are doing the speaking.” “Yes I am doing the speaking, that’s it. But I’m not even focusing on what I am saying because I am speaking with you in my mind. I don’t even know what I am saying, trusting Holy Spirit to speak through me regardless of my understanding – surely my understanding is unfruitful.”

Over the next few months, the more I spoke in tongues the less my mind said, “Foolishness.” It eventually gave up. I’m sure if I stopped I wouldn’t have spoken in tongues again, my flesh (my mind) would have robbed me. I realized that I could have spoken all along, since the moment of the baptism of Holy Spirit. In my ignorance I was waiting for God, but He was waiting for me. He had already given it to me. It is truly by faith, surrendering to Holy Spirit and just speaking, loving upon our Heavenly Father with sounds. He forms the words without us thinking about them.

II. YES HOLY SPIRIT SPEAKS THROUGH ME

“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us (How?) with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26). The Greek word for “helps” is “sunantilambanomai” (G4878). It

is only used twice in the New Testament, the other time is in Luke 10:40. “Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him (Jesus) and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.” This word “help” means “working together with”, not working alone and not in isolation but together with. Therefore Holy Spirit working together with us AS we pray. What does working with us look like as we pray? The Greek word “uttered” is “alalētos” (G215), it is not soundless as per “áphōnos” (G880) nor is it unclear pronunciation of a language as per “apophtheggomai” (G669). “Uttered” does however mean “speaking in natural words.” Therefore “the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be spoken in natural words”. So how? With an audible spiritual language (tongues) and does this with me as I surrender my voice to Him by speaking.

III. GENERAL Q&A

- 1) Do I believe every Christian, who is baptized in Holy Spirit, can speak in Tongues? Yes based on scripture, but not every Christian will speak in tongues because of their own reasoning. It is significantly easier for a person to speak in tongues just after they accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and are baptized in Holy Spirit than one who has been a Christian a long time. They are not trying to figure it out but accept it by faith. Just like in the beginning they accept Jesus by faith and later start working it out, so it is with Tongues. Jesus said, “Now these supernatural signs will follow closely those who believe in My name. They will cast out demons, they will speak new tongues, they will take up serpents and if they drink anything deadly, it will not hurt them. They will lay hands on sick ones and they will be well” (Mark 16:17-18 - Holy Gospels in One). What is the qualifier for the supernatural signs? Those who truly believe in Jesus’ authority (His Name).

- 2) How did the early church know when someone was baptized in Holy Spirit? They spoke in tongues (Acts 2:4; 8:17-19; 10:44-46; 11:15; 19:5-6). Peter debated with the Jewish Christian elders who didn’t believe that the message of the gospel was for the gentiles. He used the “first principle” to explain to them that the Gentiles also received Holy Spirit just like they had at first – referring to Pentecost, specifically to tongues. “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning” (Acts 11:15). “For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God” (Act 10:46).

- 3) What is actually being said in tongues?
 - The mysteries of God (1 Cor. 14:2).
 - The wonderful works of God (Acts 2:11).
 - Giving of thanks to God (1 Cor. 14:16).

- 4) What are the different kinds of tongues by Holy Spirit? “For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful” (1 Cor. 14:14). So even though I don’t understand it what languages do I speak?
- Language to God (1 Cor. 14:2).
 - Language of Angels (1 Cor. 13:1).
 - A natural language that others may understand as it is a message to them (Acts 2:7-11).
- 5) Is praying “in the Spirit” (Eph. 6:18; Jude 1:20) the same as praying “with the Spirit” (1 Cor. 14:14-15)?
- No. Praying IN the Spirit is referring to the POSITION we should be in when praying. And praying WITH the Spirit is praying in a spiritual language, TONGUES. IN the Spirit means not focusing on lusts of the flesh but on His Will found in His Word (Rom. 8:9; James 4:2-4). Yes praying in tongues is more spiritual, more the perfect will of God than praying in the understanding because the flesh gets in the way of understanding. But when a person walks in the spirit, desiring God’s Kingdom needs and focusing on God’s Word, then the understanding is enlightened and enables the person to pray effectively in their understanding. Praying in the Spirit includes BOTH praying in the understanding and praying in tongues. But it doesn’t necessarily need to be at the same time.
- 6) What are the benefits of speaking in Tongues for the individual?
- “He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself” (1 Cor. 14:2, 4). This means we build ourselves up spiritually in Him when we pray in tongues. Holy Spirit helps us pray the perfect will of God (Rom. 8:26-27), so even if we don’t know what the will of God is in a situation or we are in a fleshy mindset, we are able to pray the perfect will of God in tongues! What an incredible benefit. So just like praying in our understanding is important so is praying with the Spirit (non understanding).

We need both to fulfill the condition of Ephesians 6:18 “praying always with ALL prayer and supplication in the Spirit.” In the Spirit is a position, and the position includes both natural language and spiritual language. What is the conclusion then? Like Paul said, “I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding” (1 Cor. 14:14-15).

- “We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). It is no coincidence that Romans 8:28 comes after Paul’s teaching that Holy Spirit helps us to pray with groanings which cannot be spoken in natural words, tongues.
- Another benefit is the ability to express our heart to God without limitations of natural words! Like “I love you Father” doesn’t quite go deep enough, or praying for a need for someone that words themselves can’t express. Or praying not knowing what the situation is all about. I recall one day driving on the highway and I had a deep need to pray for my mother. I didn’t know what it was all about so I prayed in Tongues until I felt it was okay.

When I arrived at work I received a phone call from my mom telling me that there was a shooting and that she was caught in the middle of it. It was a miracle that she wasn't hit.

- 7) What are the benefits of speaking in Tongues for the hearers?
- Tongues are a sign, “not to those who believe but to unbelievers” (Mark 16:17; 1 Cor. 14:22). It draws unbelievers to ask the question - is this real? It is just one of the many signs God puts in front of people. If they want to know more then it leads them in the right direction, however if not, then it could harden their hearts, thinking those who are speaking in tongues are mad (1 Cor. 14:23). If it is interpreted then they have no excuse to harden their heart and have to make a choice. That's why interpretation of tongues in a corporate setting is required, it is for the unbelievers. Now anyone who obeys the interpretation of tongues is also edified. Therefore if it is not interpreted or there is no interpreter present, rather pray in tongues quietly to God – edifying yourself (1 Cor. 14:23-33).
- 8) Is there a difference between tongues for the individual (Mark 16:17) and tongues for the church (1 Cor. 12:10)?
- Yes. First, the term church means a gathering of believers, two or more, for the purpose of edification (1 Cor. 11:18; 14:26; Matt. 18:20). And as mentioned, Tongues is for every individual who believes in Jesus Christ as their Lord (Mark 16:17). However giving a tongue for the Church is not for every believer (1 Cor. 12:30), e.g. not every Christian is designated by God to be a teacher in the Church (1 Cor. 12:29) but every Christian can and does teach themselves and their family or those that come their way (Rom. 12:7). But in the Church they may not teach. Similarly, all can speak in tongues but there are those who believe they have a message in tongues from God for the church, known as the gift of tongues or “different kinds of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:10). This is different from personal tongues.

“If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God” (1 Cor. 14:27-28). God is not the author of confusion but of peace, order (1 Cor. 14:33). Paul says, “I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue” (1 Cor. 14:18-19). “Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification” (1 Cor. 14:26). And later in that chapter Paul tells the church “do not forbid to speak with tongues” (1 Cor. 14:39).

CHAPTER 7

HEARING GOD'S VOICE

I. TESTING 1, 2, 3

Now how do I know when it is God speaking and not my flesh or Satan? Please remember, when I say Satan I don't mean he is the very one who does this because he can't be every where at once. But I do mean that his workers in the kingdom of darkness are involved in some way – either the fallen angels or demons, he being their leader. So Satan and Flesh:

1. They focus on pleasures for self or the pleasures of those close to us;
2. They focus on how to elevate oneself and why it is self reliant (being a our own god);
3. They focus on fear of situations more than what is right, i.e. why it can't vs. why it can. There is no such thing as healthy fear in scripture! All fear based decisions are bad! What about crossing a busy street to get a ball, isn't that a fear based decision? People get confused between wisdom based and fear based decisions. It is fear based when we try to justify why we can't cross the street. The focus is more on the barrier than on the original objective - getting the ball. A wisdom based decision has a clear objective of getting the ball, the street is just one of the barriers it has to overcome NOT RUN FROM. So wisdom looks for gaps in the busy street to cross, but fear refrains from the original objective because it fears the busy street. Now sometimes the effort in meeting the objective outweighs the benefit therefore it is not worth proceeding, again a wisdom based decision not fear based.

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary Satan walks about like a ROARING lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Why like a roaring lion? To scare you and once he scares you he has you. Growing up we had many dogs on our land. At one point we had 7 dogs who were a mixture of Rottweiler and Chow. And when they barked they wanted to instill fear into those coming onto the property, if they smelled fear they went onto the attack. If there was no fear they were hesitant, cautious. Fear to Satan is like blood in the water for a shark, it demands an attack.

Flesh and Satan are crafty and can also provide scripture to support each point of view (Matt. 4:3, 6). It provides worldly logic and it may seem to be love motivated (Matt. 4:9). I personally have made mistakes here, thinking it is from God when it was from my flesh or Satan. Over the years I have been able to see through most of these errors by ensuring all 4 of these are true:

1. Am I loving my Heavenly Father and His Kingdom (James 4:3; Rom. 8) and not focusing on fear or elevation?

2. Am I abiding in Him by loving other believers (1 John), fasting, prayers, praises and reading His word regularly?
3. Am I imitating “those who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Heb. 6:12)?
4. Am I listening to His voice of peace in my heart (2 Tim. 1:7)?

II. IDENTIFY THE SIGNS OF HIS VOICE

Now all the signs of His voice that I will mention below need to be accompanied by an inner peace of knowing. An inner peace tells me it is right or no peace tells me it is wrong (Gen. 41:16, Ps. 85:8; Phil. 4:6-8; Col. 3:15, 1 John 2:27). “I will hear what God the LORD will speak, for He will speak peace to His people and to His saints; but let them not turn back to folly” (Ps. 85:8). “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7).

An inner peace that isn’t based on logic or tradition or emotions but on an inner knowing it is right. The knowing is like a green or red traffic light; if green, I may not feel like going but I know I have to go, or if I stay I will face the consequences. If it is red, I may I feel like going but I know I can’t, or if I go I will face the consequences. Inner peace is like the traffic light – when Green I feel peace to Go, when Red I feel peace to Stop. The situation may look terrible, fearful, illogical to react to but the witness from the Holy Spirit within may tell me to react! This inner voice is from Holy Spirit and He uses, “Yes (Peace)” or “No (no Peace)” to navigate us. We can’t see around corners, we can’t understand all the fine print, even if we are fully convinced with logic we can’t see the potential impact for that path, but God does! So listen to His inner voice of peace. “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7).

My employer offered me a new assignment and I wasn’t even looking for it. It looked really good; it came with a promotion and really good financial benefits. Most people would have jumped at the opportunity. So instead of me asking God, “Should I take the assignment or not?” I asked, “Lord, should I take the assignment?” The first question consists of two questions therefore it is not specific enough, I needed a specific Yes or No answer. So I switch off my feelings and listen to Holy Spirit on the inside of me. I felt great that they offered me the position but I didn’t have 100% peace. I was just so excited about the offer and started working out the financial benefit.

Everything pointed to saying yes, but inside something was wrong. I sensed slight uneasiness within me like a No but I didn’t have the reason. Was this a result of my skeptical self or God, or was this opportunity too good to be true or was it a blessing God put in my path? So I waited and kept trying to justify why it was right with logic (that should have been an indication I didn’t have peace as you don’t need to justify it). A week or so later, as I was driving home in my car, a word came out from seemingly nowhere and when the word came I knew it was related to the

assignment. Like a word of knowledge for the church but this knowledge was for me (1 Cor. 12:8). The word was “Time”. So I started looking at it through the timing and time lens, it confirmed to me that it was a 100% no. I thanked the Lord for confirming it to me and was happy I didn’t take it. “Let the peace of God RULE in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful” (Col. 3:15).

Now there have been times I thought God had answered my question with peace, only to discover He answered the “why” question and not the specific question. My pregnant wife and I wanted to know the sex of our child so I could pray more effectively for him/her. This shouldn’t have been difficult, it was simple, “Lord, is it a boy?” I felt the Lord asking me, “Why do you want to know?” “Well, because I want to know what to pray for.” Again He responded with why. I said, “Lord, if it is a boy then I would pray for this vision for them. If it is a girl then I would pray for that vision for them. So is it a boy?” I felt peace with the vision of the boy and therefore deduced the child was a boy.

Yet, I didn’t feel satisfied and approached the Lord again this time changing the question, “Lord, is it a girl?” Wanting to compare the inner peace with that of the boy. Again the Lord responded with why? And I kept on telling Him the need to pray the vision for the child and was always comforted and had inner peace for the boy’s vision. I approached the Lord 4 times on this and every time ended up believing the child was a boy. Only to discover months later that it was a girl. When I approached the Lord on how I had misunderstood Him, He asked me from within, “Would you have prayed the vision for the boy if you knew it was a girl.” I said, “No.” Then I realized that the Lord sometimes answers the root of the question, the motivation not necessarily what I wanted to know but WHY I wanted to know it. So next time you ask the Lord to know something be prepared to answer why you want to know it – He will answer that. “For the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts” (1 Chr. 28:9).

Here are some of the signs of His voice:

1. When I read, hear or remember a **specific Bible passage and it brings clarity, understanding or confidence to that exact area of my need; as if it was inserted in the scripture just for me, it is most likely for me** (2 Peter 1:19; Ps. 119:16,105,130). His Word creates this uncommon peace and joy within me that can’t be explained except to say, “God said so.” However If I don’t spend time in His Word and don’t believe His Word, then it becomes a reproach to me. I won’t benefit from it and bring a curse upon myself (Jer. 6:10). Jesus said, “The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (John 14:26). Now if I don’t spend time in His word how can I recognize His voice? Or how can Holy Spirit bring to my remembrance what Jesus said without me having something inside me to remember?

I remember a major obstacle came up when I wanted to immigrate to Canada. While I was pondering on the severity of the obstacle a verse popped into my mind, “Luke 10:19.” I went to the washroom (sometimes the best place for peace and quiet), pulled out the New Testament and looked it up. “Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you”

(Luke 10:19). Even though the context of the scripture wasn't the same as my need, the having power over the enemy and nothing will hurt me was the same as my need. This was the very verse that gave me the confidence to stand against the attack. I memorized that verse and quoted it until the fear of the situation left.

Now my Flesh (self) and Satan didn't want me to trust God's word. They gave me suggestions of unbelief like, "did God really say or mean this or that, is this really a promise for you", just like Satan did to Eve (Gen. 3:1). If I believed the suggestion, I would have doubted God's Word, made different choices and received the consequences. So I chose to believe His Word regardless of what the situation dictated and 1 year later I received the fruit that I believed God for.

Sometimes I feel like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego who rejected the pressures of the world as in Daniel 3:14-18. "Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up." And you know what happened – God saved them.

Yes it goes against worldly or natural logic, that is a given, so it comes to choice. The choice to believe Him. It is not always easy, actually seldom is. Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, THEN you will know that I am..." (John 8:28). Notice that only AFTER He is lifted up higher than self then we will know, not before. Therefore our choice to believe comes before knowing or seeing an avenue. So hold onto Him by holding onto His Word and rejoice when suggestions or others come across your path, who contradict His Word, because it means you are on the right path. Consciously cast out those thoughts by speaking against them (2 Cor. 10:5) and try using scripture like Jesus did, "It is written" (Matt. 4:4).

2. **A dream or a vision** that is engrained in my mind and I have difficulty shaking it. Deep down I know it is a message from God. "In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds, then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction" (Job 33:15-16).
 - o Sometimes this message is about something I need to do and/or pray for, like Peter getting a message through a vision to encourage him to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 11:5-10).

- Sometimes it is a bad situation to tell me to do something to prepare for it, like Joseph preparing for the 7 famine years (Gen. 41:25-32).
- Sometimes it is something that goes against God's will, a warning and instead of accepting it pray against it or lay my hands on them, like Ananias laying hands on Paul to receive his sight (Mark 16:18; Acts 9:10-12).
- Sometimes it is to reveal the past and the future to bring people to their knees, like Daniel with Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:32-47).
- Sometimes it is to prepare self for something and letting me know it is to suffer for His name at the hands of others, like Paul going to Jerusalem knowing what would happen to him (Acts 22:17-19).

God's will is never for His Children to suffer at the hands of sickness, poverty, natural disasters or accidents, but sometimes it is His will that they suffer at the hands of others so that those who are persecuting His Children see His love and forgiveness in them and come to Him.

3. **God sends someone across my path to tell me the answer, or asks me a question that inspires the answer.** God often uses my loving wife, she is truly my helper as the Lord designed (1 Cor. 11:9; Gen. 2:18-24). Other times His prophets (Acts 3:18-22; 1 Cor. 12:28) and sometimes He will even use the simplest thing to get my attention, like something a young child says. It reminds me of the prophet Balaam who was perverse in his ways, who still wasn't getting what the Lord was saying, so the Lord made his donkey talk to him (Num 22:28-33).

When God chooses to speak to us through others many times it wouldn't be new to us. Deep down inside we would already know the answer and they just confirmed it (Acts 21:10-14). So don't just listen to everyone, make sure that there is an inner confirmation, from Holy Spirit, of peace and it is backed up by His Word.

A side note: Never seek council from the world (Ps. 1), from the kingdom of Darkness (Deut. 18:10-14) but only from God and His elect (Eph. 4:11-13), this includes marriage councilors. NEVER be impressed if someone who doesn't know you tells you about your past or things that they wouldn't have known. "Wow, if they knew everything about my past then they must know everything about my future too." Wrong. Satan has access to this information and does this to deceive many. This is not impossible - they know your history; where you live, what you did, knowledge of your family members and friends, your favorite food, etc. It is like one giant website in the spiritual world with everyone's historical data on it. The fallen angels and demons use this to awe people into believing them. Working behind the scenes in and through palm readers, psychics, fortune tellers, astrology, etc.

They are trying to lure people to believe them, once they believe then the fallen angels and demons can get them to do pretty much whatever they want without resistance. So beware

and know that they don't know your future. The future is decided ONLY by the choices you make now. They want to rob you of it by giving you their choices to accept, or give you their set of beliefs upon which to base your choices. If you believe them, you will conceive the evil and birth it. God strictly warns against this abomination so if you have done this in the past, repent quickly (Is. 59:4; Jer. 29:8; Deut. 13:3).

4. **The idea is impossible to execute in the natural world, but His Faith and His favour propels me forward** (Prov. 3:5-10). Like Joshua and Caleb seeing the opportunity and knowing that God is well able to help against the natural odds (Num. 14:6-9). Or like Peter choosing to obey Jesus' words and step out of the boat into the raging sea to walk on water (Matt. 14:29).

5. **A brilliant thought** seemingly comes out of nowhere. And by implementing it, it will change the situation. I have the mind of Christ (Matt. 10:20; 1 Cor. 2:10; Is. 55:9). There are many times at work when I get given a problem to solve and it is complex. After I pray I either get a vision of the end result and have no idea how to get there; or I get the next step and have no idea what the end result will look like, I just know that this is the next step. Can you imagine trying to envision or energise others when you only have part of the puzzle? I can't very well say, God said this, let's see where this takes us. It is fun!

6. **God plays a similar scenario out in front of me and exposes the direction** (2 Sam. 12:1-12; Jer. 1:11-12). In a negative sense, it is like the LORD sending Nathan to David to play out a scenario. When David heard, he reacted and Nathan used it to expose David's sin. Now that David's sin was exposed, David was forced to repent.

7. **While writing to Him He responds within, and I write His response.** It is as if I am having a dialogue with God on paper. He is looking over my shoulder and responding from within. King David often prayed this way through his Psalms. He sometimes starts to write from a place of hopeless despair or from fear but then it is as if God gives him the answer. Now he erupts with praise and declares that he will not be afraid (Ps. 3; 4; 5 etc.). I've often used this approach when I feel despondent about something or I'm having a difficulty focusing on Him. It helps the conversation flow because more of my senses are focused on Him.

CHAPTER 8

BARRIERS TO ANSWERED PRAYER

What are the things that will cause God not to hear my prayers? If I'm not walking as He walked. "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:6), those who walk as He walked walk by the Spirit (Rom. 8). "For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:20-22). "For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil" (1 Peter 3:12; Prov. 15:29).

Here are the signs of those who are not walking as He walked, therefore I have to judge myself against these elements.

The following show I am not Loving God, when I :

- **Focus more on others and what they said, than on who God is (Heb. 11:6; Ex. 3:14);**
- Base my requests on my righteous works not on God's Character (Dan. 9:18) and His Word, promises (Is. 43:26; 55:10-11). Our righteous works are as filthy rags in the sight of God (Is. 64:6). If we are proud of our good deeds then we push ourselves away from God (Luke 18:9-14). It is not our good works that make us righteous but who we are in Christ that made us righteous (Rom. 3:23-27; 1 John 1:7; 2 Cor. 5:21). Because of Christ we automatically do good works (Eph. 2:10), we should take pleasure in our labor but more importantly be thankful to Him who has enabled us to labor in the right direction.
- Praying to God from our mind and not from our whole heart (Jer. 29:11-14; Is. 29:13);
- Not submitting to God, His counsel, or His Word (James 4:7-8; Prov. 28:9; 2 Chr. 7:14-16);
- Not having a believing heart (Heb. 3:12, 18-19);
- Mostly seeking self pleasure, not God's Kingdom needs (James 4:3; Matt. 6:20-33);
- Not repenting to God for sin (1 John 1:7-9; Ps. 66:18);

The following show I am not Loving Others

- Un-forgiveness towards others (Mark 11:25-26). People will always offend, there will always be something. The issue isn't what others do to us but how we internally respond to it. If there is no forgiveness towards others then there is no entry into Heaven. This is very serious. Forgiveness is also the pre-requisite for receiving ANY blessing or request. Jesus said, "If you do not forgive men their trespasses, NEITHER will your Father forgive your trespasses"

(Matt. 6:15; Mark 11:25-26). And we will feel the consequences of demon harassment (Matt. 18:21-35). So how do we overcome un-forgiveness? Forgiveness stops self from continually thinking and talking about the offense, and replaces the negative thought with praying for them (Matt. 5:44).

- Not loving our brothers/sisters in the Lord (John 15:7-12; 1 Thess. 4:9; 1 Pet. 1:22, 4:8; 1 John 3:20-24);
- Not even trying to reconcile with our brother/sister in the Lord (Matt. 5:23-24);
- Praying prayers of destruction on those who reject God's plan for salvation – His Son (Luke 9:53-56).
- Abstaining from learning to do good; not seeking justice, not rebuking those who oppress those who are suffering; not defending the fatherless, not pleading on behalf of the widow (Is. 1:15-19);
- Ignoring the needs of our family (1 Tim. 5:8);
- Dishonouring our wife (1 Peter 3:7); and not loving her as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her (Eph. 5:25);
- Not submitting to our husband AS to the Lord (Eph. 5:22; 1 Cor. 11:10);
- Not honouring our parents (Eph. 6:1-3), including our parent in-laws. The 2 shall become 1 therefore my spouse's parents are my parents (Eph. 5:31);
- And being stingy (Prov. 21:13).

What happens if I can't avoid the above? That's the problem, it isn't about avoiding the above. Trying to avoid the above will cause a never ending downward spiral of sin, with the added of guilt of failure. If I'm breaking any of the above then I haven't surrendered fully to Christ. As I surrender to Christ I automatically avoid the above without thought. So how do I live in a state of surrender to Christ?

CHAPTER 9

BREAK THROUGH PRAYER – LIVE A SURRENDERED LIFE IN CHRIST

When I think of the good news of God, I think of “the Key” God has given me to have intimacy with Him forever! The Key is only effective in me when I accept the Key by choice and surrender my choice to the Key. Then I am One with the Key, I don’t become One but I AM One that very instant. It isn’t a journey, it doesn’t take long, it is closer and quicker than a breath – it is a choice of total surrender of my choices to the Key. I don’t try, I just do, trusting that the Key has already unlocked whatever I need. The Key is Jesus Christ, and surrendered life to Him is mandatory to live life (Matt. 1:23; John 17:21-23).

It isn’t about waiting for some big break, it’s about receiving His love through Jesus Christ and responding. So instead of me focusing on what or what not to do, I focus on intimacy with Him, what He did for me and who I am in Him. This will result in a surrendered life to Christ automatically doing good works (Eph. 2:10; Heb. 12:2; 2 Cor. 5:21). A surrendered life to Christ is walking in the spirit and it practically looks like the following:

- I. FASTING unto Him,
- II. Spending TIME with Him in Prayer,
- III. FOCUSING on Him and His Desires (being in His Word & Knowing who we are in Him),
- IV. Having our DIRECTION founded in Him (loving, caring and expanding His Kingdom),
- V. TRUSTING in Him,
- VI. Being GRATEFUL in Him,
- VII. Knowing WHO HE is and not HOW HE will.

I. FASTING UNTO HIM

Christian or no Christian, when our flesh controls us then Satan controls. “If you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Rom. 8:13). Fasting is one component of a life walking in the spirit.

WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is the voluntary abstinence from food, and sometimes it goes beyond just food and includes water (Acts 9:9). Biblical Fasting is unto the Lord, it is not abstaining from food to achieve some natural results like losing weight or detoxifying our body.

WHY FASTING?

Does Fasting move the hand of God? No, if we believe that God withholds blessings from us because of our works then we don't know what Jesus Christ has already done for us (2 Cor. 1:20). So why do we fast? To suppress our flesh in order to hear clearer what the spirit is saying (Acts 13:2; 14:23). We need to hear what the spirit is saying to us (1 Cor. 2:11). When I'm struggling to hear God, I know it is not God who is not speaking with me but I'm not receiving. My receiver is dirty – Fasting helps clean my receiver.

Jesus had given His Disciples authority to go into the towns and heal the sick. His authority wasn't limited to only one mission as some like to suggest. Neither did He give His Disciples the authority every time He sent them out. These Disciples obviously had some success as they moved from town to town, however there was a boy in one of the towns who some would consider as an epileptic.

They had tried to cast out the demon but had failed. I'm sure they tried and tried but nothing happened. Some probably thought that it was the will of God that the boy stayed like this but the Pharisees used this failure to accuse the disciples and to argue with them. Jesus comes to town, has dialogue with the father's boy who is begging him to heal his son and then tells him, "If you can believe, all is possible to him believing" (Mark 9:23). After some interaction Jesus casts out the demon and then leaves.

Those Disciples came to Jesus and question Him privately, saying, "Why could we not cast it out?" Jesus said to them, "Through your unbelief. For indeed truly I say to you, "If you have faith as a kernel of mustard, you will say to this mountain, "Withdraw from here to there." And it will withdraw. And nothing will be impossible to you. Now that kind can go out in nothing except in prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29, Matt. 17:19-21 – Holy Gospels in One).

It is not the prayer and fasting that produces the power because they had already been given the power and the authority, just like us (Mark 16:17-18). But it is prayer and fasting that produces belief (intimacy with God), this is the pipe through which the power flows. Sometimes it is clogged by our flesh - prayer and fasting helps clean it. With intimacy comes belief, with belief we are able to release the power of God, and with the mouth of belief the power of God is released through us (Mark 11:22-24).

We know "the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh" (Gal. 5:17). "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Gal. 6:7-8). Fasting is for the spirit, it is not for my flesh but it is designed to suppress my flesh in order for the spirit to gain, or stay in, control.

I used to ask myself, "Why didn't the Disciples fast when Jesus was with them? Why did they only fast when He left?" (Luke 5:33-35). The Disciples did not need to fast because Jesus was their eyes and ears. He told them exactly what, when, how, and where they should go (Matt. 10:5-14). When Jesus returned to God the Father, His Disciples had to fast because they had to make decisions for themselves (Matt. 9:15). This helped them hear what Holy Spirit was telling them to do and kept their flesh under control.

In addition to helping us hear the spirit clearer, fasting also humbles us (Ezra 8:21). David humbled himself by fasting (Ps. 35:13) and David was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). He who humbles himself will be exalted (Matt. 23:12). God gives grace to the humble and answers their prayer (Ezra 8:23; 1 Peter 5:7; James 4:6-8). "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23).

TYPES OF FASTS

There are three primary types of fasts mentioned in the scripture:

1. **Partial Fast** - Eating only basic food groups and drinking only water (no meat, no wine and no sweet or savory things). This is used to get a revelation concerning something or to get understanding regarding a vision or to mourn. It is a natural repercussion of the situation, and the focus is far from food, just eating to survive, not caring about the taste of food or about spending time making it. The length of the partial fast is dependent upon receiving the required results or it is a predetermined time established by self before the fast. "In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled" (Dan. 10:2-3). In Daniel's case he was probably mourning for the future of his people (Dan. 10:12-14), his fast lasted 3 full weeks.
2. **Normal Fast** (Matt. 4:1-4) - Not eating anything, only drinking water. Not drinking juices, soups or having teas. This is the most common Biblical fast, and a common practice in the early church in service to the Lord. It is used to bring clarity or establish a vision (Acts 13:2-3), spiritual examination (Lev. 23:27), for victory in battle (Judges 20:16-28), for mourning because of the dead (1 Sam. 31:13; 1 Chr. 10:12) and hearing God audibly (Ex. 24:18; 34:28; 1 Kings 19:5-8; Luke 4:1-2). The length of the normal fast is pre-determined by self before the fast. The time ranges from one to two days, sometimes one to two days a week, to 40 days (Judges 20:26; Matt. 4:1-4). I have known some to fast the same day every month for 24-48hours, part of a regular routine. In addition, they also have spontaneous fasts to meet any specific need. This is a good practice, and the early church did something similar (Acts 10:30; 13:2; 14:23).
3. **Absolute Fast** – Neither eating nor drinking anything. It is used in significant, life changing occasions when hearing God's voice for a situation is vital. Like Paul's conversion (Acts 9:9; 17-18), or when all hope has gone like the crisis Esther faced (Esther 4:16). The length of the absolute fast is sometimes pre-determined by self and sometimes it is just an outcome of a situation. Food is the last thing on one's mind when these kinds of things happen. The time ranges didn't really exceed 3 full days in scripture, except for Moses when he received the commandments on Mount Sinai (Ex. 34:28).

HOW TO FAST?

Things to consider before the Fast

Select the fast, in most cases it will be the normal fast, and then determine the time frame. Ensure you have regular planned fasts but also make time for spontaneous fasts (Acts 10:30). Both are needed.

Things to consider during the Fast

- **Reflect on self and repent.** Jeremiah faced similar problems with the people in his day. They continued to sin, did not repent and did not seek to do God's Will but still wanted to fast to get God to hear them. This resulted in them wandering around aimlessly (Jer. 14:10). Then the LORD told Jeremiah, "Do not pray for this people, for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence" (Jer. 14:11-12; 11:14).

- **Leverage the time saved** for preparing and eating food, and use this time for spiritual food:
 - **Pray more than normal.** Sometimes revelations are revealed during this time, so **write them down** (Ex. 34:27). After the fast our flesh kicks in and many times we forget the details of the revelation.
 - **Spend more time studying and meditating on His Word** (Jer. 36:6).
 - And **loving people** (Zech. 7:5-9; Is. 58).

- **Endure the fast by resting in Him,** knowing a war is happening inside you - Your spirit vs. your flesh. Sometimes when I fast, my flesh moves its focus away from external factors like people, finance and work; and moves its focus onto itself, the body. The flesh can see it is losing the reins and tries everything in its power to make me eat something. Sometimes I start getting a headache, some will call it low sugar levels but I call it flesh. It tries to deceive the soul by highlighting the importance of eating to survive (Ps. 109:24).

The flesh provides suggestions like, "This is not healthy for me". It then magnifies my smell and taste buds to such an extent that I can smell the food coming from my neighbor's kitchen two houses down. Oh how wonderful food smells on those days I fast. It is amazing how many people bring cakes to work on those days. I am then bombarded with temptations, "Have one bite. It is only a bite. Come on, it is not that bad, I can fast an extra few hours later to compensate". I used to become so preoccupied in "how I can twist the fast to get my way" that I would lose focus on God. But now I use the thought of food as a trigger to pray for someone in need, or to thank God.

When fasting more than a day, my flesh generally switches its focus from food to my emotions. I get emotional highs and lows. Just after this, break-through seems to happen, resulting in an immense amount of inner peace, joy and love. Prayer is sweet and flows effortlessly.

Here are some don'ts during a fast

- **Don't brag, nor debate, nor strife, nor point fingers at others, nor think we are better than anyone else, nor speak unclean words, nor attract attention to our self, it is time to reflect on self and to help others** (Is. 58:3-4,9). I have also heard some use fasting to brag about how long they didn't eat and forget they have just received their reward, recognition from others and not from God. Jesus said, "When you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly" (Matt. 6:16-18).

- **Don't have intercourse during fasts.** "Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Cor. 7:5).

- **Don't keep focusing on the time, like when is it going to be done, just keep focusing on God.**

Things to consider just after the Fast

- Sometimes as I step out of a fast there seems to be a war going on trying to rob me of the peace and joy I am in. Sometimes it comes disguised through those close to us, saying things to us that push our buttons. Be prepared and remember, do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:21). So respond or choose not to respond, just be prepared.

II. SPENDING TIME WITH HIM IN PRAYER

Nowadays everything is done in a hurry. We have fast foods and fast service. However God requires quantity and quality time in His presence. The person who believes in the power of prayer will deny self the rest it demands in order to pray. The person who has waited upon God commands demons to depart and they depart. He commands the lame to walk and they walk. And the person who hasn't the time to pray, gets the same results every time and then wonders why their prayers aren't answered. Or even worse blame God.

Over the years I have met many people who have blamed God for not helping them. Some of them have chosen a specific direction thinking it was God's Will for them but they never consulted Him. Some did but they never waited for His response. They push their ideas on Him without giving Him a chance to respond and yet blame Him for the unexpected outcome. Where was God? Why did He do this to me? Why didn't He tell me? (He did tell but you weren't listening because you weren't spending time with Him).

Waiting upon God is not wasting time but the most productive time we can spend. All the great people of God spend hours of alone time (isolated) with God in prayer. We may know all God's laws and principles and we may even implement some of them but at the end of the day we will be in a pit if we don't spend regular time with Him in prayer.

Now many know this, I know this! But there are times when I wrestle in prayer, when my mind wanders and my focus on God is broken. Sometimes the hardest time for me is the first minute in prayer, then the first 10 minutes, after this it is easy. It is as if my flesh literally wants to tear itself away from my time with God saying, "Ok, there isn't anything more to say. I'm done!" But if I stay, my flesh starts to feed me with thought provoking things to get me to go. Things I had totally forgotten about come into my mind when I start to pray, like, Hey that's where I left that thing, let me check. Or check emails, there may be an urgent message for me? Or have I locked the front door? Or let me get a glass of water or juice before I pray? Or I need my rest, I worked late last night. Or just 5 more minutes? But I get up 20 minutes later only to rush through prayer. You know what I mean.

How do I overcome this? There is a war going on inside me (Rom. 7:14-25) so I need to recognize there is a conflict between my flesh and spirit and choose to side with my spirit.

Prayer is throughout the day, but for those times (like early morning (Ps. 88:13)), a conscious decision needs to be made to stay in prayer alone with God. In these cases, I personally like setting a minimum time, just like fasting. Notice just the minimum because the time may end up being more. And I know some may say, it is legalistic, they are probably the same folks who don't spend time with Him. I find it effective because my flesh needs expectations. If it thinks prayer is open ended it will jump around giving me reasons why I need to go. But if it knows I have chosen to be there for some time, say 10, 30, 60 minutes etc, it doesn't interfere as much. Jesus came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:40-41).

The first few minutes of praying are the toughest because my flesh gets in the way. I recite a list of needs and wants. This is when I tell God everything that is on my mind, and ask Him to intervene. Then I have nothing to say, so instead of talking for the sake of talking, I just shut up

(Ps. 46:10). I've found that the longer I stay in the silence, true prayer begins. My flesh again tries to drive me from His presence, telling me I'm wasting my time. This is a trigger for me to thank Him, being grateful to Him and loving upon Him. The atmosphere in the room starts to change, I get a little scared, my flesh starts to die of its needs and I don't particularly care about my needs anymore. They seem so insignificant now and I'm just enjoying Him. I don't really want to talk, then impressions come into my heart and after some time a two-way conversation happens. My words are few, I forget about time and my inner ears seem to be open.

There is an indescribable change that takes place within me when I spend alone time with God. Moses' face shone after he spent time with God and I am sure we do too in the spiritual world. In prayer, barriers are broken down and the once dirty lamp is clear so the light within can shine through. A lamp that is stained or dirty cannot emit light and cannot be used. It is not like I physically feel any different after prayer but I do see the difference in the choices I make, the uncommon peace inside me and the speedy manifestation of elements prayed for.

III. FOCUSING ON HIM AND HIS DESIRES

When I arrived in Canada we had a house, newly laid grass but after 1 year it was like a minefield of weeds. My neighbours on either side had perfect lawns. It was as if all the weeds in the street were piled up on my ground and then the new lawn was laid on top of it. Within a year, literally 70%+ of my ground were weeds. So guess what I did, I spent days, weeks pulling out the weeds and as fast as I pulled them out the more they grew. I also damaged the new grass in the process. I couldn't get rid of them, so I invested in liquid weed killers. All the weeds were dying, less prominent. But the next season they were back in full fury. I hired professional lawn people, they too didn't solve it but controlled it. I still had about 70% weeds. The next season the weeds were back.

There was nothing else I could think of doing so I laid hands on the weeds and cursed them. The Lord spoke inside me, "What are you doing?" "I'm trying to get rid of the weeds" "Why?" "So that I can have grass." The Lord instantly spoke again in my heart, "Your focus has been all wrong, why are you focusing on the weeds when you want the grass? Focus on the grass." Wow, that was an amazing revelation so that's what I did. I focused on the grass: planting grass seeds, fertilizing the area, cutting the grass and only pulling a few weeds out, within the year I had 5% weeds and the start of the following season 1% weeds. I had learned a valuable lesson, the grass killed the weeds, not me. Similarly, by focusing on Christ automatically crowds out the sin.

Therefore focus on Jesus Christ and His desires by getting to know Him and His Word; and obeying Him (Eph. 1:9; John 15:7-10; Matt. 7:20-24). By doing this we die to self promotion and walk as Christ would want us to walk, and leverage our covenant right as children of God (Gal. 4:7; Rom. 8:13-16; 1 Peter 5:7; 1 Cor. 15:31; Matt. 5:8-10; 27:40; Job 31:6-12; Rom. 6:6-7; Gal. 2:20; Matt 16:24-26; John 12:24-25). To do what? To love God, love Christians, love self and love others to God, in that order (Mark 12:29-31; John 15:12-13). Not just in thoughts and

words, but also in ACTIONS (Matt. 25:34-40). There is no time for sin when our focus is on Him and His desires.

IV. HAVING OUR DIRECTION FOUNDED IN HIM

What are you doing in the Kingdom of God? Your Kingdom Job? Do you know what your unique assignment is? If I told you how to discover yours would you want to know? Firstly it is not necessary that your Kingdom assignment is the same as a career choice e.g. Paul was a tent maker and yet he did the Kingdom assignment (Acts 18:3). Kingdom assignment is a lifestyle of always looking for opportunities to help further and care for God's Kingdom through Jesus Christ. Thus leveraging your time, abilities and resources to do this daily.

If you are struggling or want to confirm your assignment in the Kingdom of God - 1) **Answer the following questions, 2) summarize the answers into one comprehensive sentence, ensure you're covering the answers in some way, 3) make some goals based on it, and 4) just start doing it.** It is that simple. And excuses like: I can't because of financial and/or time reasons are not true. It is about making it a priority above something else and just starting. Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses and David, just made God a priority and just started with what they had, trusting in God. I don't have to solve world hunger but I can make a few meals and serve a few families in need, letting them know that it is Christ's love for them that enables me to serve them. The Lord will direct my steps (Prov. 16:9).

Here are the questions to answer, do not move on until you have answered each question comprehensively. It may take you some time to ponder on and pray about it:

1. **If I had to die now, what would I want God to say about my work for Him** (Matt. 25:21-23)?
2. **What can I do to solve what I perceive is people's greatest need? Or what is it that I truly hate?** "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:26-27).
3. **What is the biggest problem I faced or am facing and what specifically can I do for others who have similar problems?** E.g. if it is difficult for me to find employment can I give someone employment.
4. **If I had a choice to do anything I wanted every day, assuming my financial needs were taken care of, and it wasn't breaking any of God's laws of love and was glorifying Jesus Christ, what would it be?**
5. **What can I do to show my love for Christians?** "As we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). "By this we know love,

because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:16-18). "If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works" (James 2:15-18).

V. TRUSTING IN HIM

What is the best gift you can give someone you love? Total trust and respect for them. Look at a marriage, if there is no trust then it is a matter of time before the marriage falls apart. The couple may love each other and lust after each other but if they don't trust one another then destruction is a moment away. So I gave my Heavenly father my heart when I accepted Jesus, His Son, as my Lord. But I make a conscious effort to trust Him, trust His Word. Experience sometimes wants to move me against God's Word and that is the time I need to remind myself to hold onto it.

Instead of me discounting His word I discount my understanding. And if I fall here, He remains faithful because He can't deny himself (2 Tim. 2:13). His Character and Authority is in His name, those who know His character and His authority deep inside act based on His Name. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God" (Ps. 20:7; 119:132; 69:36; 89:16; Prov. 18:10). "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:23-24).

Trusting in Christ's righteousness not mine (2 Cor. 5:21) means I can relax on His love and power and influence not mine. So instead of focusing on my failures like I should have done this or that, I just do the very best He can through me. Note, I don't say I do the very best I can because my very best is nothing and limiting, but when relying on Him He takes me beyond myself (1 Cor. 1:30-31).

CAN HE TRUST ME?

Can God trust me with His power? Can He trust me with the resources, money and time He has given me? Can He trust me with His message of reconciliation to those who put their trust in His Son Jesus Christ? Can He trust me with the words that come out of my mouth? Can He trust me with what I allow into my eyes and ears? It makes no difference if I've been a Christian for 100 years or one year, can He trust me? Guess what, He does because of Jesus Christ! He wouldn't have revealed His Son to me if He didn't trust me. All I did was accept His Plan, His Son as my Lord.

Now this doesn't give me a license to sin, God forbid, but to live life in freedom of conviction and freedom to love (1 John 3:1-9; Rom. 8:1-2 KJV). With God's love also comes God's discipline on those who continually rebel against His Word. He generally rebukes me first and I feel bad inside. Sometimes He re-reminds me by highlighting something I read in His word. If I still don't repent this opens the door to the Devil. He doesn't open the door, it is my rebellion that does. Then He sends someone across my path to tell me or chastise me (most cases I already knew what it was but was trying to avoid it).

God tells me because He loves me and wants the best for me. If I still don't repent He gives me time to reflect on why things aren't going as smoothly as I hoped for. If I still don't repent because of my rebellion (lack of submitting to Him), then let's just say it is dangerous territory; and even worse if it comes against God's authorities (Acts 5:1-11; Num. 12:1-15; 1 John 5:16-17) or against other believers (Rev. 2:20-23) – I need to fear God and repent immediately (Heb. 12:5-10).

HE VALUES ME!

Some people use alcohol or drugs to make them forget or just to make themselves happy. Before I came to the Lord I used to get drunk. And even after giving my life to the Lord, but it grew less and less until I eventually stopped all together. Why did I drink? To ignore internal pains of being rejected, not feeling valued. The alcohol was a mask to help me forget and be happy. It came with a price and it still didn't solve the problem. My solution came when I realized my value came from the Lord and what He said about me, not what I or someone says about me.

I tell my son when he brings me a picture he drew, "Good job, it looks good, you are getting better, I like this and that. Just watch for this small thing but it is really very good." Honestly the picture isn't that good from a worldly perspective but from my perspective it is. I see passion, I see time and effort, I see thinking, I see composition, and I see creating something new. Yes I also see the lines, colors or lack there of, the composition doesn't quite fit, but in the big scheme of things it is negligible. Why? Because the very best part is, he brings it to me because he values me, love me, and he wants my approval, to give him value. I am here to tell you, you have God's approval so

keep bringing Him things. If my son took His picture to the neighbor and sought their approval, that would make me very unhappy. So why do we seek approval from the world or others, when we already have the ultimate approval from God – Christ in you!

VI. BEING GRATEFUL IN HIM

God said, “These people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men” (Is. 29:13). Some people are good at honoring God with their lips and singing many beautiful songs but their hearts are far from Him. Worshipping God is not a method. It does not require following rules, playing certain notes on the instrument, or singing certain songs or hymns. It does not require reducing the pace of the music, as many love to do. Worshipping God has to do with having our heart set on Him, loving Him and obeying Him.

Throughout history kings demanded dancing, praise and laughter all around them. A happy king is a good king. Court jesters were ordered to make the king laugh. Dancing and music were done regularly to create an environment of joy around the king. When people came to visit the king they had to adhere to Royal protocol. They weren’t permitted to make requests or come into the king’s presence until the king permitted them. If the king felt like seeing them then he did. What swayed the king’s decision was the environment. So if the people made him feel good then he permitted them to enter.

To make the king feel good they always brought great gifts, and as they entered the court they praised the king for what he had done for them. If the king was moved by their words and gifts then he permitted them to enter his presence. When they came before him, they worshiped him by telling him how great he is, “Great king, powerful king, you are so wise.” Generally the king would then say, “What do you want? Is there anything I can do for you?” “God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with understanding” (Ps. 47:7). “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name” (Ps. 100:4).

Now if the king had children, they wouldn’t need to follow this protocol, they already had direct access to him. But they still needed to show Him the necessary respect, honor by keeping his word. Christians are God’s children and have direct access to Him (Heb. 4:16). However we are required to be thankful (called thankfulness), praise Him for what He has done (called praise) and honor Him for who He is by obeying Him (called worship). “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (1 Thess. 5:16-18). Do you do this? Are you grateful - really?

Ask a parent who watches their first child birth what they think. “Wow, awesome, amazing. Life from nothing! There must be a God.” Even though some don’t respond like this, generally there is a sense of awe. Now ask those who were in awe to describe seeing their 100th birth. “Ah, it’s nice”. The once admired wonder that God has put in place is brushed over with little thought. I

remember seeing snow for the very first time, it was amazing. I didn't care if I was cold I just wanted to play in it and throw snow balls. Now after years of snow the once admired beauty is hardly even recognized. How hard and ungrateful I became.

Am I a spoiled child? As I journey through life is anything really good enough or am I continually driving downwards for more and more? Instead of saying thank you why do I find things to complain about? Is my "Thank you" replaced with, "Its about time, it took you long enough"? Do I focus more on the obstacles than what I have? Yes, I had become very ungrateful. Was I like a child of darkness because Satan has been complaining and accusing for thousands of years? No but I am sure demons had fueled my ungratefulness but I must take full responsibility, it was my choice. James said that it is impossible for sweet (praise and worship) and bitter (ungratefulness) water to come from the same fountain (James 3:8-12).

God enjoys a grateful and happy environment not an environment of bitterness and ungratefulness. Scripture is full of this. This is the reason why many never experience His presence. Think about yourself, do you want to be around someone who is continually bitter and ungrateful? I don't. I didn't even like myself when I was like that.

HOW TO NURTURE GRATEFULNESS

It is quite simple: By consciously making a point to speak to yourself and others in psalms of David, and hymns of praise, and spiritual songs of tongues, while continually singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving Him thanks always for all things and caring for other Christians in the fear of God (Eph. 5:18-21). In addition, make a point to look for the good and thank God for that good. Look at the beauty that no one else sees. Yes there will be many negative events and situations that exist throughout the day, so instead of dwelling on the negative, point out the positive.

Not so long ago when it snowed for the umpteenth time that season, I needed to clear my drive way. It was just before church so I needed to be quick. I was tired from the night before and the snow fall was unexpectedly large. As I started the snow blower I recall saying under my breath, "I'm tired of this snow." Then as I went out, just as I started the wind picked up and blew the snow into my face and down my neck. If that wasn't bad enough, it blew it into my neighbor's freshly shoveled driveway. Ah no, I just started and now I have to use the shovel. And the very reason I had purchased the snow blower was for days like this. If I didn't love my neighbor like myself then I probably would have used it and let him figure out how to empty his driveway.

As I shoveled, my back and shoulders became sore and I became slower, which meant I wouldn't just be late but very late. I kicked the snow and didn't realize that there was ice build up, and stubbed my toe. I threw my shovel. Then I heard a voice from within, what good do you see from this? Are you grateful for anything? I sarcastically said, "For my snow blower that isn't being used because the wind blows it into my neighbor's driveway."

As I started thinking of the benefits, I forced myself to start, “Thank you forfor giving me exercise even when I don’t want to. I have been sitting more than moving lately. Thank You for the fresh water that is being given through this snow. Thank You for the wind that drives the pollution away. Thank You I am able to shovel. Thank You for my shovel. Thank You for a car, filled with gas, to get us to church. Thank You Lord for giving us the gift of your Son Jesus Christ, that I am able to experience true life now. Thank You for never leaving me or forsaking me. Thank You for loving me.....”

During the shoveling I received a sermon on gratefulness, and the remaining shoveling experience was awesome. Yes I arrived late to church but I was thankful we were able to go and weren’t persecuted for going. Now there are some serious situations where we are to mourn and cry when we need to cry, but even in this we can always find something to be grateful for.

So sacrifice thanksgiving unto God (Ps. 116:17). The word sacrifice means, “It is a voluntary action against the natural norm.” “Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; ... Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Hab. 3:17, 18). God never said, “When everything goes well praise Me.” He says, “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess. 5:18). Note, IN every situation give thanks. Not thank God for the situation but IN the situation.

Should I give thanks for sickness? NO. Give thanks for who HE is in the midst of sickness, He is the Healer (Ex. 15:26). Give thanks in the midst of poverty for He is the Provider (Gen. 22:14). Give thanks in the midst of persecution because He is glorified (Acts 5:41). We have all heard of James 1:2-3 “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience”. This was in reference to being persecuted for Christ, and this tests our faith. What carries us through is taking on Joy. Joy in what? Joy in Him.

If we were beaten, locked up in a jail cell, and fastened to a stock, would we praise God (Acts 16:16-24)? Paul and Silas did (Acts 16:25). And guess what happened? “Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed” (Acts 16:26). And remember Jonah? Jonah was only released from the fish’s belly after he repented and praised God (Jonah 2:9). If I was in a belly of a big fish would I have sacrificed praise to God or panic before Him? I would only hope I could trust in the Holy Spirit to enable me to praise. “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name” (Heb. 13:15).

What does praise look like? “My soul shall make its boast in the LORD; the humble shall hear of it and be glad” (Ps. 34:2). I will tell others about the victories God has given me and brag about Him (Ps. 107:15; 26:6-7). “Come and see the works of God; He is awesome in His doing toward the sons of men. He turned the sea into dry land; they went through the river on foot” (Ps. 66:5-6). It is easy to praise God in front of Christians but I need to praise God in front of the heathen too. “I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the Gentiles, and sing praises to Your name” (Ps. 18:49).

My praise must be spontaneous and I mustn't be embarrassed because of who is around me. Feeling embarrassed is motivated by my pride and pride is a sin. I must praise like a child who says what they feel regardless of who is around them. Jesus said, "Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants you have perfected praise" (Matt. 21:16). "I will give You thanks in the great assembly; I will praise You among many people" (Ps. 35:18). I will live in a grateful attitude, like the Psalmist who consciously made time to praise God seven times a day (Ps. 119:164). And the level at which I offer praise to God should be higher than anything I offer to people, sports teams or institutions.

PRAISING PRODUCES RESULTS

Throughout scripture there are many cases where victory came after they praised God. Don't we do the same to someone in the world who gives us a gift? Before we even know what it is or even before we have used it; we are grateful and thank them for it. And when someone really praises us for the things we do for them don't we want to do even more for them? "Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; Sing praises on the harp to our God ...He sends out His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly" (Ps. 147:7, 15). Based on the praise they are giving Him, His word runs very swiftly for them.

"Let them shout for joy and be glad, who favor my righteous cause; and let them say continually, "Let the LORD be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant." And my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness And of Your praise all the day long" (Ps. 35:27-28). "Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart" (Ps. 37:4; John 15:7). "Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God" (Ps. 50:23).

Therefore "be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7).

VII. KNOWING WHO HE IS AND NOT HOW HE WILL

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). It is not about looking or trying to figure out how God is going to do it, it has everything to do with who He is and what He can do. I'm sure there was no logical way Gideon could figure out how God was going to use 300 men to beat so many Midianites (Judges 7). Gideon focused on the WHO, who God is and not on how God was going to do it. All Gideon needed was to make sure it was God's

Will. Once he knew then the worldly odds and the how was immaterial. So don't focus on HOW it will happen but focus on WHO God is and the covenant you have in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20).

I remember when the Bank and Mortgage brokers told me that I couldn't buy a house for so many legitimate reasons. They were right from a natural perspective. And logically there was no how to get there, I didn't have the funds. All I knew was who I trusted in. If my Heavenly Father brought me to Canada He would provide me a house. I could have given up and said, "Well, I've tried". But I just smiled at them and said to God, "Thank You Father for my house, thank You for my house, thank You for my house". I kept singing this until the feeling of doubt and fear disappeared.

There were times when I felt so negative because of the attacks internally and externally, that I had to strengthen myself with His Word. I recall that these were the verses that He used to strengthen me - Psalm 23; 37:5; 86; 145:10-21; Luke 10:19. Then instead of my prayer being about asking for the house or about the funds, it was more about assuming I have it and the next steps of finding a church etc. He already heard me the first time so why continue asking for the same thing 100 times.

Unlike the women or the man who weren't in covenant with God, who kept on asking until they received (Luke 11:5-8), I am in a better covenant in Christ, I am family, I am His Child. I don't need to beg, so instead of looking at the HOW it will come about, I look to the end, do His best in me but leave the "How" with Him. I started speaking to God as though everything was approved, and then I erupted with an immense amount of gratitude and thanksgiving. Had I physically received the house? No. Were there lots of obstacles? Yes. Did I see a logical avenue? No. All I saw was who my Heavenly Father is. It was only a question of time for the avenue to come into sight.

Then thoughts and people said things like, "What happens if you don't get it you will look like a fool? It is impossible! You are living in a dream world. Aren't you trying to manipulate God?" I had to cast them out by saying, "You don't even know my Heavenly Father so don't speak as if you do. Anyone can doubt! It doesn't take faith to believe what you have or what you can see come about. Only when there is no possible avenue to imagine then and only then is faith needed. I choose to believe Him. And if I don't get it, I still choose to believe Him." I didn't receive the house that month, but this didn't stop me from thanking God for it.

The demons and people kept on trying to suppress this hope; I kept quiet as much as possible and praised God for it. I'm sure the demons started looking at each other, "Is this guy crazy, the more negative things we bring up against him the more He praises God. It doesn't look like we are doing our job. The more he praises God the more God intervenes. We are on dangerous ground so we better move on to someone else who doubts. This guy doesn't give up and doubt." I received my house 6 months later and many marveled. And the nay-sayers tried to provide worldly reasoning where at the beginning they had no answers. What I learned was patience, and my time is not always God's time but it will come. "Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass" (Ps. 37:5).

I understand that not everyone needs to get a house. But I do believe that God takes pleasure in the prosperity of his children (Phil 4:19; Ps. 35:27), and that He teaches us in the way to prosper (Josh. 1:6-8; Ps. 1:1-6; 25:13; Prov. 28:25; 3 John 1:2) and get wealth (Deut. 8:17-18; 1 Chr. 29:12; Ps. 112:1-3; Prov. 8:18-21; 10:22; 22:4; Eccl. 5:19; Is. 45:3; 48:17; Luke 6:38; 1 Tim. 6:17-19). Why? To hoard? Certainly not, but to be a blessing to others – in not only spiritual things but also material things. I believe Jesus' words, "Ask, and it will be given to you" (Matt. 7:7) when it is based on, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7). I don't have to second guess it.

When God told Joshua to conquer Jericho, Joshua did not say, "LORD the walls of Jericho are too high and we don't have the equipment or the expertise to enter it". Even though Joshua didn't know how, he heeded to the promise of God and MOVED and SPOKE that way (Josh. 6:2-5). Joshua and his people walked around Jericho thirteen times, implementing what God had told them to do. And as Joshua walked around Jericho, he kept his eyes on God. Looking to Him as the source, not how He will. He did not give up and he did not give in, but he and his people persisted in faith expecting something to happen. At the right time they released their faith with the words of their mouth and the walls of Jericho came tumbling down (Josh. 6; Heb. 11:30).

Time restricts me from elaborating on all the testimonies where the Lord healed me, my wife, my children and some of my friends from various diseases and sicknesses, and still does! (Matt. 8:17; Acts 3:16; 1 Peter 2:24; James 5:15-16; 3 John 1:2). Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith, it is His faith residing in us (Heb. 12:2) therefore we have the faith of God (Mark 11:22). Truly all the promises of God in Jesus Christ are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us (2 Cor. 1:20).

IN CONCLUSION

Now you have what most people don't, the knowledge and understanding to influence your future. It is not your past, or your education, or race, or area of influence, or access to resources that impacts your future; it is the decision you make in the present that impacts your future. If you are a Christian, start accepting the fact that you are victorious in Jesus Christ (Heb. 12:1; 11:1, 6; Gal. 4:7; John 10:10). Know that God Almighty is your heavenly Father. And know that Holy Spirit is with you always. He is bigger than anyone you know (1 John 4:4) and He will help you do His Will. Victory is yours so love those who are lost to Jesus Christ. Have fun, relax and enjoy your new life in Him. I pray that you "walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light" (Col. 1:10-12). For in Him (Jesus) we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28).

BACK COVER

I remember sitting in a church service as a new Christian, and the minister asked the crowd, “If you could ask God for one thing and know that you would get it now, what would it be?” It was an interesting question, as the minister went around the room with his microphone getting responses no one asked the question I so desirably wanted to know, “LORD, what do You want me to do and I will do it?” Essentially there were two questions in this 1) What is my unique purpose? 2) How to hear You? The microphone never came to me but these questions never left me. I wanted a clear answer, “Go here, and do xyz, then next week do abc...” Was I asking for too much? Or should I just do what I think and hope He would guide me from within?” This is what this book is all about – How to Hear Him and do what He has called us to do.