

Chapter 6 Knocking On Heaven's Door

Matthew 6:6 (NLT)

But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Praying to God is one of the most useful things you can do. It's a spiritual act that brings physical rewards. Most people are passionate about things that have no benefit to them whatsoever, but prayer benefits the believer in many ways. Here are just a few examples.

When we pray:

1. God listens.
2. God intervenes.
3. Doors are opened.
4. Negative doors are shut.
5. The sick are healed.
6. Miracles take place.
7. Faith grows.
8. God moves.
9. We grow.
10. Delayed answers come our way.

Proverbs 15:29 (NLT)

The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayers of the righteous.

Those are just a few things to show you what prayer can do. Now, I know you would love these things to happen to you, but do you spend time in prayer for them? When we don't pray, here's what happens:

1. God seems far away.
2. No access to supernatural power, resulting in a life of stress and emotional pain.
3. Blocked access to God-ordained opened doors.
4. Negative things are always around.
5. Sickness comes.
6. No experience of miracles.
7. Faith dies back.
8. God cannot move.
9. We shrink spiritually.
10. Our lives can be characterised by delay, disappointment and discouragement.

I don't know what drives you, what motivates you or where you are in your relationship with the Lord, but a life with God coupled with prayer is dynamic! Most

people would love to have the lifestyle of the rich and famous - to have the house, the car, the private villa, to be in the media, to have the best health care, etc. - but prayer places us in the path of God's favour and bountiful blessings.

Solomon communed with God. God appeared to him in a dream and connected with him in a real, tangible way. The result of this was that Solomon's heartfelt prayer was answered, and he was granted the blessings and lifestyle that every king would want as well! It pays to knock on Heaven's door in prayer!

1 Kings 3:10-14 (NLT)

The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for wisdom. So God replied, "Because you have asked for wisdom in governing my people with justice and have not asked for a long life or wealth or the death of your enemies—I will give you what you asked for! I will give you a wise and understanding heart such as no one else has had or ever will have! And I will also give you what you did not ask for—riches and fame! No other king in all the world will be compared to you for the rest of your life! And if you follow me and obey my decrees and my commands as your father, David, did, I will give you a long life."

My Prayer

Heavenly Father, I come before you and ask that you will give me grace and mercy. I will lock myself in your presence and daily connect with you. Father, as I do this, help me to grow in you and your Word. Help me to be a person of faith, a person that has wisdom to make the right choices in life. I will give to you of my wealth and my time as I help build your Church. May your Kingdom come and your will be done. I give you all the praise and all the glory. Amen!

Chapter 14

Who's In Charge?

Matthew 6:24 (NLT)

"No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

Jesus talks about money more than any other single topic in the Bible. Yes, money! James tells us that the love of money is the root of all evil. Now, money itself is not bad; it's the 'love' of money (being ruled by needing or making money over needing God) that is bad. How do we curb that love of money? Simple - by giving it away! Yes, give it away! The scriptures tell us a lot about helping the poor, supporting the needy and building His Church by giving our money.

Deuteronomy 15:10 (NLT)

Give generously to the poor, not grudgingly, for the LORD your God will bless you in everything you do.

As we have seen in the news, when there is a natural disaster the world's first response is to donate money to the cause. Why? Scripture tells us in Ecclesiastes 10:19; *"A feast is made for laughter, and wine makes life merry, but money is the answer for everything."*

This scripture is obviously not talking about money bringing long-term happiness, fulfilment or salvation, but about it being the solution in times of need. It is also teaching us how to avoid the sin of covetousness. Money can invoke different reactions in people; some just love to give and others only take. As believers - God's representatives on Earth - we need to reflect Him not only in the way we speak but also in how we handle money. When you bring your tithes, offerings and First Fruits, it's a way of saying, "It's not my money and I will not be ruled by it. I will not let money tell me what to do and how I should live my life. I live by the Word of the Lord and I depend on Him for life. I will not be mastered by money, I will master it!"

So, who is your master? You alone know the answer.

2 Corinthians 9:9-11 (NLT)

As the Scriptures say, "They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever." For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then

produce a great harvest of generosity in you. Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.

My Prayer

Father, I come before you and I lay my heart open. I ask that your Holy Spirit speaks to me and shows me if I am ruled by money. As I go to your house I prepare myself to give my tithes and First Fruits offering with joy to you.

I will not be ruled by my emotions when it comes to money, but I will be ruled by your Word. I will not let fear of the future lead me, I will trust in you. I know that your Word is a lamp to my feet, a light to the path of life. I surrender my mind, will and emotions to your Word. In the mighty name of Jesus. Amen!

Chapter 15

Let's Dance

Psalm 30:11 (NLT)

You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing. You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy.

'Giving may hurt but what you get causes shouts of joy' (Psalm 126, author's version). The human tendency is not to give but to keep for ourselves. We see it as our right to hold on to what we have, simply because it belongs to us. When God asks us to give He is hitting at the heart of what really matters most to mankind: "I work hard for what I get, why should I give it away?" There is only one condition to giving and that's obedience. No matter how deeply you search through the Bible, there's only one thing God blesses us for and that's obedience to His Word.

Matthew 6:31-32 (NLT)

"So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs."

He knows what you need and He also knows what surprises are awaiting you. In the midst of something bad, He has already begun to work out something good. That's what faith is; trusting in God despite what you see around you. I trust God so I bring to Him my tithe and my offerings. I don't hold back because of what I see, I trust Him all the way.

Psalm 28:7 (NLT)

The LORD is my strength and shield. I trust him with all my heart. He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy. I burst out in songs of thanksgiving.

Have you ever seen someone on a bus or train with headphones on listening to music? They sing along, tap their feet and even do the occasional jig. To you or anyone else watching it seems ridiculous, but if you were to put on the headphones the chances are you would sing and dance too! It's the same with trusting God. People around you are in their own turmoil with their own problems and struggles, but you have blocked yourself out of it by tuning into God through the Holy Spirit. Your ear is tuned to His voice and you are dancing to a different tune!

1 Corinthians 14:7-8 (NLT)

Even lifeless instruments like the flute or the harp must play the notes clearly, or no one will recognize the melody. And if the bugler doesn't sound a clear call, how will the soldiers know they are being called to battle?

My Prayer

Lord Jesus, I bring all my worries and anxious moments before you. I trust in you. You know my needs and I believe that you have already made a way for me. I will not let worry or fear dominate my mind. I give all my cares to you and rejoice in you! Thank you for the greatest blessing of all, this great salvation. Amen!

Chapter 20

Get Your Prayer On

Philippians 4:5-7 (NKJV)

Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. 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.

Most of us struggle to bridge the gap between what we know and what we do. The things we know that we should do, we don't and the things we know that we shouldn't do, we do! It's time to lead from your heart and not from your emotions. Many feelings can float around in our minds on any given day, but what makes us victorious is our ability to remain constant and levelheaded when things are potentially chaotic or even just mundane. This ability is not natural but supernatural in design and only possible through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our comforter, strength and the one who convicts. He guides us where we should go and gently encourages us about what we should do.

John 16:13 (CEV)

The Spirit shows what is true and will come and guide you into the full truth. The Spirit doesn't speak on his own. He will tell you only what he has heard from me, and he will let you know what is going to happen.

Prayer is something we all need to do more of. You don't need to pray loud, boisterous, eloquent prayers - or even so-called 'powerful prayers' - you are already praying to a powerful God! Prayers need not last hours either. They can be for just a few minutes every day, when you call out to God in that moment of need, or when you are feeling low, or when the promises that you are waiting for seem to be fading away.

You build up your faith by reading the Word and praying. When we do this we see that 'yet in all these things, we are more than conquerors!' Why? Prayer gets us to depend on God rather than on working things out in our own minds.

Psalms 4:1 (NKJV)

Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.

Prayer guided by the Holy Spirit is even more effective. There are moments in our lives when God, through His Holy Spirit, may bring someone to mind and cause us to stop what we're doing and pray intently for them. This is not the only time we should pray though, we should always be praying, no-matter what!

If there was ever anyone you could think of who wouldn't need to pray, it would have been Jesus. Yet the Bible tells us that Jesus, before He faced the day, before He healed the sick and before He spoke the Word, got up early and prayed!

The best way to start every day is in prayer. Yes, it may cost you some sleep - getting up 15 minutes before normal or even early in the morning - to call on God, but these are the times that we prepare for the unseen, hidden challenges of life. I often think that if we could match the time we spend worrying (or even sleeping) with time in prayer, how much more effective, and even more enjoyable, our lives would be.

Mark 1:35-39 (NKJV)

Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth." And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.

My Prayer

Father, I commit not only to your Church but to your Word, and I commit to be a praying believer. I am sorry for the times I have spent not praying about things and just worrying or complaining. Help me, Lord, through the Holy Spirit, to be a person who prays. I will rise early and seek you, oh Lord. Amen!

Chapter 35

Power Up

2 Timothy 1:7 (NLT)

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

Fear can be really contagious. If you listen to fearful, negative reports for long enough you will end up believing them. I once heard a story of someone getting food poisoning from eating a bad hotdog at a baseball game in America. The medics asked that an announcement go out to all 20,000 people in the stadium, saying: 'If you have eaten a hot dog and feel sick, report to the front immediately.' Around 5,000 people flooded to the front of the stadium as they all felt sick, and after a few hours it became an epidemic!

Meanwhile, the original person who was sick had been treated by doctors who had soon realised that it was not food poisoning but severe heartburn!

What caused all those people to feel sick? It was the announcement that went out telling them that if they had eaten a hotdog and felt sick to report to the front of the stadium! The hotdogs were fine; it was the suggestion that they may not have been that caused people to experience something that was not real.

We live in a time when there are many negative reports about the economy and the world we live in, but do you listen to them? Should you? Isaiah 53:1 asks the question, 'Whose report do you believe?' Does this mean you ignore warnings of danger or impending trouble? No! You do, however, let God's Word be your ultimate source of power and light. The Message gives a great translation of an awesome scripture:

Psalms 119:105 (MSG)

By your words I can see where I'm going; they throw a beam of light on my dark path. I've committed myself and I'll never turn back from living by your righteous order. Everything's falling apart on me, GOD; put me together again with your Word. Festoon me with your finest sayings, GOD; teach me your holy rules. My life is as close as my own hands, but I don't forget what you have revealed. The wicked do their best to throw me off track, but I don't swerve an inch from your course. I inherited your book on living; it's mine forever— what a gift! And how happy it makes me! I concentrate on doing exactly what you say— I always have and always will.

We overcome fear by faith. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of the Lord (Romans 10:17). When fear raises its head let faith arise in you! Look how Paul puts it:

Romans 8:31-38 (NLT)

What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honour at God's right hand, pleading for us. Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.

Recently, I bought a satnav and it's great. Finding places and getting from A to B is a whole lot easier. But no matter how good it is, it needs to be powered up. It needs to be charged for it to work, which means my journey could be delayed by a lack of power. For us to get where God wants us to be, our spiritual batteries need to be charged up.

Practical ways to power up:

1. Remember that God loves you! Nothing builds our faith more than knowing in our hearts that God loves us. And there is nothing that can change that. No matter how much you've messed up, He still loves you!
2. Be in Church. No matter how tired you are, or how long your day has been, there is nothing like being in the house of God. Make a decision that you will always be in God's house!
3. Be a giver. Despite our current world crisis, we still sow, we still trust and we still give. If in need, plant a seed! Be faithful with your tithes, offerings and First Fruits. God will bless you!
4. Don't let go. It's easy to give up in the face of sickness, tiredness and struggle, but keep on fighting

the fight of faith. Don't let go, your miracle is just around the corner! Your blessing will soon come; your mourning will be turned into dancing and your sorrow into joy. Don't give up! Winston Churchill once said, 'If you're going through Hell, just keep going!'

5. Be a worshipper. Nothing charges our spiritual batteries like being in worship. Not just singing, but giving yourself to Him as a living sacrifice and worshipping Him in spirit and in truth.

Psalm 91 (MSG)

You who sit down in the High God's presence, spend the night in Shaddai's shadow, Say this: "GOD, you're my refuge. I trust in you and I'm safe!" That's right—he rescues you from hidden traps, shields you from deadly hazards. His huge outstretched arms protect you— under them you're perfectly safe; his arms fend off all harm. Fear nothing—not wild wolves in the night, not flying arrows in the day, Not disease that prowls through the darkness, not disaster that erupts at high noon. Even though others succumb all around, drop like flies right and left, no harm will even graze you. You'll stand untouched, watch it all from a distance, watch the wicked turn into corpses. Yes, because GOD's your refuge, the High God your very own home, Evil can't get close to you, harm can't get through the door. He ordered his angels to guard you wherever you go. If you stumble, they'll catch you; their job is to keep you from falling. You'll walk unharmed among lions and snakes, and kick young lions and serpents from the path. "If you'll hold on to me for dear life," says GOD, "I'll get you out of any trouble. I'll give you the best of care if you'll only get to know and trust me. Call me and I'll answer, be at your side in bad times; I'll rescue you, then throw you a party. I'll give you a long life, give you a long drink of salvation!"

My Prayer

Today, I ask for a fresh filling of your Holy Spirit. I ask, Holy Spirit, come and invade all of my life! I ask that you give me strength to overcome. When I feel weak, through you I become strong. Father, remind me, by your Holy Spirit, of the truth and principles of your Word. Amen!

Chapter 7

Tough Times & God

Genesis 26:12-14 (MSG)

Isaac planted crops in that land and took in a huge harvest. GOD blessed him. The man got richer and richer by the day until he was very wealthy. He accumulated flocks and herds and many, many servants, so much so that the Philistines began to envy him..."

Blessings and riches can be great and awesome as God opens the windows of heaven and blesses His people for obedience in bringing the tithe and first fruits offering (Malachi 3:10-12). Isaac did exactly that - despite the gloomy forecast about the land in which he lived (it was double famine), he still planted in that land as God commanded him to do and reaped the rewards of obedience to God.

God blesses us when we obey Him above anyone and anything else. Obedience is when we do what God asks of us despite what we see around us. In 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, Paul asks the believers to fix their eyes on the unseen and the eternal and when we do that we are daily renewed.

Isaac would have seen the effects of 'the credit crunch', but he chose to do what God asked him to do and not what everyone else was doing.

Romans 8:15 says *"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father.""* We are not to be fearful in these times, but full of faith. In fact we should be faith-full; faithful to God as He will never let you down. Why not take a moment now and read through Psalm 91 and list out some God thoughts and Holy Spirit promptings.

Things to Remember:

1. Be Faithful In Giving Your Tithes And Offerings
Giving to God is all about total obedience and not about how you feel or whether you can afford to or not. No matter what you go through in life, God promises never to leave us or forsake us. He is totally committed to your well-being.
Are you totally committed to Him by bringing your tithes and offerings (including your First Fruits)? Bring your offerings this Sunday and watch a huge harvest come your way!

2. Be In Church

I firmly believe that there's no better place to be than church. Whenever the church doors open we should be there! David was exceedingly happy when it was time for church (Psalm 122:1). Why? Because he knew God was going to be there and that in His presence there is joy and blessing. In Hebrews 10:25, Paul admonishes believers not to miss church, as you may just be missing your moment of breakthrough.

3. The Worst Is Behind You

Your future is brighter than your past. Your financial breakthrough is just around the corner - it's actually closer than you think. The only thing that stops blessings is disobedience. The level of your obedience determines your level of blessing. Just remember that today's obedience is tomorrow's miracle. As leaders, partners and people of faith we press on, we give, we fight the good fight. How? By planting seeds in His kingdom. By storing up treasure where moth, rust and thieves cannot break in. When we do this, we will all reap a huge harvest.

Galatians 6:7 (NLT)

Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant.

Luke 6:38 (Amp)

Give, and [gifts] will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will they pour into [the pouch formed by] the bosom [of your robe and used as a bag]. For with the measure you deal out [with the measure you use when you confer benefits on others], it will be measured back to you.

Chapter 9

What Makes You Happy?

Hebrews 13:5 (NLT)

Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you."

Deuteronomy 31:6 (MSG)

"Be strong. Take courage. Don't be intimidated. Don't give them a second thought because God, your God, is striding ahead of you. He's right there with you. He won't let you down; he won't leave you."

As the old Rolling Stones song goes "I can't get no... satisfaction". Along with Mick Jagger and others, we live in a world today where most people – even believers – can become dissatisfied with life, with what they have and what they do. Money can also bring dissatisfaction. We can never seem to have enough. No matter what you buy, it seems to be only a little while until a new model or upgraded version comes out and you, like me, hear "Dad, that's so outdated!"

The writer of Hebrews encourages his readers to be happy with what they have! This does not mean we shouldn't believe for God's blessings and abundance in our lives; we should not walk around with a mentality that says 'this is my lot in life.' In order to get what we need out of life, we should seek God's kingdom first.

Matthew 6:23-33 gives us a great revelation about how God's blessings work. We should not seek the things we need, as pagans or worldly people do, but we should put God first! We are to put God first with our time, with our treasure, with our talent and with our one-to-one touch. Remember God is our source; He is our helper and the one that provides for our every need. He knows what you need and when you need it.

Fear will often come knocking on the door of our lives when we cannot make ends meet, pay the bills or help the needy. But let God be God and trust Him today. Be happy with what you've got and put God first! If you do, then the blessings of God will come your way. Here's a wise saying of my father Dr. Tony Kawalsingh, "The devil has nothing to offer a rejoicing Believer."

What Does This Mean To Me?

1. Stronger Church Equals A Changed Society
As the Church gets stronger, so its influence and

ability to reach out will increase. It takes money to build Church, reach the lost and help the needy. There seem to be two camps in Christianity when it comes to money. Firstly, there are those that say we should sell all that we have and help the poor and needy, not 'wasting' money on church buildings but spending it on the more urgent needs of the poor. Also, there are those who say that the more money we have, the greater our faith must be. These two positions are equally wrong. The problem is not money, but how we view it. We need money to purchase church buildings, look after the harvest of souls and help the needy, but having money is not a sign of great faith; just good business practice, hard work and Gods provision! Our focus should never be money, but God. Remember that the Church, not human reasoning, is God's plan to bring change on the earth (Matthew 16:13-19).

2. Give First To God And Build His Church

In John 12:1-8, we read of Mary taking expensive perfume and pouring it on the feet of Jesus. Judas objected; 'This could have been sold and given to the poor!' It was worth the equivalent of 1 year's wages. However, the verse says, 'not that he cared for the poor'. Judas had a problem with money and used the poor as an excuse to justify his sin, which was stealing from the money bag. You may not be stealing from the church offering bucket, but according to Malachi 3:8-12, if you are withholding your tithes and offerings, you are doing just that!

3. Jesus And His Bride The Church Deserve The Best!

Jesus commended the woman for what she did as it was for Him. In John 12:8 Jesus said, "You will always have the poor, but you will not always have me!" If anyone could have stopped poverty it was Jesus. But He did not. Human reasoning is not the solution to worldwide problems; Jesus and His Church are. Remember that Jesus was not poor, but equally He didn't depend on money for His source. When it comes to giving to God, the Church is His designated conduit; not TV ministries, or other well meaning Para-church organisations but the local church. The church represents Christ; as we reflect Him to our society it should be a reflection of comfort, excellence and the best of what is available today. When the tabernacle of Moses, David and Solomon was built, it was done so using only the best materials available. The purest silver and gold, the finest materials and only the best imported cedars would do. Why? It represents our God! He surely deserves our best! Money will not bring you total satisfaction, but Jesus will as He brings joy and fulfilment to your life.

1 Chronicles 15:16 (NIV)

David told the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brothers as singers to sing joyful songs, accompanied by musical instruments: lyres, harps and cymbals.

Psalms 21:6 (Amp)

For You make him to be blessed and a blessing forever; You make him exceedingly glad with the joy of Your presence.

Proverbs 3:5 (NIV)

"Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him and He will make your paths straight."

Chapter 19

Watch Your Steps!

Romans 8:1 (NKJV)

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Watching our children take their first steps is amazing, exciting and emotional. Our Christian life can be the same way; when we give our lives to Jesus, we have some first steps to take. Often in those first couple of weeks we will stumble and fall, but by the grace of God we are able to stand. One of the things that keep us from getting up can be condemnation; it can come in unbeknownst to anyone else but you. You can feel it during services, even when there is a great presence of God, and joy and laughter are all around you. How do we fight against that feeling? Anyone can all suffer from the feeling of being inadequate and under-equipped to do what God asks of us. The Apostle Paul tells us:

Galatians 2:20 (NLT)

"My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

The Christian life is all about exchange; exchanging all we are for all He is. The only way to overcome condemnation is to develop a personal walk with the Holy Spirit. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit as a guide, a comforter and a helper (John 14:15-31). As a newborn believer or even a mature Christian, each one of us needs a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit in our lives. We overcome fleshly vices by the Holy Spirit, and if we walk according to the prompting of the Spirit we will not be ruled by our emotions or fleshly desires (Galatians 5:16-26).

The challenge is not to pray for another revival, or pray for another move of God. The challenge is for each one of us to watch our steps and walk in total obedience to God's Word. If we do that then we will have no condemnation in our lives.

So What Does This Mean To Me?

1. My Past is My Past

Don't let what you have done stop you from doing what God wants you to do. Our past will often try and remind us of what we cannot do, but once we are in Christ we are a new creation. New creation

means exactly that - new! Not 'approved used' or 'reconditioned', but new! (2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 4:4).

2. God Never Condemns You!

The Holy Spirit was sent to convict the world of sin. Conviction is totally different to condemnation. The devil is known as the one who condemns us, and tries to stop us by saying "there's no way out". Jesus however came as 'The Way, the Truth and the Life'. He provides access when all other doors seem to be closed, when there seems to be 'no other way.' Jesus will never leave you, nor will He condemn you. He will deal with blatant sin and punish the wicked, but not those who are truly repentant and being changed from glory to glory (John 3:16-17; 14:6; Acts 2:38).

3. The Church Is Where I Get Strength and Encouragement

One of the destructive tendencies of believers is to miss church during a tough time or season. The church is God's instrument of change on the earth. That change only happens as our lives are transformed and we are given strength in times of weakness. Church should be the number one place to be, especially when things seem to overwhelm us and we feel we cannot handle it anymore. Often, during worship or the preached Word, God will minister to us and help us at our very point of need. To miss church is to miss our moment to be changed and strengthened and for God to work on our behalf (Micah 1:1-2; Hebrews 10:25; Eph 2:19-22; 4:11-16).

Hebrews 12:1 (NKJV)

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Chapter 22

Master Your Life, Or It Will Master You!

Proverbs 17:24 (Amp)

A man of understanding sets skilful and godly Wisdom before his face, but the eyes of a [self-confident] fool are on the ends of the earth.

Have you ever come to the end of your day and thought, "Did I get anything done today?" Where does all the time go? The more I do, it seems the less is done! I often think that God only extends the efforts of things I do when I give Him the best of my time first. The first and the best always belong to God. If not, we will never seem to be effective or fruitful as leaders, employees, or in any of our other roles.

Leadership is about leading others, but it starts with our own lives first. You cannot give out of what you don't have. Fill your cup first, help yourself and only then will you be able to help others. God cannot use you if you're spiritually dead! This is driven home to me every time I fly. The cabin crew will go through the safety briefing, saying, "If the cabin loses pressure the oxygen masks will drop. Put your own mask on first before helping anyone else!" If you don't do it that way, then both people risk losing their lives. In the same way, if you don't master your schedule, it will master you.

So What Does This Mean To Me?

1. Get Your Priorities Right

Obviously, you don't have time to do everything. You must make choices. You must decide what's really important and what isn't. Take some time to consider the direction of your life.

Proverbs 12:11 (TEV)

"It is stupid to waste time on useless projects."

Proverbs 16:9 (TEV)

"You may make your plans, but God directs your actions."

2. Change Your Thinking

Stinking thinking will affect your attitude. Do you really have to do everything on your to-do list? A lot of your stress can often be self-imposed. You can run yourself ragged taking kids to football, karate, swimming or cricket. Your life becomes like that old

Beatles song, Here, There and Everywhere. The Bible says that God gave us humour as a stress reliever. Slow down and enjoy a good laugh with a spouse, friend or family member.

Proverbs 12:25 (NLT)

"Worry weighs a person down; an encouraging word cheers a person up."

Proverbs 14:30 (NLT)

"A relaxed attitude lengthens life; jealousy rots it away."

Proverbs 17:22 (NLT)

"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person's strength."

3. Daily focus on Jesus.

Stress can often be a warning light. We may have taken our focus off God and are looking at our problems from our own limited viewpoint. One of the greatest dangers to believers today is that we take our eyes off Jesus and begin to do things in our own strength, training or gifting. Stop! Take your eyes off the mountain of "to-do's" and look to the Lord, for that is where your strength comes from.

Proverbs 10:27 (NLT)

"Fear of the Lord lengthens one's life, but the years of the wicked are cut short."

Proverbs 14:26 (NLT)

"Those who fear the Lord are secure; he will be a place of refuge for their children."

Chapter 27 **Who Am I?**

Galatians 2:20 (NLT)

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

We live in a world where a person's identity can be stolen and misused without their knowledge. Identity theft is on the increase, and I think we can see the same thing in our Christian lives today. We can be the victim of someone (the devil) using our old identity to tell us who we are. We must remember that we are not our former selves but as believers we are new creations in Christ. You are a new person and what really counts is this new life you live in him and nothing else (Galatians 6:15).

2 Corinthians 5:17 (CEV)

Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new.

As we celebrate and walk in this new life, we can easily forget who we really are. Don't let that old devil tell you about your life or your true identity. We can also hide behind religious titles and positions, our so-called good deeds creating an image for us. The fact of the matter is that none of our righteous deeds and good works really please God; however, obedience to Him does!

Have you ever lost something really important? Do you feel as though your right arm is missing until you find it? Well, you can never really be all that God has called you to be if you don't know who you are. Look at the life ahead of you and focus on God, not where you came from. The reason that car manufacturers make cars with a huge windscreen and a small rear-view mirror is simple; where you're going is far more important than where you just came from. Keep this same perspective in life and you will go far!

What Shall I Do?

1. Read My Bible Every Day

When you read the Word, not only will it help you but it will also help create a picture of who you are in Jesus and what He thinks about you. The devil can take days of victory and deflate them by bringing little problems that ruin your day. We should live our lives by the Word (Luke 4: 1-13).

2. Pray Everyday

When we pray we connect to God. It's the mortal talking with the immortal, it is life-giving to pray and spend time with Him. When we pray we get to know the master's voice. When we learn to recognise His voice then we can distinguish it from all other voices that can tell us otherwise (John 10:27).

3. Walk In The Spirit

Walking in the Spirit (or keeping step with the Spirit) will help form your identity. The Holy Spirit is our guide, our comforter, our source and our power. His help is all we need to overcome fleshly deeds. We are stronger when we are in tune with the Spirit.

John 10:4 (MSG)

"Let me set this before you as plainly as I can. If a person climbs over or through the fence of a sheep pen instead of going through the gate, you know he's up to no good—a sheep rustler! The shepherd walks right up to the gate. The gatekeeper opens the gate to him and the sheep recognize his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he gets them all out, he leads them and they follow because they are familiar with his voice. They won't follow a stranger's voice but will scatter because they aren't used to the sound of it."

Galatians 5:25 (Amp)

If we live by the [Holy] Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. [If by the Holy Spirit we have our life in God, let us go forward walking in line, our conduct controlled by the Spirit.