FOOD For Your FAITH

A Topical Bible Study Series and Daily Devotional

[VOLUME 1]



Gbenga Omole

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FOOD FOR YOUR FAITH
A Devotional Series
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Dedication

To my benefactor and the inspiration behind this series

Grandma Bimpe Adeloye

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Foreword

There are books, and there are life-guiding compasses. ***Food for Your Faith*** is the latter. As I flipped through these pages, I could not help but smile and pause at how God uses the simplest moments, parables, and anecdotes to communicate eternal truths. This work is not merely a collection of devotional thoughts; it is a spiritual journey. It reads like a letter from a beloved father, a wise teacher, and a trusted friend, because that is exactly who the author, **Gbenga Omole,** has been to me.

For close to three decades, Prof. Gbenga Omole has not only mentored me, he has profoundly shaped how I think, lead, live, and walk with God. His guidance has long served as a personal landmark on my path of spiritual and professional growth. Each encounter inspired me to dig deeper, pray harder, and serve better.

The beauty of this devotional series *(Volumes 1–4)* lies in its raw honesty and relatable humanity. Lessons from Jacob's labour under Laban teach us that *experience is often the highest form of compensation*. Stories such as the man who sold his father's car in desperation remind us that *guilt left unresolved is a burden no wealth can lift*. Time and again, we are shown that *struggles are not roadblocks but road signs that point us toward the making of our destinies.* Even when our greatest helpers fail us, Psalm 27 verse 10 reassures us that God will take us up.

One of the most profound truths that leapt off these pages was this: **"God does not set us free; He makes us free."** That distinction alone can transform how we endure hardship, process pain, and walk through the fire. Another lesson that struck me deeply is that *faith is not only our belief; it is our eyes in the dark.*

The chapter that touched me most is **"God Cannot Manifest in a Joyless Environment."** This theme, explored over multiple days, reminded me that *joy is not a luxury in the faith journey, it is a necessity.* Joy opens the doors for

divine visitation, while sorrow, no matter how justified, can close off the flow of the miraculous. This revelation alone is worth the price of this book.

From the author's insights on Abraham's leadership style, the strength of local content, the power of preparation, and the importance of choosing companions wisely, this devotional calls us not only to reflect but to act. It challenges us to build, to believe, and to become.

If you are seeking a daily devotional that speaks with clarity, challenges without condemning, and nourishes while sharpening your mind like a double-edged sword, ***Food for Your Faith*** is your companion for the year. Read it with a pen in hand, a prayer on your lips, and an open heart.

With deep gratitude to a mentor whose commitment has shaped my journey, I wholeheartedly recommend this treasure to you.

Dr. Gbenga Shafe
Transformational Leadership and Human Resources Consultant
Principal Consultant, Isaac-Bern Associate
Lagos, Nigeria.

Acknowledgement

The ***Food for Your Faith*** Devotional Series (Volumes 1-4) was born from a sequence of events and encounters with many lovely people, too numerous to mention. Some gave ideas, some gave encouragement, some gave of their resources to pay for advertisements on social media, and some gave of their time to ensure that the message is widely circulated.

I genuinely thank Prof. Solomon Isiorho, my long-time mentor and benefactor. He has read every single line that I have written and he has been a constant source of support. To Doyin Adeloye, my childhood friend, and son of Grandma Bimpe Adeloye. He has always chipped in words of encouragement here and there.

To my siblings, Banke, Yinka, Tosin and Oyindamola, I am blessed and honoured to have you all believe in me. You all read and treasure my works. You all encourage me from time to time. There is a saying that "The prophet is not without honour except in his hometown." You have proved that this saying is not so in every situation. I have received honour from among my own.

Also, to Pastor Gbenga Shafe and Pastor Dipo Apanisile. They were my protégés but today, they are greater than I am in the work of ministry. Nevertheless, both of them have never ceased to honour me and to remind me of our days of little beginning. To Pastor Sunday Academe, Evangelist Kingsley Nwachukwu, Dayo Oyinleye – D1, Nkeiruka Ogwor, Lara Ikotun, Ranti Agboola, Rose Sunmola, and Thelma Ekanem. These are people who regularly send words of encouragement. Some reach out every day to say something encouraging.

To Oreoluwa, a special thanks to you for reviewing the final draft, line by line, to ensure the books are error-free. To Nelly Praize and Seye who were there from the start of this work. They never ceased to display enthusiasm about its potential, even when I did not see it. That enthusiasm has not diminished four years after. Your unwavering support will always be remembered.

To my son in whom I am well pleased, Ikeoluwa (Kem-kem), who drew the illustrations for my next book project (soon to be unveiled), a book that was inspired by one of the teaching series in *#foodforyourfaith.*

Finally, to the Malicha Publishing team, ably led by Lilian Akwunwa, I am grateful for the hard work that has gone into this work. You are the best.

My profound gratitude goes to you all!

Congratulations, My Big Brother!
I remember those days back in 2001. I always looked forward to the mornings when it was your turn to lead devotion. You would explain the Word with such revelation and divine wisdom that I often found myself thinking, "I thought I had read this scripture before! How come I never saw it this way?" Then, I would spend the rest of the day meditating on the Word, jotting down insights, and sharing them with anyone willing to listen.

Now, I look forward to reading *Food for Your Faith* every day, and it has truly been a blessing. I often copy and share excerpts on my WhatsApp status, and people respond with likes and comments. I'm sure they are being blessed too! If you haven't read the devotionals yet, please do well to order yours – you'll be so glad you did!

Mrs. Dorathy Nkeiruka Ogwor,
Delta State.

Today's message from ***Food for Your Faith Devotional*** is honestly the best I've read this year! The teaching reminded me of a personal family experience where your words helped us choose peace over conflict. Thank you so much for sharing such profound wisdom, Sir. May you continue to be a blessing and an inspiration.

Food for Your Faith is worth millions… I cannot wait to order the entire devotional series.

Dr. Chukwueloka Okeke
Anchor University, Lagos.

I have been reading ***Food for your Faith*** sent to me every morning as a daily devotional by Prof. Gbenga Omole, for the past 2 years. What I love most about the devotional is the Biblical lessons and sometimes personal experiences shared. The personal touch made the messages so real for me, and made me realized that God is not only present in big moments but also in small frustrations, especially, when I feel unseen, or even the days I feel ordinary. Through this devotional, I have learnt to bring both my struggles and my joys before God, learning to trust Him completely.

For those searching for hope and wisdom, I recommend this devotional. Endeavour to get your copy, it will truly bless you!

Prof (Mrs.) Ranti Agboola,
Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State.

I have known Prof. Gbenga Omole for over two decades. He is a simple, clear, and true teacher of the Word of God. I felt the same as I read through this book.

This devotional combines deep truths that can bring structure to our growth, yet it is very easy to digest. Its aim is to fill your consciousness with spiritual values that stand the test of time. While reading, please pay attention to the quotes, they will stir your heart and inspire reflection.

Dipo Apanisile
Pastor, His Influence Church
Medway, United Kingdom

Introduction

Food For Your Faith Devotional

(Volume I)

A Year-long Journey of Faith, Formation & Fruitfulness

The FFF Devotional is a carefully structured 12-month guide designed to take readers on a progressive spiritual journey, building resilience through struggles, deepening covenant faith, cultivating wisdom, and culminating in Christ, the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises. Each month unfolds as a stage in the believer's walk, drawing from the lives of biblical figures and timeless principles.

THE MONTHLY PROGRESSIVE STRUCTURE

January – Life's Struggles Build You

The year opens with encouragement to face life's struggles with God's strength. Through themes of perseverance, wisdom, and Abraham's early lessons, readers are reminded that challenges are the foundation upon which character, faith, and destiny are built.

February – Abraham: Faith & Covenant Living

The focus shifts to Abraham, the father of faith. Readers explore obedience, intercession, covenant blessings, and how faith sustains through silence and tests. The month closes with Esther's courage, showing how covenant people shape nations.

March – Service, Promotion & The Dreamer Cometh

Service becomes the gateway to elevation. Lessons from Joseph highlight how integrity, service, and dreams align with God's promotion. Readers are equipped to handle trials, recognize divine coincidences, and embrace destiny amidst adversity.

April – Joseph: Righteousness, Dreams & Wealth

Joseph's journey deepens into lessons on purity, stewardship, and wisdom in wealth management. Dreams and their interpretations reveal divine direction, while financial discipline and forgiveness showcase maturity in handling influence.

May – Wealth Transfer & Identity

Attention turns to wealth, identity, and lessons from creation. From business and compensation to the wisdom of ants, eagles, lions, and spiders, this month weaves financial prudence with divine identity—teaching that true prosperity flows from God-given purpose.

June – Jacob: Lessons in Value, Wisdom & Wealth

Jacob's story reinforces wisdom, value, and wealth creation. Readers learn discernment ("wise as serpents"), God's care in every season, and keys to sustainable wealth through divine blessing, ideas, and work rooted in purpose.

July – Moses: Leadership, Deliverance & Divine Backing

The second half of the year pivots to leadership and deliverance. Moses' calling, God's mighty signs, and lessons in intercession reveal what it means to be chosen, equipped, and sustained in leadership by God's presence and glory.

August – Joshua: Courage, Obedience & Conquest

Joshua's journey emphasizes courage, obedience, and victory through God's strategies. From Jericho's fall to covenant renewal, readers are reminded that inheritance comes by faith, unity, and wholehearted service to God.

September – Samuel: Hearing God & Prophetic Leadership

Samuel teaches sensitivity to God's voice and integrity in leadership. Through prophetic obedience, intercession, and guiding kings, this month highlights how hearing God shapes nations and preserves righteousness.

October – David: Worship, Warfare & Covenant Heart

David embodies a worshipper's heart and a warrior's spirit. From psalms of trust and repentance to lessons in covenant loyalty, warfare worship, and preparation for legacy, readers are invited into a heart after God.

November – Solomon: Wisdom, Wealth & Worship

Solomon's reign blends wisdom, wealth, and worship. His highs (temple dedication, proverbs, excellence) and lows (idolatry, misplaced trust) reveal that wisdom without obedience fails, but true legacy is preserved through worship.

December – Prophets & the Coming King

The devotional closes with the prophetic voices pointing to Christ – the Hope of Israel and the Saviour of the world. From Isaiah to Malachi, John the Baptist to the birth of Christ, readers celebrate the fulfilment of God's promises, ending with consecration and thanksgiving.

A SUMMARY OF THE DEVOTIONAL FLOW

- 1st Half [January –June]:
- Struggles Faith (Abraham) Service/Dreams (Joseph) Wealth/Identity Wisdom/Wealth (Jacob).
- 2nd Half [July–December]:
- Leadership (Moses) → Conquest (Joshua)→ Prophetic Voice (Samuel) → Worship/Warfare (David)→Wisdom/Wealth (Solomon) →Christ the Messiah.

This structure ensures that by December, you, the reader has journeyed from personal struggles through faith, service, wealth, identity, leadership, worship, wisdom, and prophecy, ultimately pointing to Christ as the fulfillment of all things.

BUILT TO LAST

JAN 01

"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 [KJV]

To illustrate this Scripture, I would like to share a story. A man was walking in a garden when he spotted a moth struggling to emerge from its cocoon. Wanting to help, he used his fingers to liberate the moth, but it fell to the ground. The moth wriggled on the floor and never got to fly. Soon, ants came and overwhelmed it. The moth became food for predators – such a tragedy.

Later, the man discovered that the moth's natural struggle was necessary to circulate fluid and strengthen its wings. By interfering, he had disrupted the process that would have built the moth to fly and to last. The man had set it free, but in God's design, what looks like a struggle is often His way of building and forming us.

Those who don't understand the value of freedom may not know what to do with it

You see, God does not just set us free. He makes us free. Freedom is not just escape, it is a process of being made whole, resilient, and durable. As the Scripture says in ***1 Timothy 4:7b, "Exercise thyself rather unto godliness."*** Trust the journey God has set before you, and you will surely smile at the end.

CHASE WISDOM, NOT WAGES

JAN 02

"Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times." Genesis 31:41 [KJV]

Jacob worked for Laban, arguably the worst kind of employer you could imagine. Laban was mean, shrewd, and dishonest. He forced Jacob to serve without pay for fourteen years just to cover the bride price. After those years, Laban finally "employed" Jacob officially. However, over the next six years, he altered Jacob's wages ten times, deliberately trying to impoverish his helpless worker. Despite this, Jacob learned a valuable secret on the job ***(Genesis 30:37–43)***. A secret that eventually made him wealthy, despite the unfavourable work environment.

Faithful people get paid twice

The secret is that there are two forms of compensation for any work done: cash and on-the-job experience. The lesser form of compensation is money. Unfortunately, many focus too much on immediate pay and ignore the higher compensation, which is experience. Some complain, some go on strike, and many sabotage their employer's business. The wiser ones, however, channel their energy into learning trade secrets that can transform their lives.

Those who serve faithfully and pay attention to their craft can never be cheated out of their true reward. Focusing solely on monetary gain keeps you in perpetual servitude. But when you focus on contribution, giving, and service, you are already on your way to freedom from servitude.

THE VIRTUE OF PERSEVERANCE

JAN 03

"For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." Habakkuk 2:3 [KJV]

Dr Ben Carson, in his book Gifted Hands, shared the story of how his mother raised her children alone after their father left. All odds were against them. They lived in a poor neighbourhood, and the boys could have easily turned to gang life. Yet their mother stood firm and would not let them use their experiences as an excuse for failure. At times, she checked herself into a mental health facility to recover from the weight that life placed on her. During those periods, she arranged for a relative to mind her boys while she received treatment. This perseverance ultimately paid off many years later. Ben Carson became a renowned neurosurgeon, a presidential aspirant, and a cabinet member in President Trump's first term. His mother lived to see the success of her children before she passed away in 2017.

No one cares about your story until you succeed

I asked myself, *what if she had allowed her challenges to overwhelm her?* She would have lost not only her husband but also her children and herself. Instead, she demonstrated remarkable inner strength, and today, the world is better for it.

Today's headline Scripture speaks of enduring to the end. Not stopping midway, not most of the way, but all the way. Many great visions are delivered at the appointed time ***(Habakkuk 2:3)***. No challenge can overcome you if you refuse to give in. Remember, people may not know your story until it becomes a success story. I pray that you finish strong. Amen.

AVOID THE PITFALLS OF REGRET

JAN 04

""For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things." 1 John 3:20 [NKJV]

A young man was desperate to travel abroad in search of greener pastures. Knowing his father could not afford a flight ticket, he made a reckless choice. In desperation, he sold his father's only car without consent to fund his journey. While abroad, his heart kept condemning him for betraying his father's trust. Years later, he became wealthy and returned home. He bought his father a luxurious car along with several expensive gifts. However, when he arrived, the old man refused to see him or accept the gifts. Neighbours pleaded on his behalf while he lay prostrate, begging for forgiveness. The old man went into his room, came back with a knife, and inflicted a cut on him. Then he declared that his son was forgiven but must leave and never return.

Nothing weighs heavier than a guilty conscience

Just like in this story, many try to atone for past wrongdoings by giving back to society. Nothing weighs heavier than a guilty conscience. The burden on the soul can be crushing. Some never recover from the effects of a nagging conscience and resort to extreme measures to escape it.

Nevertheless, you must remember: no one knows you better than the One who made you. God is not like the unforgiving father in the story. He will forgive every sin if you genuinely repent and ask for His mercy ***(1 John 1:9)***. Do not insult God with your gifts. Instead, give Him your heart, and He will give you rest for your soul.

GOD IS WORKING THROUGH YOUR PAIN

JAN 05

"When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." Psalm 27:10 [KJV]

Several decades ago, a schoolmate of mine struggled to adjust to life outside the sheltered home he had always known. Being an only child, his parents did their best to shield him from life's hardships. He had difficulty taking care of himself and even developed a severe skin disease from days of skipping baths. Concerned, his parents travelled more than 300 km every month to visit him and do his laundry.

The best among men is still fallible

One day, tragedy struck. Both parents died in a ghastly accident while travelling to see him. To my young mind, this marked the beginning of a very hard life for him. Yet years later, he turned out excellently. He resigned from a banking job to establish his own business, which quickly went global. Today, his company operates across several continents and is worth millions of dollars. What seemed like a misfortune worked together for his good. The struggles along the way shaped him into a man. Life had taught him perfectly what his parents could not.

Today's Scripture is a reminder that sometimes even your greatest helpers can fail. No father or mother would deliberately reject their child, but circumstances may cause them to fall short. The best of men can still fail you. That is why the Bible says, ***"Cursed is the man who trusts in man" (Jeremiah 17:5)***, for the flesh is weak, and you need God on your side always. Even when help comes through men, remember it is still God showing you favour.

FROM LOSS TO FAVOUR

JAN 06

"They did not conquer the land with their swords; it was not their own strong arm that gave them victory. It was your right hand and strong arm and the blinding light from your face that helped them, for you loved them." Psalm 44:3 [NLT]

One day, my car caught fire in the middle of town. People stopped to help, and eight canisters of fire extinguishers were used, yet the fire raged on. When I returned home, the Holy Spirit whispered to me: ***"You shall recover all" (1 Samuel 30)***. Strangely, I felt an unusual sense of joy for someone who had just lost a valuable asset, because by God's word, the whole universe was created ***(John 1:1–3, NLT)***.

Faith is your vision in the dark

I believed He could easily replace my car. True to His word, barely 72 hours later, I received an unexpected visitor. He came with his only car, handed me the keys, and took public transport back to his own home. I watched in amazement as everything unfolded. I used that car for the next six years. It was a rare act of God's favour towards me.

If you live your life based only on what you can see, you are bound to live a miserable life. ***"By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Hebrews 11:3)***. Friend, there are times in life when nothing but God's favour can bail you out. Faith is your vision in the dark. With faith, you can see clearly where others stumble. Never stray from the source of your help: ***"God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble" (Psalm 46:1)***.

CHARACTER IS FORGED IN HARDSHIP

JAN 07

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you." Isaiah 43:2 [KJV]

Centuries ago, the Mandinka tribe in West Africa had a unique way of preparing their male children for adulthood. This involved a rite of passage known as *'kuyangwoo'*. In this tradition, a group of adolescent boys were taken into the forest and left to fend for themselves for a year. If they returned home safely and alive, they were considered men. What these boys did not realise, however, was that they were constantly being monitored by the older men, who had also undergone the same training earlier in their lives. At times, the boys woke up to find surprise supplies. Their fathers were not enjoying their suffering, but they knew the boys needed to mature and take up responsibilities as future leaders of the tribe. They could not grow into men while still being babied and pampered by their mothers.

Who you become is more important than what you are passing through

Just like the Mandinka fathers, God sees you when you pass through difficult seasons. He may not immediately deliver you from those tough circumstances, but He promises to walk with you through them. This can be hard to believe because it often feels as if you are all alone. Yet God always leaves evidence of His presence with you. Jesus understands perfectly what you are going through, because He also faced trials ***(Hebrews 4:15)***. Understand that God is more interested in what you learn and who you become through your experiences, than in the challenges themselves. Character formation is fundamental in God's agenda. Some people learn in weeks what others take years to grasp. The sooner you embrace what He wants to teach you, the better.

GOD CANNOT DENY HIMSELF

JAN 08

"If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself." 2 Timothy 2:13 [KJV]

A school building in a community that had been hit by an earthquake collapsed. In one of the classrooms, several little children were trapped deep under the rubble. While some cried in fear, one particular boy consoled the others. He said, "Don't worry. My dad is coming for me, and he will rescue you as well." He had unshakable faith in his father while others did not. Above ground, most of the parents had already given up. But the father of this confident boy ignored everyone's despair and kept digging. He dug tirelessly for over twenty-four hours. Finally, when much of the rubble was cleared away, the devoted father called out to his son as he dug. When the boy heard his father's voice, he smiled and said to his friends, "I told you that my father would come for us." There was a bond between the boy and his father that made him confident his dad would never give up on him.

It is not enough to ask God for things. It is more important to know and trust Him.

There will be hopeless moments in life when everyone around you might give up on you, and even you might give up on yourself. But the Scripture reminds us that God cannot deny Himself. He will not rescue you because you are perfect; He will come to your rescue because He is fully conscious of His responsibility to you as a Father. He cannot stop being God, even when you are undeserving of His mercy. Hold on to that truth, and you can live through anything. Shalom!

GOD CANNOT LIE

JAN 09

"So, God has given both His promise and His oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie." Hebrews 6:18a [AMP]

Joseph Goebbels was the minister of propaganda under the Nazi regime. He once said, "If you repeat a lie a thousand times, it will become the truth." This Goebbelsian theory proved very useful in Hitler's drive to dominate the world. That three-letter word, 'lie,' has brought so much grief and agony into the world ***(John 8:44).***

The human body cannot conceal a lie. It always tells the truth.

The first recorded lie or deception in the Bible occurred when Adam and Eve attempted to hide their true state from God. They covered their nakedness with leaves and also hid themselves. Since then, humans have perfected the art of masking the truth. Psychologists have shown that people often present different versions of themselves. The version they reveal at any given time depends on their intention and the person they are relating with. Yet psychologists have also shown that the human body was designed to tell the truth. That is why, during investigations, the police do not focus only on what is said. They also pay attention to body language. There are always tell-tale signs that expose a liar. Fortunately, God is not like us.

The scriptures say that it is impossible for God to lie. When God speaks, you can be assured that it will come to pass. ***Matthew 5:18 [AMP]*** says, ***"Until the heavens and the earth are no more, even one letter in God's word will not pass away until it has come to pass."*** This is a very reassuring truth in a constantly changing world.

GOD CANNOT CUT CORNERS

JAN 10

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction. Whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life." Galatians 6:7 [KJV]

I used to be the leader of the Christian students while I was in high school. Through the grace of God, I did many exploits that brought glory to His name. When the time for examinations came, I expected God to have my back. After all, I had spent my time serving Him. Moreover, there was a particular subject in which I struggled. Unfortunately, I did not put in the extra effort needed to understand it, and I failed. For months, I was angry with God. Shouldn't He have made up for my deficiencies and helped me? But here is the truth: God does not cut corners for anyone.

A single key cannot access every room in the house. Likewise, the kingdom of God requires multiple keys.

On the other hand, many believers die young, not because it is God's will, but because they fail to care for their bodies. Understand this; spiritual credits cannot be deposited into carnal accounts and vice versa. ***The scriptures says, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven…" (Matthew 16:19).*** Access to God's best requires more than one key. There are many things to know and do. If you miss any key, you will pay the price, unless mercy speaks for you. Therefore, take care of your mind, your health, your children, and your family, or you could lose them. Respect your boss at work, or you could get fired. May God grant you the wisdom to excel in all facets of life. Amen.

GOD CANNOT BLESS DISOBEDIENCE

JAN 11

"If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land." Isaiah 1:19 [NKJV]

One night, I couldn't sleep, so I turned on the TV. The preacher said, *"Sow a seed of $1000."* I thought, *"What kind of problem is this?"* I lost my peace for the next three days until I agreed to sow that seed, which was more than my monthly salary at the time. Eventually, I obeyed and sowed the seed.

Weeks later, strange things began to happen. I felt a sudden leap of joy in my spirit for no apparent reason. It happened momentarily, and then the feeling was gone. I picked up the signal and gave thanks to God, praying to receive whatever my spirit was rejoicing about. The next day, I received a call from someone I hadn't spoken with for about thirteen years. He said thoughts of me had come to him, and he started asking around for my phone number. He requested my bank details and deposited a neat sum of money. Weeks later, the same leap of joy came again, and another person deposited yet another amount. Within one year, I had received ten times the $1000 seed I sowed.

Anything that targets your joy is after your life

Joy is so important that it comes second among the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit ***(see Galatians 5:22–23).*** The joy of the Spirit is like an engine-powered source of perpetual happiness. It sustains the atmosphere needed for miracles in your life. But the devil's aim is to steal that joy, don't allow it.

GOD CANNOT MANIFEST IN A JOYLESS ENVIRONMENT

JAN 12

"But now bring me a minstrel. And while the minstrel played, the hand and power of the Lord came upon Elisha."
2 Kings 3:15 [KJV]

One of the best books I have ever read is *The Secret Law of Attraction* by Rhonda Byrne. As an introvert, smiling, laughing, or rejoicing often felt like a chore. I was always serious. I am still an introvert, but learning about the power of gratitude and how it creates a positive atmosphere for endless possibilities changed many things in my life. The book, though secular, showed me what God has always taught in Scripture. Joy attracts miracles, but sorrow repels them. Little wonder, the first thing Jesus often did before a miracle was to give thanks. Before multiplying the loaves and fish, He gave thanks, and only after that did the miracle happen (***John 6:11)***. At the tomb of Lazarus, He first lifted His eyes and thanked the Father before calling Lazarus back to life ***(John 11:41–43)***. Even when rejoicing in the Spirit, He expressed thanksgiving to God, saying, ***"I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth" (Luke 10:21).*** This pattern shows that thanksgiving and joy set the stage for the miraculous.

If the environment dampens your mood, change your environment.

Mark 4:25 points out that abundance and lack are mindsets. The poor man thinks he has nothing, and for that very reason, even the little he has will soon be lost. ***Habakkuk 3:17–19*** (paraphrased) says, ***"Although the fig tree may not blossom… the labour of the olive shall fail… YET, I will rejoice in the Lord… (and because I choose to be grateful), God will make me walk upon my high places."*** This is the secret of abundance.

From today's text, we see how Elisha changed his angry mood with music. Whenever you are distressed, sad, or in lack, you must change the atmosphere around you. It does not matter if you do not feel merry, play some gospel music, sing, or dance. Soon, your mood will match your moves. And that is when the miracle begins.

GOD CANNOT DWELL WHERE JOY IS ABSENT

JAN 13

"Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and sustain me with a willing spirit."
Psalm 51:11–12 [NIV]

David understood the above text perfectly because he had seen first-hand what evil spirits could do to a man. Scripture records that the Spirit of God left Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him ***(1 Samuel 16:14)***. But whenever David played the harp, the evil spirit left Saul ***(1 Samuel 16:23)***.

Demons are drawn to a joyless soul, as flies are attracted to filth

At one point, David also sinned, and the Spirit of God departed from him. He quickly sought restoration because he understood the consequences of living without God's presence. Whenever joy leaves a person, troubling spirits take over. Years ago, someone I knew went through a life-altering tragedy. He found himself at a low point, deeply depressed. His diet became unhealthy; he gained weight from eating junk food, and his health began to fail. One ailment came after another. He lost the will to do anything and could sleep for ten hours a day, all because joy was gone and depression had crept in.

Even his thoughts were not spared from the enemy's attack. Ideas he would never have considered before were now welcomed. His spirit, soul, and body were under siege. Depression is not a good place to be. Then God's Word came. It brought forgiveness, peace, and joy. His health was restored, and everyone around him noticed the transformation. Now, he knows better than to allow anything to steal his joy. May you never fall victim to depression. Amen.

GOD CANNOT BREAK HIS COVENANT

JAN 14

"This is what the Lord says: "If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night no longer come at their appointed time, then my covenant with David my Servant can be broken." Jeremiah 33:20–21 [NIV]

Another word for covenant is ***contract***, except that in biblical terms, a covenant always involves the shedding of blood as the basis of agreement. Another beautiful thing about contracts is that they equalise the parties involved, allowing each to hold the other accountable to the terms.

A covenant is a contract. Once signed, you can be at rest.

This is what David did in **Psalm 74:20** when he spoke to God authoritatively, saying, ***"Have respect to the covenant (between You and me)."*** This is the same covenant God referred to in **Jeremiah 33:20–21,** declaring that the only time He would break His covenant with David would be when day and night cease to function on schedule, in other words, never!

This means that when you have a solid covenant with God, you don't need to cry before He hears you. You don't have to plead. Instead, you have the right to make covenant-based demands, just as David did.

Now, the question is: How can I secure a covenant with God?

- Recognise that God is always the proponent. We only accept His terms.
- Understand that every covenant has terms and conditions.
- Know that every contract has an escape clause. Either party is released from the agreement when the other defaults on the terms.

Once you understand these three parts of a covenant and subscribe to His terms, you can go to sleep knowing God is on duty**.**

GOD CANNOT BREAK THE PATTERNS THAT YOU PERMIT

JAN 15

"Understand, therefore, that the Lord your God is indeed God. He is the faithful God who keeps His covenant for a thousand generations and lavishes His unfailing love on those who love Him and obey His commands." Deuteronomy 7:9 [NLT]

Once a covenant is in force, whether good or bad, it takes on a life of its own. No human input is required to sustain it once the terms and conditions are fulfilled. As soon as it is activated, a covenant continues to operate in the lives of descendants who may not even understand why certain things keep happening to them. The popular basketball player Dennis Rodman, for instance, began dressing like a woman from childhood. He also struggled to remain in any marriage. His first marriage lasted only eighty-two days. Another lasted six months, and the third, not much longer. He met his father for the first time when he was about fifty years old.

What Dennis did not realise was that even without knowing or meeting his father, he was living out his father's life. His father, Philander Rodman, had thirty children from sixteen women and also enjoyed dressing like a female. In fact, his very name, *Philander,* which means "a man given to love affairs," reflected the covenant working across generations. ***Every name is a form of covenant (1 Samuel 25:25).*** This is why you must choose to align only with godly covenants. God changed Abram to Abraham, named Isaac Himself, and rechristened Jacob as Israel. Israel means ***"one who contended with God and prevailed" (Genesis 32:24–28).*** If a man can prevail with God, how can any nation on earth defeat his descendants?

Today, more than four thousand years after Jacob's death, Israel still prevails among nations in military strength, scientific advancement, and business success. May you inherit generational blessings. Amen.

GOD CANNOT IMPOSE HIS WILL ON ANYONE

JAN 16

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and dine with him, and he with Me." Revelation 3:20 [NKJV]

Today's scripture presents a surprising picture. Jesus is standing at the door and knocking. He owns the door, the house, and even the occupants. He is the Landlord, yet He stands outside and courteously knocks. This reveals something profound about God's nature: He will never impose Himself on anyone.

God honours your power of choice

Secondly, notice that Jesus does not expect the occupants to open the door immediately after the knock. We do not open our doors at the first sound of a knock for security reasons. The normal response is to ask, "Who is it?" The visitor then replies, "It's me, John," or simply states their name. If the voice sounds familiar, the person inside may open the door. There is something powerful about voices. They carry memories, good or bad. That is why Jesus said in ***Revelation 3:20, "If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in."*** The challenge is that many people have taken offense with God over painful experiences in their past. Many have asked, *"If there is truly a God, why did He allow this to happen to me?"*

But Jesus remains patient and loving. He says, ***"I stand at the door and knock. I am not going anywhere."*** If you would only open the door to Him, you will come to understand, as you sit with Him at the table, that everything that happens in life ultimately works together for your good, even when you do not understand it yet ***(Romans 8:28).*** His presence makes everything beautiful.

GOD CANNOT OVERRIDE YOUR CHOICES

JAN 17

"…Today, I have given you the choice between life and death… Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live."
Deuteronomy 30:19 [NLT]

Humans are the only creatures God made with the free will to choose to obey or disobey Him. Even angels are not given such a privilege. However, with this privilege comes responsibility. In other words, you and I are accountable for the outcome of any decisions we make. Some people say, *"God is not wicked. He cannot throw people into hell fire."* Truly, I agree, God does not hurl people into hell fire for sport. But here is the hard truth: people's choices can take them there.

The ability to choose and decide is an underrated blessing

Pablo Escobar is a name synonymous with drug trafficking. In his days, his cartel reportedly raked in a daily income of seventy million dollars and an estimated annual income of twenty-six billion dollars. Escobar was so powerful that he made famous the phrase "Plata o plomo" which means "silver or lead." Silver, if you accepted his bribe, and lead (bullet) if you refused. That was the only choice he offered anyone who stood in the way of his ambitions. In 1991 and 1992, over twenty-five thousand and twenty-seven thousand violent deaths were linked to his organisation respectively. He felt invincible. But one day in 1993, at age forty-four, he was gunned down in the streets by law enforcement. He never imagined that he could die that way.

As the Scripture warns, ***"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Galatians 6:7, KJV)*** May you receive the grace to make the right choices. Amen.

GOD CANNOT BEHOLD SIN

JAN 18

"But you are pure and cannot stand the sight of evil." Habakkuk 1:13 [NLT]

Today, we live in a world filled with all forms of unrighteousness. Sometimes, I find myself wondering why God permits such evil. But part of the reason lies in what we explored earlier on the topic *"God **Cannot** Override Your Choices"*. God gave the earth to us to do as we please ***(Psalm 115:16)***. Instead of honouring that gift, we invited the devil to dine with us ***(Genesis 3:1–24)*** *(Take time to study this scripture)*. And now, we expect God to come and clean up the mess. That, in itself, is disrespectful to God.

Sin can draw a boundary that God cannot cross

Let me share a funny yet sobering story of a man who was born and raised during the apartheid, in South Africa. He grew up being servile to and segregated from white people. Years later, apartheid ended, and he migrated to the United Kingdom. After his first night at the hotel, a Caucasian maid came to clean his room. For several minutes, he was stunned and could not comprehend the possibility of a Caucasian doing a cleaning job. So, he devised a plan to make the experience last a little longer. He would wrinkle a piece of paper and deliberately throw it on the floor. Then, he would call the woman's attention to clean it up. He did this repeatedly and had his little revenge and fun.

You and I sometimes behave like that South African man and treat God like the maid. ***Isaiah 59:1–3*** tells us that ***God's hands are not too short that He cannot save, but our iniquities have separated us from Him.*** Instead of acting as though God is merely here to serve you, take a moment to discharge the devil from your life, apologise to your Creator, and invite Him into your life as your honoured guest. May your prayers be answered in Jesus' name.

GOD CANNOT SLEEP

JAN 19

"Indeed, He who watches over Israel never sleeps or slumbers." Psalm 121:4 [NLT]

Human beings need between seven to nine hours of sleep each day to function optimally. In fact, sleep deprivation has been statistically linked to depression, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, reduced immunity, heart disease, stroke, weight gain, and inflammation. But all these side effects do not bother God. Scripture tells us that He never sleeps nor slumbers. He has no need for this biological function. He is on duty twenty-four hours a day, watching over His flock. ***Psalm 127:1–2*** says, ***"…except the Lord keeps the city, the watchman wakes up in vain. It is vain for you to rise early and sit up late… for He gives His beloved sleep."***

You can go to sleep. Let God handle the night shift.

One of my favourite actors was Heath Ledger. Sadly, he battled health problems linked to insomnia. He once shared that although his body was tired, his mind kept racing, thus keeping him awake. He turned to pills, only to wake up after one or two hours of sleep. Eventually, in 2008, at the age of twenty-eight, he died from acute intoxication caused by the combined effects of six different medications.

Being able to sleep is a gift. God gives His beloved the gift of sleep as a way to relieve anxiety. That is why He says you should cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you ***(1 Peter 5:7).*** So, whenever troubles arise that threaten to take your sleep away, just tell the devil this simple truth: It is pointless for two persons to stay awake over the same matter. Let God handle the night shift for you.

HEARING GOD'S VOICE

JAN 20

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, "Get out of your country, from your family, and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you."
Genesis 12:1 [NKJV]

The capacity to hear God is an innate ability in every human being, whether you are a Christian or not. Remember that God warned Pharaoh about a coming drought through a series of dreams in ***(Genesis 41)***. God also revealed the rise and fall of empires to Nebuchadnezzar in a vision, laying out what would happen in a thousand years ***(Daniel 2).*** These men were not believers, yet they still heard from God.

You see, man was the only part of creation that came to life by the direct breath of God into his nostrils. ***Genesis 2:7 (NIV)*** says that ***God formed man from the dust and breathed into him the breath of life, making him a living being.*** By this act, God and man became connected. However, the problem is that many are not listening or lack the capacity to understand what God is saying. Sin, unfortunately, dulls our spiritual ability to hear God.

Wise counsel sounds like breeze in the ears of the stubborn

Isaiah 59:2 points out that ***our iniquities have separated us from God, and our sins have hidden His face from us.*** Despite this, every single word from God is full of purpose and power. Every word from God matters and carries the capacity to make you great. Sadly, many ignore or fail to understand His instructions. A good illustration is the radio wave: when a station broadcasts, the waves fill the air, but without a receiver, you hear nothing, even if major announcements are made. God is always speaking, yet only a few pick up His signal. Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar heard Him but lacked understanding because they had no relationship with Him. It took a believer to decode the message.

LISTEN WHEN GOD SPEAKS

JAN 21

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, "Get out of your country, from your family, and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you." Genesis 12:1 [NKJV]

A very significant point to note from our anchor scripture today is this: ***"God had said…"*** This suggests that God's word had come to Abraham earlier, but his obedience to it came much later ***(Genesis 12:4)***. ***Genesis 11:31,*** we are told that Abraham made an earlier attempt to reach Canaan. However, his father led the expedition and took along several other family members, contrary to God's instruction that he should depart from his family. That expedition ended in Haran. Partial obedience or modification of divine instruction, as Abraham did in ***Genesis 11:31,*** can lead to an aborted destiny. Delayed obedience can also be dangerous.

On the other side of obedience is promotion

In the 1950s, *Elizabeth Taylor* and her husband at the time were on a plane about to depart for Rome. Suddenly, she said to her husband, *"We need to get off this plane."* They were allowed to disembark. The plane exploded mid-air before it landed in Rome, and everyone on board perished. Later, when she was asked how she knew that the accident was going to happen, she simply said, *"I just knew in an instant."*

God speaks to people through various means, including dreams, premonitions, songs, or conversations. But whichever method He chooses to use, your spirit always lights up, and an ordinary dream, song, or conversation suddenly stands out for your attention. That feeling may not last long, but those who know the voice of God never ignore the leading of His Spirit.

GOD DOES NOT CALL YOU IN VAIN

JAN 22

"I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; I did not say to the seed of Jacob, "Seek Me in vain." Isaiah 45:19 [KJV]

When God called Abraham and asked him to give up his country and his family, He also showed him what He would give in return. ***Genesis 12:2–3*** details the promises God made to Abraham. He promised to make a great nation out of him, to give him a great name, and to assure him of security. Among family, we often feel safe.

According to psychologists, all humans are born with three basic instincts: the God instinct, the sex instinct, and the herd instinct. The herd instinct is simply the desire to belong or fit into a group, because isolation is alien to human nature. Every society has its traditions, belief systems, rules, and regulations. When people are exiled, ostracised, or rejected from their society, it can be psychologically crippling.

The old is an enemy of the new, and the familiar is the enemy of the potential.

Abraham must have felt exposed and vulnerable. Therefore, God reassured him that in the place of the family he lost, he would become a great nation. For the country he left behind, he would be a blessing to all the nations of the earth. He was also promised security that anyone who cursed him would be cursed. God never calls anyone unto shame. Whenever you are asked to render service, give up certain habits, time, or resources, it is because God has better things in store for you. The lesson, however, is this: to experience the best of God's plan, you must be willing to let go of the old.

LEARN FROM YOUR LOSSES

JAN 23

"Now there was famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land." Genesis 12:10 [NKJV]

Not long after Abram obeyed God, challenges arose. The fact that you are facing a challenge does not imply that you made a wrong decision. Oftentimes, great difficulties arise even when we are doing the right thing. For many, self-doubt will set in, their very core will be shaken, and at that point, they give up on their dreams, thinking that the difficulty they experience is proof that they are on the wrong path. This is not always true. At times, God permits difficulties to come our way so that our conviction can be tested and reinforced. Problems come to test commitment.

Sometimes, your greatest lessons come from your greatest losses.

Elon Musk, founder of SpaceX, understands the value of tests. Today, the U.S. government grants space travel contracts worth billions of dollars to his company. But how did he earn such confidence? By conducting flight tests and learning from his failures. One Falcon 9 rocket launch is estimated to cost about sixty-two million dollars, and Elon Musk has lost several rockets due to take-off or landing errors. Yet with each failure, the process improved. Today, the company has the capacity to take passengers safely to space and with that comes huge financial rewards. The truth is, Elon Musk never lost sixty-two million dollars when a rocket exploded. Rather, he gained lessons worth sixty-two million dollars.

While in Egypt, Abram lost his wife Sarai to a lecherous king ***(Genesis 12:14–20).*** But God intervened, and Abram retraced his steps back to the promised land where God had originally sent him. Sometimes, your best lessons come from your greatest losses. Do not dwell on your losses; focus on the lessons, because there is great reward in them.

LEARN FROM YOUR LOSSES

JAN 24

"So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company." Genesis 13:11 [NIV]

Abram had no children of his own when he left **Haran**, so **Lot**, his nephew, was like the child he never had. Lot's father and grandfather had died ***(Genesis 11:28–32)***, and Abram became his guardian. Lot, like several others, went wherever Abram went. After some time, both Abram and Lot became so wealthy that their herdsmen began to quarrel, and their businesses turned into a competition. Abram proposed a peaceful resolution, suggesting that they part ways ***(Genesis 13:9)***. He offered Lot the privilege of choosing first, and Lot selected what appeared to be the best piece of real estate. While Abram was being considerate, Lot was self-centred.

The quality of any decision is revealed with time

Life is a complex web of decision-making. Every decision we take is influenced by hidden motivations. But the true quality of any decision is revealed only with time. Some choices lead to joy, while others lead to regret. However, there are certain decisions that demand absolute caution because they can affect your very existence. In such moments, you cannot afford to choose for yourself. ***Proverbs 14:12 (NLT)*** says, ***"There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death."*** The outcome of Lot's decision was revealed in Genesis 19 – he ended up with something worse than nothing. Abram, on the other hand, kept growing stronger because he routinely sought God's direction. ***Proverbs 3:6*** reminds us***: "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."*** May you receive grace to make godly decisions. Amen.

CHOOSE YOUR COMPANY WISELY

JAN 25

"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."
Proverbs 13:20 [KJV]

One of the most important decisions you will ever make is your choice of companions, the people you spend your time with. The truth is, those you choose to be around will influence your decisions in life, whether you give them permission or not. And the consequences of those decisions can be beyond your control. When you choose your company, you have, in essence, chosen a set of outcomes. That is why it is important to choose your company carefully. ***Proverbs 13:20 (NLT)*** says, ***"Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble."***

When you choose your company, you have indirectly chosen a set of outcomes.

Mike Tyson is known globally as a boxing champion. By age 20, he had already become a world heavyweight champion, and in just a few years, he had made millions of dollars. But that was not how his journey started. Throughout his childhood, he lived in dangerous neighbourhoods that shaped his early behaviour. By age 13, Tyson had been arrested 38 times for various offences. Around that time, he met a man named Cus D'Amato, who became his guardian and mentor. D'Amato channelled the young Tyson's anger and fury into purposeful energy. This made him who he became. When Cus D'Amato died, Tyson lost his guiding light, and his life began to spiral downwards once again. Such is the power of companionship.

In ***Genesis 13:11***, Lot and Abram parted ways, and Lot chose to align himself with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. That decision ultimately shaped his destiny. Choose your company wisely, for your associations today can determine your destination tomorrow.

ISOLATION LEADS TO DECIMATION

JAN 26

"Woe to him that is alone when he falls; for he has no one to help him up." Ecclesiastes 4:10b [KJV]

While a bad company is undesirable, as you learned yesterday, isolation is equally destructive. When Lot separated himself from his uncle Abram, he set himself up for a fall. There is no strong man anywhere. As long as a man remains alone for extended periods, it is only a matter of time before the enemy brings him down.

Consider Samson who strayed from his kind and fell victim to Delilah. Elijah ran from Jezebel and went into isolation, and soon suicidal thoughts filled his mind ***(1 Kings 19:4)***. Lot left Sodom and Gomorrah and isolated himself with his daughters on a mountain. Before long, a once righteous man committed incest with his children ***(Genesis 19:30–36)***.

There is no strong man in isolation. It only makes one vulnerable.

I once watched a wildlife video of a huge male lion. It had strayed from the pride and was soon surrounded by a pack of hyenas numbering more than ten. Though none of the hyenas could confront the strong lion one on one, they surrounded and harassed it. While some snarled at him in front, others bit him from behind, forcing the lion to keep turning and twisting. Soon, the mighty lion's strength began to wane. Just as the situation was becoming hopeless, the lion's companion, who had heard the commotion, came running toward the scene. The hyenas dispersed immediately upon sighting the new lion. The balance of power shifted. Ten hyenas could take down one lion, but they were no match for two. ***Deuteronomy 32:30*** says, ***one will chase a thousand, and two shall put ten thousand to flight.*** You need the company of trusted allies, for there is no strong man in isolation.

THE WISDOM OF PREPARATION

JAN 27

"Now, when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his 318 trained servants who were born in his own house and pursued them as far as Dan." Genesis 14:14 [KJV]

For a while, there was peace all around. Then suddenly, conflict broke out among nine kingdoms ***(Genesis 14:1–3)***. Lot and his family were caught up in the disturbances. When Abram heard of the threat to his relative, he had only moments to respond, not days.

It is instructive to note that Abram had already trained an army, even when there was no imminent threat. Some situations require rapid responses that come only through foresight and preparation. Faith is not just believing in God; it involves taking deliberate steps in the direction of God's promises. ***James 2:18b*** says, ***"I will show you my faith by my works."***

Some situations require the rapid response that can only come from foresight and preparation

Throughout history, the world has proven to be dynamic. One of the keys to generational survival is foresight and preparation. The COVID-19 pandemic affected every part of the world. Between 2019 and now, there have been approximately 226 million recorded infections and 4.7 million deaths. Jobs and economies were wiped out, and travel was restricted. Yet, new opportunities emerged, especially in the virtual space. The world is still re-evaluating how things are done. After this global event, life did not remain the same. Are there lessons for you to learn to reassess your future? Are there new skills you can acquire? How can you guide the next generation in these changing times? There will always be new investment opportunities, but will you be ready when they come?

THE VALUE OF INTERNAL STRENGTH AND LOYALTY

JAN 28

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6 [KJV]

Abram had hired servants, yet he did not raise his army from among them. Instead, he recruited only those born to his servants, men who had been raised and trained under his watchful eyes in his own household. Why is this? There are four powerful lessons here.

First, the most effective time to train anyone for mastery in any subject is from childhood. ***Proverbs 22:6*** says, ***"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."*** Abram chose men who had been moulded from childhood with his values, beliefs, and discipline, giving him soldiers with not only skill but unwavering alignment to his vision. Second, people who are money-driven are not the same as those who are service- or loyalty-driven. Loyalty is a rare and precious trait in the world. This is why many people desire children, to form lasting bonds that transcend temporary relationships. Third, learn to produce some of what you consume. A life of total dependence on external resources breeds vulnerability. Constantly paying for everything you need will eventually make you poorer.

Discipline is the soul of any army. It makes small numbers formidable; procures success to the weak, and esteem to all. (George Washington)

Fourth, training and capacity development make you formidable. George Washington once said, *"Discipline is the soul of an army. It makes small numbers formidable; procures success to the weak, and esteem to all."* With just 318 well-trained men, Abram defeated four powerful kings and accomplished what five allied kings could not. Any nation, organisation, church, family, or individual that hopes to excel must take these four lessons seriously. In the coming days, we shall draw parallel lessons from these points as they relate to the most populous black nation, Nigeria.

TRAIN THE MIND BEFORE ARMING THE HANDS

JAN 29

"Now, when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his 318 trained servants who were born in his own house and pursued as far as Dan."
Genesis 14:14 [KJV]

After training the youth, Abram also armed (gainfully employed) them. The order, however, is to train before empowering. To recover its greatness as a nation, Nigeria and indeed the rest of Africa, must strengthen its educational system and prioritise youth employment.

Statistics shows that 70% of Nigeria's population (about 140 million people) is younger than 30 years of age. The greatest natural resource of any nation is its human resource. Any country, company, organisation, church, or family that neglects, disrespects, or downplays its youths will lose its future and posterity. Switzerland, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Belgium, and Japan are among the top ten countries in the world with almost no natural resources. Yet, these nations receive massive inflows of immigrants from Africa who are seeking jobs and a better standard of living. The literacy rate in each of these countries is no less than 99%, while Nigeria's stands at about 62%.

The trained human mind is worth more than silver and gold

This tells us that the greatest resource is the human mind, not silver or gold. Switzerland is the financial headquarters of the world. It is where some despots (who lack sound thinking) hide stolen money. Japan has no iron ore deposits or rubber plantations, yet it remains the world's leading manufacturer and exporter of high-quality vehicles. The human mind, when trained in sound thinking, is of greater value than crude oil or diamonds. Youths are naturally curious, eager, adventurous, and energetic. However, when left unattended, youthful energy may be redirected into crime and destruction. May we not lose our posterity.

ALLEGIANCE IS CULTIVATED

JAN 30

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."
Proverbs 22:6 [KJV]

Never assume that children know what must be done. It is the responsibility of elders to train them. Training means teaching a person (or even an animal) a particular skill or behaviour through practice and instruction over time. Therefore, training requires instruction, practice, and patience before skill or behaviour is truly formed. When fully trained, the trainee instinctively does certain things without much thought or effort. Abram understood this principle ***(Genesis 14:14).***

Years ago, I visited Canada, and something stood out to me. Drivers respected pedestrians and waited quietly for them to cross without honking. I was in awe. Where I come from, drivers seem almost eager to mow people down. Pedestrians sprint across the roads, horns blare endlessly, and noise fills the air. It is far from dignifying. After returning home, I realised I had become more patient as a driver. On another occasion, while in South Africa, I was standing in a queue at a shop when a young man strolled in and went straight to the counter as though the rest of us did not exist. When he opened his mouth, it was clear which country he came from. In South Africa, I also observed that the best jobs were reserved for citizens, while foreigners were often offered contract or temporary positions.

In contrast, in my country, foreigners are often treated better than citizens. These behaviours are learned. The younger generation watches, absorbs, and passes them on. Allegiance is cultivated through consistent training and example. No wonder millions of Nigerian youths are not loyal to their country.

ENCOURAGE HOME-GROWN SOLUTIONS

JAN 31

"Lazy people don't even cook the game they catch, but the diligent make use of everything they find."
Proverbs 12:27 [NLT]

The next lesson we draw from Abram's decision to train and arm his own army is his commitment to produce what he needed ***(Genesis 14:14)***. He did not hire or outsource his security needs. Our Scripture today explains the difference between the lazy and the diligent. Even when the lazy have access to resources, they will still not process or develop them. But the diligent optimise whatever is at their disposal.
Abram saw that children were being born in his household. He needed loyal staff for his long-term security team, and he took deliberate steps to harness that manpower. If the youngest person in that army was about twenty years old, that was how long Abram had invested in each of them. Evidently, nation-building requires visionary leadership, patient labour, and wise investment. When you have unused or undeveloped resources, it amounts to wastage.

Nigeria has no business with poverty. The nation is blessed with vast resources, both human and material. Yet much of these are either untapped or left for foreigners to exploit. That is mental laziness ***(Proverbs 12:27),*** and laziness always leads to poverty ***(Proverbs 10:4).*** Rather than looking inward, many Nigerians have developed an excessive appetite for foreign products. The demand for foreign healthcare, education, vacations, clothes, and cars is so high, even when similar services can be rendered locally.

This mindset has created a high demand for foreign exchange and reduced the value of the local currency. No country or individual can attain true wealth with such a mentality. Receive the grace to acknowledge and maximise every blessing God has given you. Amen

SKILLS PAY BILLS

FEB 01

"So Bezalel … and every skilled person to whom God had given skill and ability … received from Moses all the offerings the children of Israel had brought to carry out the work …" Exodus 36:1–3 [NLT]

The next lesson we learn from Abram is that training provides skill and capacity. The American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "*Build a better mousetrap, and the world will beat a path to your door."* The key word in this quote is *better*. When you are better than everyone else at anything, the world will seek you out for that service. It is wiser to earn 0.005% from several people's income than to depend on 100% from one employer. In today's text, Bezalel was recommended by God Himself and appointed by Moses. We know how the Israelites contributed large amounts of gold for the work of God, but not much is said about who managed all that treasure. It flowed into the hands of the man with skills, Bezalel.

When you are skilled enough, you can dictate your price

A Nigerian doctor who specialises in repairing curved backs charges ₦2.5 million per surgery. One day, the father of a child in need of surgery was quoted ₦1.5 million at a local hospital. After hearing this, the doctor, not wanting to take the patient from his colleague, inflated his fee to ₦10 million. To his surprise, the father agreed, explaining that after seeking treatment abroad, the surgeons in London recommended the same Nigerian doctor.

When you are skilled, you set your price. A nation filled with skilled people will enjoy prosperity. In ***Genesis 14:21–24***, Abram rejected the king of Sodom's offer and set his own terms. Like Abram, your skill may not pay immediately, but the world will soon recognise it.

GOD IS A STRONG DEFENCE

FEB 02

After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." Genesis 15:1 [NIV]

Immediately after the battle with the kings, Abram obviously had concerns. Why would a man who had just defeated four kingdoms in battle be afraid? Abram was no fool. He knew that his interference in the conflict among the nine kingdoms could have repercussions. At that time, kingdoms did not fight one battle and then move on; conflicts were seasonal, as ***(2 Samuel 11:1a (KJV))*** shows. Having joined the fray, Abram had left obscurity to become a force to reckon with. If the defeated kings regrouped and came for him the next year, he could be wiped out. This is why God came to reassure him: ***"Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, and your reward shall be very great." (Genesis 15:1-2 (KJV))***

Recognise that sometimes, cries come to promote you. When God elevates you, only He can keep you at the top. Achieving success is the easy part; staying successful is much more difficult. People in the entertainment industry understand this. To stay relevant, they often generate artificial conflicts and negative news, knowing that bad news sells.

Sometimes, crises come to promote you

Not too long ago, a popular Nigerian musician whose career was approaching twilight made the headlines. His wife accused him of cheating with another woman who already had three children by him. The entire country discussed the matter. Days after the accusations, he released a new song. Shortly after, he had his birthday, and both he and his wife were once again expressing love for one another. Mission accomplished. For a believer, however, it is God alone who can keep and sustain all that He has given you. Do not be afraid.

THE POWER OF VISIONS

FEB 03

He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."
Genesis 15:5 [NIV]

In ***Genesis 15:2***, Abram expressed his despair over his childlessness and the yet-to-be-inherited promised land. It had been decades, and none of these promises had come to pass. In Abram's estimation, Eliezer, one of the servant children born in his house, would be his heir. With this kind of warped thinking, God had to intervene. The first thing God did was take him outside, away from his house, and make him look up at the sky. Now, because Eliezer was in the house, God took him away from there so He could change what he was seeing.

Have you ever walked into your room to get something but forgotten what you came for? You began looking at every object in the room, hoping to recall what you had come to pick up. The thing was right in front of you, yet you left the room with nothing. This is because the physical eye is a mere decoration without the mind's eye. While you are doing something else, the image of what you needed flashes before you. This time, you return to the room and go straight to the item. The item was there all along, but because your mind could not picture it, you missed it. Such is every miracle that enters your life, you must see it to have it. ***"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever" (Deuteronomy 29:29 (NIV)).*** May you not miss your inheritance.

You must envision it to have it

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

FEB 04

But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?" Genesis 15:8 [KJV]

It is an integral part of faith to ask questions. Some believers think asking questions is a sign of unbelief, but Abram, the father of faith, did. Notice that Abram did not challenge God, he asked questions. There is a difference. Some questions come across as accusations, but ***(Genesis 15:8)*** shows that Abram asked respectfully. He began by addressing God as "Sovereign Lord." A Sovereign Lord is the supreme ruler with ultimate power, the unquestionable ruler. Yet Abram posed his questions anyway. The way and manner of asking matters. As a pioneer and entrepreneur, Abram needed to know what he was doing with his life. When you put all your resources into a venture without facts, it is called gambling. When you do so with sufficient information, it becomes an investment. Your life is all you have, and it can be transformed with the right information. You could save yourself many troubles in life simply by asking those who have experience.

Putting all your resources into a venture without facts is gambling, but doing so with sufficient information is investment.

David's greatness was rooted in one secret, he never made any move without God's direction. In over 13 years as Saul's general and 40 years as king, he never lost a battle. Each time, he asked the Lord, ***"Shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them?"*** and God replied, ***"Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them, and without fail recover all" (1 Samuel 30:8)***. Again, when the Philistines rose against him, David prayed, ***"Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you deliver them into my hands?"*** The Lord answered, ***"Go, for I will surely deliver the Philistines into your hands" (2 Samuel 5:19)***. Every business, relationship, and decision is unique. Like David, you must learn to inquire of the Lord always.

BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHECIES

FEB 05

''Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things.'' 2 Peter 1:20 [NIV]

It is strange that Abram could misinterpret a message he received through a direct visitation from God. When Sarai suggested that Abram should take Hagar so they could have children through her, and he agreed. In ***Genesis 16:1-2***, she said to Abram, ***"The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her."***

This shows how possible it is to hear God and still miss it in life. The same also happened to Adam. We might blame Abram and Eve for failing at the slightest chance, but the truth is that we all do the same thing sooner or later. Today's text warns that prophecy is not subject to human interpretation. If it came from God, only God can correctly interpret and fulfil it. Unfortunately, many people get in God's way, thus making a mess of life.

Moving faster than God's leading is a recipe for disaster

Kenneth E. Hagin once shared the story of a great preacher in his day. This man operated in prophecy with unusual accuracy, words of knowledge flowed with precision, and miracles were common in his ministry. Yet, he fell into error by declaring himself to be Elijah, the prophet who was to come before the return of Christ ***(Malachi 4:5 (KJV)).*** God sent Hagin to warn him that unless he stopped, his life would be cut short. Sadly, the warning was ignored, and he died prematurely. It was not pride that destroyed him, but the grave error of misinterpretation. Many have been misled by prophets who claim their relatives are witches or that their children are possessed. Only the giver of visions can interpret them accurately. Therefore, be humble and patient enough to let God lead.

PRAYING PROPHECY INTO MANIFESTATION

FEB 06

''This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare.''
1 Timothy 1:18 [KJV]

Building on yesterday's teaching, the surest way to interpret and actualise prophecy is through ***prayer warfare.*** In prayer, you return God's promises to Him, asking Him to bring them to pass. His word is His bond, and prayers aligned with His word are the ones He answers swiftly. This confidence is clearly expressed in ***1 John 5:14 (NIV): "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."***

God Himself gives us the charge ***Isaiah 45:11 (NIV): "Ask Me of things to come…concerning the work of My hands, you command Me."*** God may reveal the end, but rarely the how because process of fulfilment belongs to Him. As Jesus explained in ***Mark 4:26–27 (NIV): "The kingdom of God is like a man who scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how."***

God may reveal the 'what', but He rarely reveals the 'how' or the 'when'.

I once heard of a widow who had little flour left. In tears, she scraped the bottom of the barrel to prepare her last meal. Her three-year-old asked, "Mama, why are you crying? Did God not hear you scraping the barrel?" Such is the faith of a child. Our frustration comes when we try to take on God's responsibility, worrying about *the how* instead of trusting Him. ***1 Peter 5:7 (NIV)*** says ***"Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you."***

FREEDOM REQUIRES RESPONSIBILITY

FEB 07

''When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.'' Genesis 16:4 [KJV]

Sarai must have had many girls who were her slaves, but Hagar was favoured to serve as surrogate mother. Several perks must have been attached to this promotion. She would no longer live like other slaves, toiling with hard labour. She would dress better and probably be served by other slave girls. But humans have short memories. Once comfort is attained, health restored, desires fulfilled, and bellies satisfied, we often forget where we came from. Hagar, as soon as she was exalted, began to despise her mistress after becoming pregnant, forgetting that a glorified slave is still a slave.

To Enjoy the freedom of the ocean, you must enslave yourself to the compass. (Chinese proverb)

There is an ancient Chinese proverb: *"To enjoy the freedom of the ocean, you must enslave yourself to the compass."* Life is like a vast ocean where it is easy to lose direction. Getting lost there can mean destruction. But with a compass, you will find your way, even after months at sea. In the same way, when blessed with health, wealth, status, or opportunities, it is important to respect the rules that keep you grounded. Never abuse privilege, it is the quickest route to a fall.

SUBMISSION PRECEEDES PROMOTION

FEB 08

"Then the Angel of the Lord told her, 'Go back to your mistress and submit to her." Genesis 16:9 [KJV]

After Hagar escaped her mistress' mistreatment, an angel came to correct and instruct her. Strange as it may sound, the angel told her to go back and submit. The reason is clear in verse 10, her destiny was tied to her respect for authority. God places people, institutions, and systems over us for training and preparation. Many times, these authorities are far from friendly, but that does not cancel the fact that they are divinely positioned. Without excusing abuse of any form, every believer is called to endure hardship as a soldier of Christ ***(2 Timothy 2:3)***.

When I was ten years old, I had a friend who cried often after losing his mother. Later, his father sent him to the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), a military university known for tough discipline. His father once confessed to me with regret, *"I don't recognize my son anymore, he's become hard and withdrawn."* Yet the training opened extraordinary doors: government-sponsored education up to PhD level, a steady salary, and opportunities to live and serve in some of the best nations on earth. The truth? Easy is not always good; difficult is not always bad.

Easy is not always good; difficult is not always bad.

GREATNESS IS BY ASSOCIATION

FEB 09

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory…"
2 Corinthians 3:18 [NKJV]

It was easy for Hagar to assume that the angel visited her because she was special. The truth is, she became special because she was carrying Abram's child, as recorded in ***Genesis 16:9–10)***. There are people who enter your life and everything begin to align, while others may bring chaos. Every human being is also a spirit being, with different forces at work in their lives. This is why you must be careful about who you permit to stay around you. Abram was the blessed of the Lord. Today, out of the global population of 7.9 billion, Christians and Muslims, offspring of Abraham, account for 4.3 billion (54.4%). Hagar's greatness came because she was connected to Abram when the angel instructed her to return and submit to his wife.

Joshua replicated the results of Moses because he spent time with him. Elisha carried the same anointing as Elijah. You become like those you associate with. The sun may be the main star in the galaxy, but the moon also shines through right alignment.

We become like those with whom we associate

Mentors you encounter, whether in person, through books, or through messages, leave an imprint. Their words are seeds that incubate within you and bring results. As positive mentors shape you by their words and actions, you are transformed. We become like those with whom we associate.

WHEN GOD IS SILENT

FEB 10

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me faithfully and be blameless."
Genesis 17:1 [NIV]

At age 75, Abram began his journey with God in ***Genesis 13***. Then, in ***Genesis 15***, God appeared again to show him the next 400 years of his life, confirming that Abram would indeed have children that would inherit the promised land. However, in ***Genesis 16***, at age 86, Abram and Sarai took matters into their own hands and decided to fulfill the promise by birthing Ishmael, using their own ideas. God was obviously displeased with that, and never spoke again with Abram until he was 99 years old, over 13 years of silence.

The numbers are significant. While the drama of Hagar's pregnancy was brewing, God bypassed Abram to speak directly to Hagar regarding the child she would bear for Abram in ***Genesis 16:7***. This was highly irregular. Why would God refrain from speaking with Abram for so many years? It was as a result of Abram's disconnection. Abram stopped listening to God, and instead chose to follow his wife's cunning ideas. So, God left him to execute his own plans to see how far his human ingenuity could take him.

Those who love the presence of God cannot endure His silence

In ***Matthew 27:46***, Jesus bemoaned this silence of the Father when He cried out, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* meaning, My God, My God, why have you forsaken me. Likewise, David in ***Psalm 51:11*** pleaded, ''***Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me***,'' after his grievous sin with Bathsheba. For those who are accustomed to the presence of God and His leading, divine silence is always unbearable. Nothing blocks your access to God's voice like sin. Therefore, guard your access to His voice with jealousy.

WALKING WITH GOD PAYS

FEB 11

"I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."
Genesis 17:1-2 [NIV]

After more than 13 years of silence, God's first message to Abram was a call to walk before Him faithfully and blamelessly. Only then did God establish His covenant. Abram's access to the promise depended on his alignment with God's will and plan. It is not enough to achieve success; what matters to God is how that success is attained. In fact, He is far more interested in your walk with Him, with who you become, than with what you achieve. This is why the years Abram spent waiting mattered more to God than the birth of Isaac itself. Abram was designed to be the model of faith through whom God would teach countless generations how faith operates, as recorded in ***Isaiah 51:1-2***. The prototype always matters.

The Tesla Company has been very aggressive in developing the electric car. Between 2010 and 2020, the company invested over $1.5 billion in research and development of its brand. It sold fewer than 500,000 units in 2020. But the global demand for more units of the car is now through the roof. Today, one share of Tesla in the stock market is $781, with a market valuation of $820 billion.

God is more interested in who you become (Character), than what you achieve.

Every minute you spend in God's laboratory while waiting for the promise is His investment in you. He will release the promise to you only when you are market-ready. God is particular about the product He is releasing into the market. Therefore, endeavour to enjoy the process of your making. It is never wasted time.

THE SIGNINFICANCE OF NAMES

FEB 12

''No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham.'' Genesis 17:5 [NIV]

Abram had already walked with God for twenty-five years, and God never mentioned anything about his name. But at the point of the release of his blessing, God instituted some changes. First, his name and his wife's were changed to reflect who they were supposed to become. Second, a physical mark was placed on Abraham's body through circumcision in ***Genesis 17:9–13***. This was the token of the covenant. A token is something visible that reminds you of something significant. It is a symbol, a representation, and a reminder. Whenever Abraham relieved himself, he was reminded of the covenant. These two changes had one purpose: to shape what he heard and saw, thereby shaping his thinking. ***Proverbs 23:7*** says, ***''As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.''***

Your ears and eyes are the windows to your soul, and faith comes by hearing repeatedly, as ***Romans 10:17*** reveals. Doubt also comes through the same channel. This is why you must control what enters your soul. Abraham's part in receiving his blessing was to stay focused on what he wanted. ***Joshua 1:8*** commands ***''This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth. You shall meditate on it day and night.''*** Also, ***Habakkuk 2:1*** says, ***''I will stand on my watch and set myself, and watch to see what He will say to me.''*** This shows absolute focus.

What you focus on gets bigger (David Oyedepo)

In the words of David Oyedepo, *''What you focus on gets bigger.''* Stop looking at what you do not want to see in your life. Instead, focus on what you desire to experience. It is not magic. It is a vital principle for receiving from God.

THE MIRACULOUS CAN BE RIDICULOUS

FEB 13

So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?" Genesis 18:12 [NIV]

When Sarah was approaching her 90th birthday and her husband's 100th, she overheard the angels say that she would have a child. This made her laugh because it sounded ridiculous. Yet, it was still the deep desire of her heart to have children. At 90, it was humanly impossible to think of conceiving and bearing a child. But God is a specialist in the miraculous. With Him, nothing is impossible ***(Luke 1:37, (KJV))*** emphasises.

One of the most astounding miracles I have ever experienced happened in my living room. My little boy was born with a medical condition that slowed his development. At nearly five years old, he could neither walk nor crawl. He always had to be carried and strapped on the back. Sunday school teachers rejected him and told us to take our "*thing*" home. People stared and pitied us. That was when I learned that only God can save the troubled from becoming a spectacle.

Whenever you wake up, that is your own morning (Igbo proverb)

Just before his fifth birthday, he suddenly got up and walked, without ever learning to crawl. He was so excited to walk for the first time that he kept at it, sweating for two hours non-stop. We were cheering him on and praising God. Anytime I see him now, I remind myself that God is never too late and nothing is impossible for Him. An Igbo adage says, "*Whenever you wake up is your morning."* No matter how hopeless the situation seems, do not give up on hope. God is a specialist in the miraculous.

SKILLS PAY BILLS

FEB 14

Then the Lord said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry." Genesis 18:20 [NIV]

The wickedness in Sodom and Gomorrah was so widespread that not even ten righteous people could be found there. How could two entire cities be filled with such corruption? First, because sin is contagious ***(1 Corinthians 15:33)***. Second, because judgment is not quickly executed upon the wicked ***(Ecclesiastes 8:11)***. Yet, remember that God is the Righteous Judge. Whether sooner or later, everyone receives a recompense for the works of their hands.

When everyone around you is practicing wickedness, it is easy to tag along. With time, grievous sins begin to look normal simply because "*everyone is doing it."* But God does not want you to blend with evil; He wants you to stand for what is right. According to ***(2 Corinthians 6:17)***, ***"Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord."***

Sin is a magnet for tribulation

In today's society, bribery is called "*tipping*" or "*settlement*." Lying is called "*diplomacy*." Exploitation is called "*capitalism*." Usury is excused as "business." Yet these actions crush the weak and oppress the poor. Remember that God hears the cry of the oppressed and listens when the poor call out against injustice ***(Job 29:13)***.

Please, choose to be a force for good in a hostile society.

THE POWER OF SELFISH INTERCESSION

FEB 15

Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?" He answered, "For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it." Genesis 18:32 [NIV]

When the Lord confided in him about the impending judgement, Abraham interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah. He could have pleaded for the life of his nephew Lot alone, but instead he prayed for all the residents of both cities. To become a successful intercessor, you need an unselfish and compassionate heart. Abraham leveraged his relationship with God to plead for the lost. ***Psalm 122:6*** says, ''***Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee.***''

One key to prospering in any place is to love the place

The city of Jerusalem receives an average of 3.5 million tourists annually, making it one of the most visited cities in the world. Yet, Jerusalem has had a turbulent history. It has been attacked 52 times and captured 44 times by different conquerors. It has been besieged 22 times and completely destroyed twice, only to be rebuilt. You may ask why anyone would want to live in such a troubled city. However, there are people who have loved and interceded for Jerusalem over the years, establishing her eternal prosperity and relevance, ***(Nehemiah 1:4–11)*** and ***(Psalm 122:6)***.

The Bible says those who pray for the peace of Jerusalem and love the city will prosper. The key to prospering anywhere is to love that place. If you migrate to another land, pray for its peace so that the good of that land can come to you. When judgement comes, everyone suffers, including the righteous. This is why it is crucial to pray for your nation for the sake of the righteous who live there.

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR SOUL

FEB 16

"For that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard." 2 Peter 2:8 [NIV]

The Bible testifies that Lot was a righteous man who lived among the wicked for economic reasons. For a while, he made progress and did well for himself. But something was wrong. His values were constantly violated, and his soul was in torment because of what he saw and heard. No genuine child of God can watch or listen to evil without a stirring of resistance from within.

I remember my first job as a teenage intern. I was excited and eager to learn, but my joy quickly turned sour. My employer turned out to be very hostile. I did all I could to please him, yet he was verbally abusive. Within 24 hours, he had called me derogatory names at least four times. Finally, I went to his office and said, "*Sir, I came here to learn, but it appears I can do nothing right."* His response was, *"It is because you are daft."* That foul reply gave me all the clarity I needed about what the next six months would look like. So, I left and joined another firm where I could learn in peace.

Damage to the soul cannot be measured in economic terms

When considering a job, a marriage, or even relocating, do not make economic factors your only focus. **Consider your spiritual and emotional well-being, because damage to the soul cannot be measured in economic terms.** Jesus said in ***Mark 8:36, "What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"*** Do not stay in places where your peace is consistently violated.

THE BLESSING AND POWER OF INTERCEDING FOR OTHERS

FEB 17

''Early the next morning, Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the Lord…So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived.'' Genesis 19:27-29 [NIV]

When things go well for us, it is often because God has planted intercessors in our lives. They may be godly parents, caring friends, or even anonymous believers. Though unseen, their prayers carry profound impact, and their sacrifice cannot be fully measured on this side of eternity. Abraham was so concerned about his nephew Lot that he could not rest until he pleaded with God. Interestingly, this was the same Lot who showed neither gratitude nor respect by denying his uncle the right to choose the land first in ***Genesis 13***. Yet, Abraham became a shield over his life, standing in the gap like a guardian angel. This reveals a vital kingdom principle: when you pray for others, you sow mercy, and in due time you will reap it.

Intercession is like the shade of a giant tree. We enjoy the shade though we may never know who planted it.

Several decades ago, while praying with friends, the Lord instructed me to tell one of my teachers that He had ended her secret tears. I hesitated because she always wore the brightest smile, but after praying about it, I obeyed. The moment I spoke, she fell to the floor, rolling and praising God. Later, she confided in me, and within a year, God brought her deliverance. That encounter confirmed the truth of ***Job 42:10, "After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before."*** I encourage you today to explore the blessing of standing in the gap for others, because when you water others, God will water you in return.

RECOGNIZING THE SEASONS OF CHANGE

FEB 18

And she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac." Genesis 21:10 [NIV]

At Sarah's request, Abraham sent Hagar and her son away with nothing but some food and a bottle of water. On the surface, it looked like harsh punishment for a minor offence. Fourteen-year-old Ishmael had only made a childish remark about his stepbrother, but it did not sit well with Sarah. Yet, beyond human reasoning, it was Ishmael's season of change. He was destined to become the father of a great desert-dwelling nation ***(Genesis 16:12*** and ***Genesis 21:13)***, and he had to be introduced to desert life.

Oftentimes, the beginning of a new season is heralded by crisis. A wise saying goes, "*There is always crisis at the curve of change.*"

The beginning of a new season is often heralded by crisis

Joseph experienced this when his brothers hated him for no valid reason, selling him into slavery on the path to his destiny. David also faced rejection from Saul, which drove him into the wilderness but eventually attracted mighty men who helped establish him as king ***(1 Samuel 22:2)***.

THE MIRACLE OF SEEING EYES

FEB 19

''Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.'' Genesis 21:19 [NIV]

The water supply that Hagar and Ishmael started with was soon exhausted. Ishmael was dying of thirst, and all Hagar could do was cry and wait for certain death. But at the point of despair, a miracle happened. God did not create a new well of water; instead, He opened her eyes to see the well that was already there.

Many people need the miracle of open eyes, because what they have been crying about is already within reach. ***Proverbs 20:12*** says, ***"The hearing ear and the seeing eyes, the Lord has made them both."*** What you need is abundantly available, but you need eyes that see. Also, ***Deuteronomy 29:29*** says, "***The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and our children forever."*** Also, ***(Psalm 119:18)*** says, ***"Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things from your law."***

Until it is revealed, it does not belong to you.

Until something is revealed, it does not belong to you. But when you discover it, the treasure is sufficient not just for you but for your children after you. Poverty is not the absence of resources but the absence of ideas. There is abundance all around you, you only need eyes to see it. Consider the widow of Zarephath in ***1 Kings 17***. She did not know that her endless supply of bread and oil was already in her house. Likewise, the widow whose sons were about to be sold into slavery never realised that she had enough resources in her home until the prophet opened her eyes ***(2 Kings 4:1-3)***. My prayer today is that God will illuminate your eyes to see where your treasures lie. Amen.

THE SECRET OF DIVINE PRESENCE AND UNENDING SUPPLIES

FEB 20

"So God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer." Genesis 21:20 [KJV]

The desert is a harsh place where survival seems impossible. Yet, when God is with you, He connects you to unending supplies, and you can thrive even in difficult terrains. ***(Genesis 21:20)*** says, ***"God was with the boy and he grew up…"*** Because God's presence was with Ishmael, he prospered despite the harsh environment. What was meant to destroy Hagar and Ishmael became their sustenance.

In ***Isaiah 43:19,*** God promises, ***"Behold, I will do a new thing; I will make a way in the wilderness and streams in the desert."*** When God's presence is with you, He can turn your desert into paradise. Joseph carried divine presence, as ***Genesis 39:2*** says, ***"The Lord was with Joseph, and he prospered…" Likewise, (1 Samuel 18:14) says David continued to prosper in all his ways because the Lord was with him***.

Divine presence can turn your desert into paradise.

The opposite is also true: when God's presence is absent, everything starts working against someone. Adam and Eve lost God's presence and were expelled from the Garden of Eden, and King Saul lost God's presence, causing his life to become a torment ***(1 Samuel 16:14)***. Beloved, treasure the divine presence in order to retain it. But how do you retain divine presence? Jesus answered in ***John 8:29***, ***"He that sent me is with me: and I do always those things that please him."*** Walking in obedience and pleasing God is how you maintain His presence.

WHY GOD TESTS HIS OWN

FEB 21

''Sometime later, God tested Abraham…''
Genesis 21:1 [NIV]

God is all-knowing and understands our hearts better than we do ourselves. "God is all-knowing and understands our hearts better than we do ourselves. He does not test us to discover what He does not already know, He only allows tests in our lives to reveal His will and our limitations ***(John 2:24 (KJV))***. God tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his only remaining son, and the purpose of this test was for Abraham and the generations after him to understand that nothing should be more valuable than God ***(Exodus 20:3 (KJV))***.

A second reason God tests us is for promotion, as moments of testing and trial often prepare us for advancement. After Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were tested by fire, they were promoted, ***(Daniel 3:30 (KJV))***. Joseph endured thirteen years of trials before he was promoted, according to ***(Genesis 41:41 (KJV))***. Likewise, Jesus received His promotion following His temptation ***(Philippians 2:9 (KJV))***.

Tests precede testimonies

Consider this story about a great man trying to select his trusted personal staff. He placed a bowl of sweets on his table and set up a hidden camera to monitor it. One day, two newly hired cleaning staff were sent into his office. One helped himself to a sweet, thinking a rich man would not miss it. The other did his work carefully, arranging the table exactly as he found it. Without doubt, the one who took the sweet was fired. It is not the size of what is stolen or who you steal from that makes one a thief; it is the act of taking without consent.

UNDERSTANDING TRUE BLESSING

FEB 22

''The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors… '' Genesis 49:26 [KJV]

Blessing and wealth are not the same. Blessing is superior to wealth, because it is the blessing that leads to true wealth. Abraham exemplified a truly blessed man. ***Proverbs 10:22 (NIV),*** teaches that the wealth God gives is different from wealth attained without Him: ***"The blessing of the Lord brings wealth without painful toil."*** It is possible to be wealthy yet live in pain and toil. Many tales exist of unhappy millionaires, such as Eli M. Black, who, after being exposed in a bribery scandal, climbed to the top of his 44-storey office building and jumped to his death before onlookers on the crowded streets below.

Do not confuse the blessing with money. The blessing surpasses any sum of money

True wealth includes all-round peace, and this is the peace that comes from God's blessing. Therefore, your pursuit should be God's blessing rather than wealth alone. How can you secure this blessing? Abraham's life shows that it comes through receiving instruction from God and obeying it faithfully. ***"He that keeps my commandments is the one who loves Me." (John 14:21)***

God also places agents of blessing on earth to deliver His favour. The first is the parent, and the second is the priest. We will explore both in the coming days.

THE POWER OF PARENTAL BLESSING

FEB 23

''The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors…'' Genesis 49:26 [KJV]

Parents are ordained as major gateways of blessings into their children's lives, and children are called to honour them. Jacob, while speaking to his children, declared that the blessing he gave them was greater than what he had received from his ancestors. He had twelve sons and took his time to speak into the life of each at the point of his death, ***(Genesis 49)***. The Bible also speaks of the blessings of the breasts and the womb, which refers to the blessings mothers impart in ***Genesis 49:25c***.

I have been profoundly influenced by the effect of parental blessings. In 2009, I felt a compelling nudge from the Holy Spirit to send a financial seed to my mother and to request for her prayers. Although this request left me somewhat bewildered, I obeyed. Just thirty days later, she suffered a stroke, which prevented her from forming a complete sentence until her death five years later. This experience highlighted the importance of respecting and seeking blessings from our parents while we have the opportunity.

The power to rebuke a parent has not been given to any child.

So, how can you secure parental blessings? By honouring them genuinely so that you may live long ***(Exodus 20:12 (NIV))***. It is not the size of your gift that matters, but the reverence with which you present it. Endeavour to visit or call them regularly, attend to their welfare, and address any complaints or discomfort they may have. Some parents may be unkind or contribute little to their children's development, yet you must honour them too. Exodus 20:12 does not tell us to honour only good parents. As my father once told me, the cane for correcting a parent was not delivered to any child. Do your part faithfully, and let God elevate your life.

THE BLESSING OF THE PRIEST

FEB 24

"Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you are to bless the Israelites…" Numbers 6:23 [NIV]

A second gateway of divine blessings to people is through servants of God. In fact, God trained priests of old on how to bless people (***Numbers 6:23)***. The Priest Melchizedek blessed Abraham ***(Genesis 14:18-19)***. Great as Abraham was, the Bible testifies that Melchizedek was greater than him in ***Hebrews 7:6-7*** because Melchizedek represented the interests of God on earth. In order to secure the priestly blessing, you must acknowledge their office and honour them ***(1 Timothy 5:17)***.

There is a correlation between what we say and how high we rise in life

While honouring priests is essential for receiving blessings, it is important to remember there is a thin line between honour and human worship. Never worship the clergy because God alone deserves your worship. They are not the source of blessings for God is and they are merely a channel. Clergy must not seek to be worshipped because when men worshipped angels, according to ***(Revelation 22:8-9)*** and ***(Daniel 10:9-12)***, they were corrected. Sharing God's glory is dangerous, ***(Acts 12:20-23)***. Because of their role clergy are some of the most attacked personalities in the world. The devil targets them to malign and destroy their reputation to hinder people from their blessings. ***Luke 2:34*** says ***'his child Jesus shall cause the rise and fall of many he is a sign that shall be spoken against,'*** illustrating that what we say has consequences. Many will rise or fall because of the conversations they hold regarding clergy.

DISCERNING ROLES AND TIMING

FEB 25

"At the same time, Queen Vashti gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes."
Esther 1:9 [NLT]

The Book of Esther opens with an event that triggered a series of chain reactions in later years. King Xerxes, also known as Ahasuerus, ruled a kingdom stretching from India to Ethiopia. In the third year of his reign, he threw a 187-day celebration to display his majesty. Verse 9 tells us that Queen Vashti chose the same time and place to host her own banquet. There was nothing wrong with her holding a gathering, but the timing and location were ill-chosen, resulting in parallel visions or 'di-visions' within the royal family. As ***Mark 3:25 (NIV) warns, "if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand."***

Every human being is multidimensional, and we need wisdom to discern who we are relating with per time.

In verse 12, when the King summoned his wife to court, she refused. To her, it may have seemed like a simple refusal due to inconvenience, but in reality, she was refusing a powerful king. I know of two friends who had shared a relationship for over four decades and later worked in the same organization. One eventually became the head of the workplace, and both initially celebrated the achievement. A few years later, however, they became sworn enemies because one could not reconcile that his friend was now also his boss.

Every human being is multidimensional, and wisdom is required to discern whom we are relating with at each moment. Many encounter serious trouble because they fail to adapt to the role required by the time and situation, whether at home, in the church, or the workplace.

EQUIPPED TO SERVE

FEB 26

"…Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes…let the King give her royal position to someone else who is better than she"
Esther 1:19b [NLT]

Vashti was described as a very beautiful woman in ***Esther 1:11 (NLT).*** She likely believed she was irreplaceable. Yet her beauty was meant to glorify her King, not herself. To send a message, the King's advisers counselled that her position be given to someone better than she. Who could surpass the legendary Vashti in beauty, influence, or popularity? Her story reminds us that there is always a replacement for everyone.

Each of us has been equipped to serve God's purpose and bless humanity. We are created with gifts, some with wealth, intelligence, influence, eloquence, or physical beauty. These gifts are meant to serve the King of kings, not to promote our personal agendas. Sadly, many forget that privileges can be taken away in a moment, no matter how secure they seem.

No one is indispensable. Know that, and know your place.

I recently understood the value of a foot when I twisted my ankle. The pain was mild at first, but by morning it became excruciating, leaving me immobilized for days. I had to ask others for help with tasks I normally perform without thought. When relief finally came, I developed a renewed appreciation to God for my feet, which allow me to leave the house and serve my generation. Our relevance in this world is directly tied to our service to others. Therefore, remain humble and remember that your position exists only because God permits it. May we not end up in the dustbin of history like Vashti.

CHARACTER ABOVE BEAUTY

FEB 27

"When the turn came for Esther… she asked for nothing other than what Hegai suggested…"
Esther 2:15 [KJV]

After Vashti was removed, King Xerxes initiated a nation-wide search for a new queen, selecting only beautiful virgin damsels. Each underwent beauty treatments for a full year before being granted a single opportunity to see the king in ***Esther 2:12***. It took nearly five years from Vashti's dismissal before Esther got her chance. By then, about a thousand girls had seen the king, yet it was Esther who was chosen and crowned.

What was her secret? As in every situation, beauty, intelligence, and strength alone are never enough. Each contestant could request anything to improve her chances, but when Esther's turn came, she asked for nothing for herself, accepting only the recommendations of Hegai, the eunuch in charge of the harem. This was wisdom. Hegai knew the king; what he liked or disliked. The other girls relied solely on their beauty, but Esther demonstrated character. Even after becoming Queen, she continued to follow her father's instructions ***(Esther 2:20)***, speaking volumes about her integrity. ***Proverbs 20:29 (NLT)*** says, ***"The glory of young people is their strength…"*** Yet many young people think they are self-sufficient and forget to regard the wisdom of those who have gone ahead.

Character is like perfume. It will announce you.

At every convocation ceremony, the announcer declares that the graduand is worthy in "character and learning," even though tuition paid only covers learning. Notice that character is mentioned first. Character made Esther humble and considerate, and this is why she was preferred. Character will single you out every time. It is a rare virtue, like perfume it announces you.

AVOIDING THE TRAP OF UNFORGIVENESS

FEB 28

"When Mordecai learned of all that had been done… he went out into the city wailing loudly and bitterly." Esther 4:12 [NIV]

Esther's foster parent, Mordecai, had gotten himself in trouble. Initially, he had been wise enough to keep Esther's identity hidden ***(Esther 2:10)***. But since his ward was now Queen, he began to flaunt his identity ***(Esther 3:4)***. The king had promoted Haman and commanded that everyone should render obeisance to him ***(Esther 3:2)***. But Mordecai felt different about the king's directive, and this was interpreted as pride. Haman, on the other hand, also went overboard. Rather than reprimand Mordecai alone, he plotted to murder him and his entire race ***(Esther 3:6)***. This was a case of miscarriage of justice and abuse of power. Evidently, Mordecai certainly had his faults, but Haman was undeniably evil.

Growing up, my father often prayed, *"May we not offend the unforgiving."* He also used to say, "*There is no way to walk without the shaking of the head*", meaning, mistakes are unavoidable and perfection is impossible. But there are certain people that never overlook even the slightest offence.

May we not offend the unforgiving

Unforgiving people can go to dangerous lengths to exact vengeance. The Bible warns us in ***Proverbs 4:16*** that evil people can't sleep until they've done their evil deed for the day. To navigate a world that includes people like Haman, the appropriate scripture is ***Matthew 10:16, which says be wise as serpents and harmless as doves***. May God direct your paths so you do not encounter the Hamans of this world. And if you do, may you be delivered supernaturally from their nets. Amen.

WHAT YOU DO AFFECTS OTHERS

MAR 01

"Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead, Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes." Esther 3:6 [AMP]

Every action you take impacts other people. Mordecai made a personal decision to disrespect Haman in a quiet corner of the earth. Yet, entire families living thousands of miles away were sentenced to die for a seemingly negligible act. If you lived your life with the awareness that whatever you do affects others, the world would be a better place. A man may enjoy drinking, yet his family is starving. One quick text while driving could trigger a chain reaction of accidents. Whatever you do is never in isolation.

Every action we take has a ripple effect on other people

A woman once told me what inspired her to become a doctor. Nearly five decades ago, she was just a child in serious discomfort and was taken to the hospital. She waited in line for hours to see the doctor. First, the doctor left his office for lunch. Later, he shut down and left for the day. She was not treated.

Perhaps this kind of situation only happens in developing countries where medical personnel are scarce. Nevertheless, that incident left a deep impression on her young heart. She vowed to become a doctor, one who would always show up and help people. The older doctor went home, likely exhausted, and forgot about it. But that singular act shaped a little girl's life and career for decades. As you go about your daily activities today, I pray you strive to live in such a way that your life is a blessing, not a burden, to others. Amen.

THE PURPOSE OF PROMOTION

MAR 02

"Who knows…you have come to your royal position for such a time as this." Esther 4:14b [NIV]

Mordecai sent a message to his niece, Queen Esther, urging her to approach the king for help concerning the death sentence passed on the Jews. However, she was afraid because, in those days, it was the death penalty for anyone who approached the king without invitation ***(Esther 4:11)***. But Mordecai motivated her to take a step of faith. He reminded her that she was a major piece in this chessboard game that had the lives of the Jews at stake. He also warned that if she refused to use her office to help the Jews, help would arise from other unexpected sources ***(Esther 4:14a)***.

Indeed, God is a wonder-working strategist. He plants the seed of solution within every problem. He strategically positions answers ahead of His people, even before challenges arise. Therefore, the purpose of prayer is not to inform God about the problem. He saw it before you did. The purpose of prayer is to help you recognise His pre-planned way out of the logjam.

Like the seed in a fruit, the solution to every problem is within the problem. Look again.

Mordecai advised Esther on the weight of her office. Perhaps it was because of Haman's hatred against the Jews that she was crowned. Esther was therefore called upon to invoke her divine privilege to cancel Haman's evil plot and preserve the destiny of her people. We have all been strategically positioned in life, whether high or low. For example, it was a servant girl who orchestrated the healing of leprous Naaman in ***2 Kings 5:2–3***. The butler had to be jailed for the purpose of Joseph's liberation from prison ***(Genesis 40:13–14)***. We are strategically placed to bless others, just as others are positioned to help fulfill our destiny. However, we need the Spirit of God to decode His pre-planned rescue plan for our lives. May God cause us to meet our destiny helpers.

TAKE CHARGE

MAR 03

"So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions." Esther 4:17 [NIV]

Esther had always been the one to follow instructions ***(Esther 2:9, 15,*** and ***20)***. She was a good and humble girl who was still trying to find her place in the world. However, when the occasion called for it, she took charge, and the people who once gave her instructions began to take instructions from her. Irresponsibility is not humility. When God places you in an office, He expects you to take charge of it. I like the words of Apostle Paul in ***Romans 11:13b***, ***"I magnify my office."*** This means what you do after God strategically positions you is entirely up to you.

Samuel gave Saul this counsel in ***1 Samuel 10:7***, ***"When these signs have come, do as the occasion demands."*** He said it to let Saul know that he needed to take charge as king, even though he had no royal precedent to guide him in stepping into leadership boldly. No one had been king over Israel in close to 700 years of history, so he did not know how to be king. Samuel's counsel, therefore, gave him a divine nudge. When God places a staff of authority in your hand, use it, albeit responsibly.

Use the power that has been given to you, but use it responsibly.

One time, the Holy Spirit showed me ***2 Samuel 23:3***, ***"He that ruleth among men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."*** Being just is demanding. It means giving everyone what is due: mercy to whom it is due and judgement to whom it is due. When you do not punish the wicked, you are not being merciful, you are being unjust. You simply cannot be everyone's friend in leadership. It is often a lonely journey. Thrones are established only in righteousness ***(Proverbs 16:12)***. When you fail to be just, your throne is at stake. This is a truth I have learned over the years.

DIVINE COINCIDENCES

MAR 04

"The king said, "Who is in the court?"
Esther 6:4 [NIV]

Haman was so bent on destroying Mordecai that he went to the palace late at night to ask the king's permission to execute him. Interestingly, the king also could not sleep that same night. He asked for the royal records to be read to him, and a past good deed of Mordecai was brought to his attention. Determined to honour Mordecai, the king asked, ***"Who is in the court?"*** At that very moment, Haman happened to come into the court just when the king needed someone to honour Mordecai. Thus, the death sentence planned against Mordecai was reversed into honour overnight. These events appear coincidental, but they were not. Esther and Mordecai had been praying and fasting for three days, and God, in whom they believed, began to work in their favour. When God steps into your affairs, things begin to work of their own accord.

When it is your time, everything will begin to work like clockwork.

A young indigent boy once sought admission into a prestigious university. He had no helper but God. One day, he felt led to visit the campus of his choice. Along the way, a wealthy-looking man stopped his car to ask a pedestrian for directions to an office at the university. The indigent boy happened to be the pedestrian. He offered to take the man and his son to the office they were seeking. At the office, the affluent man requested admission for his two sons, his biological child and the indigent boy he had just met. When the admission list was released, the indigent boy was given admission; the affluent man's son was not. The bible says in ***Daniel 4:17b*** says, ***"God rules in the kingdom of men."*** Men may think they are in charge, but it is God who ultimately decides every outcome. At the right moment, God will move the pieces in your favour.

THE COST OF COUNSEL

MAR 05

His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, "Since Mordecai is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him; you will surely come to ruin."
Esther 6:13b [NIV]

It was friends and family who advised Haman to hang Mordecai ***(Esther 5:15)***. But when the advice backfired, these same friends and family turned around to criticise him. People are free to give counsel, but the consequences of any adopted advice are yours to bear. This is why you must filter every piece of counsel carefully.

Nigeria once had a military leader christened by the media as the "*evil genius*" because he was considered brilliant. His moves and decisions were unique, calculated, and unpredictable. Accounts from people who served on the same ruling council reveal that the evil genius often sat in meetings without speaking much. Instead, he would ask everyone else to share their opinions. Council members would talk endlessly and argue while he listened. He would then take bits and pieces of idea from everyone to form his own decisions. Since he did not adopt any one person's idea wholesale, no one could claim ownership of his decisions. From his story, I learned that talkers hardly listen, and listeners make better decisions. I have also sat on countless boards and committees, and one thing I have observed is that people love to hear themselves. Most would talk endlessly, but the smart ones listened more.

Talkers hardly listen, but listeners take better decisions.

Proverbs 11:14b reminds us, ***"In the multitude of counsellors there is safety."*** This scripture does not ask you to accept advice from every counsellor. Rather, it encourages you to see a matter from multiple perspectives before making informed decisions. Ultimately, however, the consequences of your choices are not borne by the counsellors. So take a cue from the "evil genius" and keep your own counsel.

THE KEYS OF IRRESISTIBLE FAVOUR

MAR 06

Esther answered, "If I have found favour with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life…" Esther 7:3 [NIV]

Before making her request, Queen Esther painstakingly activated favour by applying three simple principles. We can also use these same principles to obtain favour from anyone, at any time. First, she secured God's favour through prayer and fasting ***(Esther 4:16)***. If you can secure God's favour, no man will be able to resist you. ***Luke 2:52*** reminds us that Jesus increased in favour with God and with man.

Spirituality, honour, and gifts are the three combination codes that unlock the strong room of favour

Second, Esther activated the principle of humility. Repeatedly, she was humble before the king, careful in her choice of words and mannerisms ***(Esther 7:3*** and ***8:3)***. ***(Proverbs 22:4)*** confirms that, ***"By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, honour, and life."*** This was what Queen Vashti lacked, and it cost her the throne.

Third, Esther activated the key of honour. When she first appeared before the king, she was asked to make a request. Her first request, however, was not for herself. Instead, she honoured the king with banquets, two nights in a row, while holding back her main request, ***(Esther 5:4*** and ***7)***. For someone whose life was urgently on the line, why would she delay her request? She had prayed and fasted. Why did she not proceed immediately to ask? Because she needed to operate that third key that activates favour.

Proverbs 19:6 says, "Many seek the favour of the prince, and everyone is a friend of the gift giver." Put another way, everyone tries to win the favour of highly placed people, but what they often fail to realise is that generosity makes the prince your friend. And with a friend, you can speak freely.

POWER OVER THE ENEMY

MAR 07

"Now write another decree in the king's name…as seems best to you…for no document written in the king's name…can be revoked." Esther 8:8 [NIV]

Although Haman had been executed for his evil schemes, the fact remained that before his death an edict had already gone out ordering that all Jews should be killed. That edict was not revoked because the king's decree was final. How, then, would God's people escape judgment? By issuing another edict that overrode the first.

In ***Esther 9***, the Jews defended themselves, and in the capital alone, over five hundred enemies were executed, including the ten sons of Haman. This story carries a powerful parallel about the ways of God. If God had merely reversed the edict and executed Haman alone, his ten sons could have risen in the future to harm the Jews. But in His wisdom, God empowered His people to uproot both present and future Hamans.

If God does not move the mountain, it may be because He intends to make you a mountain climber.

The Bible says in ***Luke 10:19***, ***"I give you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions."*** God did not remove the poison of the snakes or the sting of the scorpions. Instead, He empowered His people with authority over them. Similarly, as in ***Esther 8:8***, you are authorised to write another decree as you deem fit. Is there any evil the enemy has planned against you? Do not merely expect God to remove it. ***Deuteronomy 2:24*** says, ***"I have given you Sihon the Amorite…begin to take possession and engage him in battle"***. God has given you many things, but you must rise up and contend for them, your health, family, prosperity, progress, and protection. You are assured of victory because God's verdict in your favour always supersedes that of the enemy.

SERVICE TO HUMANITY

MAR 08

"Mordecai … was second in rank to King Xerxes … and held in high esteem … because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews." Esther 10:3 [NIV]

Nearly every mention of Mordecai in the Book of Esther shows him serving others. He raised the orphaned Esther in ***Esther 2:7*** and reported an assassination plot that saved the king's life in ***Esther 2:22.*** From Chapter 4 onwards, he prayed and fasted for the deliverance of the Jews. There is hardly any mention of him doing anything for himself, he lived to lift others. It is no wonder that, at the end of his story, Mordecai rose to the position of prime minister in the kingdom. ***Esther 10:3*** explains the reason for his greatness, he worked for the good of his people. Serving others is often thankless, and one might even be betrayed in the process.

Selfless service may be thankless, but it is the proven pathway to greatness.

Moses experienced a similar reality. In ***Exodus 2:11-15***, he attempted to use his position as an Egyptian prince to help his people, yet it was his own people who betrayed him, forcing him to flee. Despite this, Moses returned after forty years in exile to deliver them. Jesus also faced rejection. He came to His own, and even they rejected Him as recorded in ***John 1:11 (NLT)***. Yet, He served His people faithfully until the end, and both He and Moses ended in greatness, ***(read Deuteronomy 34:10)*** and ***(Philippians 2:9).***

Jesus said that the greatest among you must be a servant, according to ***Matthew 23:11 (NLT)***. Selfless service may not earn "thanks", but it is the proven pathway to greatness.

SERVICE SHAPES YOU FOR PROMOTION

MAR 09

"…And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?" Luke 16:12 [NKJV]

There is an innate desire in most people to be recognised and respected. Some seek leadership positions for control over resources or the feeling of importance. Others genuinely wish to be a blessing. Which are you? Jesus gave a profound insight in ***Luke 16:12*** that separates effective leaders from aspiring ones. Good leaders do not simply emerge; leadership begins in the shadow of service. It is only faithful servants who become great leaders. When someone suddenly finds themselves in charge of a great enterprise without prior training, there is a high chance they will fail. That is why God designed leadership to start small. As you work faithfully on what has been entrusted to you, you acquire the skills to manage greater responsibilities.

Ignore the credit, perform the task.

Several decades ago, I had a personal experience that brought this truth home. I contested for a leadership position in a youth group. My opponent lived in another state and knew he would not be available to lead, but he contested anyway because he enjoyed the feeling of winning. He was more popular, so he won. Naturally, I felt discouraged. My instinct was to withdraw and watch the group disintegrate as a quiet revenge. But I heard God say, "Ignore the office; do the job." That sentence became a life principle. For two years, I served as the leader of the group without a title, and the organisation grew and flourished, while my opponent merely held the position. Over time, that season of unseen service has since opened doors of constant invitations to lead wherever I go. Whenever a need arises that you have the capacity to meet, step up and serve without expecting recognition. God never forgets faithful service.

GOD PAYS ATTENTION

MAR 10

"Afterward Moses would return to the camp, but the young man who assisted him, Joshua son of Nun, would remain behind in the Tent of Meeting."
Exodus 33:11 [NLT]

Moses was a respected prophet, and he had a servant named Joshua. A servant's position is not often regarded as important. In today's terms, Joshua was like a personal assistant or an aide-de-camp. When important personalities hold meetings, the aide is not expected to speak. He remains hidden, keeping his attention focused on his principal to serve when needed. Moses had princes of Israel around him, and they were important. At one point, God's Spirit came upon them, and they prophesied, ***(Numbers 11:16–17).*** He also had administrators and judges who worked with him on national issues, ***(Exodus 18:24–26)***. Yet when it was time to appoint a successor for Moses, none of these dignitaries was chosen, only the lowly Joshua.

God is always seeking for lovers because they are scarce

What made Joshua distinct? We catch a glimpse of it in ***Exodus 33:11.*** Whenever Moses went to meet with God, Joshua stayed nearby. When Moses departed from the tabernacle, the natural thing would have been to escort him home. But Joshua did something unusual: he remained behind. He wanted to see if he, too, could hear from God as his master did. Joshua hungered for the grace that rested upon Moses, and God noticed it. From ***Exodus 33:1–11***, the focus was entirely on Moses. In ***verse 12***, the focus still continued on Moses. But tucked into ***verse 11***, Joshua's small act, seemingly insignificant, was recorded. It caught God's attention. A hunger for God and His kingdom will always get God's attention.

TOTAL SURRENDER

MAR 11

"Jesus said unto him, if thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." Matthew 19:21 [KJV]

In ***Matthew 19:16-24***, we read about a rich young ruler who came to Jesus. He was so pious that he confidently declared he had kept all the commandments from his youth. Yet, deep within, he sensed something was missing. Jesus knew the real issue; his possessions had become dearer to him than his relationship with God. Jesus told him to sell all he had, give to the poor, and follow Him. Sadly, the young ruler went away sorrowful because his great wealth stood as a barrier between him and God. That day, he walked away from eternal peace, clinging to what he could not surrender. Something else had taken the place of Lordship in his life.

Perfection is not the state of sinlessness. Perfection is when God has total access to all you are and all you have

In ***verses 27-28***, Peter reminded Jesus that the disciples had forsaken all to follow Him. Jesus affirmed that those who fully surrender will reign with Him, receive a hundredfold blessing in this life, and inherit eternal life. God does not accept partial commitment. Even ninety-nine per cent is not enough. He must be Lord of all, or not Lord at all.

This story teaches us that perfection is not the absence of sin. Rather, it is when God has complete access to all you are and all you have. God told Abraham in ***Genesis 17:1b (KJV), "Walk before me, and be thou perfect."*** Serving God goes beyond rituals and rules. True discipleship means being fully yielded to His will.

SERVICE PERFECTS YOU

MAR 12

"Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me." John 12:26 [NIV]

Yesterday, we learned about the rich young ruler who could not follow Christ because he was too attached to material things. In contrast, today's text shows that anyone who claims to serve Jesus Christ must follow Him. You cannot serve a master while giving excuses about somewhere else you need to be. Service requires active commitment. When the Master commands or calls, a servant does not negotiate their schedule. Instead, he or she gives up all else and obeys. This means prioritising his instructions. Jesus points out in today's verse that this is the true proof of service. Yet, within this lies a beautiful promise – honour. Those who serve are not abandoned or ignored. They are publicly honoured by God. With honour comes respect and esteem. Your life becomes decorated by His hand.

Giving is designed to purge the soul of covetousness

I remember one time at university, a colleague mentioned that he had not eaten all day, and it was already about 5:00 p.m. I heard the Holy Spirit instruct me to give him all I had left. It was a hard test. I did not want to be the one who would go hungry the next day, but I could not pretend not to hear. So, with heaviness, I gave out my last cash. The next day, to my amazement, someone gave me ten times the amount I had given away and added brand-new clothes. My joy knew no bounds.

God never asks us to give in order to impoverish us. He does it to test our allegiance and to prune our souls of unhealthy attachments. He entrusts true riches and greatness only to those who follow Him completely.

SERVICE AND SKILLS ACQUISITION

MAR 13

"Praise the Lord, who is my rock. He trains my hands for war and gives my fingers skill for battle."
Psalm 144:1 [NLT]

David was a soldier from his youth. Even in warfare, he distinguished himself through service. In ***1 Samuel 17,*** the teenage David took down the experienced Goliath. It was expected that, as a teen and recent national hero who had defeated a renowned enemy, David would be exuberant and proud. Yet, in ***1 Samuel 18:5***, we read that David went wherever Saul sent him and behaved wisely. He knew he still had much to learn.

Talent is different from skill. Amateurs may be talented, but professionals work on their talents. Through repeated practice, skill is acquired. The outcome of David's subjection to tutelage was that Saul set him over the experienced men of war. It was not his defeat of Goliath that earned him the position of captain; it was his enlistment as a serviceman in Saul's army and his willingness to learn.

In every job, there are two forms of payment – the salary and the acquired skill.

David might have won his first battle with a sling and a stone, but that was the last time he used them. He had to be trained with modern fighting equipment, and he learned to use them, thereby upgrading his talent into usable skills. In later years, David declared in ***Psalm 144:1 (KJV)*** that God trained his hands for war and his fingers for battle. In every job, there are two forms of payment: the salary and the acquired skill. The latter always pays greater dividends. A salary may feed your family for a month, but skills can feed you and other dependents beyond your lifetime. In the place of service, aim for skills. That is what transforms an opportunity into a lifelong advantage.

ELEVATION AND VISIBILITY

MAR 14

"Let…your servants…seek out a man who is a skilful player on the harp." 1 Samuel 16:16 [NKJV]

David was also an anointed musician. He played the harp primarily to worship God, and he did this often. In ***Psalm 119:164 (KJV),*** David said he praised God seven times daily. That was a lot. Although music was not his profession, it was his habit. He could not have fought wars every day, but he played his instruments daily. He must have been a joyful man who gladdened the hearts of both God and men. As soon as an opportunity arose for his musical skill, the king requested his services. Whenever kings require any kind of service, they ask for the best. When you are the best at what you do, there can be no hiding place for you. Soon, your skills will be in demand, and they will give you access to high places. ***Proverbs 22:29 (BSB)*** says: ***"Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will be stationed in the presence of kings…"***

When you are the best at what you do, there can be no hiding place for you.

Ben Carson is a renowned African-American neurosurgeon who rose from a disadvantaged background. What made him famous was the gift of a pair of steady hands. Operating on the human brain requires a high level of expertise, but operating on the brains of infants requires unusual skill. Carson accepted surgeries that no one else would dare, and he succeeded in many of them. People came from all over the world to seek his help in saving the lives of suffering children. Though he no longer practises as a surgeon due to advanced age, he has risen to high places, even contesting for the office of President of the United States.

Your desire to serve others will continue opening new chapters in your life. When you are the best at what you do, there can be no hiding place for you.

ACCESS AND INFLUENCE

MAR 15

"So the king asked me, 'Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart." Nehemiah 2:2 [NIV]

It is unusual for kings to be concerned about servants. Usually, kings have chiefs of staff who are responsible for hiring and firing. If any staff member underperforms, the chief of staff simply replaces them so the king is not bothered with such matters. In Nehemiah's case, however, he was the king's butler. Being responsible for what the king drank was a sensitive job. If the king fell sick, Nehemiah would be the first suspect. He also had to be available at all times, since the king could request a drink at any hour. Thus, Nehemiah was close to the king.

On this particular day, Nehemiah was grieving, praying, and fasting for the recovery of his nation, Israel, which had been lying in ruins as recorded in ***Nehemiah 2:3***. The king noticed this unusual sadness on the face of his servant and asked him what the problem was. Nehemiah was not just a servant; he had become the king's friend and companion. This access and influence which Nehemiah had to the throne ultimately led to the rebuilding of Israel, despite strong opposition ***(Nehemiah 2:10)***. If Nehemiah had not been a faithful servant, there would have been no opportunity to gain the king's attention on pressing needs.

The pulpit is not the only place God calls people to serve. Some are planted in strategic positions in the market place.

Advancing God's kingdom requires people with strategic access and influence in places of authority. God has long been in the business of planting people in positions of access and influence. If you are one of such people, recognise that you are an ambassador of God's kingdom. Do not expend that goodwill for selfish reasons. The pulpit is not the only place God calls people to serve. Some are planted in strategic positions in the marketplace.

A SPECIAL BREED

MAR 16

"This is the account of Jacob's family line. Joseph." Genesis 37:2 [NIV]

Joseph was a special child, and that was not his fault. The writer of ***Genesis 37:2*** sets out to tell the story of Jacob's lineage, yet he began with Joseph, the eleventh son. Usually, when the Bible discusses genealogy, order is followed ***(Matthew 1:1–16)*** and ***(Genesis 25:12–16).*** If Joseph's brothers were alive to read this verse, they would probably be upset again. What was it about Joseph that stirred up so much hatred and envy in others?

First, we must understand that we are all special. Every one of us was born with unique advantages. Yet no one has it all. Even the seemingly flawless carry private battles. The real difference is that outstanding people make the most of what they are given. Take Joseph and Benjamin for instance. They were partly orphaned, as their mother died while giving birth to Benjamin in ***Genesis 35:19–20.*** That was no advantage. But when people decide to hate you, they do not consider the difficulties you have endured; they only look at the privileges you currently enjoy.

Gratitude increases the little that you have

When people came to tell John that his cousin Jesus was doing better than him, he responded, ***"A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven" (John 3:26–27)***. With this mindset, you will learn to celebrate others when they achieve success. The man who was given one talent was described as wicked because he did not appreciate the little he had received which we see in ***Matthew 25:26–28***. We can all be special if we trade with what we have been given. Gratitude increases the little you have ***(Mark 6:41–42)***, but ingratitude will leave you with less.

THE WISDOM FOR SAFETY

MAR 17

"And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words." Genesis 37:2 [KJV]

Joseph's brothers hated him for three reasons: first, their father loved him more ***(Genesis 37:4)***; second, because of his dreams; and third, because of his words ***(Genesis 37:5; 8)***. Joseph had no control over the first two reasons, but the third was within his power. Later in life, Joseph was described as a man of great wisdom. However, he was not so wise in his early years and had to learn the hard way. He obviously knew his brothers disliked him. ***Genesis 37:4*** makes it clear that they could not speak peaceably to him. Their hatred was open, yet when Joseph had another dream, he shared it with them again, ***(Genesis 37:9)***. It was like rubbing salt into their wound.

This is a contrast to Mary's story; when she heard the prophecy about how great Jesus would be, she did not broadcast the news around town. ***Luke 2:19*** says ***"Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often."*** Likewise, David, when he saw God's grace upon his life, did not boast. Instead, Scripture repeatedly says in ***1 Samuel 18:5, 14, 15, 30*** that David behaved himself wisely. Despite this, the enemy still haunted him for years because his glory and results could not be hidden. But at least, wisdom kept him safe.

Birthing prophecy is like the chicken that incubates the egg. The incubating hen does not quack. It sits quietly and in isolation for weeks.

Joseph, on the other hand, was kept in chains ***(Psalm 105:17–20)***. As chickens incubate eggs, you must labour on seeds of prophecy through prayer in order to see them fulfilled. And even when God sets a table before you in the presence of your enemies, wisdom demands that you offer them some of your food ***(Romans 12:20)***, rather than mocking or provoking them. In this lies your safety and their condemnation.

THE POWER OF THE TONGUE

MAR 18

"We all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way."
James 3:2 [NLT]

The things we say have a significant effect on the outcomes of our lives. ***Matthew 12:37 (BSB)*** says, ***"For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."*** Likewise, ***James 3:6*** declares, ***"And among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire…"*** Therefore, ***James 3:2*** concludes that if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect.

The former leader of Uganda, Idi Amin, once said, "There is freedom of speech. But I cannot guarantee freedom after speech." I also had a boss who would look you in the eye during meetings and say, "Choose your words carefully." Truly, no one escapes the consequences of their words. At one time or another, especially in youth, we have all said things that later hurt us. Does this mean we should not always speak the truth? By all means, speak the truth, but be advised as Idi Amin implied, prepare for both the intended and unintended consequences. Even Jesus said in ***Matthew 12:36*** that men will give account of every careless word spoken.

There is freedom of speech. But I cannot guarantee freedom after speech (Idi Amin)

Your health, your economic well-being, and indeed, every aspect of your life, is affected by your tongue. Even when you do not see positive signs, never allow negativity to slip out of your mouth. Always speak peace to your life and to those around you. ***Psalm 85:8*** says, ***"Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for He will speak peace to His people."*** If God is speaking peace to you despite the storms, do not oppose Him.

AVOID DREAM CRUSHERS

MAR 19

"When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had?" Genesis 37:10 [NIV]

According to Abdul Kalam, the 11th President of India, "*Your dream is not what you see in your sleep. It is what does not let you sleep."* This is why dreams must be shared. A dream that is worth sharing will burn within you, and you may be tempted to tell the nearest person.

Unfortunately, once a dream is shared, it has only a 15% chance of success. This is because not everyone who hears your dream will share your enthusiasm. Many will crush it. Yet, dreams cannot become reality without the assistance of others. One of the first assignments of Jesus at the beginning of His ministry was to select twelve people who would share and carry on His vision. Choosing the right people was so important that He spent all night in prayer before selecting them as recorded in ***Luke 6:12–13.***

The moment you prematurely share any dream, its chances of success are depleted.

Even Jesus was misunderstood. At twelve years old, He went to the temple to learn more about His Father's business. When His parents found Him, they rebuked Him, and He replied, ***"Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49)***. That day, He postponed His dream to please His parents.

In the same way, when it comes to sharing your own dreams, there are seven ways people can react: they may ignore, mock, rebuke, attack, steal, discourage, or support. Only the last group is worth sharing your dreams with. Be wise, share your dreams with those who will support and strengthen them.

DREAMS ARE SEEDS

MAR 20

"His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind." Genesis 37:11 [AMP]

Joseph's brothers attacked him because of his dreams. Even his father, who loved him, rebuked him for his dreams ***(Genesis 37:10 (NIV))***. However, his father did something else, he kept the matter in mind ***(Genesis 37:11 (NIV))***. Parents must never kill their children's dreams, no matter how grandiose they may seem. Every dream is a possibility. Every dream is a seed. Most seeds die in the ground, but the few that germinate are worth every effort.

When I was a child, I walked up to my father and told him I wanted to be an aeronautical engineer because the night before, I had seen myself in a white lab coat onboard a flight. At the time, my father's monthly income was equivalent to just $8 today. However, he told me, "*What you want is not even available in any institution in this country, but there is nothing impossible for God to do. I will do all that is in my power to support you."* I left happy, and the dream stayed with me for years. While I did not become an aeronautical engineer, that belief in me still guided me into the field of engineering.

Parents must never kill their children's dreams, no matter how grandiose they sound.

Young people often see possibilities that the elderly might not comprehend. Elders have experienced many failures and, therefore, tend to focus on what is wrong with ideas. Younger people have not tried or failed, and so their faith level is often higher. This is why you must endeavour to keep an open mind when others share their dreams. With God, all things are possible.

GOD'S INVISIBLE HEDGE

MAR 21

"And when they saw him afar off… they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another, "Behold, this dreamer cometh."
Genesis 37:28-29 [KJV]

With all sincerity, Joseph could never have imagined that his own brothers would plot to take his life. Jesus said in ***Matthew 10:36, "A man's enemies will be the members of his own household"***. If God were to make us aware of all the evil plans against us, many of us would live in perpetual paranoia. For this reason, God often fights many of our battles without our knowledge.

In my father's words, *"You can never be as smart as the one who is hunting you."* The hunter has the prey in his sights while seeking the best moment to strike. Meanwhile, the hunted grazes peacefully, unaware of any danger. That is how most people live. But blessed be God who is ever on duty, shielding and defending. God has multiple strategies to protect you, His child, against the wickedness of the wicked. The first and greatest is spiritual protection.

You can never be as smart as the one who is hunting you

In ***Job 1:10 (KJV)***, the devil speaking to God said, ***"Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has?"*** The truth is this; God watches over you and your possessions. However, the kind of hedge that surrounded Job must be acquired and maintained only through righteousness. ***Ecclesiastes 10:8b (KJV)*** says, ***"And whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." 1 John 5:18 (KJV)*** also adds, ***"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."*** The devil is very patient and extremely alert. He is always watching for those who will stray outside God's appointed boundaries. Therefore, remain within God's protective walls.

EMPOWERMENT

MAR 22

"Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee."
Psalm 66:3b [KJV]

Another powerful means through which God keeps us safe is personal empowerment. Joseph had become so powerful that his brothers fell flat on their faces in reverence of him (***Genesis 50:18)***. The wicked understand no language except force. When the enemy cannot perceive strength around you, they keep coming at you repeatedly. But when they notice that you are heavily defended, they back off.

The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.
(Sun Tzu)

Sun Tzu, the Chinese military general and philosopher who lived around 500 BC, once said, *"The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting."* He also said, *"The greatest victory is that which requires no battle."* In other words, the enemy can be weakened at the sight of your might.

In agreement, David wrote in ***Psalm 66:3b, "Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee."*** Similarly, ***Ecclesiastes 7:12*** adds, ***"For wisdom is a defense, and money is a defense…"*** Joseph's life was a perfect illustration of this truth. He was granted both wisdom and financial authority (as recorded in ***Psalm 105:20–22*** and ***Genesis 47:20)***. With these, he effortlessly subdued his enemies. It shows us that a three-fold cord of spiritual power, economic power, and intellectual power makes a person invincible. This pattern was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. While on earth, His enemies rose against Him until His death. But when He rose from the dead, He rose in power. *In* ***Matthew 28:18, Jesus declared, "All power is given unto me…"*** *Also,* ***Philippians 2:9–10*** echoes this truth. Since then, Jesus has never been attacked by His enemies again. That same victory has been secured for you. Step into your inheritance.

DO GOOD

MAR 23

"So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him." Genesis 37:17b-18 [NIV]

Joseph was actively looking for his brothers to be a blessing to them. He brought home-cooked meals for ten full-grown men to eat after a long day in the fields. That must have been a heavy load to carry over a long distance. However, his brothers plotted his death as soon as they saw him. Many of us have experienced situations where the people we help turn around to betray us for their own reasons.

Once, a colleague approached me at work regarding promotion issues. Unknown to me, he came fully prepared to record and to use them against me afterwards. I openly guided him on how to get promoted. That same day, he wrote a petition, the first fourteen paragraphs of it twisted my words. He sent it to the Chair of the Board of my organisation. Blessed be God, I was given a chance to defend myself, and the truth saved me.

Be cautious even when you are helping people

Now, I carefully choose what I say or write. Unfortunately, those who do evil sometimes get away with it, while the kind-hearted can be hurt irreparably. While helping others, however, take precautions to safeguard yourself. ***John 2:24) says, "But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people." Even Jesus took precautions.*** Likewise, ***(2 Peter 1:5) advises, "…make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge."*** Be smart while doing good. Add knowledge to your kindness.

REJOICE AGAINST THE ODDS

MAR 24

"When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said."
Genesis 37:21 [NIV]

Some of us are going through distress that we feel we do not deserve. Things might have taken a turn for the worse, and you may feel, *"Why me, Lord? I am your child."* Do not be downcast. Often, the mercies of God are found in the midst of distress. For example, Joseph's brothers could have wasted his life. Although there were ten of them, only two, Reuben and Judah, spoke up to help him. The odds were against Joseph. Yet somehow, the counsel of two prevailed against the other eight. That was divine intervention. This means even when the odds are stacked against you, God can work in your favour to save you from trouble. You must maintain your godly values in the face of tribulation.

A young man attended a job interview. During the interview, it became clear that he was angry about something. He had become disillusioned with life and no longer cared. His mother, who had struggled to put him through school, died from cancer shortly afterwards. He was crushed and angry with God because he did not get a chance to take care of her. However, the employers did not want an angry person in the organisation. They encouraged him to shake off the crippling anger, or he could carry that dark cloud for the rest of his life.

It is a command to rejoice in the Lord always. You may not understand, but just do it.

Sorrow can prevent good from reaching you. It is hard, but you must maintain a positive attitude always. ***Philippians 4:4*** says, ***"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"*** It is a command. You may not understand it, but just do it. Rejoice in the Lord always, even against the odd.

PROSPERITY IN CAPTIVITY

MAR 25

"The LORD was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master."
Genesis 39:2 [NIV]

Prosperity comes from the Latin word ***prosperitas***, which means "to do well." But how could someone do well in slavery? In ***Genesis 39:2***, we learn that Joseph lived in the house of Potiphar. Slaves are not usually accommodated in the main house. They are rarely trusted or welcomed. Yet in Joseph's case, he lived within his master's house, which, considering the circumstances, was defined as prosperity.

Prosperity does not begin when you have money. Rather, money comes to you when you are prosperous; and prosperity comes when you have God. It was God's presence that caused Joseph to prosper. God's Presence can get you everything you need, including peace. ***Proverbs 10:22*** confirms that, ***"The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it."*** Blessing is not the same as riches. Rather, the blessing makes you rich. Therefore, do not seek riches, because the blessing is better. One of the trademarks of God's blessing is peace in any situation.

Prosperity does not come when you have money. Rather, money comes when you are prosperous.

In ***Acts 12:6***, Peter, while in chains, was sleeping, on the eve of his execution. Most people would spend such a night in fear and anxiety, eyes wide open. Not Peter. ***Psalm 127:2*** says, ***"He giveth His beloved sleep."*** When you start agitating and having sleepless nights, know that God is not present. Often, your sleeplessness comes from wanting more than God is willing to give you at that time. Joseph prospered because he trusted God in every situation he found himself in. He did not dwell on the wickedness of his brothers. He was not angry at the Midianites who re-sold him to Potiphar. He simply thrived wherever he was placed. Learn to trust God in every situation, because He is working in the background.

THE STORMS OF LIFE

MAR 26

"Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar…bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there." Genesis 39:1 [NIV]

Within moments, Joseph's life was in chaos. His life never remained the same. One moment, he was decorated in colourful clothes; the next, he found himself in a pit without water. Then came the betrayal: he was sold to the Ishmaelites and bought like livestock. It was a wild storm of negative events, and his nightmare would not be over for another thirteen years. The question is, how was Joseph able to navigate this difficult phase of his life without giving up his relationship with God? Why would God allow a teenage boy to suffer so much?

Sometimes, you get caught up in the wild storms of life. Suddenly, you find yourself in trouble and wonder how you got there. You spend long nights replaying decisions and conversations, thinking, "If only I had known." But the truth is that you cannot fully understand everything happening in your life every time. In ***John 13:7,*** Jesus said, ***"You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."*** He never specified when that "later" would be. For some, that clarity comes years after the storm. For others, it does not come until eternity.

God does not owe you explanations, but you owe Him your trust.

God does not always expect you to understand everything; neither does He feel obliged to explain. He is sovereign. He sees the full picture, and frankly, He does not owe you any explanation. However, He expects you to trust and follow Him. As one songwriter beautifully put it, there is no other way to be truly happy in Jesus than to trust and obey.

THE PURPOSE OF TRIALS

MAR 27

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?" Psalms 22:1 [NIV]

Nobody likes it when life seems out of control. David went through trials that led him to ask several prophetic questions in ***Psalm 22:1.*** Thousands of years later, ***(Matthew 27:46)***, Jesus quoted the same verse: ***"Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?"*** which means, ***"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*** when He experienced His own horrors of life. In essence, what you go through can become someone else's strength in their own time of trial. ***Hebrews 2:9-10*** explains why Jesus had to endure what He did.

Many times, God allows you to pass through trials in order to equip you to help others. ***2 Corinthians 1:4*** says, ***"Who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."*** It is difficult to understand what someone else is truly going through until you have experienced it yourself. The best leaders are those who have faced struggles similar to those of their followers, they are more equipped to help others. Joseph understood this principle when he later told his brothers that he was sent ahead to preserve them ***(Genesis 45:7)***.

No two temptations are exactly alike. At the same time, there is nothing new under the sun.

Your life is not just about you. Your life is the seed meant to help others succeed. This is why Jesus said in ***Matthew 16:24***, ***"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."*** You have your own little cross to bear. I cannot carry yours, and you cannot carry mine. May you overcome every trial and be a source of strength to others.

THE ATTITUDE OF VICTORS

MAR 28

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations…" James 1:2 [KJV]

Knowing that your life is God's seed to bless others can help you in moments of trial. Trials are not designed to crush you. In fact, the scriptures encourage you to embrace them and welcome them when they come. You may be familiar with the story of the eagle, which rejoices in the face of storms. For the eagle, the approaching storm represents a free ride and excitement. But for the pigeon, it is time to run and hide. Therefore, it is never about the storm; it is about what you are made of.

The biography of King Shaka of Zululand is particularly inspiring. As a child, Shaka's mother had to hide him because of threats to his life from royal rivals. As he grew into manhood, he became a seasoned and respected military general, so much so that even the white colonialists studied his tactics and produced modern movies about his life. When invaders threatened him with hellfire if he did not bow to their demands, he replied, "Around here, we eat fire." The challenges of life shaped him from victim to victor. The mention of Shaka's name alone sent fear into the hearts of his enemies.

It's never about the storm. It is about what you are made of.

During tribulations, God does not want you to go through them with a victim mentality. Nations are built from conflicts. Victims are eliminated, while victors take the spoils. That is the law of conflict. Rise above fear and acquire the status of a conqueror. ***Romans 8:37*** declares that you are more than conquerors. You take the battle to the gates of the enemy ***(Isaiah 28:6).***

THE AURA OF GRACE

MAR 29

When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, …Potiphar put him in charge…
Genesis 39:3-4 [AMP]

Whether you recognize it or not, you carry an aura. And, if you are spiritually sensitive enough, you can also detect the aura that others around you carry. The secular world calls it 'energy' or 'vibes,' but spiritually, it is more than just a feeling. It is a presence. There are places you step into, and suddenly everyone wants to help you because you carry this aura of grace, while others suffer misfortune. Joseph had that overwhelming aura of grace because God was with him to help him. Also, Potiphar, who did not know Joseph from anywhere, was sensitive enough to discern that Joseph carried a 'presence' or 'aura' that was divine. This made Potiphar to put Joseph in charge of his estate. People do not just get randomly promoted or fired. There is 'something' about you that makes other people want to embrace or reject you.

When you spend time in His presence, His presence will accompany you everywhere.

Decades ago, after spending several hours in prayers and the study of the word, I decided to visit a friend across town. I boarded a taxi and the only words I said to the driver was a description of my destination. Moments later, the driver turned courteously and asked, *''Are you a pastor?''*
I was surprised by his question but I replied, ***''Something like that. I do not run a church, but I fear God. Why do you ask?''*** He said that as soon as I entered his cab, he perceived that a holy person came in. From that encounter, I learned that the spirit that you carry within can be detected by others. When you spend time in His presence, His presence will accompany you everywhere.

CHANGING THE AURA

MAR 30

Pick me up and throw me into the sea, he replied, and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.
Jonah 1:12 [KJV]

Jonah was a man who carried the wrong aura, even though he was a prophet. Why? Disobedience. God had instructed him to go to Nineveh, but he went in the opposite direction toward Tarshish. Not only did God's presence leave him, but trouble also followed him everywhere, and everyone around him suffered with him. The people in the same ship as Jonah were crying and praying to God for help, but all they needed to do was eject him.

Sometimes, the challenges you face are not caused by any wrongful deed. It may simply be that you are keeping the wrong company. This is why it is necessary to know the people you allow into your camp, ***(2 Peter 1:5)***. Many of God's children wonder why they seem to lack favour. But in today's world, it is easy to lose divine presence. It is not enough to be a child of God; you must continually strive to live in His perfect will, or the wrong things will keep happening.

Sometimes, the challenges we face are not caused by sin. It may be that we are keeping the wrong company.

Take King Saul, for example. He began well with the Spirit of God, but when he disobeyed God's instructions repeatedly, God withdrew His Spirit from him. A contrary spirit entered his life, ***(1 Samuel 16:14)***. This foul spirit tormented him until he was finally destroyed. So, how do you know and ensure that you command the right aura? By simply and genuinely obeying God and staying within His will. Do what He tells you, and His presence will never depart from you.

THE HAZARDS OF GRACE

MAR 31

"And after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, 'Come to bed with me!" Genesis 39:7 [NIV]

People gather around light at night because it is a good thing. Light attracts. However, unwanted elements like flies and bugs are also drawn to it. Similarly, when God's grace is upon you, certain unwanted elements become attracted to you. ***Song of Solomon 1:3 (ESV), "Your anointing oils are fragrant; … therefore, virgins love you."*** In Joseph's case, Potiphar's wife was not just drawn to him because she was immoral; she was attracted to the beauty of God in him and desired a taste.

When God blesses you, distractions and temptations will come. The glory on your life can stir envy, lust, manipulation, or obsession in others. That is why grace must be stewarded wisely. As soon as Jesus was anointed in the wilderness, Satan was the first adversary He encountered ***(Matthew 4:2-3)***. The anointing drew Satan instantly. This is why the anointed must remain level-headed. Never get carried away by visible results. If you lose that anointing, attention and admiration will shift elsewhere.

You are not that beautiful. It is grace that has coloured your life.

Consider Samson also; he was a ladies' man, roaming from one woman to another because he felt invincible. But when the anointing that empowered him was withdrawn, he lost his dignity ***(Judges 16:20)***, and there is no record of any of those women comforting him. Sin is a deceiver. Do not ever get flattered by sinners; you are not inherently that attractive. It is grace that has coloured your life. Once, my driver jokingly said to me, *"Sir, if only I had your stature and looks, the ladies would suffer in my hands."* We both laughed at his odd compliment, but it reminded me that my temple belongs to God. It is not to be exploited for fleshly lusts. Watch out lest you lose that valuable presence of God within you.

LEARN TO SAY NO

APR 01

And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. Genesis 39:10 [NIV]

Slaves have few choices. They are expected to do as they are told under pain of suffering or death. However, when it came to matters that concerned his God, Joseph was uncompromising and ready for the consequences. In ***Genesis 39:8–9,*** Joseph tried to reason with Potiphar's wife. He politely explained to her that such an action would be a betrayal of the trust his master had in him. However, when it comes to matters of lust, reason hardly works. This is why the Bible recommends fleeing when lust is involved ***(1 Corinthians 6:18)***. More importantly, Joseph considered it an act of great wickedness and a sin against God to sleep with his master's wife. One of the things that makes sin effective is that it is constantly in your face. When you keep seeing something every day, it might begin to feel normal, especially when everyone else appears to be doing it. Yet, the fact that everyone else participates does not make it right.

In the matters of lust, reason hardly works.

An adage says, the river is crooked because it follows the path of least resistance. Mike Murdoch also said, what you are willing to walk away from determines what comes to you. Joseph walked away from Potiphar's wife, and the throne came to him. Abraham walked away from his people at God's command, and greatness came to him. Adam and Eve walked away from following God's instruction, and trouble came upon them and their children.

THE ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

APR 02

She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house. Genesis 39:12 [NKJV]

It is not a coincidence that whenever clothes are stripped or put on in Scripture, it signals a change in status. Joseph's brothers stripped him of his coat of many colours, and he went down into slavery ***(Genesis 37:23)***. Also, Potiphar's wife grabbed his cloak, and he was compelled to run away without it ***(Genesis 39:12)***. Consequently, his situation became more complicated as a slave and prisoner. Later, Joseph changed his clothes to appear in Pharaoh's presence ***(Genesis 41:14),*** and again, Pharaoh changed his garments to mark his elevation to Prime Minister ***(Genesis 41:42).*** Even Jesus was not exempt. His clothes were stripped because of our sins, and He bore our shame ***(John 19:23–24).***

As long as we are in the flesh, our white clothing will get stained.

In ***Zechariah 3:3–5***, an angel was commanded to take the filthy garments off Joshua and clothe him with fine ones. Adam and Eve clothed themselves with fig leaves, but God replaced them with garments of animal skin ***(Genesis 3:7 and 21)***. The prodigal son was clothed with the best robe by his father when he repented and returned home ***(Luke 15:22***).

In all these cases, someone removed or clothed these people. This shows that in matters of destiny, we cannot help ourselves. In the same light, God has made provision for our spiritual covering. At new birth, we obtain the righteousness of God. Yet, as long as we are in the flesh, our garments will get stained. Therefore, we are enjoined to wash our robes always through the cleansing of the Word, ***(Ephesians 5:26). Revelation 22:14*** *says,* ***''Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life.''***

THE COST OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

APR 03

She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house. Genesis 39:12 [NKJV].

A striking point from today's scripture is that the choice to do right may cost you dearly. Slaves have very few valuables. They are the least members of society and rarely well dressed. So, a favoured slave like Joseph was likely to own fairly good clothing, which would have been extremely valuable to him. Yet when it came to choosing between doing what was right and paying the price, he let go of his cloak and chose his faith.

Many saints of God have paid dearly in order to maintain their integrity. Some even gave up their lives. On 19th February 2018, Leah Sharibu, who was only 14, was kidnapped from Chibok, Nigeria, along with 275 girls. Leah was among the many captives selected to be released by the terrorists on the condition that they renounced their Christian faith. She refused, choosing her love for God over her freedom. She was subjected to statutory rape and has since given birth to at least two children. Leah chose captivity in defence of her faith. ***Hebrews 11:38a (NIV),*** says of people like Leah, ***"the world was not worthy of them."*** and ***Psalm 116:15 (KJV)*** also says, ***"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints."***

These saints are more valuable than this entire world, and their sacrifice has not escaped God's notice. God may not have delivered them from their tormentors simply to teach the rest of us. The lessons they leave us are extremely rare and priceless.

HOLD THE FORT

APR 04

"But while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favour in the eyes of the prison warden."
Genesis 39:20b–21 [NIV]

Is it not strange that God did not save Joseph immediately from all his troubles? Instead, God showed him kindness and favour while he was still in prison. The average person is quick to question God during tribulation, asking, "Why me, Lord?" But that is the wrong posture. The right attitude is seen in ***Job 14:14, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."*** Giving up is not an option for the believer. Paul also said in ***2 Timothy 2:3, "Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."*** We are enlisted in Christ's army and engaged in warfare, the war for your soul and mine. Every event of life is designed to show the devil that God's army is loyal and disciplined. Therefore, you cannot be a deserter or a dissident.

Giving up is not an option for the believer. We must soldier on.

In 1864, a group of Union soldiers were assigned to defend a strategic supply depot. Soon, however, they were surrounded by the enemy. They were on the verge of defeat when an officer looked up and saw the white flag of their commander charging towards them with superior reinforcements. Although the commander was about 20 miles away, the soldiers were re-energised at the mere sight of their trusted leader. They fought more bravely and were able to hold their ground until the commander's arrival.

This true event inspired the hymn, "Hold the fort, for I am coming, Jesus signals still…" Jesus is that Commander, and we have the responsibility to hold the fort.

HIS WORD CAME

APR 05

"…He was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him."
Psalm 105:18–19 [KJV]

Today's scripture explains what Joseph went through. It reveals a divine pattern for preparation. He was not only imprisoned; he was shackled. His tribulation was part of his training, and when he was tried, he passed. A clergy once said that the only person God ever used without trial was Adam. He was blessed unconditionally and did not truly grasp the weight or value of God's blessings. No wonder he failed woefully. Since then, anyone who will be trusted with kingdom matters must go through a period of trial before the time of showing.

Jesus was not spared from trial either. ***"Although He was a Son, He learned obedience through the things that He suffered,"*** **(*Hebrews 5:8*).** Jesus was not born obedient; He learned it the hard way. He went through trials to build character. Why then should you, as a believer, be appalled when you go through difficulties?

Jesus was not born obedient. He learned it the hard way.

John 16:21 paints an interesting picture. A woman who is about to give birth experiences pain because her time has come. The pain is proof that her time has come, not an indication of the end. When her baby is born, she forgets her anguish. That pain fades into oblivion because of the result. But if the woman gives up during labour, she may have a stillbirth or even lose her life. Sadly, this is what happens to many believers when they do not recognise their time of visitation. During labour, it is important to acquire strength to push through. May discernment and endurance keep you standing so you do not despise your time of visitation.

REPENTANCE = CONFESSING AND DEPARTING

APR 06

"I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon." Genesis 40:15 [NIV]

The question is: How do I know that I am being tried by God or if the enemy is just punishing me? The answer lies in ***1 Peter 2:19-20 (NIV), "For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God."***

Many people bring evil upon themselves and then cry foul. These are not the kind of persons I am referring to. Sincerity in self-examination is crucial. Joseph had examined himself and knew he did not deserve the injustice he faced. He had been careful not to sin against God. In ***Luke 15:11-31***, we see the story of the prodigal son. He examined himself sincerely and concluded that his calamity was self-inflicted. Then he did the next best thing: he repented.

Repentance is comprised of two things: confessing and departing.

Repentance involves confessing and departing. Confession is the sincere admission of wrongdoing. He that covers his sins shall not prosper ***(Proverbs 28:13)***. Covering up your deeds only prolongs suffering. Departure from wrongdoing is the concluding part of repentance. Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery ***(John 8:11)***, ***"Go and sin no more."*** Remember, God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that he repents (***Ezekiel 33:11)***. Sin always brings death, avoid it.

SELF HELP IN TROUBLE

APR 07

"But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison." Genesis 40:14 [NIV]

Another crucial point to note during trials is that every attempt at self-help, initiated to escape seasons of trial, often fails. If the trial is divinely orchestrated, your best option is to ensure that you pass the test. Each course in the curriculum of the trial must be passed, not bypassed, if you are to graduate.

Joseph considered himself fortunate to have met influential people in prison. While comforting them, he was able to interpret their dreams. He also requested the butler to remember him once he was released. Self-help is not wrong. It is human nature to seek relief in times of trouble. However, when God is the one dealing with a person, the only true helper remains God. Joseph's attempt at self-help failed. He remained in prison for two more years after lobbying for release. ***Genesis 40:23 (KJV)*** says, ***"the butler forgat him."*** That must have been a very severe case of forgetting. Both ***Psalm 60:11*** and ***Psalm 108:12*** declare, ***"vain is the help of man."***

Each lesson in life's curriculum cannot be bypassed. It must be passed.

According to the scripture, a country was so ravaged by famine that women began to eat their own children. One woman said to her friend, ***"Let us cook your child today to feed our families. Tomorrow, we will cook mine." They ate the first woman's child, but the next day, the other woman hid her child. In distress, the first woman appealed to the king for help. The king replied, "If God does not help you, how can I help you?" (2 Kings 6:27).*** The moral of the story is this: if anyone has ever helped you, it is because God enabled them to do so.

THE GIFT OF A MAN

APR 08

"But he impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation." Genesis 40:22 [NKJV]

Joseph had an outstanding gift, the interpretation of dreams. Anyone can dream, but Joseph could interpret dreams with uncanny accuracy. Recognise your gifts and stay with them. Bishop David Oyedepo, pastor of one of the largest church congregations in the world, once said, *"If you want to see my weakness, give me a screwdriver and spanner."* In other words, his greatness lies in staying within the scope of his calling. When you venture into another person's area of expertise for which you are not equipped, you will struggle endlessly. Even if your gift is not in demand at the moment, do not despise it. Keep refining it. You were given that enablement for a reason and a season. At the appointed time, demand will rise for what you carry and your reward will come with it. Many people miss their reward because they grew tired of nurturing their gifts and veered off into other people's fields of expertise to earn a living. When their season of visitation came, they could not be found.

Your gift was given to you for a reason and a season. Nurture that gift until your time comes.

At the right time, God divinely orchestrated the meeting of Pharaoh's officers with Joseph. He was not fit to appear in the palace, so God arranged for the palace to come to him in prison. It was not coincidence; it was 'Godcidence'. In his book The Law of Recognition, Mike Murdoch explains that whatever is of value in or around your life must be recognised for it to deliver dividends. When you despise something of value, you lose its worth. Moses had no respect for his rod until God asked him, ***"What is in your hand?"*** Thereafter, the rod became the rod of God ***(Exodus 4:17 and 17:9)***. I will ask you too, "What is in your hand?"

TALENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

APR 09

"…So he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him." Genesis 41:8 [NIV]

Your gift or talent is that thing you do with ease, which others find difficult to do. In today's scripture, Pharaoh sent for all the magicians and wise men, but none of them could interpret his dreams. Then Pharaoh's cupbearer remembered how Joseph had interpreted his own dream effortlessly and accurately two years earlier. That was the only reason Pharaoh sent for Joseph. Pharaoh was not being kind to Joseph. He did not care for Joseph; he was only interested in the gift Joseph carried. Joseph could have rotted and died in prison for all Pharaoh cared, but his gift made a way for him. ***Proverbs 18:16 (KJV), "A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men."***

Your gift or talent is that thing you do with ease but others find difficult to do

A great man once entrusted talents to his servants. The first was given five talents, the second two, and the third just one. The first two traded with their talents and doubled their value. The third, however, buried his. If that servant had traded with his one talent diligently, he could have gained ten more and perhaps received the same reward as the first servant. What he lacked in quantity, he could have made up for in diligence and focus. The first servant had five talents to start with, but quantity can also be a distraction. None of the three servants was disadvantaged. It is not about how many gifts you have but how well you use what you have been given. The third servant's destiny was crippled by envy and laziness.

THE DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

APR 10

So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. Genesis 41:14 NIV

One of the surest signs that your time of visitation has come is that things will begin to move very fast. Events will unfold in quick succession. Years ago, I experienced such a divine visitation. I was involved in an automobile accident that left me with a broken femur. As a construction worker who needed to climb heights to inspect works, this was a serious limitation. For nine months, I was grounded in one place and felt as if the world had forgotten me. Indeed, the world may pity you for a while, but it eventually moves on. Nature was designed to favour the strong and eliminate the weak. In my frustration, I turned to the wall in my bedroom and begged God for mercy. It was as if heaven was waiting for me to ask. The very next day, a prophet visited me. God told him to share a scripture with me, ***(Job 36:16).***

When your time of visitation comes, the whole world will re-adjust to accommodate you.

Two days after that visitation, I received a phone call inviting me for a job interview in another city, seven hours away. I travelled there, and one of the managers immediately loved me and adopted me into his care. I was using a walking stick at the time. Right there in his office, he called his staff to get paper and had me write my application letter on his desk. I was interviewed that same day and asked to resume the next morning. From application to issuance of the employment letter took less than twelve hours. I had to request one week's leave to sort out relocation logistics. I was granted the leave despite not having worked a single day, and I was paid for that week. They were in a hurry to have me.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PACKAGING

APR 11

"So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh."
Genesis 41:14 [NIV]

God's gifts often come in raw, unattractive form. A key part of trading your talents is learning how to package and present them effectively to your audience or clients. Many people leave their gifts in raw form and wonder why the world does not recognise them. ***Proverbs 12:27 (AMP)*** says, ***"The lazy man does not catch and roast his prey, but the precious possession of a [wise] man is diligence [because he recognises opportunities and seizes them]."*** The 'roast' in this verse refers to the processing of raw potential. Some gifts will require investment in seminars or quality time with mentors.

Joseph interpreted dreams for Pharaoh's officers in a dingy prison cell. Even though he had rendered accurate and valuable service, they did not reward him because he did not appear valuable. They forgot him as if he was nothing. However, when he got the chance to serve Pharaoh directly, he intentionally repackaged himself for maximum impact and was rewarded far beyond his expectations.

Money spent in packaging and marketing is not wasted resources.

This principle is used by major corporations and brands. Once, a man visited my construction site and was impressed with my work. He invited me to his home to discuss a personal project. After our meeting, he saw me off. When he realised I did not have a car, he gave the job to someone else. He assumed that if I had truly constructed the first building, I would own a car and feared I might misuse his funds to buy one. From that experience, I learned that I should have rented a car and driver to meet a potential client.

DREAMS AND INTERPRETATIONS I

APR 12

Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do." Genesis 41:25 [NIV]

God speaks to us in different ways. Some people, however, have the propensity to see the future through dreams. It is important to note that all humans have spirits, and God is the Father of all spirits ***(Hebrews 12:9)***. When He wants to communicate with us, He speaks to our spirits, not our ears. While some pay attention to and develop the receptiveness of their spirits, others ignore the signals altogether. Virtually every great person with significant achievements in all spheres of life has learned to make use of their spiritual faculty.

R. G. LeTourneau was a pioneer in the fabrication and construction of earth-moving equipment such as bulldozers. Historical accounts show that he single-handedly produced and sold more than half of all the earth-moving equipment used in World War II, making him a money magnet in his time. The renowned author Napoleon Hill once travelled with LeTourneau aboard his private jet. Hill noticed that LeTourneau dozed off. In a subconscious state, he reached for his notepad and scribbled on it. When he woke, Hill asked what had happened. LeTourneau could not recall, but he revealed that this is how he derived most of his inspirations.

Have a dedicated notepad where you write every inspiration that strikes you as soon as it comes. Ideas do fly away.

In ***Genesis 41:8,*** Pharaoh knew that his dream was beyond ordinary. He refused to dismiss it until he discovered the interpretation. Many people would have ignored the dream and gone on with their normal lives. The lesson is clear: always have a notepad and and ensure you write down every single divine message or inspiration you receive. Always capture divine messages immediately.

DREAMS AND INTERPRETATIONS II

APR 13

"The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream." Genesis 46:26 [NKJV]

People who have experienced hearing from God know that He often communicates using images and numbers. These are divine codes. God delivers these messages and leaves us with the task of deciphering them accurately. ***Deuteronomy 29:29*** says, ***"The secret things belong to God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children."*** Some interpret divinely coded messages wrongly and ruin their lives, while others get the right interpretation and move forward.

God speaks to us in codes to confuse the enemy while guiding His sheep

Warning; beware of false prophets who give inaccurate visions or wrong interpretations of dreams. Relationships have been destroyed, and lives have been lost because someone gave literal translations to symbolic visions. Divinely coded messages are like ciphers used by nations to transmit vital intelligence that the enemy cannot decode.

In 1941, during World War II, Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto masterminded the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The US President ordered his elimination to send a message to Japan. US Intelligence decrypted Japanese codes and intercepted Yamamoto's flight itinerary. Sixteen aircraft flew 965 km non-stop to intercept him. This was only possible because the Japanese code was broken. Likewise, God speaks to us in codes to confuse the enemy while guiding His children. The onus is on us to decipher these divine codes using the tools of the Word and prayer. God speaks in codes to protect and guide His people.

DREAMS AND INTERPRETATIONS III

APR 14

"And of the children of Issachar…men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do;… and all their brethren were at their commandment." 1 Chronicles 12:32 [KJV]

From today's scripture, we see that the ability to interpret divine messages confers different levels of authority. The one who sees better than others controls them. This was the case with Joseph. God did not reveal the future to Joseph in a dream; it was shown to Pharaoh. But the interpretation came from Joseph. He understood the times and what Egypt ought to do in the next fourteen years. Therefore, the whole of Egypt was entrusted to him.

The ones who sees beyond others controls the others

Likewise, when Jesus was born, the wise men read the signs accurately. Little wonder they had great resources at their disposal, ***Matthew 2:11*** records. Bible historians note that the gifts the wise men gave Jesus at birth were enough to sustain His family during their years of exile from Herod ***(Matthew 2:13, 19–20).*** Daniel was also a man who experienced multiple promotions because he accurately interpreted divine messages ***(Daniel 5:28–29)***. We cannot overemphasize the importance of understanding divine messages. At the very least, one must be able to see for himself or herself. Depending on others for spiritual guidance on matters of your destiny means you have relinquished control of your life to them. This could be risky.

In Luke 19:41–42, Jesus wept over Jerusalem because no one there understood the times they were in, and their blessings were hidden from their eyes. Take a moment to pray ***Psalm 119:18: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."***

LISTEN CAREFULLY

APR 15

"And the dream was shown to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass" Genesis 41:32 [NKJV]

God is not a talkative, and hardly repeats Himself. We are the ones who need to listen again and again to what has already been said. ***Psalm 62:11 (AMP)*** declares, ***"God has spoken once, twice I have heard this: that power belongs to God." (Romans 10:17 (KJV))*** reminds us, ***"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Deuteronomy 28:1 adds, "If you diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord…He will set you on high above all nations of the earth."***

Therefore, if God ever says something more than once, you must pay close attention. According to Joseph, any revelation repeated is firmly established by God and will soon come to pass. To maximize divine instruction, active listening is crucial. Many of us need to grow in listening. We love to talk, but often fail at hearing God. For some, God has already answered their prayers long ago. But because they prefer to fill prayer time with many words, they have missed His voice. Jesus warned in ***Matthew 6:7, "When you pray, do not use vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."***

When God speaks twice on any subject, you better listen well because that thing will soon come to pass.

A huge part of listening is writing down what God has revealed, then reviewing it again to be sure no detail is missed. ***Matthew 4:4 (KJV) says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."*** Every word is vital, and missing even one detail could be costly. ***Numbers 20:8–12,*** God instructed Moses to speak to the rock, but he struck it instead. For that error of interpretation, Moses was disqualified from entering the promised land. It is that serious.

THE PARETO PRINCIPLE

APR 16

"Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance." Genesis 41:34 [KJV]

From Pharaoh's dream, it was revealed that seven years of famine would follow seven years of plenty. To escape the devastating effects of famine, Joseph advised that 20 percent of the harvest during the years of plenty be collected and preserved against the years of scarcity.

About 173 years ago, an Italian named Vilfredo Federico Pareto was born. During his lifetime, he observed that 80 percent of results often come from 20 percent of the input. This became popularly known as the Pareto Principle. Yet the truth is that Joseph applied this principle more than 3,500 years earlier. Perhaps it should be called the "Josephic Principle." Joseph spent 13 years in slavery and prison, with ample time to reflect and sharpen his skills. While in Potiphar's house and later in prison, he was consistently placed in charge of all affairs around him (as recorded in ***Genesis 39:4*** and ***Genesis 39:22)***. This suggests he had tested and refined management principles over time. So when he stood before Pharaoh, his proposal was not merely a spiritual prophecy but a practical, time-tested management solution to an economic crisis.

There is no place with both problems and the potential for wealth as Africa

Believers must learn from this. We are not called to be overly spiritual people who float around with no practical value. As believers, we must also provide workable solutions to real life problems in our world. And there is hardly any place with as many challenges and opportunities for wealth as Africa. Stop complaining and start working. Your wisdom, diligence, and practical strategies can preserve nations.

THE JOSEPHIC PRINCIPLE

APR 17

"In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him." Ecclesiastes 7:14 [KJV]

I will be building on yesterday's study and would want you to take a closer look at the 'Josephic Principle.' First, realise that the earth and the rest of the galaxy were created in cyclic shapes, and they turn on an axis for a reason. It is because what has been is also what shall be ***Ecclesiastes 1:9 and 3:1–8*** also reminds us. That is why for every mortal, there is a time to be born and a time to die. There is winter and there is summer. There is also the time of plenty and the time of scarcity. God sets up things this way so that man will not seek for anything outside Him ***(Ecclesiastes 7:14)***. He is the Eternal Being who sustains times and seasons. The wise will understand and take action.

Everything God made comes in cycles, whether on an atomic or galactic scale.

Decades ago, I observed a sales girl at a restaurant. She stood out like a sore thumb; it was obvious that she did not belong there. She was about twelve years old and looked like someone from a wealthy background. Upon further inquiry, I discovered that her father who was a prosperous civil servant, had just passed on. When he was alive, he had prevented his wife from taking up any job. So, when he passed, his children instantly began to struggle for survival. We might blame God for not watching out for us, when in reality He expected us to simply learn from history.

Like Joseph, we ought to recognise the productive seasons of our lives. What do you do with your harvests? Many people simply devour their earnings in the days of plenty, while assuming that there is more time to earn. I pray that you receive wisdom to be prudent with your earnings.

BE DELIBERATE

APR 18

Let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt; let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.
Genesis 41:33–34,6 [KJV]

Joseph, who was considered a very young man at thirty years old, gave Pharaoh a compressed lesson on wealth management principles. The lessons are: first, be deliberate. Second, apply discretion and wisdom. Third, create a structure and have a savings plan. Fourth, seek expert advice. Fifth, cut costs and reduce expenditure. Sixth, secure your income. Seventh, adopt a futuristic approach. Eighth, define your purpose for building wealth. In the next few days I will expand on these eight principles.

Create a financial structure and have a savings plan that works for you

The first lesson shared by Joseph was that one must have a serious approach to wealth creation. Pharaoh was the king, but the king could be too busy to pay serious attention to this project. Kings are usually relaxed; they are bosses and do things only when they want. They sleep and wake when they like. However, wealth creation demands a more serious approach. Therefore, Pharaoh was advised not to mix business with pleasure. Enjoy your life, but do not be like everyone else. You must have deliberate plans for the future. This is one of the key things that separates the wealthy from the poor. They think decades ahead. The rest of the Egyptians enjoyed the plenty at their disposal, but Pharaoh, who had expert advice, took a different approach.

The life you want to live today should not stop because you want a better future. By being deliberate you can create a budget or financial plan that takes care of both your present needs and your future plans.

THE VALUE OF DISCRETION

APR 19

"Let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt…let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years."
Genesis 41:33-34 [KJV]

The second lesson is this: discretion and wisdom are vital for creating and managing wealth. Collins Dictionary defines discretion as the ability to behave quietly and in control, without drawing attention or revealing private information. Wealth does not like noise. In The Psychology of Money, Morgan Housel wrote, "*Wealth is quiet, rich is loud, and poor is flashy."* A loud and careless person can hardly sustain wealth. Jack Ma, founder of Alibaba and Ant Group, learned this lesson too late. Once among the world's richest men, his love for public speaking and showmanship became his undoing. As he grew louder on the global stage, he drew the ire of China's powerful leaders, who reminded him that the nation has room for only one voice at the top. Cut down to size, he faded into silence as his wealth declined.

Wealth is quiet, rich is loud, and poor is flashy. (Morgan Housel)

Scripture says in ***1 Corinthians 16:9, "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries."*** Dr. David Oyedepo also notes, "*For every new level, there is a new devil*." In wealth creation, there is so much envy and too many haters. Why would you deliberately attract more? This is why Joseph recommended discretion. Every business has its trade secrets. The moment your competitors discover them, you could be hounded out of business. John Lily Euphues once said, *"All is fair in love and war."* This means anything goes. The arena of wealth creation is a battlefield, and discretion is a defensive weapon you must possess.

CREATE FINANCIAL STRUCTURE AND DISCIPLINE

APR 20

"…Let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years." Genesis 41:34 [KJV]

The third lesson is this: create a financial structure and have a savings plan. Joseph advised Pharaoh to appoint a discreet overseer along with other officers over different regions of Egypt. This established a clear organizational structure with proper reporting lines to ensure that no area was neglected. Joseph was also specific about the percentage of income to be reserved: the fifth part, which represented 20%. Most importantly, Joseph acted immediately. Had he delayed two years before implementing this savings plan, Egypt would have lost two of the seven years of plenty. In the same way, the earlier you begin implementing your wealth-creation plan, the better because lost time is rarely recovered.

Budgetary discipline is a must, if your wealth creation plan must be achieved. All waste is an invitation to penury.

Discipline is equally non-negotiable. Many people plan to save but often give in to unexpected expenses. Legitimate excuses may arise, yet without budgetary discipline, your wealth-creation goals will fail. Start small if necessary—perhaps saving 5% or less over 30 years, or 50% over five years. Avoid over-ambition. Instead, choose a plan that fits your financial capacity and remain consistent.

After the miracle of the multiplied bread and fish, Jesus said in ***John 6:12, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."*** This is a divine warning. Waste is the enemy of wealth. Walk when you can to save fuel, cook only what you can consume, switch off unused lights and appliances, and save a penny here and there. Every form of waste is an invitation to poverty.

VALUE EXPERTISE

APR 21

"…Let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years." Genesis 41:33-34 [KJV]

The fourth lesson is this: seek expert advice and services. The officers Pharaoh appointed were subject-matter experts, not random picks. Their appointment also meant salaries would be paid, which increased overhead expenses. Yet, paying qualified staff, experts, or consultants to assist you in areas where you lack knowledge is wisdom, not wastage. Much more is lost when we try to save money by cutting out payments to experts.

If you pay peanuts, you'll only get monkeys to work for you. (James Goldsmith)

Not long ago in Nigeria, a 21-storey building collapsed, claiming about 45 lives. A year earlier, the structural engineer had written a letter warning about serious concerns with the project. His warning was ignored, leading to immeasurable loss. James Goldsmith once said, *"If you pay peanuts, you get monkeys."* You cannot underpay workers and expect quality service. Experts may resign, leaving you with quacks, or they may stay but work half-heartedly. Understand that quality comes at a cost, but it also yields great dividends. Hiring competent contract lawyers, for example, may be expensive, but they can save you from paying hefty fines in damages. Paying a doctor's consultation fee may seem like an expense, but it can promote a healthier lifestyle and prevent costly medical treatment later.

There is a saying: your sense of value determines the flow of virtue to you. When you value people, the virtue they carry flows into your life. The opposite is also true.

HOW TO SECURE WEALTH

APR 22

"Store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food." Genesis 41:35 [KJV]

The fifth lesson from Joseph's principle of wealth is this: secure your earnings. In ***verses 33–34***, Joseph advised Pharaoh to appoint a wise and discreet man to collect grain across Egypt. However, when it came to securing the collected grain, Joseph understood that only Pharaoh's authority could guarantee its safety. The grain was intended to be stored for fourteen years, covering both the years of plenty and the years of famine. With widespread hunger among millions of people, lawlessness and attempts to break into the storehouses were almost certain. Only Pharaoh's authority could withstand such an onslaught. Joseph also foresaw other risks: pests could attack the grain, or fungi could spoil it. Likewise, in modern times, the value of money kept in cash or traditional bank accounts is easily eroded by inflation, fraud, or mismanagement. This means wealth creation requires more than just saving, it demands knowledge, authority, and wisdom to secure it.

Generational wealth requires a unique body of knowledge to secure it

The wealthy preserve and grow their money through value-retaining instruments. Many invest in land or other assets that appreciate over time. For example, the English royal family is a thousand-year-old dynasty that has preserved wealth across generations, beginning with William the Conqueror in 1066 AD. Today, they control about 116,000 hectares of forests, lands with mineral rights, and rental properties in prime locations. Others preserve wealth in gold, a store of value that has remained stable for centuries. For generational wealth, think security and think long term. Lasting wealth demands not just accumulation, but a unique body of knowledge to secure it for future generations.

STRATEGIC COST REDUCTION

APR 23

"Store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may Not be ruined by the famine."
Genesis 41:35-36 [NIV]

The sixth lesson Joseph shared teaches on how to cut costs and reduce expenses. He recommended that the food be stored in different cities, not centrally. He foresaw that food would be needed in all the Egyptian cities, even though there were no immediate demands. He built infrastructures to store and preserve the grains close to where they would be needed. This eliminated the need to transport goods across hundreds of kilometres. By opening branches, Joseph saved logistics costs and brought the service closer to the people.

Wealth belongs to no one. It is only held in trust for a while.

The seventh lesson is to have a futuristic approach. Joseph advised that the food should be held in reserve for the country and used during the famine only. The eighth lesson teaches that it is important to define your purpose for wealth. Joseph's purpose for accumulating wealth was clearly defined, it was to help the people and preserve the nation. He was motivated by love and responsibility. When wealth is gathered solely for self-aggrandizement, it rarely lasts.

In his book, *'The Gospel of Wealth'*, Andrew Carnegie espoused the idea that every wealthy person is given an opportunity to hold wealth in trust on behalf of society. He believed it is not really yours, but you are chosen to manage it for the good of others. Carnegie gave out approximately $5.2 billion (today's value) to charity during his lifetime. Like Joseph, who was chosen in his generation, settle in your heart what you would do with your blessing, and you could be positioning yourself to be the next person entrusted with wealth for your generation.

THE PURPOSE OF WEALTH

APR 24

"How I long for the days when God watched over me, because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist them."
Job 29:2 and 12 [NIV]

The Bible speaks about the rich fool in ***Luke 12:13-21 (KJV)***. Within verses 17-19, the rich fool used 'I' six times and 'my' five times, a total of eleven references to self. This is the life of a narcissist: everything is always about them, and they have no regard for anyone else. For this reason, God responded very harshly to the rich fool. His soul was required of him, and he died, giving up all that he had accumulated.

In contrast, we see Job, who was described as the richest man in the East in his days ***(Job 1:3).*** His wealth was all about helping other people. In Job 29, he explained the benefits he enjoyed simply because he was a blessing to others. Beginning in verse 2, he said God watched over him. In fact, the devil testified ***in Job 1:10: "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land."***

The way up is down. The formula for greatness is service.

Such is the blessing upon those who live to serve others. God fights the selfish but preserves the giver. By extension, Joseph's life shows that he lived to serve God and humanity. Little wonder he became great. ***Matthew 23:11,*** Jesus said, "***The greatest among you will be your servant."*** Therefore, the way up is down. The formula for greatness is service.

THE PURPOSE OF WEALTH II

APR 25

"The one who was dying blessed me; I made the widow's heart sing." Job 1:13 [NIV]

Today's devotional invites you to ask a simple question: What are the ways through which I could use my resources to serve humanity? When there is an emergency, sharing food and other basic necessities could save lives. Giving towards urgent healthcare is also good. However, sharing money with the able-bodied among the poor is a disservice to humanity. In fact, so much damage is done when money is freely given in return for nothing. In an article by Patrick Fagan and Robert Rector (1996), it was shown that long-term welfare reduced work effort and caused an overall decrease in family income. They also wrote that welfare is definitely ineffective against poverty eradication.

In *'The Gospel of Wealth'*, written by Andrew Carnegie, he educated the privileged on how to bless humanity. He asserted that the most meaningful help that could be rendered to people is the kind that gives them an advantage. Do things that help them to be able to sustainably fend for themselves. For example, when you sponsor education, the beneficiaries could take care of themselves and several other dependents. When you build libraries, hundreds of people could escape ignorance. When you provide potable water to communities, countless man-hours can be saved by preventing water-related sicknesses. Effective giving requires specialized knowledge too.

Charity is not all about handing out cash. It is more about empowering the helpless in a sustainable manner.

2 Peter 1:5 NIV says, ***"Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;"*** lest we cause inadvertent damage. Another great way of being a blessing to humanity is being an employer of labour. He who gives you an opportunity to earn a decent living has already done you a great service. Charity is not all about handing out cash; it is more about empowering the helpless in a sustainable manner.

ALL THINGS WORK FOR YOUR GOOD

APR 26

"Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt." Genesis 41:46 [NIV]

At age 17, Joseph was unjustly stolen from his father and sold into the harsh life of slavery. For 13 years, Joseph endured hard labour. It seemed as if God did not care about him. But one day, overnight, when Joseph least expected it and had himself given up, change came, and his life was transformed. ***Psalm 105:16-22*** reveals the bigger picture of Joseph's journey through life. When men sold him into slavery, it was actually God who sent him ahead of his brethren for their preservation ***(Psalm 105:17)***. When he was laid in iron, it was because God was testing his heart ***(Psalm 105:19)***. When Pharaoh sent for him and promoted him into high office, it was because God sent His word for his rescue ***(Psalm 105:19-22).***

There is a divine hand guiding the affairs of your life, even when bad things happen.

We may see only the activities of men around Joseph, but a divine plan was being worked out in the background. Forget about the physical happenings around you. There is a divine hand guiding your affairs if you are a child of God. Your rising is from the Lord alone. Never lose sight of that fact. Even when negative things occur, the Scriptures say that all things work together for good ***(Romans 8:28)***. You may not know how, and you may not know when, but God will come through for you. However, you must learn to see things through the big picture. Learn to view life from God's perspective, or you might miss His divine plan. For His thoughts are not our thoughts, and His ways are not our ways ***(Isaiah 55:8)***. If you insist on having things your own way, you may fade away, God forbid.

THE BIG PICTURE

APR 27

"God sent me before you to preserve you…to save your lives… So now it was not you that sent me here, but God…" Genesis 45:7-8 [NIV]

While we are in a mess, all we often see is that mess. It takes training to view present discomfort from the perspective of the heavens. Rise above the situation and see things from a divine viewpoint. Joseph was confident that God was in charge of the affairs of men, as ***Daniel 4:17*** teaches. Keeping this in mind prevents anger or bitterness toward those who hurt you.

Joseph could tell his brothers, who had caused him pain, that he was sent to preserve them. What a large heart! However, Joseph's great heart did not come naturally. He had to be trained by God, ***(Psalm 105:19)***. At the end of this training, even Pharaoh marvelled at the wisdom evident in Joseph, (according to ***Genesis 41:38)***.

When God shows you the big picture, the things that bother others will make you smile.

Part of God's training includes taking you to a higher plane so you can see the bigger picture. If you have ever flown in an airplane, you understand this perspective: cars and houses appear as dots, distances stretch for kilometres, and the world below looks like a small stage of human activity. Then you land and blend back into the same hustle and bustle. Peter experienced something similar when Jesus took him to a high mountain, ***(Matthew 17:1-6).*** Moses and Elijah appeared, and Peter suggested remaining on that mountain permanently. ***Revelation 4:1b tells us, "Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter."*** In the place of prayer, God elevates us and reveals different perspectives on the issues that trouble us.

MANASSEH AND EPHRAIM

APR 28

''Manasseh…because God has made me forget all my trouble. The second son he named Ephraim…because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering'' Genesis 41:51-52 [NIV]

God began to bless Joseph. He married and had children, and the names he gave them are instructive. From these names, we learn a vital lesson: Joseph had to forget before he could be fruitful. He had to forgive all wrongs done to him before moving forward. A burdened and bitter heart remains permanently in defeat.

One of the biggest lessons for all believers seeking progress is the ability to forgive all offences, no matter how big. ***Matthew 18:7 (KJV)*** says, ***"Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come…"*** You cannot avoid them. As long as you live, people will offend you, and you will offend others. Yet some hold onto offences too long, which leads to bitterness. When bitterness takes root, it causes trouble in the flesh and defilement of the spirit, ***Hebrews 12:15b (KJV)*** warns.

Medically, unforgiveness has been linked to several ailments, and forgiveness therapy is now recognised in practice. It has also been linked to unanswered prayers, ***(see 1 Peter 3:7*** and ***Matthew 5:23-24).*** Taking a cue from Joseph, we need to free ourselves of all burdens of unforgiveness in order to live a fruitful life. Unforgiveness is like unnecessary weight on an airplane. Airlines weigh everything because planes need to be light to take off. So it is with human life: unforgiveness can keep you grounded. Let it go so you can grow.

Airlines weigh everything that come on board. Unforgiveness is a dead-weight that can keep you grounded.

THE WISDOM IN FORGIVENES

APR 29

"Many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust Himself to them, for He knew all people"
John 2:23-24 [NIV]

Like everything else, balance is required. Jesus instructs us to forgive as many times as anyone offends us, even up to 490 times from one person ***(Matthew 18:21-22 (KJV)).*** This calls us to live a life free of grudges and offence. He also directs us to turn the other cheek when struck ***(Matthew 5:38-40 (KJV))***.

Yet today's scripture reveals a vital balance. Jesus would not entrust Himself even to those who believed in Him because He understands human behaviour. Forgiveness does not mean placing yourself in harm's way. As He instructs, I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves ***(Matthew 10:16 (NIV)).*** Sheep are vulnerable while wolves devour. Survival requires shrewdness, which is the application of wisdom and good judgement. When your safety is at risk, take precautions.

Wisdom is the believer's greatest defense system in a cruel world

Jesus exemplifies this balance. On the cross, He forgave those who crucified Him. But when He rose, He revealed Himself only to His trusted allies according to ***John 20:11-18 (NIV),*** rather than confronting His enemies. Similarly, Joseph forgave his brothers but never gave them another opportunity to harm him. He tested them repeatedly before granting them limited access to his life ***(Genesis 44 (NIV)).***

NO TITLE (DIVINE SIGNALS)

APR 30

"Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead, Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes." Esther 3:6 [AMP]

There is no season in human history without its peculiar troubles or challenges. Each generation experiences its own type of famine. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob each faced different scarcities, yet God made provisions to rescue them from each one. However, only those connected to God can escape the harshness of such seasons. Jesus instructs that the end times will be marked by various troubles ***(Luke 21:25-28 (NIV))***. He advises us not to panic or be troubled when we see these signs, for they indicate that His second coming is near.

Even amid chaos, God always provides a way of escape for His own. In Joseph's generation, famine ravaged the whole earth, but Egypt was preserved because Pharaoh heeded the warning given through Joseph. Jesus assures us, I will not leave you comfortless ***(John 14:18 (NIV))***. In other words, Jesus has not abandoned His own. He makes a way of escape. Yet, believers are not always attentive to the gentle voice of warning. Those who are preserved are those who recognise and respond to divine signals.

This principle is reinforced ***in 1 Corinthians 2:12 (NIV).*** We have received the Spirit of God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God. The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to reveal matters that ensure our preservation. Failure to understand divine messages is entirely our responsibility, and the consequences can be severe. In this noisy, chaotic world, you must continually seek the grace to remain connected to divine directives. That is the secret of preservation.

DREAMS AND SEEDS

MAY 01

"Then he remembered his dreams about them…"
Genesis 42:9 [NIV]

Two decades after Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, they met again. At that moment, all the dreams he had seen about them began to unfold like a movie. Joseph was so overwhelmed by the realisation that, at one point, he wept profusely ***(Genesis 42:24).*** Whatever God has said about you will surely come to pass if you believe. Our faith is required so that we can actively work with God on our dreams, and not against Him. There is no greater joy than when someone achieves his or her dreams, ***as Proverbs 13:19*** states.

Dreams and visions are like seeds. They must be planted, nurtured, and given time to grow. It may take years, decades, or even a lifetime before the results manifest, but you must wait for it. Like seeds, dreams can easily die in the ground. The process of watering and weeding around the seed signals hope and expectation. It is like reminding the earth, *"I planted something here, and I expect a harvest."* Jesus gave an apt analogy ***in Mark 4:26-28;*** A man planted seeds. Day and night he slept and woke, and the seed sprouted and grew, though the farmer had no idea how it happened. The earth yielded crops by itself.

Dreams and visions are like seeds. They must be planted and nurtured.

The earth does not only yield food crops. It yields dream crops too. It yields every type of crop you are believing God for, because God designed it that way. Sometimes you pray about something, and out of the blue someone appears to meet that exact need. That is not coincidence; it is God's design at work. When God plants an idea in your heart and you take steps towards its fulfilment, you need not worry about its growth. Do your part, then rest. The Lord will bring it to pass.

HOW DREAMS GROW

MAY 02

"He does not understand how it happens. The earth produces the crops on its own…" Mark 4:27 [NLT]

One of the great mysteries of creation that we often take for granted is the process of growth. Whether it is the growth of a baby in the womb, plants, businesses, or even dreams, we move from the unknown to the known. ***Hebrews 11:3, (NKJV) says, "By faith we understand that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible."*** It is important to realise that everything achieved today is controlled by the unseen. Many deny the spiritual side of life, but in doing so, they only limit themselves. Joseph was a deeply spiritual man, and he ruled his world. The invisible controls the visible.

The intangible determines the tangible

One day, my car caught fire. Although passers-by stopped to help and eight fire extinguishers were used, the car was reduced to ashes. It was my only car, and I was devastated. Yet, out of nowhere, I had a strong knowing in my heart that all would be restored. This impression was so strong that I knew it was not my own thought, but it was planted in my heart by God. For someone who had just lost an asset, I suddenly became supernaturally joyful and began to give thanks. True to that knowing, another car was miraculously delivered to me within seventy-two hours. I could hardly believe how quickly that knowing became reality.

This is the principle behind the fulfilment of dreams or ideas. First, you must know without a doubt that you will succeed, as written in ***John 6:6***. Second, you rejoice and give thanks to God **(*1 Samuel 1:18b)***. Third, you live in that reality as though it has already been delivered. Then God works out the rest, for *Mark 4:28* says the earth produces the crops on its own.

THE FEAR OF GOD

MAY 03

"On the third day, Joseph said to them, 'Do this and you will live, for I fear God…" Genesis 42: 18 [NLT]

Joseph had imprisoned his brothers for three days. Revenge often feels sweet when enemies are delivered into our hands. Many of us would seize such an opportunity and crush them completely. Yet during those three days, Joseph was restless, for the Spirit of God must have convicted him. He declared that he feared God, as ***(Genesis 42:18***) and against his natural instincts, he set them free.

This was Joseph's secret: the spirit of the fear of the Lord, ***(Isaiah 11:2)***. Pharaoh recognised this spirit in Joseph and called it the Spirit of God, ***(according to Genesis 41:38)***. It is also the spirit of revelation. Those who live in holy reverence for God are granted access to see beyond the natural and understand what the natural man cannot. In return, the righteous must carefully and jealously guard this access to revelation. Others who had access to revelation because they feared God include Job ***(in Job 29:4)***, Daniel ***(in Daniel 5:11)***, David ***(in Psalm 25:14)***, and Jesus Christ ***(in Isaiah 11:1–3)***. This was Joseph's secret: the fear of the Lord. Pharaoh saw it and called it the Spirit of God.

Gold is bought only by those who recognise its value (Yoruba adage)

There is a Yoruba adage: gold is sold only to those who recognise its value. In reality, gold is not advertised on television because it is not for everyone. Those who deal in gold know where to find it. If you try to sell gold to those who know nothing about it, they will haggle endlessly. So it is with wisdom and revelation. The price of it is the fear of God.

SIMEON

MAY 04

"He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes." Genesis 42:24b [NIV]

Joseph released his brothers but decided to detain Simeon as collateral. Why did Joseph do this? He wanted to help them, but first he needed assurance that his brothers had truly changed. He knew first-hand how evil they could be. There is no wisdom in retaining evil around you. Second, his younger brother was still living with them, and Joseph needed assurance that he was safe. But why Simeon, out of nine alternatives? Simeon was Jacob's second son. His name means "heard," "obedient," or "little hyena." He was named Simeon because his mother felt unloved by his father, and God heard her cry.

Interestingly, there is no record that Simeon played any special role in Joseph's capture. The main players in selling Joseph into slavery were Reuben and Judah, the first and the fourth sons, ***(Genesis 37:21, 26-27).*** From the meaning of his name and the circumstances of his birth, being the child of an unloved marriage, Simeon may have grown up timid and insecure. Yet while the others received freedom, grain, and their returned money, Simeon was held back to endure extended isolation, stagnation, and uncertainty. Reuben and Judah, though more culpable, were not detained.

Nature eliminates the weak but makes room for the strong

The lesson is clear: looking timid and passive in life will only lead to frustration. Dr David Oyedepo once said, "*You need a lion heart to get your lion share in life."* Nature eliminates the weak but makes room for the strong. When the children of Israel approached Canaan, God commanded Joshua to be strong and courageous in ***Joshua 1:9.*** The Promised Land is always occupied by strong forces that must be displaced before your inheritance can be possessed ***(Mark 3:27).***

BUSINESS AND CHARITY

MAY 05

"You have saved our lives… we will be in bondage to Pharaoh." Genesis 47:25 [NIV]

Joseph was one of the shrewdest businessmen who ever lived, and from him we learn key principles of wealth transfer and how world economies function. By the end of the famine, although he was under forty-five, he had mastered the principles of sustainable wealth. Modern economists cite land, labour, capital, and entrepreneurship as the four factors of production. Under God's direction, Joseph leveraged the famine years to strategically control these factors.

First, he collected all the cash (capital) in Egypt and its surrounding regions ***(Genesis 47:14).*** The following year, he accepted livestock in exchange for food, effectively taking over their resources and tools ***(Genesis 47:16).*** Next, he bought all the land of Egypt ***(Genesis 47:20).*** Then, he secured cheap labour by purchasing the people themselves and reducing them to willing servants ***(Genesis 47:21).*** Finally, he instituted a system where the people paid him twenty percent of their harvest for life (entrepreneurship), ***(Genesis 47:24)***.

Business and charity are like oil and water. They do not mix.

Remarkably, the people were grateful that Joseph bought them cheaply and accepted his terms voluntarily. Yet a challenging question arises: was Joseph not a man of God? Why would he reduce a nation to servitude for economic gain? This illustrates a vital principle: business and charity do not mix. When it is time to make money, do it without guilt. The wealthy often face criticism from the poor, yet they provide jobs and wages that benefit society. Joseph boldly declared that God had sent him to save lives ***(Genesis 45:5)***, and his methods were divinely inspired. In the coming days, we will explore more about this wealth transfer dynamics

RECOGNISE OPPORTUNITIES

MAY 06

"For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no ploughing and reaping." Genesis 45:6 [NIV]

Joseph knew exactly what would happen and how it would affect everyone. Though he had never experienced famine, he could foresee its devastating effects and knew how to act. Great people anticipate the future and prepare for it, while the simple live hand to mouth. The poor see problems; the rich spot opportunities within them. Many Africans believe their continent's problems are too complex, yet Africa is naturally rich in minerals, arable land, and favourable weather, making the West envious. Still, she remains impoverished.

Every problem in Africa presents a grand opportunity for wealth creation. Transportation, for instance, is in dire need. A billion people require movement and will pay for the service, yet railways, airlines, and road networks lie in ruins. Agriculture is another goldmine: billions need food, yet arable land lies fallow while imports flow in from China. Youth, full of energy and potential, waste away or migrate to Europe for meagre wages. Millions of Africans long for education, but schools are decimated. Wealthier families send their children abroad, spending huge sums between 2019 and 2020, fourteen thousand Nigerians spent 501 million dollars in the United States, 40 million in Great Britain, and an estimated 732 million in Ghana. The same pattern occurs in electricity, foreign airlines, vacations, and medical tourism, draining capital instead of developing the continent. What Africa lacks, at both family and national levels, are visionary entrepreneurs, competent managers, and wise leaders like Joseph.

A common trait of great people is their uncanny ability to see the future and prepare for it

NO FREE LUNCH

MAY 07

"When the money of the people of Egypt and Canaan was gone, all Egypt came to Joseph and said, 'Give us food…our money is all gone.' 'Then bring your livestock,' Joseph said." Genesis 47:15–16 [NIV]

The Egyptians believed they were poor because their cash was gone. So they came to Joseph for food, claiming they had no money. What they really wanted was charity, but Joseph was just beginning with them, as today's scripture shows. Money was the least of their resources, and Joseph knew it. So he taught them an important lesson: there is no free lunch in life.

If you continually give your services for free, you will soon become as needy as those you are trying to help. You must therefore find a way to be compensated while rendering quality service. Consider Facebook. It provides a platform where anyone can freely join and post content. As of recent estimates, Facebook has 2.89 billion active users daily. The company then turned around and sold access to those users through business advertisements, earning 84.2 billion dollars from ads in 2020 alone. This is a clear example of balancing free service with compensation.

Giving away something for nothing is a recipe for poverty.

People will drain you completely if you allow them. Even our children must be taught to value what they receive, instead of thinking the world owes them something. Life itself is a privilege, not a right. Joseph was not greedy when he asked for money, livestock, or land from the Egyptians. He was not being selfish. He simply understood that giving away something for nothing leads to poverty. Even God did not sacrifice His only begotten Son without expectation. ***Hebrews 2:9–10*** shows that God gave His Son in anticipation of many sons in return. May you and I never disappoint God's investment of His only begotten Son in our lives. Amen.

FORMS OF COMPENSATION

MAY 08

"All Egypt came to Joseph and said, 'Give us food, for our money is all gone.' Joseph replied, 'Then bring your livestock." Genesis 47:15-16 [NIV]

The fourth lesson Joseph taught the Egyptians was this: money is the lowest form of compensation. They placed too much confidence in cash. When it ran out, they assumed they were poor, forgetting that they had other assets of greater value. A cow can reproduce many others, and land will always appreciate in value. But money can fail, and in this case, it did.

In desperation, the Egyptians offered Joseph their land and even their own bodies ***(Genesis 47:18-19)***. That was a mistake. They could have negotiated for several years of food in exchange for part of their land, and Joseph might have agreed. But hunger clouded their judgment. We often make the same mistake and give up too much just to gain a short-term advantage.

Money is the least form of compensation

A widow once left her three children, hoping to find greener pastures in Canada. But she was tricked and ended up in a Middle Eastern nation, where she was treated worse than an animal for about three years. When her first daughter longed to see her, the traffickers offered to take her to her mother, and she too ended up in slavery. When they finally regained freedom, they realised that the money spent on visas and flights alone would have been enough to start a business back home. Sadly, they had to endure horror before they understood the true worth of freedom, health, and family bonds. If all you consider in any venture is the amount of money involved, then your thinking is poor. Train your mind to see beyond money, and you will eventually gain command of it.

HUNGER AND NEGOTIATION

MAY 09

"However, he did not buy the land of the priests, because they had food enough from the allotment Pharaoh gave them. That is why they did not sell their land." Genesis 47:22 [NIV]

All the Egyptians sold their land to Joseph, but the priests did not, simply because they had food to eat, ***(Genesis 47:22).*** This teaches a vital lesson: a hungry person is a poor negotiator. Life is full of negotiations not just in the marketplace. Even in prayer, negotiation occurs, ***(Isaiah 45:11)***. To get married, people negotiate, ***(Genesis 24:33-59).*** Many negotiations happen subconsciously, and often we conclude them without realising a transaction has taken place.

To succeed in life, you must manage your mindset. Never approach a negotiation table on an empty stomach, or your hunger will dictate the outcome and you will get a poor deal. When Abraham's servant went to negotiate a wife for Isaac, the first thing they offered him was food. He declined, having already eaten before the journey, ***(Genesis 24:10, 22, 33, 53)***. That meal could have cost him the deal. Similarly, when Jacob purchased Esau's birthright with a pot of stew, Esau's hunger led him to lose far more than the meal was worth ***(Genesis 25:29-34)***. As Jesus said, ***"To him that has will more be given; and from him that has not, even what he has shall be taken away" (Matthew 13:11, (KJV)).*** The hungry will always lose at the negotiating table.

A hungry man is a poor negotiator

Therefore, address your emotional needs before you make life's critical decisions. You cannot give from an empty cup. Dress well before you attend that job interview. Remember, they are not looking for whom to help, but for someone who can help their company. Deal with your hunger first.

PASSIVE INCOME

MAY 10

"And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own." Genesis 47:24 [KJV]

Through wisdom, superior management skills, patience, and perfect timing, Joseph assumed full control of all the cash, cattle, land, and people in Egypt. When there was nothing left to take over, he bought their future as well. He proposed that when the famine ended, the people would still owe him 20 per cent of their revenue ***(Genesis 47:24-25).*** This is the sixth lesson: use your current earnings to generate passive income. Passive income is what you earn without having to work physically for it. Joseph laboured for fourteen years—gathering grain for the first seven and selling it in the next seven. He also foresaw that once the famine ended, his role might diminish. So, he established a system that ensured he would continue to earn beyond the famine years.

Whether we agree or not, the day will certainly come when we can no longer work as hard as we do today. This may be due to age or health. Some of our ancestors, as insurance against old age, bore many children in the hope that at least one of them would become successful and care for them. That is a retrogressive way of thinking. ***Proverbs 13:22 (NLT), "Good people leave an inheritance to their grandchildren."*** Notice the emphasis on good people, not rich people.

Use current earnings to achieve passive income

Let me share a short story to illustrate this. My grandmother was a locust bean seller. Though uneducated and disadvantaged, she managed her affairs well. At her passing, neatly stashed cash amounting to hundreds of thousands was found in her bedroom. Therefore, aim to leave something behind, not to burden your offspring.

CONTRACTS

MAY 11

"So Joseph established it as a law concerning land in Egypt, still in force today, that a fifth of the produce belongs to Pharaoh." Genesis 47:26 [NIV]

The question is: how did Joseph secure passive income through royalties? Today's scripture shows it was through formal, legally enforceable contracts. Written agreements continue to protect parties even when they are no longer present. Therefore, the seventh lesson is: learn to use formal agreements. People may agree today, but their minds can change tomorrow. Written agreements ensure your protection and enforceability when goodwill fades.

Good relationships are destroyed when people do business with family or friends based only on trust, without formal contracts. Eventually, the lender may lose both money and relationships, sometimes even gaining enemies. For years, a young man living abroad sent money to his elder brother to build a country home. Unknown to him, his brother was using the funds for himself while sending fake pictures of another construction site. When the younger brother finally visited, all he found was a bush. His brother refused to compensate him, and his wife supported him. Even their mother intervened, urging reconciliation. The younger brother could not recover from the shock, he lost his labour, his hope, and gained three enemies at once, not counting his nieces and nephews.

Formal agreements can save you from needless regrets

Examples of formal agreements in Scripture include Abraham ***(Genesis 23:1-20),*** his employee ***(Genesis 24:9),*** Jacob and Laban ***(Genesis 31:44-53),*** Boaz and his family ***(Ruth 4:1-9),*** and Judah and Tamar ***(Genesis 38:15-26).*** Such agreements can prevent much trouble**.**

THE PEACE OF GOD

MAY 12

"His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves,' they said. But Joseph said to them, 'Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God?" Genesis 50:18-19 [NIV]

After seventeen years of living in Egypt, Israel, Joseph's father, died. Following his funeral, Joseph's brothers became fearful. The wickedness they had done to him thirty-nine years earlier was still haunting them. Today's scripture records that they threw themselves on the ground and offered to become his slaves once again. But Joseph, out of the fear of God and the love of his father, would not harm his brothers. They were also the blessed of the Lord. So he said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I God?"

The value of peace is never known until it is lost

According to ***1 Samuel 23:3, (KJV), "The God of Israel said… He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."*** This is a requirement God places on everyone entrusted with leadership. It is not optional. It is necessary if you are to last in that position, ***(Proverbs 16:12)***. Never use your position of authority as an opportunity for vengeance. God sees all. Joseph's brothers lived in fear for nearly forty years. The absence of peace is enough punishment for anyone. ***Isaiah 48:22, (NLT), "There is no peace for the wicked,' says the Lord."***

You may never know the value of peace until it is lost. Peace is one of the fruits of the Spirit ***(Galatians 5:22),*** and it cannot be faked. It is given only by God. ***Isaiah 32:17*** says, ***"The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever."***

THE WEIGHT OF GLORY

MAY 13

"So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten." Genesis 50:26 [NIV]

We end our study of Joseph's life with this summary: his life exemplified God and humanity in a secular environment. He also demonstrated fulfilled dreams and accomplished goals despite many contradictions. Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten. He became Prime Minister at the age of thirty. Before that, he was a slave for thirteen years. After his promotion, he remained in power for eighty years. Therefore, for every year he spent in slavery, God compensated him with six years of prosperity.

This brings to mind the scripture in ***2 Corinthians 4:17 (KJV): "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."*** Every challenge you have ever faced is working for your good. But the secret is revealed in ***2 Corinthians 4:15-16 (NIV)***.

All champions know that trophies come through challenges

First, realise that everything that happens is for your sake and for your ultimate good. Never assume that anything is designed to work against you. You may not understand why you are going through certain experiences, but you must trust the process and trust God. Second, do not faint and do not give up. Those who went before you overcame similar battles. You are not alone. ***Hebrews 12:1*** reminds us that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, meaning the saints of old are cheering us on. You shall not disappoint destiny in Jesus' name.

THE MANUAL

MAY 14

"The Lord God formed man…and breathed into his nostrils…and the man became a living being." Genesis 2:7 [NIV]

It is fitting to begin the new year from the very beginning; creation itself. We all love new things because they carry the fragrance of freshness. New things inspire and stir up excitement. One common feature of new things is that they often come with a manufacturer's manual. That manual contains the instructions on how to operate the gadget safely, for both the user and the gadget.

Learning by trial and error is costly

When I bought my first automatic vehicle, I found the manual in the glove compartment. But it was so bulky that I never read it. Besides, I had been driving manual cars for a long time and felt there would be no real difference. So I went on cruising my new toy confidently. One day, while travelling on the highway, the gear failed. The mechanics later found that I had left the auxiliary gear engaged. This caused the damage. I went on to damage a few more things in the vehicle simply because I refused to read that manual and relied too heavily on my past driving experience, forgetting that some cars come with unique features. These mistakes cost me a pretty penny.

We may learn by trial and error, but it is costlier. Many of us live our lives the same way, drawing only from personal experience or from the experiences of people around us, instead of checking the manufacturer's manual. When God made the first man, Adam, He gave him a manual. Within this manual are five key components. These also apply to everyone born of Adam. In the next few days, we will study each of those items in the manual carefully. We can replace a damaged vehicle, but human life has no backup. Therefore, it is necessary to revisit the manual.

IDENTITY I

MAY 15

"The Lord God formed man and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." Genesis 2:7 [NIV]

God created man from mud, but man is not mud. The mud container received the breath of God, and that breath made him a living soul. Yet that was not man's true identity. His real identity was revealed in ***Genesis 1:26, (NIV): Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule…"*** Man was made in God's image, and his purpose was to rule his world. We do not have the space to fully explore what it means to be made in God's image. However, one thing is outstanding; God is creative. Because man was made like God, he was designed to create.

God gave man the basic tools, and man has gone on to create everything else in this world: Skyscrapers, ships, space shuttles, etc. That is exactly the nature of God at work in man. ***"Ye are gods" (Psalm 82:6).*** Being creative in our respective fields of endeavour should not optional; it is part of our DNA. Hence, the first instruction in God's manual for man is to discover our true identity, because identity determines purpose. ***In Matthew 16:13–20***, Jesus asked His disciples, ***"Who do people say the Son of Man is?"*** He received various answers, yet He was not confused. He knew exactly who He was. Jesus did not choose His assignment; He discovered it, ***(Luke 4:17*** and ***Hebrews 10:7)***.

Your identity is a pointer to your calling.

Gideon was another example. Though timid and self-doubting, his true identity was revealed when the angel said, ***"Thou mighty man of valour," (Judges 6:12).*** God also renamed Abraham, Israel, Peter, and Paul, just to show them who they truly were. So now the question is: Who are you?

IDENTITY II

MAY 16

"But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" Exodus 3:11 [NIV]

Scripture testifies that there was no prophet like Moses in ***Deuteronomy 34:10***. While other prophets received dreams and visions, Moses spoke with God face to face. He was a prophet in a class of his own. Yet his glorious destiny could have been cut short by an identity crisis. When God first appeared to him with the task of delivering the Israelites from 430 years of slavery, Moses asked, "*Who am I?*" God responded not by describing Moses, but by giving a detailed account of who He (God) is. Yet, Moses was unmoved by God's words ***(see Exodus 3:14–21)***. His reply was filled with insecurity: he believed people would not listen to him because of his circumstances ***(Exodus 4:1).*** After all, he had lived with his father-in-law for forty years, working as a glorified servant tending sheep. How could such a man suddenly become the chosen deliverer of a nation? Then God asked him to throw down his rod, and it became a snake. Still, Moses was unconvinced. He argued again, claiming that he stammered. God countered that excuse ***(Exodus 4:10–11)***. Even after these assurances, Moses' final response ***(Exodus 4:13)*** was, ***"Please send someone else."*** At that point, Scripture records that God became angry with him ***(Exodus 4:14).***

Embrace your identity. It is your uniqueness in a chaotic world.

Many of us are like Moses. Things often go wrong in our lives because we resist our calling and destiny. We remain stuck, far from who we are meant to become, simply because we struggle to accept our identity in Christ. The starting point, therefore, is to accept who God says you are. It takes faith, but the ability does not rest in us. It rests in the God who sends us and equips us. ***"The one who calls you is faithful, and He will do it." (1 Thessalonians 5:24).*** So the question remains: Will you embrace your true identity?

LOCATION

MAY 17

"Now the Lord God had planted a garden in Eden, and there He put the man He had formed."
Genesis 2:8 [NIV]

The second item in God's manual for man is location. God created the earth, then carved out a specific place, the Garden in Eden, for Adam. The moment he left that designated space, his struggle began. God has also mapped out a specific location for each of us. You do not belong everywhere; you only belong somewhere. ***"From one man He made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth (Acts 17:26);*** and He marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands." ***(****You can read* ***Deuteronomy 32:8, Nehemiah 9:22,*** *and* ***Psalm 74:17).***

There are several reasons God determines people's locations. One of these is found in ***2 Samuel 7:10: "I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more. Neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them anymore."*** In your appointed place, you are safe, at rest, and rooted.

You do not belong everywhere. You only belong somewhere.

A plant needs a specific location to flourish. If you plant something but keep uprooting and moving it to new spots, it will not grow well. ***Isaiah 61:3 (NIV) says, "They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendour."*** If you miss divine location, you risk missing everything else God has prepared for you. When God wanted to bless Abraham, He told him to move to the land He would show him ***(Genesis 12:1–2)***. To preserve Elijah from famine, God led him to the brook *Cherith* ***(1 Kings 17:2–3)***. It is vital to discover the place God has prepared for your life.

THE PROVISION

MAY 18

"The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground." Genesis 2:9 [NIV]

The third item in God's manual for man and woman is provision. This means all you need to succeed in life has already been supplied. But there is a condition: every person's provision is tied to their appointed location. ***Genesis 2:5*** (paraphrased) says, ***"No shrub had yet appeared on the earth, for there was no one to work the ground."*** Yet, after God placed man in the garden, provision came forth in verse 9. The plants sprouted, and there was gold and other precious stones as written in verses 11 and 12. The good of any land remains hidden from those who do not belong there, but when you are where God has sent you, the hidden treasures will be revealed. There is no bad land, only misplaced people.

God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son on a specific mountain. On their way, Isaac asked his father, ***"Here is the wood and fire, but where is the lamb?"*** Abraham answered, "***God Himself will provide the lamb."*** When they reached the mountain, Abraham prepared the altar, and God showed him the lamb. If he had gone to the wrong place, he would have killed his son in vain. That is why ***(Genesis 22:14)*** says, "***On the mountain of the Lord, it shall be provided."***

The good of any land will always stay hidden from those who do not belong there

The same principle appears in the New Testament. ***Luke 22:35,*** Jesus asked His disciples if they had lacked anything when He sent them out without purse or sandals. They answered that they lacked nothing. Jesus knew that provision follows obedience to location. ***Isaiah 1:19 declares, "If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land."*** Provision is always connected to your God-appointed location.

THE COMMISION

MAY 19

"The Lord God put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." Genesis 2:15 [NIV]

The fourth item in God's manual for man is commission. This is the same as your assignment on earth. For Adam, his assignment was to work in the garden and to take care of it. Each of us has a specific assignment entrusted to us by God. It is important to note the difference between your job and your work. Blessed are you if your job is the same as your work, because you will not have divided effort or attention. While your job earns you a living, your work is what God has sent you to do. Your job is optional, but your work is compulsory and non-negotiable. ***"I must work the works of Him that sent me." (John 9:4)***

For example, Jesus' job was carpentry, but His work was saving souls. Peter's job was fishing, but his work was spreading the Gospel ***(John 21:16)***. The Apostle Paul's job was tent-making, ***(Acts 18:3)***, but his work was dramatically revealed to him ***(Acts 22:10–15).*** For Peter and Jesus, their job and work eventually converged. For Paul, however, he continued with both, since he never wanted to be a burden to the church, ***(1 Corinthians 9:1–18).***

Do not sacrifice your work for a job

For some, their work lies in politics, like Daniel, Joseph, and Nehemiah. For others, it is in business, like Abraham and Job; in agriculture, like Isaac; in engineering ***(Exodus 31:1–11)***; or in more abstract callings such as intercession (***Luke 2:36–39)*** and kingdom financing ***(Luke 8:2–3).*** If you are willing to seek God, your commission will be revealed to you. Your work is what God will use to assess you at the end of your journey on earth. ***"Every man's work shall be revealed by fire." (1 Corinthians 3:13)***

INSTRUCTION

MAY 20

"You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." Genesis 2:17 [NIV]

The fifth item in God's manual is instruction—what you must do or avoid to stay preserved in your assignment. For Adam, the command was simple: he was forbidden to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. To others, eating a fruit might have seemed trivial, but to Adam, it was a serious directive. For Samson, the instruction was never to shave his head ***(Judges 16:17).*** Though he sinned in other ways and seemed to escape, when his hair was cut, his end came. King Saul's kingdom was lost because he disobeyed a clear command in ***1 Samuel 15:24–26.*** Even Moses missed the Promised Land because he failed to follow one instruction ***(Deuteronomy 32:50–52)***. Why is instruction so important? Because your life is tied to it. ***Proverbs 4:13 says, "Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life."*** While we are all bound by general rules, each person also has unique instructions designed for their destiny.

When you are skilled enough, you can dictate your price.

Years ago, a colleague met a lady at a church event, and that same day they fell into sexual sin. From then on, he suffered intense demonic oppression for nearly a year. Each night between midnight and dawn, unseen forces tormented him, leaving visible marks on his back. He showed me the wounds daily and almost lost his sanity. When deliverance finally came, he abandoned fornication for good. Certain rules may be ignored by others without visible consequence, but the day God's chosen one does the same, it could cost him everything. This does not mean sin is ever permissible; rather, some destinies come with unique restrictions. It is wisdom to recognise yours ***(1 Corinthians 10:23).*** Special graces often come with forbidden fruit, and with them come deadly consequences.

HOW LIFE WORKS

MAY 21

"What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun." Ecclesiastes 1:9 [NIV]

Looking back, the first man, Adam, received a manual from his Maker. It consisted of five items: identity, location, provision, commission, and instruction. These items were unique to him. Adam has come and gone, but we are still here. Today's scripture reveals a mystery: the secret to life is hidden in plain sight. What has been is what will be repeated. If we want a different outcome from Adam, we must study and learn from what has already been. Like him, we also have the same five items in our operating manuals. It is easy to judge and condemn Adam, but we are the players today. These five items are like ingredients. How we combine them effectively will determine the outcome of our lives.

A cake is the final product, yet it comes from the right mix of flour, sugar, eggs, butter, physical effort in stirring, and the proper oven temperature. When it turns out well, we treat it as a single item. Such is human life. When a life turns out right, people often say the person is lucky. But that is not entirely true. Grace is available to all, yet the outcome of one's life is borne out of the willingness to take full responsibility. Your life and mine can be beautiful, regardless of circumstance. However, most people focus only on the middle item, provision, and end up chasing money endlessly. The mystery is that provision is connected to the other items. Get those right, and money will be the least of your worries. When you align identity, location, provision, commission, and instruction, your life will flourish as God intended.

Get the five ingredients of life right, and money will be the least of your worries.

ANTS

MAY 22

"Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise!" Proverbs 6:6 [NIV]

God, in His infinite wisdom, created animals, birds, insects, and fish, giving them amazing levels of intelligence. Although man was given superior intelligence, he often behaves foolishly. This is why God refers man back to creation to learn. In today's scripture, Solomon addresses the sluggard, instructing him to observe the ant. Who is a sluggard? He is a lazy, slothful, or sluggish person.

Yet in scriptural terms, laziness is not always about refusing to work or exert energy. ***Proverbs 12:27, "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting."*** It takes effort to hunt an animal, sometimes all night, and it may require setting traps and returning repeatedly to check them. But here, the lazy man allows his catch to go to waste because he refuses to finish the process of preservation, value addition, and storage.

Laziness includes failing to preserve what you already own

Esau fits this description. He was a skilled hunter, but he consumed all he caught and likely gave away the rest. When an emergency came, he had nothing in reserve, so he had to go hunting again ***(Genesis 25:29-34*** and ***Genesis 27)***. This was not only foolish but also a mark of laziness. In the same way, if your salary gets finished before the next payday, or you must borrow to pay your children's school fees, or if a nation has crude oil but must import refined oil, then you also need to go to the ant for lessons. True wisdom includes learning how to preserve and multiply what God has already placed in your hands.

ANTS SPECIALISE AND CONTRIBUTE

MAY 23

"Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise!" Proverbs 6:6 [NIV]

Within a colony, every ant has its duty and function. The queen lays the eggs, while the soldier ants provide security. The feeder ants search for food and store it. The male ants mate with the queen, and each one dies shortly after. The worker ants, which are sterile females, perform roles such as building nests and hauling loads. An average worker can carry a load fifty times its body weight. There are also cask ants. Ants are known to love sugar, so feeder ants travel long distances to beehives to collect honey. They bring it to the cask ants, which eat and store it in their bodies until they can no longer move. These cask ants then hang upside down from the ceiling. When any ant is hungry, it approaches a cask ant for nourishment, and the cask ant supplies it.

The true meaning of life is revealed through service

When an ant falls ill, some workers separate it from the group and take it to special chambers for nursing care. If the ant dies, it is carried out for burial. Every ant contributes to its community, and all of them stick to their roles. The average ant dedicates its life to the service of others. By contrast, the average human being is extremely self-centred. Yet our lives will be better if we learn to think about others. Jesus showed us the way in ***John 10:17-18: "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life… This command I have received from my Father."***

It is a divine command to serve. Life's true meaning is revealed through service. You will find more joy when you bless others without always expecting compensation.

FORESIGHT

MAY 24

"Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer." Proverbs 30:25 [NIV]

Another remarkable attribute of the ant is foresight. Who taught the ant that winter would soon arrive and food would become scarce? Larger animals such as lions and elephants live day by day, seeking food. But the ant, with its tiny head and limited capacity, thinks ahead. Who taught it to build storage systems for food?

The Allegheny ant works all year to raise its home to a height of one foot, yet the anthill can extend forty feet underground and ten feet above the ground. Imagine the coordination required to achieve that! The largest ant colony is in Hokkaido, Japan. It spans thirteen miles and covers 670 acres, housing billions of ants that live in harmony and cooperation. Inside the anthill are chambers for different purposes, such as nurseries, food storage, and living quarters. While the average black garden ant lives for only four years, an anthill can last for a hundred years. During the day, ants work tirelessly. At night, they slow down and rest. Although their vision is poor and blurry, and they rely on feelers for movement, they do not allow these limitations to hinder their progress.

Timely information converts your disadvantage into an advantage

In human terms, this level of organisation and productivity is astonishing. We see a similar example in Joseph, who stored up grain during seven years of abundance to prepare for seven years of famine ***(Genesis 41:49)***. What Joseph accomplished once in his lifetime is what ants do consistently, without recognition. What does this teach us? A Yoruba adage says, "*The forewarned blind man does not die in battle."* In other words, access to prior information gives an advantage, even to the disadvantaged. At every level, foresight and forward thinking can make us appear invincible. Seek information, it will give you an advantage.

OVERCOMING DEPRESSION

MAY 25

"Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise!" Proverbs 6:6 [NLT]

Ants are known as busy little creatures, always on the move. If food were the only goal, they would not need to work so hard. But the worker ant labours tirelessly to store up food for others. Because of this service-oriented nature, the ant is rarely sick. Jesus echoed this principle when He said in ***John 9:4, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work."*** Yet His life's work was not for Himself but to save others from trouble.

At its root, one cause of depression is that people want more from life than they are presently receiving. They feel they deserve better, or that others owe them something. Some even go as far as ending their lives in frustration. However, when we shift our focus away from ourselves and begin to serve others, which does not come naturally, joy becomes the result.

Joyful people are not necessarily problem-free; they are simply not controlled by their problems.

Joyful people are not necessarily problem-free. They simply refuse to let problems control them. There is a deeper level of fulfilment that comes from giving joy to others. In ***John 16:22***, Jesus prepared His disciples for His death. He was the one about to die, the one who should have been overwhelmed with sorrow, yet His concern was how His disciples would cope with His departure. He said, ***"So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy."*** Take a cue from this. As you give others joy, your own joy will multiply in return.

THE EAGLE

MAY 26

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary…" Isaiah 40:31 [KJV]

At the beginning of each year, many Christians dedicate time in prayer, seeking God's face for the months ahead. One of the blessings of such retreats is the gift of vision and prophecy. You are able to see ahead and prepare for what the year may bring. This is important because what you see or perceive has a direct impact on the speed of accomplishment, ***(Jeremiah 1:12)***.

Today's scripture reminds us that waiting on God is the secret to renewed strength. Many things can drain strength, including emotional burdens, physical exhaustion, and financial stress. This is why you must be still, recharge, and refocus before moving forward. The eagle is a majestic creature. It symbolises power, wisdom, vision, speed, and excellence. It does not waste its time or energy. Instead, it soars into the air, from where it chooses its meal from life's menu. Some eagles have a 340-degree vision, making them aware of everything around them from one position. An eagle can see a swimming fish in a river 1.6 km away. It can fly as high as 5 km, and from that height spot thousands of potential preys, yet focus on just one. Then, with ferocious speed, it seizes its choice. The golden eagle can reach speeds of 320 km/h.

What you see has a direct impact on the speed of accomplishment

To make the most of life, rise high in God's presence. Survey your surroundings in prayer, and focus on what the Holy Spirit reveals. Then move with speed and accuracy. Do not lose focus. Such is the way of eagle believers.

THE LION PRIDE

MAY 27

"There are three things that are stately in their stride… a lion, mighty among beasts, who retreats before nothing." Proverbs 30:29–30 [NIV]

It is arrogant and deceptive to think that we can survive in isolation. We all need one another. Even difficult relationships serve a purpose. A wise man once said, "You may not meet the person you want, but the person you need." God knows exactly what you need, and that is what He gives you. For example, an annoying person may remain in your life if you need to learn patience. ***Hebrews 10:25, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some…"***

There will be moments when walking away from fellowship may seem the best option, perhaps due to offence. Yet, quite often, the one who leaves becomes the prey. The lion has earned a reputation as the strongest among beasts. Today's scripture describes a lion as a creature of beauty when it walks. Its confidence and majesty are striking. Yet, the lion is not truly the strongest, fastest, biggest, or smartest beast. Why then was it considered the strongest? Mostly because of its family, the lion pride. There is strength in numbers, and when lions cooperate, the size or strength of other beasts cannot deter them. Interestingly, the lion is the only big cat that lives in families or groups. Other large cats, such as tigers and leopards, live in isolation. This communal structure is the secret to the lion's superiority and dominance. Of course, life in the pride has its challenges. They squabble and maintain a strict hierarchy. But once an erring lion is banished from the pride, its days are numbered. Likewise, ***"Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah," (Revelation 5:5)***, and we believers are members of His pride. Stay within the pride and obey its rules. It is safer.

The perfect prey is the one that becomes separated from the group

THE LION'S HEART

MAY 28

"Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those who trust in the Lord will lack no good thing."
Psalm 34:10 [NLT]

The lion is an apex predator, yet being at the top comes with its own challenges. The prey will not sit still for the lion to claim it, so the lion must work hard to get food. Strangely, most hunts fail. A lion has only a 17–19% success rate when hunting alone, and about a 30% success rate in groups. With a 70% failure rate, lions often incur huge losses of effort and energy. At times, they go hungry for days, walking several kilometres while stalking prey, even when food is abundant all around. This teaches us that the ability to see opportunity does not guarantee success. There is a God-factor to success.

The ability to spot an opportunity does not translate to automatic success. It only increases the chances of success.

Psalm 145:16 (NIV) says, ***"You open Your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing."*** Trusting in our own strength or skill is folly, for no one has the means to excel in this jungle called life. ***Proverbs 3:5–6, (NKJV)*** says, ***"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."*** David is a perfect example of a man who prevailed in every hunt and battle. He was never defeated in his forty-year career as a warrior-king because he understood the principles of victory. His secret was his connection to God through praise. ***Psalm 119:164, "Seven times a day do I praise Thee."*** Because of this relationship, he could consult God at any moment, and God never stopped guiding him. He sought God's direction before battle, and God answered ***(1 Samuel 30:7–8)***. Therefore, make God your trade secret. This is the sure way to win life's battles.

FLESH AND BLOOD

MAY 29

"Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you." John 6:53 [NIV]

Jesus was clear when He established the mystery of communion in ***John 6:48–60***. The purpose of eating His flesh and drinking His blood is to infuse the believer with divine energy and new life. All that Jesus represents is present in His blood. His sinless blood gives us power over sin, sickness, destruction, poverty, death, and more. Earlier, ***(Leviticus 17:11–14)***, God had instructed the Israelites never to eat the blood of an animal because the life of the flesh is in the blood. This is why the Jews found it difficult to accept His new commandment about communion, ***(John 6:52*** and ***60)***. Yet, the very reason they were forbidden to eat blood is the same reason Jesus now commands us to drink His blood, so that we may access the divine life within it.

Communion is the mystery that makes the believer unmolestable.

Isaiah 31:4, (NIV) says, ***"As a lion growls, a great lion over its prey, and though a whole band of shepherds is called together against it, it is not frightened by their shouts or disturbed by their clamour."*** When the lion tastes blood, it is too late to frighten or threaten it. Even the shepherds who own the torn meat can no longer retrieve their meal. The kingdom of darkness also understands this mystery. Witches who perform human sacrifice and drink blood are imitating what God ordained for believers. Their imitation is seen in stories such as Dracula, where drinking blood changes a person. But this is only a counterfeit of the true mystery. When we partake of the flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus, we are infused with divine life and become untouchable.

THE DILIGENT SPIDER

MAY 30

"The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces." Proverbs 30:28 [KJV]

Have you ever walked through a door, only to return an hour later and feel spider webs on your face? You wonder, did I not just use this door? That is the work of a tiny creature. Even if you destroy its recent labour, the spider does not complain or stop. It immediately begins spinning its web again somewhere else. Though the web seems negligible to humans, its effect is significant. If thick enough, a web can even stop a man in his tracks for a moment. The silk is produced from the spider's spinneret gland in its abdomen, so it is safe to say the web is born from the spider's "sweat" or hard labour.

Scripture tells us that the spider works diligently; this is why you will even find it in kings' palaces. ***(Proverbs 22:29)***, ***"Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings" (KJV)***. Likewise, ***Ecclesiastes 9:10, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might."*** These verses do not specify the type of work that distinguishes a person, which means that any kind of honest work is honourable as long as you give it your best.

Hard work does not kill. It is wrong work that does. (David Oyedepo)

Shakespeare once said, *"If you build a better mousetrap, even if you live in a forest, the world will beat a path to your door."* Dr David Oyedepo often reminds us: "*Nothing works unless you work," "Worth is a function of work," and "Hard work does not kill; it is wrong work that does."* These admonitions urge us to see every job in our hands as God's gift to deliver us from a hard life. Diligence is the path that takes ordinary people into extraordinary places.

SMART WORK

MAY 31

"The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces." Proverbs 30:28 [KJV]

The spider weaves its web across great distances through ingenuity. It releases the first strand and waits for a gentle breeze to carry it across a gap. Sometimes the breeze is produced by people walking past. Once the strand sticks to the other surface, the spider senses the change in tension through its abdomen and knows it is time to get to work. It then travels along this strand and doubles it. From there, it spins a Y-shape until the radial is complete. In this way, the spider saves time and energy that could have been wasted crawling long distances. Many people are not as smart. They spend so much energy in circular motions that produce little progress, just as the Israelites did.

Anyone who fails to recognise that there is another dimension to fruitful labour will keep working like a donkey. Jacob slaved for his in-law for fourteen years without breakthrough. Then one day, he received a divine idea that turned him into a wealthy man while on the same job ***(Genesis 30:38–43)***. When faced with daily tasks, ask God for divine ideas to accomplish them faster and better. Think like the spider and take advantage of favourable winds. Business leaders call this a "big break." The biographies of great people attest that there is always a day when something unexpected happens that changes their fortune. The key is being smart enough to seize such opportunities.

Ecclesiastes 9:11 tells us that time and chance happen to everyone. But not all are wise enough to recognise opportunity when it appears, ***(Luke 19:41–42)***. A questioning mind is a prepared mind. In ***Genesis 30:30***, Jacob asked a question before his change came. So did Moses ***(Exodus 3:3)*** and Paul ***(Acts 9:6).*** Never accept the status quo. Question it constantly. Smart work comes when divine ideas meet human diligence.

You know you are ready for a change when you begin to ask pertinent questions

MY HIGH PLACES

JUN 01

"The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places." Habakkuk 3:19 [NKJV]

There are moments in life when things do not unfold as we planned. Our efforts may seem wasted, and circumstances may appear unfair. Yet, when you do not know what else to do, switch to praise. ***Habakkuk 3:17–19, "Although the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, though the labour of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food, though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills."*** Similarly, ***Psalm 18:33, "He makes my feet like the feet of deer, and sets me on my high places."***

Praise raises people

Hinds, also known as deer, are vulnerable creatures often hunted by predators. Yet their defence lies in their feet, strengthened by powerful ligaments. Deer are specially adapted for sprinting, jumping, and leaping. They can jump as high as eight feet and leap ten to fifteen feet. It is not unusual to see them leap across a road, clearing moving vehicles in a single bound. This is why the writers of Habakkuk and Psalms used this imagery: when life seems not to be working, your way of escape is through high praises. Surely, praise will lift you to recover all in leaps and bounds. Praise takes you from a low, helpless state to higher altitudes in God.

Instead of dwelling on problems, present them to God. Thank Him for past victories. Recognise that without Him you can do nothing, and even when you have skills, it is still God who brings the increase.

LONGING FOR GOD

JUN 02

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God." Psalm 42:1 [NIV]

At seventeen, after his encounter with King Saul, David spent many years on the run through deserts and desolate places. As a man who loved to commune with God, he missed going to the synagogue to worship alongside other like-minded people ***(Psalm 42:4).*** David also needed the ephod to consult God ***(1 Samuel 30:7–8)***. The ephod is a highly revered artefact in Jewish worship, worn by priests for oracular purposes whenever people came to inquire of the Lord.

While David was on the run, it was difficult to find a priest or the one who carried the ephod. For this reason, Saul's men knew David loved being in the synagogue, so it was likely kept under constant surveillance. During his time in the wilderness, David must have observed the deer, which reminded him of his own situation. Deer are constantly pursued by hunters. Having few sweat glands, they regulate body temperature by panting, especially after a sprint. But as they pant, they lose more body fluid and become dehydrated. Their most urgent need becomes finding a watering hole, especially during the summer when many streams dry up. Unfortunately, predators also know this, so they lie in wait at watering holes to trap the deer. This places the deer in double jeopardy.

The psalmist compares this to his longing for God. Just as water is the deer's lifeline, God is our lifeline. Yet many ignore Him until life reaches a crisis point. This is unwise.

WISE AS A SERPENT I

JUN 03

"For wisdom is a defence." Ecclesiastes 7:12a [NKJV]

When Jesus was preparing His disciples for life in a hostile world, He gave a striking instruction: ***"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." (Matthew 10:16 (NKJV)).***

*W*hy did Jesus commend the wisdom of the serpent? The snake is perhaps the most hated of all God's creatures. Personally, I would not miss them if they became extinct. Yet unlike other species that have been hunted to extinction, such as the Tasmanian tiger and the Bluebuck; those now critically endangered, like tigers and rhinoceroses, snakes continue to thrive. In the United States alone, their population is estimated at over three million. Despite widespread hatred, snakes survive and multiply. Their ability to thrive in a hostile environment is one reason they are considered wise. This offers a lesson for us: learning to survive and remain steadfast in a world full of hostility is part of godly wisdom.

The quiet and subtle live longer, while the loud and quarrelsome attract unnecessary trouble.

One tactic the snake has is its ability to be noiseless. My elder sister once shared how, during her college years, she pulled a box from under her bed only to find a large snake coiled on it. She ran out in shock, not knowing how long they had shared the same room without detection. This illustrates the wisdom of being quiet and subtle. Scripture advises in ***1 Thessalonians 4:11, "Aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business…"***

WISE AS A SERPENT II

JUN 04

"…Having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith… self-control."
2 Peter 1:4–6 [NIV]

Evil desires and thoughts come to every human being, and the only evil that man has not committed is the one that has not yet entered his mind. However, as believers, we are charged to exercise control over such desires. Faith without self-control is empty. Today's scripture admonishes us to "make every effort" to practise self-control, which is the ability to regulate oneself and keep base impulses in check.

Walking away from temptation is far more effective that staying to pray against it

Snakes are known for destructive impulses. They do not move in groups, do not raise their young, and care little for anything but themselves. The favourite food of the king cobra is other snakes. Yet one species, the python, displays a remarkable measure of self-control. Unlike most snakes, the python incubates its eggs for 52 to 60 days. During this time, it does not search for food because it remains with its eggs. As a result, the mother python can lose up to 40% of its body weight. Once the eggs hatch, however, the mother abandons her young. Why? Because if she sees them, she will devour them. It is in her nature. So, in a final act of restraint—against both maternal instinct and hunger, the python slithers away to protect her offspring from herself.

If you do not put effort into restraining your flesh, you too will be shocked at your own behaviour. The flesh is unreliable. ***Philippians 3:3, "For we are the circumcision… and have no confidence in the flesh."*** Imagine the baby snakes hatching and not finding their mother. They might assume she is cruel, not realising that her absence was an act of mercy. Truly, nothing is as it seems.

WISE AS A SERPENT III

JUN 05

"Your life is now hidden with Christ in God." Colossians 3:3 [NIV]

We all need a hiding place, a shelter in the time of storm. Sometimes, when the battle becomes fierce, we need a refuge where we can recover our strength. For believers, that hiding place is in Christ, even as Christ Himself is hidden in God (***Colossians 3:3).***

Never stay away from your hiding place

Despite its potent venom and power, the snake recognises that it has enemies. It knows it cannot simply go about displaying its abilities. Instead, it stays close to places where it can camouflage and blend with the environment. Sometimes the snake uses this tactic to catch its prey, and at other times, to remain safe from predators. In environments where it cannot blend in, the snake seeks holes in the ground or cracks in walls. Since it cannot burrow for itself, it makes use of holes dug by other animals, spaces in wood stacks, or cracks in stones. The snake never strays far from such hiding places. Whenever danger is near, it retreats quickly to safety.

Scripture reminds us in ***Proverbs 18:10, "The name of the Lord is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe." Proverbs 27:8*** also warns**, "*Like a bird that wanders from its nest is one who wanders from his place.*"** A bird far from its nest exposes itself to needless risk. In the same way, wandering far from God is straying from our place of safety.

COUNT THE COST

JUN 06

"Without oxen, a stable stays clean, but you need a strong ox for a large harvest." Proverbs 14:4 [NIV]

Today's scripture describes a dilemma. The Ox is a type of cattle trained to work, especially before the advent of tractors or towing vehicles. An adult Ox can weigh as much as 600 kg but can pull up to 900 kg. It is not easily worn out, not reluctant to serve, and is docile. When put to work, an ox enables a farmer to achieve more on the farm or while hauling goods. Oxen can even be harnessed in pairs to produce greater results. However, having an Ox requires taking responsibility. An Ox discharges about 10 kg of dung per day. If this is left in the crib, the farmer must put in the extra work of cleaning.

Thus, ***Proverbs 14:4*** presents a choice: keep the Ox and clean the crib, or do away with the Ox and work by yourself. Everything of value in life has an attached price tag. Whatever you intend to create, first count the cost. Anything is achievable if you are willing to pay the price.

Anything of value comes at a cost

An excellent student must sacrifice the comfort of the bed. A thriving relationship requires constant maintenance. A successful entrepreneur must study, research what works, and put in the work. To live healthily, one must observe the rules of eating and exercising properly. It is better not to start a venture than to abandon it midway. ***Luke 14:28–30*** paints the picture of a man who laid a foundation but could not finish his building. The passage concludes that such a man is ridiculed for starting what he could not finish.

LISTEN MORE

JUN 07

"The ox knows its master, the donkey its owner's manger, but Israel does not know; my people do not understand." Isaiah 1:3 [NIV]

In today's text, God laments over His beloved children. How many times has He warned, rebuked, and corrected us? Yet we still fall into the very traps He cautioned us about. We make errors that adversely affect our lives. If God were not patient and loving, how lost we would have been.

As strong as the Ox is, it does not rely on its strength to survive. The donkey is known for bearing heavy burdens, yet it recognises its owner's house and can find its way home unaided. But we humans, despite being gifted with intelligence and emotions, often allow these very gifts to become barriers between us and our Owner. They impair our ability to discern God's instructions. Sometimes, we do not need God to speak afresh. We must return to the last instruction He gave us and correct our ways. God's old instructions remain valid.

The dog that ignores the hunter's whistle will soon get lost (Yoruba adage)

As the worship leader Michael Smith sang:
Ancient words, ever true,
Changing me and changing you.
We have come with open hearts,
Oh, let the ancient words impart.

The voice of God is all we need to navigate this world safely. Jesus said, ***"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me… no one will snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:27–28 (NIV))***. Our safety and breakthrough lie in our ability to listen and follow as the Yoruba adage goes: The dog that ignores the hunter's whistle will soon get lost.

SEEK WISDOM I

JUN 08

"The ostrich lays her eggs on the ground, unmindful that a foot may crush them. She cares not that her labour was in vain, for God did not endow her with wisdom. Yet she spreads her feathers to run; she laughs at horse and rider". Job 39:13-18 [NIV]

If God withholds wisdom from anyone, that person cannot accuse Him for it. Wisdom is not free; it is a divine gift given to whomever God wills. Scripture says that wisdom can preserve your life ***(Ecclesiastes 7:12)***, yet many people live without it. I have seen men with healthy, beautiful children abandon them without reason. I have heard of a bank manager who sold all his assets, only to relocate abroad and work as a janitor. Foolishness is everywhere among men.

Today's scripture paints a striking picture of the Ostrich—the largest bird in the world. It is taller than any man and can outrun a lion. Weighing between 130 and 150 kg, one powerful kick from an ostrich can kill. It has sharp eyesight, excellent hearing, and lays nearly forty eggs a year, each the size of twenty-four chicken eggs. Despite all these strengths, the Ostrich is famous for its lack of wisdom. It neglects its eggs, often losing them to predators or carelessness.

Wisdom is not evenly distributed at creation. Some have little; others have it in abundance.

Why is the Ostrich so careless? The Bible gives the answer in ***Job 39:17 "For God did not endow her with wisdom"***. When you sense a lack of wisdom in any area of your life, the right response is to ask God. ***James 1:5 (NIV)*** says, ***"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."***

SEEK WISDOM II

JUN 09

"She cares not that her labour is in vain, for God did not endow her with wisdom. Yet she laughs at horse and rider". Job 39:17-18 [NIV]

The Ostrich is a large bird endowed with stature, strength, and speed. Still, the absence of wisdom puts all its other virtues at risk. Scripture says the Ostrich lacks wisdom, yet it laughs at others who are far better than it. Many people live like the Ostrich. Instead of humbling themselves to learn from others, they mock those whose success they should study. It is painful to see people with good jobs, money, and beautiful families trapped in self-destructive habits. They know what they are doing is wrong, yet they cannot help themselves because they are enslaved by those habits. In the end, they destroy what they laboured so hard to build.

With a little introspection and a measure of wisdom, however, one can escape anything. ***Proverbs 6:5, (NKJV)*** says, ***"Deliver yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, and like a bird from the hand of the fowler." Proverbs 9:12, (NKJV)*** adds, ***"If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, and if you scoff, you will bear it alone."*** If you choose foolishness, you must bear its consequences, and the weight of foolishness is heavy.

Strictly speaking, people do not make mistakes; they make choices.

Strictly speaking, people do not make mistakes; they make choices. What we often call mistakes are simply regretted choices. Every decision flows from the heart and mind, which is why we must continually pray for wisdom and guidance there. ***Proverbs 4:23 (KJV)*** says, ***"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."***

GOD CARES I

JUN 10

"Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered."
Luke 12:6-7 [NIV]

Today, there are 7.9 billion people on the planet. That is a vast number of souls, and it is easy to feel lost among so many. The hustle and bustle of life can make one feel insignificant, especially in times of trial when it seems no one cares. Yet, Scripture assures us that God notices us. He says He knows the exact number of hairs on our heads. That is astonishing detail! Since I was born, I have never tried to count my hairs for two reasons: first, I do not need that information, and second, they are far too numerous to count. But God has counted them. This means He knows me more intimately than I know myself.

A supercar does not know its own value, but the manufacturer does.

Sparrows are tiny birds, only about 15 cm long. According to today's text, five sparrows were sold for just two pennies in Bible times. That is how little value man placed on them. Yet, not a single sparrow can escape God's watchful eye. How much more precious are we humans? ***Mark 8:36*** explains that the whole world is not enough to purchase a man's soul. ***Luke 15:10*** also adds that angels rejoice in heaven whenever one soul is saved. That is how valuable you are. A Mercedes does not know its own worth, but its manufacturer does. In the same way, none of us can value ourselves like God does. Do not be intimidated by difficulties. Your Creator is fully aware, and He cares.

GOD CARES II

JUN 11

"Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap, which neither have storehouse nor barn, and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?" Luke 12:24 [KJV]

Ravens are massive birds, measuring nearly two feet in height and one meter in wingspan. They are completely black and reputed to be intelligent. In the wild, ravens can live up to 15 years. Today's scripture emphasizes that ravens do not sow or reap, and despite their size and need for lots of food, they are fed by God for many years.

It is not our intelligence, strength, size, or wealth that has kept us this long, but the mercies of God. None of us can extend our breath by even one second when God says it is time. Here is the question, have you ever thought of this? With 60 to 70 beats per minute, our hearts beat about 2.2 billion times if we live up to 70 years. This is without battery power or solar cells. Yet we know that every moving thing has a fuel source. Therefore, our hearts must be powered from a wireless source, a divine source.

To enjoy more days, fear and reverence Him.

Still, many of us fail to acknowledge this power. Instead, we spend our energy craving things we feel God has not yet done. ***Psalm 139:16 (KJV)*** declares, ***"Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed; and in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them."*** This means that while we were still nothing but cells in the womb, God saw us. Each of our organs, and every single day we are yet to experience, are already recorded in His book.

GOD CARES III

JUN 12

"The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook." 1 Kings 17:6 [NIV]

When Elijah prophesied that there would be famine because of the sins of the people, God directed him to hide by the brook Cherith, where ravens were commanded to feed him ***(1 Kings 17:5–6)***. The ravens brought him bread and meat morning and evening. It is interesting that God selected the raven for this task of preserving the prophet. Ravens are omnivores, they eat meat, eggs, small birds, carrion, mice, worms, crickets, and many more. Due to their high intelligence, they steal from other predators and even humans when no one is watching. They have also learned to hide their food from other animals, including fellow ravens. Groups of ravens have been seen raiding colonies of seabirds, stealing their eggs and young. In fact, the raven is an expert thief.

According to scientist John Dalton, atoms can neither be created nor destroyed; they can only change form. Even when you burn a substance, it has not been destroyed, it has only changed into ashes and gas. The same number of atoms that made up that substance remains. In a similar way, Elijah's gain was someone else's loss. Cooked meat and bread do not grow on trees; the ravens must have been conducting raids on someone else to feed God's beloved. Perhaps they were even stealing from Jezebel's courtyard! The fascinating part is that these birds needed the food themselves during the famine, yet they set it aside to feed someone else, because God commanded it so. Your problem is not the famine; your problem is a lack of connectivity to God. When you please Him, He favours you so that in the same land others are complaining, you are preserved.

When you are rightly connected to God, the famine will not concern you.

GOD CARES IV

JUN 13

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."
Psalm 23:1 [KJV]

As a young shepherd boy, David spent his days and nights tending the sheep. Sheep are meek and gentle creatures, making them easy prey for predators. When they grazed far from home, they needed constant watch, especially through the night ***(Luke 2:8).*** Spending so much time with them, is his devotion was so deep that he risked his life to protect them ***(1 Samuel 17:34–36)***. Interestingly, scientists have found that the sheep experiences a wide range of emotions. They can feel happiness, sadness, fear, anger, boredom, and even show optimism or pessimism. Thus, when David wrote ***Psalm 23,*** he identified himself as a sheep and God as his shepherd. While the shepherd is with the sheep, they feel safe and sleep better. To reach greener pastures, they often had to cross dangerous places. So David said in ***Psalm 23:4, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."***

The sheep does not worry about food. That is the shepherd's problem.

Another discomfort they experience is ticks and tsetse fly bites. To resolve this, shepherds spray them with aromatic ointments. So David said ***in Psalm 23:5, "Thou anointest my head with oil."*** Like the good shepherd ***(John 10:1–29)***, God also provides all-round care for us. To secure our daily bread, we must move through different places each day, with dangers lurking around ***(Psalm 91:5–7)***. For this reason, we need protection from the "ticks and flies" of life, criticisms from acquaintances, demonic attacks, or unexpected illnesses. The anointing of Jesus Christ has provided the antidote. He promised ***in John 10:28, "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."***

CHOICES AND OUTCOMES

JUN 14

"Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." Genesis 25:23 [NIV]

For twenty years, Rebekah was barren. Eventually, she conceived twins. While in the womb, the babies struggled with each other. This troubled her, so she asked God why it was so. God replied with the words in today's text.

We are all like Rebekah. Within us are opposing forces constantly struggling for expression. This means the capacity to do good or evil is present in each of us. The Apostle Paul wrote in ***Romans 7:19 (AMP), "For the good that I want to do, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want."*** Paul experienced this struggle even as a saved and Spirit-filled man of God. This means that having God's Spirit within does not eliminate the conflict between the flesh and the spirit. The flesh will always contend with the Spirit as long as we live. An anonymous writer once said, "*The flesh does not care where you spend eternity because it is not coming with you."* Your flesh wants to enjoy today because once it dies, whether you go to heaven or hell, it is not concerned. Therefore, it is left to you and I to decide who wins the struggle.

The flesh does not care where you spend eternity because it is not coming with you (Anon)

How did Paul handle his struggles? He said, ***"Mortify the flesh" (Romans 8:13).*** He also declared, ***"I die daily" (1 Corinthians 15:31),*** because the flesh kept rising with new temptations. We all have a choice to make, to live right or to follow the dictates of the flesh. But whichever choice we make carries consequences, and the responsibility lies fully with us.

SELFISH LOVE I

JUN 15

"Esau became a skilful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob."
Genesis 25:27-28 [NIV]

In these two verses, we see a family of four, each making a choice. Esau, who was obviously an extrovert, chose a career path that kept him outdoors. Jacob, on the other hand, was an introvert who preferred staying at home. He later chose a career that suited his temperament. Their parents also made choices: Isaac loved Esau because of the game he hunted, while Rebekah loved Jacob. Thus, the family was divided in two.

The outcome was hostility between the brothers. What could have been an ordinary request for lunch later turned into a serious business transaction ***(Genesis 25:29-34)***. Often, we blame Esau for choosing lunch over his birthright, but their parents had already sown the seed of discord early in the family. Of particular concern is the reason Isaac loved Esau. His love was conditional because of Esau's ability to provide bush meat. In truth, Isaac did not love Esau unconditionally as a parent should. He loved the meat Esau provided. This selfish love was revealed much later in ***Genesis 27:4 (KJV), when Isaac said to Esau, "…make me savoury meat, such as I love…"***

Beware of people who love you for what they can get from you

Beware of people who love you only for what they can get from you. While you are hooked on such love, they can use you for their benefit and even channel your life in a direction you do not want.

SELFISH LOVE II

JUN 16

And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game. Genesis 25:28 [KJV]

Isaac was a man of God – a child of promise. Yet, he had his failures. Using others for selfish ends, least of all your own child, reveals how fickle human love can be. So, do not be too quick to judge Isaac. Nearly everyone is guilty of the same. If you examine yourself closely, you would realise that out of every hundred persons you know, you probably love only three or four unconditionally. Others are in your life because they serve one purpose or another. If you are observant enough, however, you can discern the motivation behind anyone's love. As human beings, our motives are usually subtle, but thankfully, there are always telltale signs. One major way to distinguish between selfish and selfless love is this: selfish love is ever-demanding, while selfless love gives far more than it demands.

Samson loved Delilah ***(Judges 16:4)***. But Delilah loved money ***(Judges 16:5–6).*** She never asked Samson for money, but she kept asking for the secret of his strength, not to help him, but to trade him like a commodity. There were telltale signs, but Samson ignored them to his hurt.

Selfless love gives far more than it demands

For instance, that boss who seems to care so much about you likely values you because you are still productive. But if your health fails, would you still be retained? The truth is, your boss is only protecting his or her own interests. You must also learn to protect yours and know when to draw the line. However, when you encounter genuine, selfless love, learn to cherish it deeply.

SENSE OF VALUE I

JUN 17

"So Esau despised his birthright."
Genesis 25:34 [NIV]

One day, Esau came home from the field extremely hungry. He appealed to his twin to give him some food. But Jacob saw Esau's dilemma as an opportunity to obtain what he had always wanted; Esau's birthright. What is the value of a birthright? In Jewish tradition, as in many cultures, the firstborn had several privileges. ***Deuteronomy 21:17*** states that the firstborn must be given a double portion of what others received. If the parents were wealthy, that was a bright future indeed. But because the flesh is near and the future seems far, many people trade away their destiny. Esau gave up his future for a bowl of food.

What you do not appreciate will depreciate

The Bible later records that Esau was immoral for choosing food over fortune simply because he could not control his appetite, ***(Hebrews 12:15–16).*** Yet, men have been trading their fortune for little things since time immemorial. Adam gave up the Garden of Eden for food. The devil also attempted to buy Jesus' birthright with fame and power ***(Luke 4:1–13).*** This temptation came right after Jesus had fasted for forty days. It might have seemed justified if He had turned the stone into bread. But the salvation of mankind could have been lost forever in one bite, and Jesus would have forfeited His immense glory, according to ***Philippians 2:9–11***.

When you do not have a sense of value, you lose your virtues. The result of Jesus' self-control was power, ***(Luke 4:14)***. The Bible also says that a person is perfect when they can control their tongue, according to ***James 3:2.*** Therefore, self-control is great power. The flesh has a way of exaggerating its needs and forcing its demands on you. But giving in to those demands in moments of weakness can cost you dearly.

SENSE OF VALUE II

JUN 18

Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright."
Genesis 25:31 [NIV]

One of the most impactful books I have ever read is Buy the Future by Mensah Otabil. The book explores the story of Jacob and Esau, two people with different mindsets that led to entirely different futures. You may not have been born with everything you need, but you have something you can trade for the future you desire. No one is truly disadvantaged in life. The key is recognising the gift you already have.

Jacob desperately wanted the blessing. He had heard the story of his grandfather Abraham, who skipped Ishmael, the firstborn, to bless Isaac. So, Jacob knew it was possible for him too. He wanted the blessing so much that when the opportunity came, he seized it without hesitation. Esau, on the other hand, did not value it. He took it for granted and sold it for a mere meal. What you do not value will eventually vanish.

What you do not value will vanish

A woman once ran to Prophet Elisha for help ***(2 Kings 4:1–7).*** Her husband had borrowed large sums of money and used their two sons as collateral. Sadly, he died without repaying the debt, and the creditor was coming for her sons. The prophet did not organise a fundraiser for her; instead, he asked what she had at home. At first, her poverty mindset made her say she had nothing. Then she remembered she had a small bottle of oil. That bottle was her asset, though she never valued it. Elisha then showed her what to do with the oil. When she recognised it, she traded it to buy the future she desired. In the same way, you can always buy the future you want if you know what to trade.

HELPED OF GOD

JUN 19

His mother said to him, "My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say…" Genesis 27:13 [NIV]

While Isaac was giving Esau conditions for obtaining a father's blessing, Rebekah was working behind the scenes to secure the blessing for her younger son. She taught him how to trick his father and cheat his brother out of it. Jacob protested that he might attract a curse instead of a blessing, but Rebekah replied that if a curse were to come, it should fall on her. She was ready to bear a curse just to ensure her son had an advantage in life.

Genesis 25:28 shows that Rebekah loved Jacob without qualification or condition. Earlier, in ***Genesis 25:23***, God had revealed that the younger son would be greater. Perhaps this was what fueled her determination to help Jacob. Without going into the ethics of her actions, the main lesson here is that everyone who has enjoyed any form of advantage in life has been helped by God.

One sign of uncommon favour is that helpers will come your way

The Bible also speaks of King Uzziah: ***"And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men… and his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong" (2 Chronicles 26:15)***. When you find favour before God, He positions helpers along your path, people who will not rest until you have reach your appointed place in destiny. Helpers who do not seek recognition but whose only mission is to see you rise. In your life's journey, may God bring such people across your path. Amen.

THE BLESSING I

JUN 20

"May He give you…the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of…the land God gave to Abraham." Genesis 28:4 [NIV] (paraphrased)

Finally, after so much scheming, Jacob secured the blessing from Isaac. In ***Genesis 28:4,*** Isaac passed on the blessings of Abraham to Jacob. Immediately after receiving this blessing from his father, Jacob embarked on self-exile. At night, Jacob decided to take a break. He found a stone which he used as a pillow. We all know that a stone can never be a comfortable pillow. Only poverty or misfortune can make a man adopt a stone as a pillow. Yet at this low point in his life, Jacob heard God for the first time. He saw a vision where God repeated what Isaac had proclaimed: ***"I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying" (Genesis 28:13b (NIV))***.

This became the foundation of all the blessings that Jacob later experienced. Every physical manifestation of true wealth has its root in divine blessing. ***Proverbs 10:22 (NIV),*** says, ***"The blessing of the LORD brings wealth."*** Consequently, the blessing is not the same as wealth, but the blessing is a precursor to wealth.

The blessing is not the same as wealth. It is the precursor to true wealth.

Observe that God never blessed Jacob until his father did. This underscores the fact that there is a protocol for obtaining divine blessings. God has agents on earth who serve as conduits of blessing, and one of them is the parent. *In* ***Genesis 27:1***, we are told that Isaac was weak, old, and blind. Nonetheless, in that worn-out vessel resided eternal blessings. Never look down on your aged parents nor underestimate the weight of parental blessing. Honour them, take care of them in their old age, and let their dying breath declare blessings upon you.

THE BLESSING II

JUN 21

"Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will…give me food to eat and clothes to wear…" Genesis 28:20 [NIV]

Jacob never showed signs of ambition, yet destiny found him. While Esau was already hunting and bringing venison home, Jacob was still tied to his mother's apron. Even when Esau was getting married to his third wife, Jacob was still single and going into exile (***Genesis 28:8),*** then he encountered the God who blesses. God promised that the entire earth would be blessed through him and his children. But the only thing Jacob could think of asking God for was food, clothes, and safety ***(Genesis 28:20-22).***

Within a month of arriving in Haran, Jacob was given a job and told to name his price. His request made no sense. He asked for a wife in exchange for seven years of labour, without considering that he also needed money, a house, or land to maintain her. Because of his small thinking, he ended up serving fourteen years in exchange for two wives and nothing else ***(Genesis 29:30)***. Although God's blessing was upon Jacob, the blessings remained dormant until he activated them.

The blessings means nothing until you believe, and your belief means nothing until you take steps.

Later, God taught the children of Israel the formula for receiving the blessing; ***Deutronomy 2:24, "See, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite and his country. Begin to take possession of it and engage him in battle."*** When God gives you a promise, do not be shy to claim it through active partnership with Him. If you wait, you might waste. If God offers you a country, do not ask for a village. He is more than able to deliver on His promises.

THE BLESSING III

JUN 22

"And Laban said to him, 'Please stay, for I have learned by experience that the Lord has blessed me for your sake." Genesis 30:27 [NKJV]

It is possible to be blessed while the blessing is being transferred to someone else. It takes ingenuity for the blessed to experience the blessing for themselves. Laban knew very early on that Jacob was blessed. While Jacob was distracted with having many children, Laban capitalized on Jacob's blessedness and fruitfulness in the economic sphere for fourteen years. The same thing happened with Joseph. Joseph was a prosperous man, yet other people harvested that prosperity ***(Genesis 39:2)***. As a slave, he had nothing physical to show for several years until mercy bailed him out of trouble.

Many Christians are like Jacob and Joseph. God has been prospering the organizations where they work for their sake, yet they themselves have nothing to show. They labour while their employers reap the benefits. Jacob had a second opportunity after fourteen years when Laban repeated the offer: ***"Name me your wages, and I will give it" (Genesis 30:28).*** This time, he had been cured of his naivety. He quickly negotiated a shift from being a mere employee to becoming a business partner ***(Genesis 30:31)***. That ingenuity allowed the blessed man to finally experience the blessing for himself.

When life offers you a buffet, do not be timid. Be bold enough to claim your portion.

After Albert Einstein was rescued at the advent of World War II and brought into the United States from Germany by the government, he was asked to name his salary. He mentioned a ridiculously small amount that could not even feed his family. The next day, his wife confronted his employers and set the figure straight. This was the same man whose science helped win the Second World War.

ESCAPING POVERTY

JUN 23

So he said, 'What shall I give you?' And Jacob said, 'You shall not give me anything…"
Genesis 30:31a [NKJV]

The story of Laban and Jacob representswhat happens between employers and employees, corporations and the labour force, the affluent and the masses, the privileged and the underdogs. From Scripture, it is clear that Laban's greatness was traceable to Jacob's hard work and diligence. Jacob said to Laban, ***"what you had when I came was little, but…God has blessed you since I came. And now, when shall I provide for my own family?" (Genesis 30: 30).*** After Jacob had his eleventh son, apart from an unspecified number of daughters, he realised that his job offered no fringe benefits beyond a basic salary. In the midst of abundance, he was still struggling. It was then he understood that he had to think for himself because no one else would.

When Laban asked, *"What shall I give you?"* Jacob replied, "*Nothing*," for truly, an employer has nothing else to offer but salaries. As long as you depend on handouts and charities, you will never break free from lack. It is wiser to look inward and activate God's blessings within you. However, many employees remain poor because of their own lifestyles. Jacob's income was fixed, yet his expenses kept rising. With more than eleven children, it was only a matter of time before he would be trapped in debt and servitude. Sadly, this pattern mirrors the story of many African nations.

As long as you love free things, you will never escape poverty.

We must learn to manage our personal finances like corporations do. Either you keep your expenses below your income, or you find a legitimate way to grow that income. This can only happen through divine creativity. May God grant you a well of divine ideas. Amen.

POWER OF IDEAS

JUN 24

"Then he put three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks." Genesis 30:36 [NKJV]

Jacob went ahead to submit his proposal to Laban. He asked for all the animals with certain markings as payment for his labour so that it would be easy to identify what belonged to him and what remained Laban's. Laban agreed, but in the dead of the night, he removed what could have been Jacob's. Thus, Jacob began again with nothing but ideas.

Someone once said that money is never a problem for people with great ideas. Every year, we hear stories of people who lose their savings after investing their money with so-called investors in the hope of gaining high interest. This shows that there is a lot of cash circulating, but finding honest people with sound ideas is a real challenge. When investors discover such a person, they compete eagerly to support him.

Productive energy is lost when we engage in conflict

In other words, poverty is not caused by a lack of money but by a lack of working ideas and honest labour. Today's passage reveals that Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks. Instead of protesting against the injustice done to him, Jacob simply went back to work. Much valuable energy is wasted when we focus on conflict instead of productivity. Because of poverty and the craving for quick wealth, the principles of honesty and hard work are fast disappearing among the younger generation in many developing nations. Still, no one can cut corners and prosper ***(Jeremiah 17:11 (KJV)).***

SEASONS OF CHANGE

JUN 25

"And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, and indeed it was not favourable toward him as before. Then the Lord said to Jacob, 'Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you."
Genesis 31:2–3 [NKJV]

In everyone's life, there are seasons to watch out for. It is never wise to be fixated only on what we want. Sometimes, God gives us signs so that we can recognise when there has been a shift in His plan for our lives. The fact that God sends you to a place does not mean you will remain there forever. We must be willing to move with the cloud of glory whenever God commands it, ***(Exodus 13:21 (KJV)).***

Jacob had lived with Laban for twenty years. He had been so favoured that Laban was willing to give him his two daughters in marriage. But then, Laban's attitude towards Jacob changed. At that point, God told Jacob that the time to leave had come, ***"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28 KJV).***

Those who know what to do will always be ahead of those who don't

When certain things begin to happen in your life, it is time to sit up. It is time to look up to God and ask, *"What is the way forward?"* Scripture tells us of the men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do. Though they were only two hundred, their entire tribe numbering in millions, looked to them for leadership and guidance, ***(1 Chronicles 12:32(KJV)).*** Jesus also walked in this same grace of knowing what to do, ***(John 6:6 (KJV)).*** When you understand divine timing and move in obedience, you walk in favour and peace.

KEYS TO WEALTH CREATION I

JUN 26

"I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock." Genesis 31:41 [NKJV]

Today's scripture tells us that Jacob served fourteen years for his two wives and an additional six years for his own flock. The first lesson here is that Jacob served. Although Jacob received blessings from his father and from God, he had to serve before those blessings could manifest. He had to learn on the job and acquire the skill that secured his wealth. Blessings do not appear out of thin air; they manifest when God blesses the work of your hands. God does not simply give wealth, He gives the ability to make wealth, ***(Deuteronomy 8:18)***. To sustain wealth, you must build it from the ground up. Wealth from get-rich-quick schemes quickly disappears, but wealth from hard work grows over time ***(Proverbs 13:11 (NLT))***. You cannot bypass the process if you want lasting increase.

I have had the opportunity to teach young people from wealthy homes, and I noticed that some of them often say they do not wish to work for anyone. Because they were born into wealth, they want to set up their own company from the start. I always remind them that no matter how rich their parents are, skill acquisition is non-negotiable. To be as wealthy as their parents, they need to know what their parents know.

When you jump up, you come down. But if you climb up, you stay up (Anonymous).

Jacob's father, Isaac, was very wealthy ***(Genesis 26:13-14)***, but Jacob had to start from scratch. A wise man said: *"When you jump up, you come down. But if you climb up, you stay up."* Therefore, get the knowledge to build wealth. Spend time as an apprentice. Serve someone else. And when you are given an opportunity to serve, take advantage of it.

KEYS TO WEALTH CREATION II

JUN 27

"Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, 'I will serve…"
Genesis 29:18 [NKJV]

Prior to his sojourn in Haran, Jacob lived a sheltered life with his parents. His father was a successful crop farmer, ***(Genesis 26:12 (KJV)).*** The first mention of Jacob tending sheep was when his mother sent him to fetch one from their backyard, ***(Genesis 27:9 (KJV))*** However, while in Haran, the woman he loved, Rachel, was a shepherdess, ***(Genesis 29:9 (KJV)).*** It is certain, he must have spent a lot of time with her. His interest in shepherding may have developed from associating his love for Rachel with her work, giving him the opportunity to learn on the job. This is why it is important to love what you do. Confucius, a Chinese philosopher who lived around 500 BC, said: *"Choose a job you love, and you'll never have to work a day in your life."* When you enjoy your work, it feels more like fun than labour—you hardly notice time passing.

Love is an endless fuel source that keeps driving the lover

Genesis 29:20 (KJV), "So Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." Because Jacob did what he loved, seven years felt like just a few days. Of course, the experienced Laban noticed how love-struck Jacob was and took advantage of it. Thankfully, Jacob still gained the necessary skills that would bring him wealth later in life.

Jacob testified, ***Genesis 31:40 (NKJV), "In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from my eyes."*** This shows that the work was not easy, but love sustained him. Indeed, love is a powerful motivator that enables purpose and perseverance. Let us take a cue from Jacob, and even from St. Valentine, and let love guide us into our purpose.

KEYS TO WEALTH CREATION III

JUN 28

"I have been with you for twenty years now… nor have I eaten rams from your flocks."
Genesis 31:38 [NIV]

Jacob served Laban for twenty years. During that time, Laban changed Jacob's wages ten times in an attempt to swindle him ***(Genesis 31:41)***. In a way, Jacob reaped what he had sown. He had cheated his brother Esau by deceitfully obtaining the blessing meant for him ***(Genesis 27:36)***. Years later, he met someone who cheated him repeatedly. Whatever we sow in life, we will eventually reap with interest. Although Jacob was deceitful earlier in life, he later changed. The man who once cheated was now serving Laban faithfully. In those twenty years, he never defrauded Laban. When there were losses, he bore them himself. He could confidently declare that he had been faithful. ***1 Corinthians 4:2, "Moreover, it is required in stewards that one be found faithful"***

Faithfulness means being loyal, steadfast, and consistent, remaining at your duty post and refusing to abandon your responsibility despite excuses or challenges. Scripture also says that Moses ***"was faithful in all of God's house" (Hebrews 3:5)***. Moses had a complicated assignment. He was not a politician, yet he governed millions. He was not a priest, yet he blessed people. He was not a lawyer, yet he wrote a code of laws that has been passed down for thousands of years. ***Exodus 25:40***, God instructed Moses to carry out all His commands according to the pattern He had shown him. Moses' ability to obey precisely earned him the commendation of being faithful. Therefore, understand that faithfulness is a non-negotiable requirement not only for lasting wealth creation but for every aspect of life.

KEYS TO WEALTH CREATION IV

JUN 29

"In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes." Genesis 31:40 [NKJV]

Although Jacob was blessed by his father and by God, he still went through the motions of hard work. He endured many sleepless nights, remaining diligent. He was always at his duty post—come rain, come shine. It is important to know that the Almighty will not excuse you from hard work just because He has blessed you. In the school of abundance, hard work is non-negotiable.

It is a proven fact that some of the most religious nations on earth are also among the poorest, while some of the wealthiest nations do not even acknowledge God. A simple search reveals that as of 2022, the poorest country in the world is South Sudan, a predominantly Christian country, with 82.3% of its people living below the poverty line. The second poorest is Syria, a predominantly Islamic nation, with 82.2% of its people in poverty. Meanwhile, the richest country today is China, with a national wealth of approximately $113 trillion. Yet, China does not permit preaching of any kind to its citizens, nor do they allow the distribution of religious materials. The second richest country is the United States of America (USA) with $50 trillion.

In the school of abundance, hard work is non-negotiable.

James 2:17 (NKJV), "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." And again, ***Acts 10:34–35 (NKJV), "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him."*** God does not reward His children simply because they are His children. You must put in your quota of hard work to see the results of your blessedness.

THE RIGHT WORK

JUN 30

"The Lord has blessed you wherever I have been. But now, when may I do something for my own household?" Genesis 30:30b [NKJV]

You are labouring in the wrong direction. It took Jacob fourteen years to realize that he had been labouring in the wrong direction. He said to Laban in today's text, ***"God has blessed you wherever I have been" in other words, all that Jacob had been doing was enriching Laban. Then he asked further, "When may I do something for my own household?"*** Many people spend their entire lives serving other people's interests, as long as they can draw a weekly or monthly income. Do not get it wrong: you do not have to set up your own business to start realizing your potential. You can be working for someone (as Jacob did) and still be blessed beyond measure. What matters is consciously settling it within yourself, what it is you need to do, even where you are right now, to see God's hand manifest in your life.

If you do not think for yourself, no one will.

Song of Solomon 1:6 (NKJV) says, ***"Do not look upon me, because I am dark, because the sun has tanned me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept".*** The character in this passage was made to work. His brothers emotionally blackmailed him to serve their interests. He worked so hard that even his physical appearance was affected, while he neglected his own fields. The sooner you start thinking for yourself, the quicker your fortune will change for the better.

DIVINE PROTECTION

JUL 01

"If the God of my father…had not been with me, you would surely have sent me away empty-handed." Genesis 31:42 [NIV]

The Godfather, produced in 1972, is one of the most watched movies of all time. Made on a budget of $7 million, the movie raked in $287 million and has been widely acclaimed worldwide as a classic and blockbuster. The theme centres around a crime family that makes its money from criminal activities and taxing local businesses in exchange for protection. When businesses refused to pay the Godfather, sudden and unexplainable accidents happened almost overnight. But when they complied, their businesses flourished. Laban would have sent Jacob away without his wives, children, or possessions; which he had laboured for over twenty years, if God had not helped him. Such is the wickedness of the wicked. But God appeared to Laban in a dream and warned him to leave Jacob alone ***(Genesis 31:24).***

We all need God to protect us from the unexplainable accidents of life. We may acquire many things in this world, but the safety of those acquisitions comes only from the Lord. Job was an extremely rich man. One day, God praised Job's steadfastness to Satan, who responded, ***"Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side?" (Job 1:9-10)***. Thus, Satan himself explained that the basis for Job's increase was divine covering. ***Proverbs 21:31, "The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the LORD."*** No matter our efforts, they will all be in vain if we do not rely on God the Father.

DIVINE SIGNALS

JUL 02

"So, Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him." Genesis 31:1 [NIV]

Sometimes, we come to crossroads in life where we must make extremely tough decisions. Some of these decisions can be life-altering, permitting no margin for error, or they could even lead to death. In such moments, we need to be certain, and we may hope for signs that confirm we are on the right path. Jacob experienced many such divine signals.

Twenty years earlier, Jacob had wronged his twin brother by taking his birthright. Esau vowed to kill him as soon as their father died ***(Genesis 27:41)***, so Jacob went into exile. Now, God was instructing him to return home, where he could easily be reached by his brother ***(Genesis 31:13).*** He did not take that decision lightly, as he had begun to receive divine signals. First, he lost favour in the sight of his father-in-law ***(Genesis 31:24).*** Then he saw a vision in which God revealed it was time to leave ***(Genesis 31:10-13).*** And now, as he was leaving, the angels of God met him along the way *(**Genesis 32:1. Acts 14:17) "Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness…"***

When God is leading you, there will be divine road markers showing you are on the right path. However, it is dangerous to pray merely to see signs and wonders, because the devil can orchestrate deceptive signs ***(2 Corinthians 11:14)***, and our flesh can generate false signals. ***Ecclesiastes 5:3*** says**, *"For a dream cometh through the multitude of business…"*** Thus, if you desire something strongly enough, you may start seeing it in dreams. Therefore, it is never advisable to rely on signs. Let God originate the signs if necessary.

PRAY GOD'S WORD

JUL 03

"Then Jacob said, 'O God…the Lord who said to me, "Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you." Genesis 32:9 [NIV]

Jacob had followed God's directive and embarked on the journey back home. Yet, he was still afraid of Esau, his brother. He sent messengers to inform Esau of his return. In response, Esau immediately assembled four hundred armed men to meet him. This frightened Jacob, and he began to wonder if he had made the wrong decision. He divided his family into groups so that if Esau attacked the first group, the others could be alerted to flee. Sometimes, we make decisions, and the aftermath makes us feel we chose wrongly. Other times, we second-guess ourselves without reason. This is a recipe for failure. To attain success, you cannot have any iota of doubt about the direction to take. ***James 1:8, "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."***

When in doubt, take time to settle the matter with God and proceed without wavering. Jacob handled his doubt by returning to the One who had instructed him. He prayed God's words right back to Him. ***(1 John 5:14 (NIV))*** says, ***"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."*** The prayers that God answers fastest are those aligned with His will. When you pray merely to satisfy your desires, your request may be delayed, ***(James 4:3)***.

To attain success, you cannot entertain any doubt about what to do.

The first unfailing step is to seek God's perfect will. Ensure you write down the exact instruction(s) you receive from Him. If you encounter opposition along the way, revisit those instructions and pray them back to God. He will always come through for you.

HAVE A STRATEGY

JUL 04

"So he commanded the second, the third, and all who followed the droves, saying, 'In this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him."
Genesis 32:19 [NIV]

It is not enough to pray; you must also strategise based on the divine instructions you have received. God may show you the direction to go, but it is your responsibility to find the best path that leads to your destination. Archbishop Benson Idahosa once said, *"God gave men brain so that they can give Him rest."* Therefore, put your mind to good use. In Jacob's case, he applied several strategic steps. First, he prepared gifts to pacify his brother (***Genesis 32:13–21 (KJV)). As Proverbs 18:16 (NLT)*** puts it, ***"Giving a gift can open doors; it gives access to important people!"***

Second, Jacob did not send all the gifts at once. He divided them into three batches to observe his brother's reaction. If the first group was attacked, the others could escape. Third, he taught his servants to speak courteously, ***(Genesis 32:19 (KJV)).*** Poor speech often creates unnecessary problems. ***Psalm 112:5 (KJV), "A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion."*** Discretion means speaking or acting in a way that avoids offence.

If God points you in the right direction, it is your responsibility to get a map to trace the best path.

Even those led by God can encounter trouble if they proceed with rudeness. The more grace we receive from God, the more humble we should be towards others. Moses, the only prophet who saw God face-to-face ***(Exodus 33:18–23 (KJV)).*** David also demonstrated discretion. Though he was anointed to replace Saul, he behaved wisely and never treated Saul or his servants rudely ***(1 Samuel 18:14-16 (KJV))***.

BE ALONE WITH GOD

JUL 05

"So, Jacob was left alone." Genesis 32:24 [NIV]

Crisis has a way of forcing us to focus on what truly matters. When the crisis reached its peak, Jacob sent all his wives and children across the ford of Jabbok. Next, he sent all his possessions ***(Genesis 32:22-23),*** until he was left completely alone. To find God, you must leave everything else behind and prioritise Him. Remember, we came into this world naked and shall return the same way. All that we acquire will be left behind, and we will face our Maker alone. It is therefore wise to practise this rehearsal as many times as possible before the day we meet God. Always make time to be alone with Him, so you can put everything else into perspective.

Crisis compels people to focus on what truly matters

In the journey of life, a time comes when we realise that nothing else is more valuable than life itself. The greatest gift God can give anyone is not a house, spouse, land, position of influence, wealth, or power. The greatest gift is life itself. Each one of us is a potential billionaire if we look at life holistically. For example, if you live to seventy years, your heart will have beaten about 2.2 billion times. Each of those heartbeats is a free gift from God that money cannot buy. He gives them to you without charge. If He can give you so much even without any effort on your part, how much more can He do when you truly appreciate what you have right now? Never say that God has not done anything for you. God has done a lot for all of us. This is the truth!

WRESTLING WITH GOD

JUL 06

"So, Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak." Genesis 32:24 [NIV]

While Jacob was alone, an angel appeared to him in the form of a man and wrestled with him all night. It takes an extraordinarily strong man to fight all night without giving up. For the angel, that was not a problem because he was not human. Jacob, on the other hand, was human, yet he held on. As the saying goes, desperate times call for desperate measures.

From the struggle, Jacob realised that he was not fighting an ordinary man but a spirit-being. His struggle showed the strength of his flesh and will. Many of us are strong-willed and unnecessarily tenacious. With humans, this can be a strength, but with God, it may become a weakness. In the end, the angel dislocated Jacob's hip bone with one touch ***(Genesis 32:25***), still he held on. A reasonable man would have been afraid. If one touch could dislocate his hip bone, what would a blow do? But Jacob was desperate. It is a dangerous thing to struggle with God. ***Isaiah 45:9 (NKJV)*** says, ***"Woe to him who strives with his Maker!"***

Jesus experienced a similar struggle ***(Luke 22:42-43).*** He, too, faced a dilemma and prayed all night. He was naturally unwilling to die, because flesh resists death. He said in ***Luke 22:42***, ***"Lord, if You are willing, take this cup from me. Yet not my will, but Your will be done".*** Then an angel appeared to strengthen Him. When you surrender to God, you receive His help. But when you struggle with Him, you may get injured.

WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

JUL 07

"The man asked him, 'What is your name?"
Genesis 32:24 [NIV]

When Jacob asked the angel to bless him, the first thing the angel did was to ask Jacob for his name. Of course, the angel already knew his name. But He asked to highlight the importance of names. Our name is probably the most familiar word to each of us. We grow up realising that everyone calls us a certain name without our consent.

In Jacob's case, his name had a negative connotation. Jacob means ***"supplanter,"*** one who circumvents, seizes, or usurps. This was reflected in Jacob's life: either he was ***"Jacob-ing"*** someone, or he was being ***"Jacob-ed."*** Even when he met the angel, he seized the angel, just as he seized his brother's heel at birth and his birthright in exchange for a bowl of porridge. He even had to seize his blessings from Laban, or he would have gone away empty-handed. To seize something often involves struggle with someone else, and Jacob struggled all his life to obtain what he wanted. That must have been a stressful life. When Pharaoh asked his age ***(Genesis 47:9),*** Jacob responded, ***"…My years have been few and difficult."***

Names are prophetic

The first thing to note about names is that they are prophetic. Every time you hear your name, whatever it represents is being reinforced in your life. Whenever your name is called, something is being proclaimed over you. The angel drew Jacob's attention to this and changed his name to Israel. Israel means someone who ***"struggled"*** with God and man but overcame ***(Genesis 32:28).*** If you notice negative patterns in your life, approach God for a change of story. He is the one who changes destinies**.**

A NEW DAY

JUL 08

"Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip" Genesis 32:31 [NKJV]

After Jacob received his new name, the sun rose upon him. ***Malachi 4:2 (NLT)*** **says,** ***"But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in His wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy…"*** Jacob came out of that life-changing encounter with a new name and an injury, but it was worth it. The sun that rose upon him signified a new dawn, a new beginning. The Sun of Righteousness that rose upon him brought healing to whatever injury he had received in that encounter. His physical injuries were nothing compared to the emotional injury; the fear of his brother, that he had carried for two decades. In that encounter, God removed that fear and gave him the assurance of tomorrow.

Unseen wounds run deeper than physical ones

Some of us are also in need of physical, emotional, psychological, financial, marital, or social healings to move forward. Some of those injuries were self-inflicted, others resulted from struggles with other people, and some came simply as we journeyed through life. Whichever way the injuries came, healing is available from Jehovah Rapha. Doctors may attempt to heal the body, but some people have invisible injuries that are more serious than broken bones. Men may not even know where to start addressing these. But God knows exactly where we hurt and can expertly heal every wound. Like physical injuries, invisible injuries can leave scars that remind us of past hurts and failures. Regardless of what you have been through, you must cross over Penuel and move forward. Let nothing hold you back.

FACE THAT FEAR

JUL 09

"But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him." Genesis 33:4 [NIV]

One of the implications of Isaac's blessing upon Jacob was that Canaan belonged to him. However, due to the rift between him and Esau, Jacob fled into exile. Esau occupied the promised land and had a formidable army, while Jacob had none. Thus, actualising God's sworn blessing on his life seemed impossible. But at the word of the Lord, Jacob moved forward toward the promised land.

The day came when he had to face the fear from his past. He even arranged his family in readiness for an attack from Esau. However, mysteriously, Esau lovingly embraced and accepted Jacob. ***Proverbs 16:7 (NKJV)*** says, ***"When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him."*** When you align your life with God's will, you may be surprised to see your enemies congratulating you.

Enemies keep you on your toes and away from complacency

If your enemies are actively making life difficult, it is an indicator that you are yet to reach God's ultimate purpose for your life. Enemies are tools in the hand of God. They are there to make you uncomfortable until you enter God's perfect will. ***Hebrews 4:9-11 (KJV)*** says, ***"There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God…Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest…"*** Enemies will not let you rest until you are within God's perfect will. When you reach God's promised land, their job is done, and they will leave you alone. Therefore, enemies do not deserve your fear. Pleasing God is all that should concern you.

DIVINE SECURITY I

JUL 10

"Then they set out, and the terror of God fell on the towns all around them so that no one pursued them." Genesis 35:5 [NIV]

Self-preservation is one of the basic instincts of every human. We all want to feel safe and secure. We also want to keep our loved ones and assets safe from harm and theft. Jacob wanted the same, and his security system is worth studying. Despite his wealth, Jacob never had an army like his grandfather Abraham ***(Genesis 14:14)*** or his twin brother Esau ***(Genesis 32:6).***

Engaging armed guards seems the smart choice when much wealth is involved. However, Jacob did not see it that way. He transported many valuables from Haran back to Canaan, a distance of approximately 1,218 kilometres. Covering that distance on foot would have taken over a year, considering the need to travel slowly and rest for the sake of the children and livestock. Yet he did all this without armed guards. At one point, Esau offered him armed escorts, but Jacob declined ***(Genesis 33:15)***. He was confident that he was secure enough. What, then, was Jacob's security arrangement?

Today's Scripture reveals that when Jacob travelled, the terror of God fell on everyone around him, and no one came near him or his. To achieve this divine security, Jacob engaged in a specific practice. ***Genesis 35:2, "So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, 'Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes."*** This was Jacob's simple formula for achieving divine security. In the coming days, we will study Jacob's security formula in detail.

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DIVINE SECURITY II

JUL 11

"So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, 'Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you…" Genesis 35:2 [NIV]

Jacob lived many years among the heathen while he was in exile. Serving other gods was normal for them, but Jacob took responsibility for educating his family against such practices. When Jacob was returning to Canaan, his wife, Rachel stole her father's idols ***(Genesis 31:19)***. This means Jacob had unholy items among his possessions, even though he was unaware.

There are three things that can cause us to lose God's presence: serving other gods, keeping unholy items around us, and associating with people who practice idolatry. In ***Exodus 20:5***, God made it clear that He is jealous when we serve other gods, and the offence of idolatry can affect the third and fourth generations. This means God is deeply hurt when we follow other gods, and He distances Himself from the idolater and their household. If you cherish God's presence, you must avoid other gods. *"Other gods"* represent alternatives we prioritise over Him. These are not necessarily carved idols; they can be objects or practices that draw us away from God.

If you work in a place where your job requirements contradict your faith, you have chosen that job over God. If you own property that God cannot ask you to sow as seed or release for His service, that property has become an idol. Nothing must come between you and God. Divine security requires giving God the first place in your life.

DIVINE SECURITY III

JUL 12

"So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, 'Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you…" Genesis 35:2 [NIV]

You may not serve idols, but if you condone those who do, you can be found guilty by association. ***Romans 1:32***, ***"…those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them."*** Jacob had no idea that his wife stole her father's idols when he told Laban, ***"If you find anyone who has your gods, that person shall not live" (Genesis 31:32).*** Afterward, Rachel died during childbirth ***(Genesis 35:18-20)***. Although Laban did not find the idols, the living God, who sees all that we do in secret, saw them, and Rachel paid with her life. ***Joshua 7:1*** illustrates a similar principle: ***"Achan…took off the accursed thing, and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel."*** God vented His anger on an entire nation because one man kept an accursed thing. Similarly, ***Jonah 1:6-17*** **s**hows how many people nearly lost their lives because Jonah shared the same boat with them.

Guilty by association is real

Years ago, I witnessed the investigation of two students at a Christian university. The boys were caught in a room where alcohol and drugs were being consumed. Only one of the boys used the substances, while the other did not. Consequently, both boys were expelled. The second boy, whose mother was a widow struggling to pay his fees with her pension, was declared guilty by association. I saw the old woman weeping and pleading for her son, but the law ran its course.

Psalm 1:1 says, ***"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners…"*** Stay away from the rebellious before you share in their judgement.

DIVINE SECURITY IV

JUL 13

"…Purify yourselves and change your clothes." Genesis 35:2b [NIV]

The key to divine security is divine presence. When God is with you, nothing can harm you. Jacob understood this, and that was his trademark secret. However, Jacob also understood that God is holy, and if you wish to be a friend of God, you must be holy as well. God said to Abraham at the age of 99, ***"Walk before me, and be thou perfect"*** (***Genesis 17:1 (KJV)).*** Abraham's walk with God began when he was 75 years old. God had been guiding and helping him all along, but twenty-five years later, He admonished him to continue that walk of perfection.

The journey of holiness is continuous. You never arrive at a destination until you are perfected in glory (or in heaven). ***Hebrews 12:22-23***, ***"But you have come to…the spirits of just men made perfect."*** The saints were made perfect; they were not perfect in and of themselves. ***Romans 7:18 (NLT), "And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I cannot."*** If we live in this body, we will pick up dirt no matter how careful we are. The flesh itself was made from dirt and naturally tilts toward dirt.

A daily bath in the Word is the only way to remain holy

Therefore, a regular bath in the Word of God and prayer is a daily requirement to stay clean. In ***John 17:17,*** Jesus said, ***"Sanctify them by thy truth. Thy word is truth." Ephesians 5:26*** adds, ***"Cleansing her by the washing with the water through the word."*** A daily bath in the Word is the only way to remain holy. This is why Jacob instructed his family: ***"purify yourselves and change your clothes."***

DIVINE SECURITY V

JUL 14

"We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him."
1 John 5:18 [NKJV]

Decades ago, I spent a year in another part of the country. Along with some young people, we rented all the bedrooms in a block of four apartments. One fateful night, my friend and I were in my room with about three other guests. We had barely retired when, around 10:00 pm, we began hearing loud noises. Soon, we realised that armed robbers had arrived. My friend panicked, but I told him to lie still. With one kick to the door, a robber gained access to the room and called for the gang leader. Both robbers carried what looked like shotguns. They demanded to know where our money was, and I was the one conversing with them. The others were too scared to make a sound.

Growing up, I had always known that when you do not touch what does not belong to you, and if you can keep yourself from sin, the wicked cannot touch you. ***1 John 5:18*** assures us of this truth. This was my confidence, and I knew that God would send help. The robbers did not last a minute in my room. They felt suddenly uncomfortable, and the leader instructed us to keep sleeping as they shut the door behind them.

The devil stays off those who are kept by God

In the next room, an unmarried couple was sleeping. Tragically, the male was killed, and the female was taken away. The robbers continued to terrorise other rooms and took two more girls. This was a traumatic experience, yet mysteriously, my room was one of the only ones where no one was harmed or robbed. When you keep yourself, God will keep watch over you.

THE PROPHETIC TRIGGERS

JUL 15

"Jacob came home to his father Isaac in Mamre..." Genesis 35:27 [NIV]

Is it not strange that Isaac, who thought he was about to die and had requested to eat venison before blessing his son ***(Genesis 27:4),*** was still alive to receive Jacob after so many years in exile? Bible scholars state that Jacob was about 70 years old when he arrived at Laban's house, and Isaac died at the age of 180, when Jacob and Esau were 120 years old *(**Genesis 35:28).*** This means Isaac lived 50 more years after he thought he would die.

God can use the mistakes of others to promote you

One wonders why Isaac triggered the series of events that shook up his sons' lives through his unusual appetite. Did Isaac sense he was about to die, or did he sense that the blessing needed to be pronounced on one of his sons? Whatever the answer, these events were the needed triggers to get Jacob out of his comfort zone. Before these events, Jacob was comfortable living in his mother's tent, but God's plan for him was far greater than his mind could comprehend. By the time Jacob returned from exile to meet his father, he was already a blessed, rich, and great man.

Some of the negative events that occur in and around our lives are not necessarily bad. Some are prophetic triggers to move us from our comfort zones into the place of our blessings. They are dynamics of blessings at work, pushing us toward attainment. We must, therefore, be sensitive in the spirit to these motions that may come to unsettle us at different stages of life. May we never miss an appointment with our glorious destiny. Amen.

PROPHETIC TRANSFER

JUL 16

"Isaac lived a hundred and eighty years. Then he…died." Genesis 35:28-29 [NKJV]

The last prophetic activity of Isaac recorded in Scripture was the transfer of his blessing to Jacob ***(Genesis 27:1-40)***. After that, he became spiritually inactive, and all spiritual visitations from God were directed to Jacob. Isaac was about 130 years old, and Jacob about 70, when this happened. By then, Isaac was already physically blind as recorded ***(Genesis 27:1)***, and for the next 50 years, he remained spiritually blind as well. The old prophet breathed his last at 180 years.

Meanwhile, at every interval, God continued to appear to Jacob with various messages. Jacob also experienced many angelic visitations in his lifetime. In contrast to Isaac, Jacob's last prophetic activity was on his final day, when he blessed his twelve sons and transferred his prophetic blessings to them ***(Genesis 49:29–50).*** To be physically blind is a difficult experience. However, being spiritually blind is far worse. Losing the sweet fellowship of the Almighty is more tragic than the loss of physical sight. For instance, every member of Isaac's family deceived him, and he could not discern the difference; ***Genesis 27:33*** states this clearly. Even his wife manipulated him at will (***Genesis 27:6-10, 42-46)***. The great prophet became a pawn that was tossed around.

In contrast, Jacob remained spiritually alert even in his old age. When Joseph brought Ephraim and Manasseh to be blessed, Jacob crossed his hands and blessed the younger son, despite Joseph's protest ***(Genesis 48:13-19).*** Though Jacob also had poor sight in old age, he told Joseph that he knew what he was doing, ***(Genesis 48:19)***. The spiritually active always know what they are doing. May you not find yourself in error at any point in your life. Amen.

APPARENT DELAYS

JUL 17

"These were the kings who reigned in Edom before any Israelite king reigned…" Genesis 36:31-40 [NIV]

Today's scripture documents eight generations of kings from Edom, the descendants of Esau. Their rule followed a continuous lineage, with one king handing over to the next, spanning hundreds of years. Meanwhile, Israel had no defined structure as a nation, let alone kings. In fact, during much of this period, Israel was in slavery in Egypt while Edom was advancing.

Sometimes, in our personal lives, we feel we are lagging behind compared to others. Some may say, ***"Others are married while I am yet to get married,"*** or ***"Others have bought cars and built houses while I am still searching for a job,"*** or even ***"My friends have their fourth child while I am yet to conceive."*** Moreover, ***2 Corinthians 10:12, (NKJV)*** reminds us: ***"But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."*** Our paths, journeys, and life trajectories are completely different. Embrace yours.

Our paths, journeys, and trajectories in life are completely different. Embrace yours.

In today's world, none of the kings or kingdoms of Edom are recognised, yet Israel remains a force to be reckoned with. All the time that seems stolen is actually not lost. Your life is not the same as others because the one who carries the prophetic unction upon his or her life is not ordinary. Abraham waited until he was 100 years old before he had his first child. His nephew Lot, the son of Haran, was already married, rich, and with children. Yet, Abraham was not envious; he waited for his time. By the time Abraham began to have children, Lot's light had already begun to fade. We do not rejoice in the misery of others. Neither do we envy them. We simply mind our journey.

TRUST GOD I

JUL 18

"Their father Jacob said to them, "Everything is against me." Genesis 42:36 [NIV]

Jacob had lost Joseph for years. Then famine arose, and his sons went to buy grain. Simeon was detained in Egypt by Joseph until Benjamin was brought to take his place. Jacob had to release Benjamin before they could secure food for the family. He felt helpless, as though he was losing his children one after another. However, God was working in the background without Jacob's knowledge.

Joseph had been promoted to prime minister of Egypt and positioned to preserve Israel and his family from the famine God had foretold. Jacob did not know how long the famine would last, but Joseph did. Hence, Jacob, in despair, declared those words: ***"Everything is against me."*** There are days when everything seems contrary, when circumstances appear to oppose us. Yet, all along, **God is working in our favour.** How often have we been ungrateful, unfaithful, and unthankful? ***Romans 8:28, NIV: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."***

What you thought was against you may be working for you

We must come to a place of confidence, knowing that God has our back no matter what reality looks like. This is true trust. To trust God is to believe that He is working things out in our favour. When we fail to believe, we hurt Him. ***Hebrews 11:6*** tells us: ***"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe…"*** To please God, believing Him, even when things seem contrary, is a must.

TRUST GOD II

JUL 19

"I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there." Genesis 46:3 [NKJV]

When Jacob discovered that Joseph was alive and saw the luxurious chariots and horses Joseph had sent to bring him to Egypt ***(Genesis 45:27),*** he became eager to travel and reunite with his long-lost son. Yet, while on the journey, God appeared to him again, saying, ***"Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt."***

Students of Bible interpretation note that whenever Scripture says someone ***"went down" to a location, it often signified trouble (Judges 14:1).*** Conversely, when it says someone ***"went up"*** from a location, it implied blessing ***(Genesis 13:1).*** In today's passage, however, God already knew Jacob was heading into trouble in the long run, yet He told him not to be afraid. In ***Genesis 15:13,*** God had revealed to Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved in Egypt for 400 years. What Jacob was doing at this point was simply fulfilling prophecy. He had no control over these events.

Sometimes, good is present in evil, and vice versa.

Nevertheless, the enslavement was not altogether evil. God wanted to use that discomfort to forge Israel into a nation. Many nations have been formed without centuries of slavery, but for Israel, this was God's unique process. Why the enslavement was necessary is a deeper subject for another time. What we must understand is this: there is good hidden in what seems evil, and sometimes evil hidden in what seems good. A pregnant mother's birthing process is rarely pleasant, but it produces a bundle of joy. In the same way, Jacob went down to Egypt to escape temporary famine, but his descendants endured 400 years of slavery. In all, we must learn to trust God's leading.

PRAISE

JUL 20

"Now Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to get directions to Goshen.." Genesis 46:28 [NIV]

Jacob was going into the unknown. Migrating to a new country to start afresh is not an attractive prospect when you are 130 years old. At that age, you want to stay with the familiar. You also desire stability and retirement. To make matters worse, Jacob had never been to Egypt before. Yet he was leading his entire family of seventy souls and all his goods into uncertainty, ***(Genesis 46:26)***. But Jacob took a brilliant action. He sent Judah ahead of him. Judah means Praise. Jacob had many sons, but when he needed directions, when all seemed uncertain, he engaged praise.

Like Jacob, we must learn to engage the weapon of praise when faced with uncertainty, dilemma, or crisis. As you praise God, **He will give you directions to Goshen, your place of rest.** ***"Although things may not be going as expected, yet I will rejoice in the Lord and praise Him. Then He will make my feet like the feet of a deer and enable me to tread on the heights." (Habakkuk 3:17–19)***

Gratitude will always take you out of servitude.

Do not wait until everything is working perfectly before you praise God. Learn to praise Him in the dark moments of life and watch Him guide you into the prepared Goshen of your life. Complaining, crying, fidgeting, or panicking will not fix things. Gratitude will always take you out of servitude. Paul and Silas were thrown into prison ***(Acts 16:23–34).*** Rather than accuse God for allowing their misery, they prayed and sang praises to Him, and their chains were broken. Praise always precedes deliverance.

A STRESS-FREE LIFE

JUL 21

"The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty. My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers." Genesis 47:9 [NIV]

When Pharaoh asked how old Jacob was, his response echoed regret. Abraham was 175 years old when he passed on, while Isaac was 180 when he died, ***(Genesis 25:7*** **a**nd ***Genesis 35:28)***. Jacob knew he would not live as long as his forefathers. How so? He gave up on life. When he met Joseph ***(Genesis 46:30),*** he said, ***"Now I am ready to die."*** He wished for death even in a moment of joy**.** What we say does affect what we experience.

Subsequently, Jacob died at age 147, (***Genesis 47:28).*** Notably, of the three patriarchs, Jacob was the one who struggled the most, while Isaac was the one who lived the most surrendered life. Jacob struggled to have everything, even things God had promised him, and this made his life difficult. Isaac, on the other hand, hardly struggled for anything and lived the longest. When it was time for him to marry at age 40, he was simply meditating when his wife was brought to him, ***(Genesis 24:63–67).*** Jacob cheated and struggled his way into destiny. He married two sisters and their maids; four women in total. Settling quarrels among four women daily could shorten any man's life! Although he attained his purpose, his life journey was stressful.

What we say affects what we experience

We all have a choice; to live like Isaac or Jacob. The Yorubas, a tribe in western Nigeria, have an adage that says: ***"The chameleon that moves slowly still dies; how much faster will the frog that keeps slamming itself to the ground?"*** Please do not run ahead of your Maker. Enjoy the journey.

CHANNELS OF BLESSING

JUL 22

"Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from his presence." Genesis 47:10 [NIV]

Is it not strange that Jacob blessed Pharaoh? Should Pharaoh not have been the one to bless Jacob, since Jacob had come to Egypt to escape famine? And was this same Pharaoh not Joseph's master, the one who held the key to the stores? Interesting questions to ponder, yet it is written that Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

A similar situation is recorded in ***Hebrews 7:4–10.*** Abraham returned from battle with much spoil and gave a tithe to Melchizedek, the mysterious priest. Then Melchizedek blessed Abraham. Abraham was the giver, yet the blessing flowed from the greater to the lesser. ***"And without doubt the lesser is blessed by the greater" (Hebrews 7:7).*** These examples show that the blessing is released after the lesser honours the greater. The blessing cannot flow in the opposite direction. It only flows from the greater to the lesser. This teaches us that there are channels of blessing on earth, though they may not appear so at first. In ***2 Kings 4:8–36,*** we read the story of Elisha and the Shunammite woman. Elisha needed accommodation, and she offered it wholeheartedly. The prophet, in turn, blessed her and terminated her barrenness. When the child later died, Elisha raised him back to life. This entire episode reveals one truth: Elisha was her destiny helper. Yet she could have missed all these opportunities had she failed to recognise her channel of blessing.

Honour is a key that unlocks favour and blessing

Many great people with the capacity to bless may appear as those in need of help. Yet in their mouths are words that can liberate destinies. We need discernment and humility to receive from them, and we must honour them. May we not miss our channels of blessings. Amen.

JACOB AND REUBEN

JUL 23

"Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power. Unstable as water, you shall not excel." Genesis 49:3-4 [NIV]

When the time came for Jacob to die, he called all his sons to release prophecies over their lives. As a man who had struggled for blessings himself, he understood the weight of a father's words. Jacob had twelve sons, and he blessed them one after the other, beginning with Reuben, his firstborn.

Jacob started by praising Reuben. He was his father's pride, present at the beginning of Jacob's greatness when there was little beauty in his life. But, along the way, Reuben grievously offended his father. More than twenty-seven years before Jacob's death, Reuben slept with one of his father's concubines. ***Genesis 35:22, "…and Israel heard about it."*** This deed brought Jacob deep grief, though he remained silent until the day of Reuben's supposed crowning. Within those twenty-seven years, Reuben did many commendable deeds. He saved Joseph from his brothers when they wanted to kill him ***(Genesis 37:21–22)*** and later showed concern for his father ***(Genesis 42:22 and 37).*** These acts of kindness were not enough to restore his father's favour. Jacob called him ***"unstable as water,"*** for he could be noble one day and reckless the next.

Never spit into your fountain. Never betray your roots.

Though no one is perfect, Reuben's failure was his dishonour toward the one he should have revered most. For that reason, his father stripped him of the privilege of the firstborn, declaring, *"You shall not excel."* Never spit into your fountain. Never betray your roots. Never dishonour your parents, whether in the flesh or in the Lord.

ANGER

JUL 24

"Simeon and Levi are brothers… Cursed be their anger… I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel." Genesis 49:5-7 [NIV]

Simeon and Levi were Jacob's second and third sons by Leah. While prophesying over them, Jacob referred to their action in ***Genesis 34:25–31.*** After their sister Dinah had been raped, they slaughtered all the men of the city where the offender came from and seized their possessions. This action alarmed Jacob so much that he moved away from the area. In response, Jacob cursed their anger and declared that they would be dispersed in Israel. Why? The two brothers shared a strong bond and seemed to be the closest among the twelve. They confided in no one, but together, plotted and attacked an entire city. Jacob recognised that their combination was destructive, so he decided to separate them. Later, when the promised land was divided, Levi received no territorial portion. Instead, the two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, received the allotments in place of Joseph and Levi ***(Joshua 14:3–4).***

Anger is a flash of insanity that can burn down a city

The truth is, anger never produces anything good. It brings demotion, isolation, loss, and shame. When people are angry, we often say they ***"lost their temper"*** or ***"went mad."*** Indeed, anger results in temporary insanity and losses. It never adds to anyone. ***Proverbs 22:24–25 (NIV)*** warns: ***"Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared."*** This passage advises us to avoid those who are quick to anger, for their behaviour can drag others into needless trouble. Anger can become a learned habit through association. Anger is not a good trait and can destroy in moments. Avoid angry people.

JUDAH THE LEADER

JUL 25

"Judah…your father's sons will bow down to you… The scepter will not depart from Judah…"
Genesis 49:8-12 [NIV]

Jacob bypassed his first three sons to place the mantle of leadership on Judah, his fourth son from Leah. He also spoke words that pointed to the colt Jesus would ride into Jerusalem and to His clothes being soaked with blood. Jacob saw that the Saviour would come through the lineage of Judah. Such is the nature of a prophet; able to see thousands of years ahead. Judah was not exceptionally good; like his brothers, he had his failings. Yet, he showed leadership. When Jacob's sons needed Benjamin released as a condition for buying grain from Egypt, Reuben said Jacob could kill his two sons if Benjamin was not returned. Jacob refused, ***(Genesis 42:38), "My son will not go down there with you."*** He could not trust a man who would offer his own sons as ransom. Reuben was unstable ***(Genesis 49:4).***

Responsible leaders would rather sacrifice themselves than others

However, Judah said to Jacob, ***"Send the boy with me, and I will be personally responsible for him. I will bear the blame forever if I do not bring him back" (Genesis 43:8–9***, paraphrased). These were the words that persuaded Jacob. And this was what Jesus did for us all. He took our blame and shame ***(Isaiah 53:4–5).*** He accepted responsibility for our salvation. He asked God the Father to hold Him accountable for our sins. This reflects the responsible leadership that Jacob saw in Judah. True leadership does not sacrifice others; it sacrifices self for the good of others.

JOSEPH THE FAVOURED

JUL 26

"The archers have… shot at him and hated him… but his bow remained in strength, by the God of your father who will help you." Genesis 49:22-26 [NKJV]

Joseph was his father's beloved, and ***Genesis 39:2–3*** shows that he was also deeply favoured by God. Yet the favour he enjoyed attracted enemies. Just as Joseph's brothers grew restless over his dreams, enemies will rise the moment God's hand becomes evident in your life.

The Bible calls us the light of the world. Light is a blessing, but it also attracts flies. Have you noticed what happens when you light a lamp at night? In no time, insects and flies gather around it. In the same way, when your light begins to shine, people you never offended can suddenly feel uncomfortable with your progress. Sometimes, their only problem is that you are moving forward. Think about Jesus. He went about doing good, yet His goodness led Him to the cross. ***John 3:19b*** explains, ***"Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."*** So should you dim your light just to make others comfortable? Never. ***Psalm 23:5*** reminds us that God sets a table before us in the very presence of our enemies. ***"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works…" (Matthew 5:16)***,

As candlelight attracts moths, so good deeds attract enemies.

The truth is this: if God has lit your lamp, do not hide it. Keep shining, because your light is proof that God is with you. Some lights cannot be hidden, no matter how much you try. So how do you escape the attacks of enemies? Only through the help of God, ***(Genesis 49:25).*** If God does not help you, please hide. But if God prepares a table for you, rejoice and enjoy it, because you will be heavily defended.

PATTERNS I

JUL 27

"According to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare." 1 Timothy 1:18 [NKJV]

As we conclude the study of Jacob, it is important to pause and examine certain recurring patterns in his family line. One striking pattern was barrenness. For generations, it affected only the women the men truly loved. Sarah endured twenty-five years of barrenness before giving birth to Isaac through Abraham. Yet, Hagar, Sarah's maid, conceived for Abraham without struggle. After Sarah's death, Abraham married Keturah, who bore him six children as we can see in ***Genesis 25:1–2.*** Rebecca also endured twenty years of barrenness before finally giving birth to Esau and Jacob ***(Genesis 25:20–26).*** Isaac, notably, was the only patriarch who remained monogamous. Rachel, Jacob's most beloved wife, struggled with barrenness for many years before giving birth to Joseph, while the other three women conceived easily. Why is this significant? Because the day God reveals your glorious future is often the very day the devil takes note of it too. Sometimes, he even perceives it before you do.

God's promise is not for the fainthearted. It is for those who can do battle

After God promised Isaac, Sarah's womb became a battlefield. When Jacob was chosen to succeed Isaac, Rebecca's womb was gripped by delay. Joseph was destined to save nations, yet Rachel struggled for years to conceive him. These patterns reveal a clear truth: every time God releases the seed of a promise, the enemy stirs to resist it**.** The enemy seeks to snatch the seed ***(Matthew 13:4)***. This is why Paul urged Timothy to wage warfare with prophecy ***(1 Timothy 1:18).*** God's promises are not for the fainthearted; they demand strength to battle through.

PATTERNS II

JUL 28

"…While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted."
Psalm 88:15b [KJV]

A second pattern in the patriarchs' homes was that firstborn children were often relegated to second place or worse, despite God's covenant ***(Numbers 3:13*** and ***Exodus 13:2).*** Abraham's first seed, Ishmael, was driven out ***(Genesis 21:8–14).*** Esau, Isaac's firstborn, brought grief to his parents ***(Genesis 26:34–35).*** Reuben, Jacob's first son, was cursed by his father ***(Genesis 49:3–4).*** Even Joseph's first son was denied the right of the firstborn ***(Genesis 48:14–19).*** Clearly, the devil was contending not only against the marital bliss of the patriarchs but also with the destiny of their children. From Eden ***(Genesis 3:15),*** his goal has been to destroy the institution of marriage, making it impossible for godly seeds to emerge, as God intended ***(Malachi 2:15).***

Trials and temptations were designed to distract people from the promise

The patriarchs were active partners with God, and this angered the devil. As yesterday's study showed, their wives all experienced barrenness. The enemy did not only tamper with the destinies of the firstborn children, but he also tried to poison their marriages so that the attention meant for God would be dissipated through anger, bitterness, and quarrels. At one point, Sarah disrespected Abraham because of the strange woman, Hagar ***(Genesis 16:5–6).*** Rachel also said to Jacob, ***"Give me children, or I die!"*** which provoked him ***(Genesis 30:1–2)***. These were all actions and reactions within the home, but the enemy's aim was quite subtle. While these families faced challenges, they were being distracted from the vision God had given them, and also from the wiles of the enemy ***(Psalm 88:15b***, ***Ephesians 6:11)***. Therefore, stay vigilant.

PATTERNS III

JUL 29

"In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes." Genesis 31:40 [NKJV]

A third pattern that emerged in the lives of the three patriarchs was famine, ***(Genesis 12:10, Genesis 26:1, and Genesis 42:1–5).*** Abraham survived the famine, eventually became rich, and willed his wealth to Isaac. During Isaac's time, famine came again, but his inheritance could not preserve him. It was God who orchestrated his survival ***(Genesis 26:1–6 and 12–14).*** Jacob also faced a severe famine; despite having money, there was no food to buy. He could have been wiped out if God had not arranged his preservation ***(Genesis 45:7–13).***

Famines are economic downturns capable of wiping out personal, corporate, national, and even global fortunes. A single health crisis can also consume a family's resources. Still, no famine or economic depression comes by accident. ***Psalm 105:16 (NIV)*** says, ***"He (God) called down famine on the land…" Ecclesiastes 7:14*** adds, ***"In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him."*** God allows such seasons so that our focus remains on Him, not on our purses. Human cleverness is insufficient to keep anyone buoyant.

The surest security against famine is divine favour, divine ideas, and divine blessings

At different times, God has used famines, recessions, and depressions to transfer wealth. History proves that names once associated with wealth eventually fade away. Riches without God do not last, but the fear of the Lord guarantees enduring wealth. ***Psalm 112*** declares that the generation of the upright will be blessed and their wealth established. With God, true prosperity flows from generation to generation.

PATTERNS IV

JUL 30

"What miserable comforters all of you are."
Job 16:2b [TLB]

When people observe a negative pattern in someone's life, they often label it a curse. Some may offer advice, but few recognise that the person they criticise might actually be engaged in a fight of faith, battling for destiny. Job's story reveals this truth. In one day, he lost seven children, his business, and his health. His closest friends came to comfort him, but their sincerity was mixed with judgement. They offered explanations for his suffering, but none was accurate. At last, Job called them *'miserable comforters'* because instead of lifting him, they deepened his pain.

Years ago, someone I had confided in said to my face, *"Can't you see that's a family curse?"* At one point, I had an accident that left me badly injured. While in the hospital, my pastor at the time announced from the pulpit that the accident happened because I had sinned. Someone once said the church is the only *"army"* where its wounded soldiers are killed off instead of being helped. While this is not entirely true, it is sadly common. On another occasion, a brother explained to me that what I was experiencing was not just a pattern but a battle for destiny. He reminded me that while I focused on the symptom (my troubles), the disease (the devil's agenda) was festering. He added, *"While you are going through the challenge and concentrating on the pattern, you are simply being distracted."* ***Psalm 88:15b*** reflects those feelings. This altered my perspective.

Forgive people quickly to preserve your focus and energy

Simply put, our destinies are constantly under attack, and it is our duty to safeguard them. Learn to forgive the mockers, for they know not what they do. God instructed Job to pray for his friends in *Job 42:10*. Holding on to anger only adds more distraction.

THE TISHBITE I

JUL 31

"And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab…" 1 Kings 17:1 [NKJV]

Elijah is considered the greatest prophet of the New Testament if we accept Jesus' statement that John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah, ***(Matthew 11:11–14).*** The deeper connection between John and Elijah shall be discussed later. For today, let us focus on how the greatest prophet who ever walked the earth was traced to his roots. Elijah was a native of Tishbe in Gilead. This introduction was necessary because of the extraordinary miracles that marked his days.

Scripture highlights his origin to show that he was an ordinary man, just like us. ***"Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are." (James 5:17)***. In essence, Elijah was no different from us. He carried the same human weaknesses, yet God worked through him mightily. Humanity has always longed to draw near to God, but the passions of the flesh often stand in the way. Through Elijah, God reminds us that prophets are not to be worshipped because we too can walk with Him if we desire.

Elijah is also one of two people in the history of man who never died. The other was Enoch. ***"Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." (Genesis 5:24).*** The greatest prophets in scripture were accorded this kind of honour because of their deep fellowship with God. God was so protective of their God-like status that He would not leave their graveyards among men, lest they be turned into shrines. Therefore, we shall be studying some of these secrets of Elijah in the coming days.

THE TISHBITE II

AUG 01

"Elijah said to Ahab, 'As the Lord lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word." 1 Kings 17:1 [NIV]

This marked the beginning of Elijah's manifestation. He walked straight up to King Ahab and declared that the rain would cease until he said otherwise. Naturally, no one took him seriously. How could any man stop the rain from falling? The king neither arrested him nor replied. Elijah did not look like someone worth wasting energy on. Yet later, the entire nation stood still for him.

What prompted Elijah to make such a bold declaration? In ***1 Kings 16:30–33***, we learn that Ahab was the most wicked king who ever ruled Israel. He built altars to Baal within Israel's borders. Baal was a pagan god that demanded periodic human sacrifice. Such practices were common among heathen nations, but they were never to be found among God's people. However, Ahab imported this demonic practice into Israel. Since the king practised it openly, the people also did the same. There was no higher authority to challenge him. Elijah therefore acted in jealousy and on God's behalf, declaring, ***"As the Lord lives, whom I serve…" (1 Kings 19:10).*** His stand showed he had no personal agenda. He was willing to put his life on the line.

The first key to answered prayers is to seek God's kingdom interests

Elijah's example reveals how to get God's attention and answered prayers. ***"When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures." (James 4:3, NIV).***

THE TISHBITE III

AUG 02

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:10 [NKJV]

Jesus said, ***"I know You always hear Me" (John 11:42).*** Would it not be wonderful to know that God hears us every time we pray? This makes it necessary to learn from those whose prayers were consistently answered. In ***Matthew 17:1–6,*** we read of the meeting between Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. This was no chance encounter. It was a gathering of three men who shared one common trait: they lived completely surrendered lives in service to God. Nothing else mattered. Nothing else took priority. These men also happen to be among the greatest who ever walked the earth. Their lives and ministries changed the course of history forever. When they met, the subject of their conversation could only have been the kingdom of God. As soon as Jesus came down from that mountain, a voice from heaven declared, ***"This is My beloved Son… Listen to Him" (Matthew 17:5b)***. Jesus received God's approval not by forcing people to follow Him, but by living a surrendered life.

Much of what we bother God about does not really bother God

Matthew 6:9–14 outlines Jesus' model prayer. The first four lines had nothing to do with self. Instead, they emphasised honouring God, thinking of His kingdom, and seeking His will before asking for daily bread. Though it may feel difficult to follow the Lord's Prayer, it remains the type of prayer that God honours. Most of what we trouble God about does not truly concern Him; it only troubles us. This is why Elijah could say to the widow of Zarephath, ***"Make for me first" (1 Kings 17:13).*** Though it sounded harsh, it revealed the formula for having all needs met.

THE TISHBITE IV

AUG 03

"Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith…" 1 Kings 17:2–3 [NKJV]

Elijah first displayed boldness when he went to deliver God's message to the king. Yet immediately afterward, God told him to hide. Was God not powerful enough to protect him from attacks? Of course He was. In fact, years later, God did exactly that for Elisha, Elijah's successor. When an army came to arrest him, ***(2 Kings 6:8–18),*** Elisha struck them with blindness, and seasoned warriors were led about like helpless children. But in Elijah's case, God's instruction was different: He told him to hide. There is a time to stand boldly, and a time to remain hidden.

Sadly, many only recognise the Lion of the tribe of Judah, but not the Lamb. Yet the God of the mountain does not always operate in the same way as the God of the valley. Also, in ***Mark 9:2–9,*** Jesus took three of His disciples to the Mount of Transfiguration, where they beheld His glory as the Son of God. On their way down, however, He instructed them not to tell anyone what they had seen, because it was a time to blend with the crowd.

There is a time to be bold and a time to hide

To avoid missing God, we must flow with His operations per time. ***"For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me" (Psalm 27:5, NKJV).*** Likewise, ***"He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge" (Psalm 91:4).*** When God instructs you to hide, do not poke your finger at your enemy's nose. Your safety lies in His instructions.

THE TISHBITE V

AUG 04

"Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith…" 1 Kings 17:2–3 [NKJV]

God's directions to Elijah were clear. He told him to turn eastward, and when he got there, God specified the brook where he would stay. He could have simply told Elijah to flee, and Elijah might have chosen north, west, or south. But in this case, God chose the exact direction. There are times when God leaves the choice open, and there are times when His instructions are very precise. Running with half-instructions is the reason many run into trouble.

Running with half-instructions is the reason why many run into trouble

Years ago, in high school, a friend of mine came under demonic oppression. I went to the clinic to see him and met him struggling; his eyes dilated and teeth clenched while the most muscular boy in school tried to restrain him. He had been given an overdose of sedatives, yet nothing worked. The nurse urged us to fetch the doctor quickly. As I ran to get help, I heard God say, ***"Go back, lay your right hand on his forehead, and say 'In Jesus' name' once."*** The instructions were clear and sudden. You may ask what God's voice sounded like. It was not audible. It was a knowing, so strongly imprinted on my mind that I knew it was not my own thoughts. As I approached, the boy's eyes grew wider, fixed on me as though to attack. I asked the muscular boy to hold him while I obeyed the instruction. The result was immediate. The boy went limp and fell asleep. Within five minutes, he woke up and requested to be discharged. As far as I know, he never experienced that attack again. God's directions may sometimes seem crazy, but they always work.

THE TISHBITE VI

AUG 05

"And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." 1 Kings 17:4 [NKJV]

When you are in harmony with the will of God for your life, every segment of nature works in your favour. But when you are out of harmony through evil deeds, things may go out of balance. In ***1 Kings 17:5–6,*** we read that Elijah did as he was told, and ravens brought him breakfast and dinner without fail. Brook Cherith was a remote place with no other humans around, yet because Elijah was on assignment for God, creation served him. ***Romans 8:28, "All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Ecclesiastes 5:9*** also says, ***"Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field."*** These verses show us that God designed nature to serve us.

The earth helps those who walk in harmony with God

Revelation 12:1–16, the devil released a flood intended to sweep away a woman and her child. Yet ***verse 16*** says, ***"…the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth."*** Similarly, when Daniel was thrown into the den of lions ***(Daniel 6:1–16),*** the lions lost their appetite that night and could not harm him. That was the earth helping Daniel. Again, ***in Numbers 16***, some men of influence rose against God and His servant Moses, but the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, along with their families and belongings. This shows us something profound: the earth can assist someone, and it can also fight against someone. As we serve the interests of God and humanity, may the earth and all that is within it rise to help us. Amen.

THE TISHBITE VII

AUG 06

"Go at once to Zarephath…and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food."
1 Kings 17:9 [NIV]

When the brook dried up, God spoke to Elijah again, instructing him to relocate to a widow's house. What is striking in this scripture is that God told Elijah He had commanded the widow to feed him. One would expect that God had appeared to her in a dream, but it was not so. She had no idea. When Elijah showed up and asked for food, she complained that she did not have enough, ***(1 Kings 17:12).*** However, Elijah was not disturbed. It was the same way God had earlier commanded the ravens ***(1 Kings 17:4).*** The ravens may not have understood why they were bringing food to Elijah, but they obeyed anyway. This reveals something powerful: God can prepare people to help our destinies, even when they are unaware of it. But here is the key: if they are not aware and we are not sensitive, such miracles may never manifest.

Some people have been sent to help you but they do not know it yet

1 Corinthians 2:12 says, "Now we have received…the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God." The primary reason we have the Holy Spirit is so that we may know the things that belong to us. ***Amos 3:7, "Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets."*** That is God's way, He always reveals His plans before they unfold. If we are not spiritually aligned to receive or announce them, those moves may remain undone. This is why we must always stay in the Spirit, so we can connect with the Father's will.

BREAD OR SEED

AUG 07

"Go at once to Zarephath…" ***1 Kings 17:9 [NIV]***

Another point of note in this scripture is that the prophet was sent to the widow for her preservation. God could have organized another stream and ravens for the prophet's sustenance. However, the plan was to rescue the widow. God said to the prophet, ***"Go at once…"*** which shows that the matter was urgent. The prophet arrived at the city gate just in time.

1 Kings 17:10–12, the prophet asked the woman to get him water, and as she went, he also asked her for bread. She replied, ***"I do not have any bread—only a handful of flour… I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die."*** This shows the depth of her desperation. Notice that the prophet asked for bread, and she correctly replied that she had none, because bread is a finished product. What she had was flour - seed. Elijah was sent urgently to save her from cooking her seed.

Some have turned their seed into snacks

2 Corinthians 9:10, "Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness." God may give you bread for food, but that is a one-time miracle. When Jesus multiplied five loaves and two fish, the people ate once and went home. But when God gives you seed, and you sow it, that seed can multiply into an endless supply. God has given seed to many, but itchy throats made them convert it into bread. My prayer is that we discern the difference between our bread and our seed. And secondly, I pray that we never eat up our seed. Amen.

MAKE FOR ME FIRST

AUG 08

"…Make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son." 1 Kings 17:13 [NKJV]

What Elijah said to the widow could have trended for weeks if it were leaked on social media today. Here was a woman with nothing left but the last meal for herself and her son. If she had consulted her neighbours or family, they would have likely advised her to ignore Elijah, suspecting him to be a fraud. Yet the prophet told her, ***"make me…first."*** She was to bake for him first, then head back to the kitchen a second time to start baking again for herself and her son. Why was she not allowed to bake once for all three of them at the same time and then share for the man of God? That is the principle of first fruits.

It is not enough to give God your tithe; it is also essential to give Him first before spending the rest. That is part of what we owe Him. Tithe simply means 10%; it means anything divided into ten places. It could be taken from the first, middle, or last portion. But God insists on being placed first, ***(Exodus 34:26, Exodus 22:29, Mark 14:4-7,*** and ***2 Timothy 2:6).*** If it comes from anywhere else, the instruction is already being flouted.

It is not enough to give God your tithe. It is also important that you give Him first before you spend the rest.

Imagine being the head of state and you hosted a banquet for your staff in the state house. It is a simple courtesy that no one eats until you declare the table open. So it is with everything God gives us. It is simple respect to serve Him first.

RECOGNISING GOD'S VOICE I

AUG 09

"She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family." 1 Kings 17:15 [NKJV]

The widow did not argue further after hearing Elijah's instruction. She went away and did exactly as she was told. Was she gambling? Was she gullible? Was she stupid? She was none of these. Something within her must have resonated to confirm that what she heard was true.

The ability to recognise God's voice is a topic of interest to many people. Most people believe in a higher power, yet there are too many false prophets and teachers eager to take advantage of others. Many homes and families have been ruined because of this. Years ago, a friend of mine was woken very early in the morning by his father, who rained curses on him. The reason? A clergyman had told the father that his son was diabolic and responsible for his misfortunes. The boy simply walked away from home that day without a word. He was innocent, of course, but it took years to undo the damage.

It takes practice to recognize God's voice

How then can we discern God's true voice to avoid a lifetime of regret? We will explore a few tips in the coming days. For now, it is important to note that recognising and discerning the voice of God accurately is not achieved overnight; it takes experience. Samuel was a prophet of reputation whose words never fell to the ground, ***(1 Samuel 3:19).*** Yet the first time God called him, he mistook the voice for Eli's ***(1 Samuel 3:4-10).*** No one is born knowing Gods voice, but everyone can access it.

RECOGNISING GOD'S VOICE II

AUG 10

"But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you..." John 10:26 [NKJV]

God speaks to everyone in diverse ways and forms including pagans ***(Daniel 2:1-47*** and ***Genesis 41:1-25).*** The first time Saul, who later became Paul, heard God was before he became saved ***(Acts 9:3-9).*** This shows, God can speak to anyone, whether are saved or unsaved. However, in all three verses mentioned, it is also recorded that none of them understood what they heard or saw. In each case, they all needed a believer to interpret their dreams or visions. This teaches us something important: the first step to hearing God and truly understanding His message is to have a personal relationship with Him.

In Christian lingua, it means being born again ***(John 3:3*)**. Jesus said in ***John 10:26: "But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you..."*** The implication here is that these people heard Jesus, but they could not believe or accept what He said to them because they lacked the basics; they were not part of Jesus' sheep. Consequently, to benefit from whatever God has to say, the starting point is to be a part of His family. Next, ***John 10:27***, *"**My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.**"* You cannot help it. As long as you are a child of God, you will hear Him. When you eventually hear Him, you still need to understand what you have heard. This is where many get confused, because there are many voices today. The spirit speaks, the devil speaks, the flesh speaks, and the soul speaks. How do you distinguish who is speaking per time?

THE INNER WITNESS

AUG 11

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God." 1 John 4:1 [KJV]

One of the contemporary authorities on how to hear from God is Kenneth E. Hagin. As a prophet, he had a close walk with God. In his book I Believe in Visions, he described how Jesus appeared to him many times and the conversations they shared. Yet, he maintained that visions and voices are tricky. You should not seek them unless God Himself chooses to reach out to you through them. This is because visions and voices can also be manipulated by demonic sources.

In ***1 Samuel 28:3–24,*** King Saul could no longer hear from God, but he was worried about the future. So, he consulted the witch at Endor, who used her powers to conjure up a spirit that appeared and spoke with him. The message Saul received through the witch was accurate, and it came to pass. However, that did not make it right. ***"Believe not every spirit."*** Do not meddle with spirits simply because they bring you results. The end is never pleasant. ***Romans 6:16*** teaches that you are a slave to whomever you yield yourself to. You may yield yourself voluntarily, but you cannot escape voluntarily. A slave is bound against his will. This is why we must be careful who we yield to. Kenneth Hagin further asserted that the most common way God leads is through the inner witness**.** The inner witness is not complicated. It is a knowing within you. ***Romans 8:16, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."*** You simply know within yourself that you are a child of God. No voices. No visions. Just a knowing.

The human spirit has the capacity to know what it has never heard before

THE KNOWING

AUG 12

"…He Himself knew what He would do."
John 6:6 [NKJV]

Have you ever ruminated over an issue for some time and, all of a sudden, an idea struck you, and in that instant, you knew it was the exact answer you needed? Or have you ever thought of someone and, out of the blue, they called your phone number or appeared before you? That is the knowing. It is the unfolding of hidden knowledge. Years ago, as a teenager in boarding school, I was overcome with sudden, inexplicable grief, and my heart went out to my dad. There were no mobile phones in those days, so I could not reach out. But the feeling was so strong that I knew something was wrong. Months later, when I finally saw my dad, he recounted an incident that had happened. To my amazement, the date and time matched my strange experience. He could have died, but a little child strayed into the garden just in time and he was rescued.

Today, whenever I sense such a burden, I know it is time to intercede. At one point, Jesus withdrew into the wilderness, and many people followed Him there. Because of the remoteness of the place, it became a problem that could only be solved by feeding them or sending them away, which risked some fainting from hunger ***(Matthew 14:13–16).*** No one had ever solved such a problem before, yet Jesus knew what He would do ***(John 6:6).***

What you do not use, you'll lose.

The knowing is one of the ways God reveals a way out of predicaments. However, what you do not use, you lose. Therefore, whenever you come into such knowing, act on it. The more you use this gift of knowing, the sharper you become at recognising it.

THE INNER PEACE

AUG 13

"You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace..." Isaiah 55:12 [NIV]

Sometimes we arrive at crossroads, confronted with different alternatives or choices, not knowing which way to turn. However, as you pray, one decision begins to settle in your heart, and the more you think about it, the more peaceful you become. At times, you have not even taken action, yet you suddenly feel joy as though you are already in the moment. That is one of the manifestations of the inner witness. It lets you know that you are on the right path. ***Isaiah 55:12*** says that you will be led forth in peace. ***Philippians 4:6-7, "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."***

Peace is an underrated inner guidance system

When issues that agitate others arise, the Bible encourages us not to be anxious. Instead, pray with thanksgiving. Then, the **peace of God** that you cannot fully understand will overwhelm you. This is an indication that the answer has come. Zacharias also prophesied that one of the reasons Jesus came was ***"to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:79).*** When you find the way of peace, or your heart is at rest over an issue, there is no need to fear anymore. Conversely, when you are considering an alternative and you feel agitated within, it is time to reconsider your plans.

In the 1950s, Elizabeth Taylor was about to take a flight when she suddenly said to her husband, ***"We need to get off this plane."*** The plane blew up mid-air hours later. When asked how she knew the accident was going to happen, she could not explain. It is wisdom to learn to follow your peace.

VISIONS AND DREAMS

AUG 14

"So he ran to Eli and said, 'Here I am, for you called me." 1 Samuel 3:5 [NKJV]

God may use the image, voice, or appearance of someone familiar to communicate with you. The devil can also do the same. Therefore, you cannot take anything at face value. ***1 Thessalonians 5:21 (TLB)***, ***"But test everything that is said to be sure it is true, and if it is, then accept it."*** The responsibility for any action you take, whether based on a vision, dream, or the words of a so-called prophet, lies solely with you.

God communicates with images and numbers

1 Samuel 3:1 tells us that Samuel was serving God**,** yet he did not know the Lord ***(verse 7).*** So when God called out to him ***(verse 5)***, he ran to Eli and said, ***"You called me."*** This suggests that he did indeed hear Eli's voice, but it was God calling him. In fact, Eli denied calling Samuel. Many people have seen their spouses, children, relatives, or acquaintances in dreams and taken such messages at face value. But spiritual matters cannot be handled that way. You need a personal relationship with God to understand what He is truly saying.

One night, I dreamt about my car. At the time, I owned a red Audi, but in the dream the car was black. I was leaning on the car when my pastor approached. I knelt as a sign of honour, and he laid his hands on me, saying, ***"Receive the help of God."*** Then I woke up. I could not understand it at the time, but less than a year later that car was burnt to ashes; the black colour I had seen in the dream. Miraculously, I got a replacement car within three days. That was the promised help. Sadly, many people would have idolised the pastor rather than praise the God who gave the vision.

IMAGES AND NUMBERS

AUG 15

"I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions; I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets." Hosea 12:10 [NKJV]

In today's text, God introduces Himself and His preferred mode of communication. He speaks through prophets, visions, and symbols. Therefore, one skill that can help us optimise divine communication is an understanding of God's messages embedded in numbers and pictures. There are more than 30 recorded parables in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each parable is made up of images and numbers, simplifying spiritual mysteries. This means we must educate ourselves on this subject. One of my favourite books is The Arithmetic of God by Don Kistler. In it, he explores the meaning of scriptural numbers from 1 to 666, using multiple references from Scripture. This skill was the very one that exalted Joseph to the position of prime minister in Egypt when he accurately interpreted Pharaoh's dream. The same gift also exalted Daniel and kept him relevant in Babylonian politics for seventy years.

Ignoring divine messages is worse than ignoring a huge inheritance

Many of us have had dreams but discarded them when we could not interpret them. Yet, each divine message is a treasure with the capacity to bring about greatness. As David said, ***"I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure." (Psalm 119:162)***. These treasures are manifested only at the discretion of God's Spirit. The good news is that we can all benefit from them. ***"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal…" (1 Corinthians 12:7, KJV).*** Not some men, not believers only, but **every man**. Our responsibility is to be alert when it manifests so that we can take maximum advantage. If you have a personal relationship with God, you will have a greater advantage.

ENJOY THE JOURNEY

AUG 16

"For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah." 1 Kings 17:16 [NIV]

The widow of Zarephath obeyed Elijah's instructions, and everything happened exactly as he had prophesied. That was when she realised that God had truly reached out to her. Sometimes the only way to confirm if a message is truly from God is to wait until that word comes to pass. ***"If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken" (Deuteronomy 18:22).***

In extreme cases, there are prophecies that will come to pass but not immediately. When Isaiah declared that a virgin shall conceive ***(Isaiah 7:14),*** all Israel thought it would happen right away. However, about seven hundred years passed between Isaiah and the birth of Jesus. To this day, some modern Jews are still expecting the promised Messiah. When Abraham first heard God's promise that he would become a great nation ***(Genesis 12:1–5),*** he had no idea it would take years before he even had one child. Much later, God reminded him to walk faithfully before Him ***(Genesis 17:1).*** In that moment, Abraham understood that his walk with God was not just about receiving a prophecy but about sustaining an ongoing relationship with Him.

Life is never about the destination; it is about the journey.

Prophecy is not always a sprint. Sometimes it is a marathon. Life with God is not only about the destination. It is about the journey of walking with Him daily.

JUDGEMENT AND MERCY

AUG 17

"Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?" 1 Kings 17:17 [NKJV]

At some point, the widow of Zarephath's son fell ill and died. She believed this tragedy had come upon her because the presence of God's servant had triggered divine judgement for some wrongs she might have committed in the past. God had just shown her mercy from the famine through Elijah, so why was judgement now visiting her at the same time? Many of us have experienced something similar. One moment, we are enjoying favour, and the next, a challenge arises.

God's visitation in our lives deserves reverence. Like the two sides of a coin, His presence brings both mercy and judgement. As Simeon declared concerning Jesus, this child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel ***(Luke 2:34, NIV). James 2:13 (TLB)*** adds, if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when He judges you The widow of Zarephath had shown mercy by accommodating Elijah, so God showed her mercy in her time of judgement by raising her son back to life. In the same way, Jesus died for our sins, but God raised Him from the dead.

Like the two sides of a coin, divine presence comes with both mercy and judgement.

After God commissioned Moses to deliver Israel, an angel met him on the way to kill him, ***(Exodus 4:24–26).*** God's presence always brings judgement and mercy. He is a just God, required to recompense us for all our deeds. But there is always a provision for mercy, and I pray His mercy will always triumph over judgement in our lives. Amen.

WAITING

AUG 18

"After a long time, in the third year, the word of the Lord came to Elijah: "Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land."
1 Kings 18:1 [NIV]

Three years is a long time for any famine. Through all the suffering, God remained silent. Only after those three years did the Lord Himself send word to Elijah. It is remarkable that Elijah could wait, refusing to move on to other things during that time. Waiting is one of the hardest tests in a believer's life. While trusting in God's directive and timing is one of the ultimate proofs of faith.

This was the very test that landed King Saul in eternal trouble. In ***1 Samuel 13,*** Saul was preparing for battle. Innumerable enemies had assembled against him, and he was to wait for Samuel's blessing before engaging them. Samuel delayed for seven days, and Saul's men began deserting the army. In desperation, Saul assumed the duties of the prophet and offered the sacrifice. Immediately afterwards, Samuel arrived and rebuked him, saying he had behaved foolishly. The kingdom would have been established in Saul's house, but now it has been taken away, ***(Samuel 13:13–14).*** The delay was the test Saul failed.

When God is silent, stay all action. (David Oyedepo)

God never delays. If He has not shown up for you, it is because it is not yet time. ***Isaiah 28:16, "He that believeth shall not make haste."*** According to Bishop David Oyedepo, When God is silent, it means stay all action. Waiting is difficult, but if you are required to wait, please do.

POWER

AUG 19

"Go tell your master, "Elijah is here."
1 Kings 18:8 [NIV]

Actions truly speak louder than words. In three years, Elijah spoke only one sentence to King Ahab: that there would be no rain until he declared otherwise. At the time, the king dismissed him because Elijah looked like a nobody. Soon after, Elijah disappeared from sight as famine spread across the land. From this, we learn that obedience is not about noise or display. One faithful act, backed by God's word, can carry more weight than endless speeches. First, the demonstration of power convicts people more than lengthy sermons. Second, the wicked only understand the language of power, not persuasion. That is why it is vital to have power with God, as Jacob did ***(Genesis 32:28).*** Third, Elijah used his absence to increase honour and respect. This aligns with Law 16 in Robert Greene's *"48 Laws of Power"*. It is not only a natural law but also a spiritual one. You cannot be everywhere at once and still expect to be respected. Clowns are never respected. They may entertain, but they carry no weight.

The demonstration of power convicts people more than lengthy sermons. The only language the wicked understands is power, not persuasion.

1 Kings 18:3–6, Ahab told Obadiah, the governor of his house, to search for green grass to preserve their livestock. The king himself did the same, but in another direction. Then, Elijah revealed himself to Obadiah on the way and spoke those powerful words: ***"Tell your master Elijah is here."*** Not too many words, yet full of weight. In ***verse 10,*** Obadiah explained how the king had been searching for Elijah in all the neighbouring countries. Elijah had become the most sought-after man. Now his words carried meaning, and he could summon the king instead of going to him. May God add value to our lives. Amen.

OBADIAH

AUG 20

"Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly"
1 Kings 18:3b [NIV]

The name Obadiah means ***"servant or worshipper of Yahweh"*** in Hebrew. True to his name, Obadiah feared God deeply. He was the governor of the house of King Ahab, the most wicked king who ever ruled in Israel ***(1 Kings 16:30–33).*** Ahab's wickedness was further fueled by the devilish influence of his wife, Jezebel ***(1 Kings 21:25).*** How was it possible that Obadiah, a man who feared God so much, could work in an environment of pure evil? How was he comfortable serving the evil duo of Ahab and Jezebel? How could a righteous man rise through the ranks under a king who sacrificed humans to idols? These questions remain unanswered in Scripture. What is recorded in his favour, however, is that he used his influence to hide one hundred prophets of God from Jezebel. He even used the king's own supplies to feed them during a severe famine ***(1 Kings 18:4).*** Truly, God weighs the motives of every heart ***(Proverbs 16:2).***

Regardless of the storms, the ship will be fine as long as the waves do not get into it.

Many believers today also find themselves earning a living in environments that contradict their faith—surrounded by practices that grieve their spirit, much like Lot ***(2 Peter 2:7).*** The most important thing is to never allow the evil around you to seep into you. Someone once said, ***"The ship will be fine as long as the waves that surround it do not get into it."*** The only time we will be totally free from the evil of this world is when we get to heaven. Until then, we are to live faithfully where God places us. Jesus, praying for His disciples, said, ***"My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one." (John 17:15).*** God may not remove you from the environment, but He will keep you safe. Jehovah sees.

HELPERS OF DESTINY

AUG 21

"Now as Obadiah was on his way, SUDDENLY Elijah met him; and he recognized him, and fell on his face, and said, "Is it you, my lord Elijah?"
1 Kings 18:7 [NIV]

God instructed Elijah to go and present himself to Ahab ***(1 Kings 18:1).*** Elijah carried out that instruction through Obadiah. Although Elijah was a prophet and knew the exact conversation Ahab and Obadiah had ***(1 Kings 18:5)*** and even where Ahab was; he still chose to meet Obadiah first. Why? It was this meeting that brought Obadiah's secret service to light. For years, Obadiah had served God in silence at great personal cost and risk, but his good works did not escape God's notice. Through this encounter, the Scriptures recorded his deeds for generations to know. Another possible reward, though not directly written, was that Ahab himself must have been pleased. After all, Obadiah had found the most wanted man in Israel; Elijah, whom Ahab had searched for in vain across nations. It was common for kings to place bounties on such men, and Obadiah might even have won that reward.

When God wants to reward you, He places uncommon solutions in your hands.

When God wants to promote you, He causes the answer to the king's problem to come through you, as seen with Joseph ***(Genesis 41:38)*** and Daniel ***(Daniel 2:46; Daniel 5:26–29).*** It is divine secrets that make uncommon people ***(Isaiah 45:3; Job 29:4; Psalm 25:14).*** And when God wants to announce you to your world, He arranges your journey to cross paths with great people. There are certain kinds of people you meet, and your life will take a dramatic upward turn. These are not chance meetings; they are divinely orchestrated. May we come across such helpers of destiny. Amen.

DIVINITY IN HUMANITY

AUG 22

"And it shall come to pass… that the Spirit of the Lord will carry you to a place I do not know."
1 Kings 18:12 [NKJV]

Elijah fellowshipped with God so deeply that he took on the very nature of God. This was one of the things that frightened Obadiah about him. Elijah did not simply walk up to Obadiah; he appeared suddenly. ***1 Kings 18:7, "Now as Obadiah was on his way, suddenly Elijah met him…"*** Elijah moved around like a spirit. When Elijah asked Obadiah to tell Ahab that he was ready to meet him, Obadiah protested that the Spirit of God might carry Elijah away to a place where no one could find him. This was also why Ahab could not arrest Elijah when they eventually met, for Obadiah must have told the king what he had experienced. It was this same spirit-transport that enabled Elijah to outrun the chariot of King Ahab's horses ***(1 Kings 18:46).***

It is not by chance that Jesus met with Elijah and Moses ***(Matthew 17:1-8).*** They were men who operated on the same spiritual frequency. Both Elijah and Moses displayed superhuman tendencies while on earth. Moses fellowshipped with God so much that his face shone like the sun, ***(Exodus 34:29-35).*** Before His crucifixion, some people wanted to push Jesus off a cliff, but He walked away through the crowd, and they could not see Him ***(Luke 4:28-30).*** This was the same spirit-transport that Elijah operated in. What this teaches us is that divinity is real and can be experienced by anyone who fellowships deeply with God. As ***(James 5:17)***, Elijah was a man of similar nature to us, yet he drew closer to God. In a world filled with insecurity and wickedness that is perpetrated in broad daylight, God can still secure His own.

EXAMINE YOURSELF

AUG 23

"I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord." 1 Kings 18:18 [KJV]

When Ahab saw Elijah again after three years, the first thing he said was, ***"Are you the troubler of Israel?"*** To Ahab, Elijah was the cause of the famine and the sufferings in Israel. But Elijah quickly corrected him, explaining that the famine was the outcome of the nation's wickedness and disobedience to God's commands. Many of us behave like Ahab. We are quick to point accusing fingers at others while excusing ourselves. It is not common to blame oneself. Whenever we do wrong, we justify it. But when others do wrong, we pounce on them with instant judgement. This is one expression of the self-centredness of man.

The second point to note is that no event is ever isolated. Every action we take affects others in ways we cannot imagine. Just because the effect is not immediate does not mean it is not real. For example, when President Putin invaded Ukraine, it seemed far removed from us. Yet rising fuel prices and foreign exchange rates revealed how interconnected the world truly is. These are physical consequences of one man's actions.

No event is ever isolated. Our actions echo around the world and in eternity.

Our sins, however, carry far greater spiritual consequences. ***Romans 5:12*** teaches that sin entered the world through one man, and the consequence was death for all. Therefore, we must acknowledge our faults and judge ourselves so that we will not be condemned by the Great Judge, ***(1 Corinthians 11:31)***. Do not be tempted to excuse your sins, for ***Proverbs 28:13*** warns that those who cover their sins will not prosper.

BOLD AS A LION

AUG 24

"Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel…" 1 Kings 18:18 [KJV]

The boldness of Elijah was unparalleled. He even sent the king on errands, assuming authority and leadership over Israel. He told the king to gather everyone to meet him at the location of his choice. ***Proverbs 28:1, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion."*** Sin reduces us to timid rats. We scamper at the sight of anything that resembles light. We fear exposure and hide in darkness. But when you walk in righteousness, you fear no one.

Why then do people choose to live like rats rather than lions? Because the lures of sin are too attractive. Without divine enablement, man will always tend towards his base nature. It takes conviction and the power of the Spirit to rise above it. What was the source of Elijah's boldness? Someone once said that the secrets of men are in their stories. One phrase Elijah constantly repeated was, ***"As the Lord of Hosts lives, before whom I stand" (1 Kings 18:15; 1 Kings 17:1).***

Knowing who you are makes you unstoppable

First, Elijah was conscious of the power and status of God. He referred to God as Lord, a title of noble rank and high authority. Elijah recognised that God is above all. He also called Him Lord of Hosts and Lord God of Israel. The word hosts refer to armies, which made Elijah feel heavily defended. Second, Elijah always said, ***"before whom I stand."*** He saw himself as an emissary of that great God. This revelation of his identity in God conferred unusual boldness on him. If you too can see who you are and whom you represent in Christ, you will be unstoppable.

REPAIRING THE ALTAR

AUG 25

"And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down." 1 Kings 18:30 [NIV]

After Ahab gathered the people in compliance with Elijah's command, the prophet challenged them for experimenting with other gods, but no one responded. They remained silent because no one truly follows a lifeless god. Their generation had only heard stories of God; they had not seen the manifestation of His power. People need a first-hand encounter with God to connect with Him. This is why ***Mark 16:17*** says, ***"These signs shall follow those that believe." Miracles are meant to follow believers everywhere.***

Elijah set a clear test: the true God would be the one who sent fire upon the sacrifice. The 450 prophets of Baal tried for hours and failed. When Elijah's turn came, he did not just call on God; he first repaired the altar, the place of fellowship. The broken altar represents believers who once knew God but drifted away. Those who have never known Him can simply come; but those who strayed must return by repairing the altar.

Repair the altar. It is the starting point for fellowship with God.

In repairing the altar, Elijah went through certain protocols—and so must we. First, realise that if you want to see God manifest in your life, you must cleanse yourself. ***Amos 4:12b*** says, ***"…Prepare to meet thy God."*** Also, God said in ***Isaiah 1:16–18 (NIV), paraphrased: "Wash and make yourselves clean… Come now, let us settle the matter." James 4:8, "Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded."*** After you have cleaned up, then you can approach God.

LIVING STONES

AUG 26

"Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob…" 1 Kings 18:31 [NIV]

In fixing the altar, Elijah took twelve stones representing each tribe of Israel. In truth, the stones represented the people. ***1 Peter 2:5 (NIV)*** says, ***"You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house…"*** Thus, we are living stones and not ordinary ones. Why? Stones are lifeless, but we are alive and constitute an integral part of the altar of God.

Our altar is not something we leave at home, nor is it something we must travel to find. Our altar is not a building or a church. The place of our meeting with God is within our bodies. This is why the Apostle Paul asked in ***1 Corinthians 3:16, "Do you not know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?"*** Churches are simple representations of how God wants us to be. We decorate the church altar because it is the most hallowed part of the sanctuary. That same care must also be given to our spirits. Do not let pollution overcome your spirit.

Furthermore, ***Romans 12:1 (NIV): "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship."*** Thus, we are not only **l**iving stones, we are also the sacrifice that is laid on the altar. Paul said to offer our bodies, not our spirits, on the altar. To avoid confusion, he was careful to say this is a ***"living"*** sacrifice. In normal sacrifices, the animals are slain. However, God wants us to live for Him all our days.

SEPARATE YOURSELF

AUG 27

"… And he made a trench about the altar"
1 Kings 18:32b [KJV]

The next protocol Elijah followed in preparing the altar for God's visitation was to dig a trench around it. Later, he poured water on the sacrifice, and the water flowed into the trench ***(1 Kings 18:33–34).*** The trench represents separation. It was difficult for anyone to walk freely up to the altar with a trench in between; thus, the altar was isolated from external influences. This mirrors Apostle Paul's admonition in ***2 Corinthians 6:17 (NIV): "Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."*** You must therefore draw a clear line around your life so that everyone can see you belong to God.

Only different people make a difference. You cannot stand out if you live like everyone else.

In olden times, castles, forts, and towns were often surrounded by moats: deep, wide ditches usually filled with water and sometimes crocodiles. The occupants used a drawbridge to cross whenever they needed to go out. At night, when the inhabitants are within the castle, the drawbridge was raised, and any approaching enemy would have to risk crossing the ditch, where the hungry crocodiles awaited. Elijah's trench represented such a defence system. Likewise, we must make every effort to protect our altar from the external influences of Ahab and Jezebel.

Daniel 1:8 tells us how Daniel and his friends separated themselves so they would not defile themselves. This separation moved God to love them and fellowship with them. We must take a cue from their example.

THE SACRIFICE

AUG 28

"And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood." 1 Kings 18:33 [KJV]

The next protocol Elijah observed was to arrange the wood. Then he sacrificed the bullock and placed it on the altar. Afterwards, he commanded that four barrels be filled with water, which they poured three times, making a total of twelve barrels. Each barrel represented the twelve tribes of Israel, while the water represented the sent Word of God. ***Ephesians 5:26, "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."*** Jesus also prayed in ***John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."*** Elijah was therefore prophetically engaging the sanctifying power of God's Word.

The bullock represented us. We are the living sacrifice ***(as Romans 12:1 states).*** The slain bullock also symbolised the sacrifice of Jesus when He died for us. In the Old Testament, the people brought a bullock or ram to the priest as ransom for their sins. The priest laid hands on the head of the bullock; symbolically transferring the sins of the people onto the animal, and then the animal was slain ***(Leviticus 8:14–15, 18–19, 22–23).*** To turn away God's wrath from us, God laid our sins upon Jesus. ***Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."*** You owe Jesus a debt of gratitude. Whenever you remember His resurrection, remain mindful of His sacrifice.

FOLLOW ORDER

AUG 29

"And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near…" 1 Kings 18:36 [KJV]

The only plan Elijah had was to restore the old order and the ancient landmark. Before Israel turned to strange gods, there were established hours of prayer. Elijah therefore timed his offering to coincide with the evening sacrifice. In ***verse 33,*** we also see that Elijah set the wood in order. Apostle Paul counselled in ***1 Corinthians 14:40, "Let all things be done decently and in order." Proverbs 22:28*** also states, ***"Do not remove the ancient landmark which your fathers have set."*** It is true that many trends in the world are changing with time. However, certain things should never change; integrity, love for our neighbour, humility, and reverence for God. ***2 Timothy 3:1–2*** warns, ***"In the last days, people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy…"*** These are the troubling trends of our times.

Decency and order should be the hallmark of every believer's life

In some modern cultures, children can call the police on their parents for reprimanding them, and some even take their parents to court. In churches, breakaways are common, with new congregations often founded on hurt egos and inflated pride. In the quest to be seen as innovative, many have caused more chaos and damage to the body of Christ. It is far better to sacrifice self-interest than to sow seeds of discord in the Lord's house. Although Elijah was confronting and disrupting Ahab's evil order, he made it clear to Israel that everything he did was at the command of God ***(1 Kings 18:36).*** Innovation has its place, but it must always be guided by decency and order, not chaos.

TRADERS OF HOPE

AUG 30

"And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near…"
1 Kings 18:36 [KJV]

After Elijah prayed, fire fell from heaven and consumed not only the sacrifice but also the wood, the stones, and even the water in the trench. The people were amazed and immediately fell in worship before God. With the nation turned back to God, Elijah told the king to go home and eat, declaring that rain was on the way. In truth, however, Elijah was only giving hope; the rain had not yet come. While Ahab went off to eat, Elijah went up the mountain to pray. ***1 King 18:42*** records that he cast himself to the ground, buried his head between his knees, and cried out to God for mercy. This agonising posture reflects the true burden of intercessors: they labour in travail so that others may enjoy relief.

Guard your lips. Never let words of fear or hopelessness escape.

Every one of us must become a trader of hope. Our words should never communicate fear or despair; they should always plant seeds of possibility. It could mean the difference between life and death. If someone comes to you seeking a job, never dismiss them with, ***"There is no vacancy."*** Instead, say, ***"I will see what can be done,"*** because anything can change tomorrow. If someone is sick, never tell them death is certain, give them hope. Many have ended their own lives because no one offered them hope, even though their change of story was just around the corner. The world is already full of darkness; let us choose to be beacons of light.

NEVER GIVE UP

AUG 31

"And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times."
1 Kings 18:43 [KJV]

Elijah began to call on God to reverse the drought that had almost destroyed the nation. However, he also practised the scriptural injunction to ***"watch and pray" (Matthew 26:41).*** As he prayed, he repeatedly sent his servant to look toward the sea for signs of cloudiness. Elijah's servant went seven times to check. The first thing to note is that Elijah prayed with full expectation. Whenever we pray, we should have the confidence that our prayers will be answered. Second, Elijah prayed until he received his miracle. After six failed attempts, he did not give up and walk away. Everyone remembers that Elijah prayed and there was rain ***(James 5:17–18).*** What is often overlooked is that he failed six times before the seventh attempt brought breakthrough. People rarely discuss failures; what matters is that you succeed once; and that one success will more than compensate for any past failure. Giving up on the eve of a miracle is the habit of many. Pressing on until the end is the habit of champions.

Thomas Watson Jr once said, ***"If you want to increase your success rate, double your failure rate."*** Abraham Lincoln's life also illustrates persistence. He failed in business, lost his bid for the legislature, endured the death of his fiancée, suffered a nervous breakdown, and lost a senatorial race. Yet, he ran for the office of the president and won. Today, Lincoln is still regarded as one of the greatest U.S. Presidents. His gift to humanity would have been buried had he given up. Keep going, your victory is near.

No one has time to discuss failures. All that matters is that you succeed once.

SMALL MIRACLES

SEP 01

"And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand." 1 Kings 18:44 [KJV]

At the seventh attempt, Elijah's servant returned with news that many could have easily dismissed. The sky was not covered with cloud; it was only as small as a man's hand. The servant had to squint to spot it on the horizon. Yet Elijah recognised and celebrated the Hand of God. He rose and prepared to receive his miracle. Soon after, ***"the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain." (1 Kings 18:45, (KJV)).*** When you celebrate the little, it multiplies quickly. Be grateful for the small things. This is the secret of multiplication. Many people have become so used to small miracles that they despise them.

When you celebrate the little, it multiplies quickly.

Several years ago, I had an automobile accident. I remained in hospital for two months, lying on my back the entire time. I was fed and bathed in the same position. When I finally stood with the assistance of the physiotherapist, I realised that being able to get up and walk wherever we want is no small miracle. Each step was laboured and filled with pain. Gradually, I could walk outside the ward. Then I noticed the sun and the green grass. They had always been there, but I had never truly appreciated them. Seeing the sun made me give thanks for the gift of the day. Learn to appreciate the small miracles. Many long to experience what you are taking for granted.

JEZEBEL, THE MANIPULATOR

SEP 02

"Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done…" 1 Kings 19:1 [KJV]

When Ahab returned to the palace, he eagerly shared all that had happened with his wife, Jezebel. I imagine he spoke with excitement. His nation had just emerged from the drought that had nearly destroyed it. Ahab had seen results. He had experienced what worked. Baal had failed, but the true God brought rain. Jezebel did not share her husband's joy. Instead, she sent messengers to Elijah with a chilling message: he had only twenty-four hours left to live. Consider these questions: Why did Jezebel send threats instead of dispatching an assassin? Why was she not happy for Israel, now that the drought had ended? And what could she possibly gain from the ruin of her own nation? Before we attempt to answer these questions, let us first understand who Jezebel was. She was a princess, the daughter of the Sidonian king ***(1 King 16:31)***. When she married Ahab, the king of Israel, her influence introduced Baal worship into the land ***(1 Kings 16:31–33)***.

The worst enemies are the ones that mobilise others against you

Jezebel had no kingdom of her own, but she loved and courted power. On her own, she was powerless. She was parasitic, deriving her authority by proxy. Jezebel was manipulative and seductive; the puppeteer, the hidden hand that moved the puppet. This already answers the first question. She could not kill Elijah without convincing the king. Her threat meant that within twenty-four hours, she would work on Ahab to accomplish her wish. This was no empty boast, and Elijah knew it. Even today, there are people with Jezebel-like influence around us. If we are not spiritually conscious, they will move us in the wrong direction.

JEZEBEL, THE NARCISSIST

SEP 03

"Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done…" 1 Kings 19:1 [KJV]

Ahab depended heavily on his wife. He told her everything. Yet, from the feedback, all that Jezebel heard was that someone had damaged her puppet, Ahab. Someone had weakened her influence over the one man who held power. That someone was Elijah, and he had to be silenced. Speaking about Jezebel's personality, ***Revelation 2:20, "…you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants…"*** This verse describes the traits of a narcissist. She knew exactly what she was doing, but Ahab did not understand her game plan.

A narcissist cannot function unless you allow them, ***(Revelation 2:20)***. They thrive by manipulating others to do their bidding, using charm, deceit, or persuasion with precision. Narcissists are self-centred, toxic, and manipulative, craving admiration while showing no empathy. Their victims are often kind and self-effacing, which makes them easy targets.

A narcissist cannot function unless you allow them

A clear example is Osinachi, the Nigerian gospel singer, whose husband grew more violent as her influence rose. He felt threatened that her growing voice might free her from his grip. Narcissists cannot bear losing control. The only escape is to step out of their influence, though they resist fiercely. Ahab's ruin under Jezebel proves that this bondage is destructive. Ahab was ensnared by Jezebel's manipulations, and by the time he realised it, his destiny had been ruined.

JEZEBEL, THE BABYLONIAN SYSTEMS

SEP 04

"You allow that woman Jezebel… to teach and seduce my servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols."
Revelation 2:20 [NKJV]

Why was Jezebel not pleased with Israel even after the drought had ended, and what she stood to gain from the nation's ruin. She had no genuine concern for Israel, not even for Ahab her husband. Her only pursuit was to establish her Sidonian gods in the land. Jezebel represents any diabolic system that distracts the people of God from true worship. This is often achieved by appealing to the desires and demands of the flesh. A major feature of Baal worship in those days was the presence of temple prostitutes. These women and men were specially trained for this purpose and lived within the temple. When worshippers came, these professional peddlers of flesh lured them into immoral acts that could keep them there all day, while infusing them with demonic spirits, ***(Revelation 18:2).***

Today's theme Scripture says that Jezebel seduced God's servants to commit sexual immorality and to consume things meant for idols. The parallel to Jezebel can be found in Babylon ***(Revelation 18:3), "For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury."*** The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, as outlined in ***1 John 2:16***, are the "***things sacrificed to idols.***" The purpose behind them is simple: to distract God's people from worshipping the true God. These are the Babylonian and Jezebel systems of government, and they are still at work today.

TAKE HEED

SEP 05

"Elijah was afraid and ran for his life…"
1 Kings 19:3 [NIV]

When Elijah received Jezebel's threat, he became afraid because he knew what she was capable of. One might think Elijah, being spiritual, should not have been easily frightened. After all, he had extraordinary abilities and could even disappear, ***(1 Kings 18:12).*** Yet Jezebel was also diabolically spiritual. She was the grand patroness of the 450 prophets of Baal whom Elijah had slaughtered. She was their mother and leader, and she too commanded power. Elijah may have thought that after such a great victory, he would be able to walk freely in Israel. He had been in hiding for about three years, and the isolation had taken its toll. He was shocked to realise that despite the defeat of the prophets of Baal, Jezebel was not powerless and she was not giving up. This mirrors the nature of the devil himself. He never gives up or grows weary of opposing God's kingdom.

You need more caution in the season of your success. That is when you are most vulnerable.

Referring to the temptation of Jesus ***(Luke 4:13)***, ***"And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season."*** The devil used every strategy against Jesus, yet Jesus did not fail. But the devil did not quit; he simply waited for another opportunity. The same warning applies to us. Yesterday's victory is reason enough to be watchful today. ***Revelation 12:10, "…for the accuser of our brethren, who accuses them before our God day and night…"*** The enemy works tirelessly to bring us down. That is why ***1 Corinthians 10:12*** warns, ***"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."*** The moment of success is often the moment of greatest vulnerability. That is when you must be most careful.

HUMILITY I

SEP 06

"He left his servant there in Beersheba while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness…" 1 Kings 19:3-4 [NIV]

The first time we learn that Elijah had a servant was after his victory at Mount Carmel ***(1 Kings 18:43).*** This may have felt like self-promotion after a moment of glory. Yet, following Jezebel's threat, Elijah abandoned his servant and sank into another unpleasant season of isolation in the wilderness. He tried to get as far away from Jezebel as possible by travelling a whole day's journey. This time, however, the Spirit of God did not help him. He was not carried by the wind ***(1 Kings 18:46)***, nor did he disappear ***(1 Kings 18:12).*** He was no longer in the Spirit, had no time to consult God, and his faith had crumbled under the weight of fear. His human nature had forcefully returned.

God does not humble people. He humiliates them if he has to do it for them.

In my teens, I once spent about eight hours in prayer and meditation. It was the first time I had ever achieved such a feat, and I felt good about myself. I had a shower and went for a stroll, feeling tall. Just two houses away, a dog that had always been calm suddenly charged at me. I ran faster than my legs could carry me. Just as the dog was about to bite, I stumbled and rolled on the ground, and the dog somersaulted with me. Frightened, it ran back. My ego was deflated. My faith collapsed in seconds. Life has a way of exposing our ego. Elijah often claimed he was the only prophet left ***(1 Kings 18:22)***, even after Obadiah had told him about one hundred hidden prophets ***(1 Kings 18:4,13)***. Scripture warns us in ***1 Peter 5:6*** to humble ourselves. That is our responsibility. God does not humble people. If He must do it for you, it will not be humbling but humiliating. Choose humility.

HUMILITY II

SEP 07

"He himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and prayed that he might die." 1 Kings 19:4 [NIV]

Within hours, Elijah went from being the victorious prophet who turned the heart of a nation to a depressed man begging God for death. He was so emotionally drained that he longed for his life to end. History is full of great servants of God who missed their way and fell hard into sin. Many lost their ministries and never recovered. This is not to condemn them but to caution us. ***Philippians 2:12, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."*** Fear of what? Not of the devil, but of the deceitfulness of our flesh through arrogance or pride. This is the quickest way to fall: When we begin to think we are infallible.

Church members may praise their pastor to the highest heavens until he begins to feel exalted. That is the very moment the devil waits for. When he strikes, the blow comes with such fury that you would not believe it unless you experienced it yourself. I have been there. Some ministers become so confident that, in their moment of glory, they even begin to hurl insults at the devil, calling him names like *"bastard"* or *"idiot."* ***2 Peter 2:10-12 (NIV)*** warns about arrogant ministers who heap abuse on celestial beings. Even angels, who are more powerful than us, do not use such language when bringing judgement from the Lord. When God sends you on errands, stay within your calling and tremble before Him. It is He who empowers, and we have no power in ourselves. Stay humble in word, in speech, and in appearance so that the Giver of grace will not abandon you.

Your safety lies in staying in your calling

DEPRESSION

SEP 08

"Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep."
1 Kings 19:5 [NIV]

After praying for death, Elijah lay down to sleep, weighed down by fatigue and depression. For many people, depression is a daily struggle, affecting both the poor and the affluent. Society often overlooks this silent plague. Medical experts classify it as a mental health condition. Causes include genetics, loss, certain medications, age, or gender. Common symptoms are loss of interest in activities, fatigue, anxiety, irritability, changes in appetite, and suicidal thoughts. Elijah experienced nearly all of these, especially the last five, sleeping on an empty stomach as he longed for death in his sleep.

Even the most spiritual can be a victim of mental health issues. Be self-aware.

Experts also teach that four hormones impact mental health. The first is dopamine, which is directly linked to happiness. This can be stimulated naturally through good sleep or by completing a task. When you achieve something, there is a temporary burst of joy. The second is serotonin, a mood-stabilising chemical secreted by the body. It can be boosted through meditation and simple exercises such as walking. The third is endorphins, a natural painkiller that reduces stress and increases pleasure. Some people artificially induce endorphins by abusing drugs, but this is harmful to overall health. Instead, endorphins can be stimulated by music, exercise, comedy, or engaging in fun activities. The fourth is oxytocin, also known as the bonding hormone. It is released when we connect with others and contributes significantly to long life. Do not only care for your spiritual life. Pay attention to your mental health as well.

THE TOUCH

SEP 09

"All at once an angel touched him and said, 'Get up and eat.'" 1 Kings 19:5b [NIV]

While Elijah slept, an angel came and touched him. This brief encounter addressed two pressing needs that had fuelled his depression: touch and hunger. First, Elijah needed human touch. Every person craves connection, and that bond with others releases oxytocin, the hormone that strengthens relationships and emotional well-being. Decades ago, before knowledge on the subject was advanced, there was the story of an orphanage where babies were mysteriously dying. But, one baby was flourishing and much happier than the rest. The carers set up 24-hour surveillance. They soon discovered that one maid, while cleaning the wards, would pick up that child, hug him, and sing to him for about five minutes each day before returning him to his cot. The daily cuddle saved that baby's life.

A touch could be the start of someone's healing. Let us be the finger of God to a hurting world.

The skin, the largest organ in the human body, is the receptor of touch. Unfortunately, many people in their longing for touch or social acceptance accept the wrong kind of touch and are left wounded or destroyed. This has led to adultery, fornication, incest, teenage pregnancies, and many other evils. Some remain in abusive relationships, while others join destructive gangs. God's people can serve as His angels, carrying a positive touch. Jesus often touched those He healed. After years of suffering and social rejection, they needed more than words. He touched the leper ***(Matthew 8:3)*** and the blind man ***(Mark 8:25-27)***. The woman with the issue of blood touched Him ***(Matthew 9:20-22)***. A touch could be the beginning of healing. Be the finger of God to a hurting world.

IT IS NOT OVER YET

SEP 10

"The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, 'Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.'" 1 Kings 19:7 [NIV]

After the angel touched Elijah and asked him to eat, the prophet woke up and looked around, hoping to see someone. Instead, he only found food. He ate a little and went back to sleep. Then the angel returned a second time, touched him again, and told him to eat more because the journey ahead was great. First, know this: God cares. He cared for Elijah's need for company, food, and hope. At that point, the prophet had signed out of life. He expected nothing but death, yet God was not finished with him.

Stephen Hawking was one of the most accomplished scientists of the past century, but his life was far from easy. At age twenty-one, he was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. It left him in a wheelchair for five decades, able to communicate only through a special machine.

When you think it is over, that is when God takes over.

Once, while speaking excitedly about his new book, a reporter asked if he was always that happy. Hawking replied that when the disease struck, he thought his life had ended, but everything since then had been a blessing. He went on to live until the age of seventy-six, becoming a bestselling author, receiving the highest honour in the United States, and being ranked number twenty-five on the BBC's list of the 100 greatest Britons. When you think it is over, that is when God takes over.

PREPARE NOW

SEP 11

"Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." 1 Kings 19:7 [NIV]

The angel did not only bring food for Elijah but also explained its purpose. He had a long journey ahead of him. Elijah had no journey planned personally, but God did. For this reason, he was encouraged to eat more. In ***1 Kings 19: 8,*** we learn that Elijah travelled for forty days and forty nights on the strength of that one meal, without needing to eat again. The lesson here is simple: there are many things in our future that we know nothing about. That is why it is in our best interest to load up today. Where we are today, is the result of the preparations we made yesterday. Where we will be tomorrow, depends on the preparations we make today.

Read that book. Stay prayerful. Attend that seminar. Take that online course. Fast regularly, not for show or immediate results, but to build capacity and increase personal value. ***Ecclesiastes 12:1 (NKJV),*** declares, ***"Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, I have no pleasure in them."***

Where we are today is a function of the preparations we made yesterday

Difficult days will always come. To overcome them, Scripture reminds us to prepare now. Build capacity, because the time will come when you will not be motivated or even able to engage in those self-development activities. This applies to individuals, corporate organisations, and nations alike. To create a new future, preparation must begin today.

BEWARE OF DISTRACTIONS

SEP 12

"…And after the fire a still small voice."
1 Kings 19:12 [NIV]

Finally, Elijah reached Mount Horeb, safely out of Jezebel's reach. There, God spoke to him and asked why he had come. Elijah replied that he had been zealous for God and that he was the last prophet remaining, yet his life was under threat. Then God asked him to stand on the mountain. As the Lord passed by, a powerful wind shattered the rocks. After the wind came an earthquake, and then fire. Elijah was a man familiar with signs, wonders, and dramatic manifestations. For him, such events signalled God's presence. Yet Scripture records that God was not in any of them. He was teaching Elijah a deeper lesson: mighty miracles do not necessarily mean that God is present.

Many people today still chase after miracles, signs, and wonders. Yes, such things may occur, but they can distract from what truly matters. Throughout Jesus' ministry, signs and wonders primarily served to convince unbelievers, ***(John 4:48)***. In heaven, there will be no need for signs and wonders. God's greatest desire is that His children treasure His presence and His voice above outward displays.

Miracles are celebrated by the multitudes. Disciples celebrate divine instruction.

After Jesus fed the crowd with five loaves and two fishes, He dismissed them ***(Luke 9:16–17)***. When they had gone, He revealed Himself to His disciples as the Messiah ***(Luke 9:18–20)***. The miracle was for the multitude, but the revelation of His word was for His disciples. In the same way, after Elijah's encounter with the noisy and dramatic events, came a still small voice that gave him the next direction for his life ***(1 Kings 19:12)***. May you never trade the true presence of God for mere distractions. Amen.

WHEN GOD QUESTIONS

SEP 13

"…What are you doing here, Elijah?"
1 Kings 19:9 [NKJV]

God asked Elijah the same question twice, and he gave the same answer twice. The Lord asked why he had travelled to Horeb, and Elijah replied, in essence, that he was being hunted. Yet God is all-knowing. He does not need our answers to form His decisions. When God asks questions, He is pointing our attention to where we have missed it. Through our own words, we begin to see our foolishness. ***Genesis 3:9,*** God asked, ***"Adam, where are you?"*** Adam replied that he had hidden because he was naked. Then in ***verse 11***, God asked two more questions: ***"Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"*** As long as Adam answered honestly, God continued to speak with him. But when Adam shifted the blame to the woman, God turned to Eve and asked in ***Genesis 3:13, "What is this you have done?"*** Eve, seeing what had just happened to Adam, quickly shifted the blame to the serpent. The danger of blame-shifting is that as long as we refuse to answer God honestly, we will miss the truth. God did not argue with them or explain further. He simply handed down His judgement.

You cannot receive the truth unless you are prepared to answer difficult questions

Elijah's response to God's first question in ***1 Kings 19:10*** revealed his flawed thinking. He carried God's presence, yet he ran at a mere threat from Jezebel. Even the breeze from God's passing broke mountains; how much more the full presence that was with Elijah? When God asked the same question again, Elijah still failed to understand. As a result, God chose to replace him with Elisha ***(1 Kings 19:13–19)***. May you never lose your place because of self-doubt. Amen.

GOD HAS SUBSTITUTES

SEP 14

"Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal."
1 Kings 19:18 [NKJV]

After God questioned Elijah and he repeated the same answer, the Lord said in ***1 Kings 19:15, (NIV), "Go back the way you came"*** Elijah had travelled for forty days and forty nights, yet God sent him back along the same path. Fear had driven him far from Israel, but the word of God redirected him to face it. The instruction he received marked the end of his earthly ministry. He was told to anoint Hazael as king over Syria. Up to that point, Elijah's ministry was confined to Israel. This command, however, signalled the beginning of an international assignment. Sadly, because fear had capped his journey, Elijah only caught a glimpse of this broader dimension. His successor, Elisha, would later step powerfully into that level of ministry.

God's plan is always to expand our scope beyond our immediate environment. Yet we can restrict ourselves through fear or a limited perspective. Where faith stops, exploits stop. God will never push us beyond our willingness to advance. In the same instruction, God announced the end of Ahab's reign by appointing Jehu as king and also directed Elijah to anoint Elisha as his prophetic successor. After declaring these transitions in earthly kingdoms and the prophetic office, God corrected Elijah's error. He had felt as though he was the only one left serving God. But the Lord revealed that seven thousand in Israel had not bowed to Baal. No one can hold God to ransom. If one servant refuses, He will raise others. As Jesus said in ***Luke 19:40, "If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."***

God will not push us beyond our willingness to advance

MOTIVATION IS ESSENTIAL

SEP 15

"So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He threw his cloak around him."
1 Kings 19:19 [NKJV]

1 Kings 19:15–16 tells us, God had instructed Elijah to anoint Hazael as king of Syria, Jehu as king of Israel, and Elisha as prophet, in that order. For some reason, Elijah sought out Elisha first, ignoring the two earlier directives. He never anointed the two kings himself; it was Elisha who later carried out those assignments ***(2 Kings 8:7–15 and 2 Kings 9:1–10).*** Even with Elisha, Elijah did not anoint him as God had commanded. He simply threw his cloak over him and moved on. Elisha was clearly one of the seven thousand reserved prophets that God had mentioned. Elijah may have been embarrassed to realise that God was right and that there were others who could succeed where he had failed. From the outset, Elisha proved highly motivated to assume the prophet's office. He had already worked eleven pairs to exhaustion before pressing on with the last pair, when Elijah found him, ***(1 Kings 19:19)***.

The ability to push yourself consistently is more valuable than any talent you may have

Consider this: An Ox is a strong animal, able to pull close to nine hundred kilograms of weight and endure long hours of work without tiring. Elisha outlasted twenty-four of them in sheer endurance. This was the kind of driven, resilient, and motivated man that God chose to succeed Elijah. As soon as the cloak touched him, Elisha ran after Elijah. Yet Elijah offered no encouragement, He only said in ***1 Kings 19:20, "Go back."*** Sometimes our mentors are not our greatest fans. Sometimes the key ingredient to success is not how anointed we are but how motivated we are**.** Therefore, approach your God-given assignments with optimism, passion, and endurance.

GIVE GOD'S CALLING YOUR BEST

SEP 16

"He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the ploughing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant."
1 Kings 19:19 [NKJV]

It is a rare privilege to be called by God. ***Hebrews 5:4, "And no man takes this honour to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was."*** If you have not been called, you can never attain the honour that comes with a calling. And if you call yourself out of desire for that honour, it will only end in shame. Elisha was a lover of God, but he had not been called yet. He must have heard of Elijah's exploits and passionately desired them. Yet, until Elijah touched him, Elisha remained at his secular job, working diligently. As soon as Elijah's cloak touched him, however, Elisha ran after him and asked permission to say goodbye to his parents. Elijah told him to go back.

If you keep a plan B, you may not put your best into plan A

Elisha returned home and slaughtered all his Oxen; all twenty-four of them. He then used the wood (yoke that connects the Oxen in pairs) to make fire, cooked the meat, and shared it with his villagers. Talk about burning the bridge! Elisha was so convinced of God's call that he destroyed his thriving farm business. A man with twenty-four oxen and farmland was clearly not poor, yet he gave it all up just to become Elijah's servant. This is scary. If you have been called by God, it is a privilege. It is not to be debated.

DEDICATION WINS

SEP 17

"Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant" 1 Kings 19:21 [NKJV]

Still on the matter of Elisha and the way he responded to the call. Elisha burned his thriving business to ensure he had nothing to return to if he failed. This is dedication. Some time ago, I listened to one of Myles Munroe's messages where he explained that dedication is greater than loyalty, skill, and commitment put together. At first, I was confused. But then he clarified that people can be loyal and committed because they believe in what you represent or for other reasons. When those reasons change, their loyalty may also change. Dedication, however, says: *"If you sink, I sink. If you succeed, I succeed."*

Dreams and visions are never clear in the beginning. Commit first. You will figure it out as you go.

Elisha became dedicated to Elijah. It was Elijah or nothing. But what was it about Elijah that made Elisha take such a decision without even a day to consider his future? It is quite unnatural to go from being a business owner to becoming someone's servant, especially the servant of a wanted and hunted man like Elijah. We may never know why Elisha responded so promptly. Ordinarily, people do not make life-altering decisions in a moment. Perhaps, God had already hinted to Elisha that Elijah was coming. Notice also that when Elisha asked to say goodbye to his parents, Elijah moved on. Elisha had to go and look for him again after feasting with his family. The longer you delay in responding to God's call, the farther away and the more difficult it becomes to catch up.

SERVANTHOOD

SEP 18

"Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant" 1 Kings 19:21 [NKJV]

Elijah was instructed to anoint Elisha as his successor. He received that anointing when the cloak touched him, but he did not assume office immediately. The starting point to greatness is always servanthood. ***2 Corinthians 4:17***, the Bible speaks of the *"weight of glory."* Many underestimate the power and pressure of sudden success. Any form of glory is heavy and unless you develop the capacity to carry it, you may be crushed under its weight.

A relative once shared how she reacted to the biggest cash gift she had ever received. She was so shocked by the SMS alert that she fell ill and had to be placed on drips to stabilise. Out of curiosity, I asked how much it was. She mentioned six figures. I teased her by asking, *"What if you had been gifted with a million? You might have suffocated."* We laughed about it, but the truth is clear: there are certain levels of glory God cannot give us without first preparing us.

The starting point to greatness is always servanthood

God took a portion of the spirit that was on Moses and distributed it to seventy elders. ***Numbers 11:25 (KJV)), "When the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease."*** The same Spirit that rested calmly on Moses came upon seventy grown men, and they lost composure. The anointing is in measures ***(Ezekiel 47:3-4)***, but we must grow into higher levels as we walk with God.

THE LABOUR OF FOUNDING FATHERS

SEP 19

"Meanwhile a prophet came to Ahab king of Israel and announced, 'This is what the Lord says…"
1 Kings 20:13 [NIV]

After Elijah had appointed Elisha, he became silent for some years. It seemed as though God was done with him. In fact, other prophets rose up. In ***1 Kings 20,*** we read of three different prophets who went to Ahab to deliver messages from God. Prophets who had once been afraid to appear in public were now freely moving about and speaking to the king. This was possible because Elijah had charted the way. His exploits emboldened others. Jezebel's influence on Ahab also appeared to have weakened. Not only was Elijah still alive despite Jezebel's threat, but Ahab was now listening to prophets of God rather than prophets of Baal.

Everyone enjoying the luxury of ministry today should remember that they are feeding off the sweat and blood of the founding fathers

In Christendom, there are men and women who have risked their lives to pave the way for the next generation. Many endured untold hardships to give us what we enjoy today. Mary Slessor, a Scottish missionary, learned the Efik language to reach the people of Calabar. Through her labour of love, centuries of twin-killing were ended. S. G. Elton left England in 1937 to help strengthen Christianity in present-day southwest Nigeria. Samuel Ajayi Crowther, stolen at the age of twelve and sold into slavery (1821-1829), later regained his freedom, returned home, and translated the Bible into Yoruba. That translation was used by Apostle Babalola and S. G. Elton to evangelise millions of Yorubas. The heroes of faith may not be often spoken of, but the flame they lit spread into larger fires. They deserve our honour and respect.

YOU ARE NOT INDISPENSABLE

SEP 20

"And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying…" 1 Kings 21:17 [NIV]

After a long time following Elijah's complaint to God about wanting to die, God once again sent him with a message to King Ahab. During that hiatus, which lasted more than a year, God worked through other prophets, completely bypassing Elijah ***(1 Kings 20:13, 22, and 35–42)***. As expected, Ahab continued to disregard God, even though God had saved him from impossible situations through prophetic interventions ***(1 Kings 20:13 and 28).*** This time Ahab coveted the vineyard of Naboth. He offered to pay for it, but Naboth refused, insisting that the vineyard was a generational inheritance that could not be sold at any price. Jezebel seized this as an opportunity to reassert her lost influence over her husband. She wrote letters in the king's name, sealed them with his stamp, and arranged for Naboth to be killed, ***(1 Kings 21:8)***. As soon as Naboth was executed, God sent His judgement upon Ahab and Jezebel through the prophet Elijah ***(1 Kings 21:19).***

It is a privilege to be called to serve. Anyone is dispensable.

However, our focus here is not on Ahab or Jezebel but on Elijah. God proved to Elijah that He could work without him and use other people. If we refuse to serve God's kingdom interests, He can always raise others in our place. But when we humble ourselves, He can restore us to fellowship. Nebuchadnezzar thought he had built the great Babylon through his own brilliance, but God reduced him to live like an animal, ***(Daniel 4:28–37).*** Ahab thought he could act as he pleased, but God humbled him. Elijah complained, and God bypassed him for a season. God alone rules in the affairs of men ***(Daniel 4:17).*** It is wise to acknowledge Him in all our dealings.

SEEK GOD'S WISDOM

SEP 21

Elijah answered the captain, 'If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!" 2 Kings 1:17 [NIV]

After the episode of Naboth and God's judgement on Ahab and Jezebel, three years passed without any major event, ***(1 Kings 22:1).*** Then Ahab died in battle, and his son Ahaziah succeeded him. Ahaziah was no different from his father, for he also followed in his father's evil ways. Elijah prophesied his death ***(2 Kings 1:6).*** Displeased with this prophecy, Ahaziah sent a military officer with fifty men to arrest Elijah. But Elijah called down fire to consume them. The king sent another team, and they too were destroyed by fire. Again, a third team was dispatched.

In situations where you cannot go forward or backward, go downwards on your knees.

Ahaziah's cruelty mirrored his father's. A considerate king would have valued the lives of his men and refrained from sending more men to their death. Elijah also would not yield, for he had already consumed the first two groups with fire. The soldiers had no choice: obey the king and face Elijah's fire, or refuse and face death for disobedience. Sometimes in life, going forward seems impossible and retreating appears worse. What should we do? The third captain assessed the situation wisely. He fell on his knees and pleaded for his life and the lives of his men. Then, an angel of the Lord intervened and instructed Elijah to go with them, ***(2 Kings 1:13–15)***. This is wisdom. ***Ecclesiastes 7:1, (KJV), "For wisdom is a defence, and wisdom giveth life to them that have it."*** In life's most difficult moments, when human wisdom fails, humble yourself and cry out to God. He will always make a way of escape. Amen.

THE REWARD OF DEDICATION

SEP 22

"Elisha said, 'As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!'" 2 Kings 2:2b [NKJV]

Finally, the day came when Elijah was to be taken up to heaven. The news of his transition was not hidden. Virtually every prophet in Israel saw the revelation and shared it with Elisha, as recorded in ***2 Kings 2:3 and 5.*** It had been several years since Elisha left his thriving farming business to follow Elijah. At first, it seemed as though Elijah was not handing over as expected, and Elisha appeared stuck in servanthood. But recall our earlier lesson on dedication in this series. Elisha was determined to swim or sink with Elijah. Thrice, Elijah pleaded with Elisha to stay behind while he continued on his journey ***(2 Kings 2:2, 4 and 6)***. Thrice, Elisha refused. He would not let Elijah walk alone. Elijah was a loner, a man who spent much of his life in isolation. Not that he enjoyed it, but his ministry and temperament demanded it.

Greatness often eludes those who seek it. Instead, it seeks out dedicated servants who pay no mind to it.

Earlier, when Elijah fled from Jezebel, he left his first servant behind in Beersheba ***(1 Kings 19:3).*** That servant was not sensitive to Elijah's inner struggles. Perhaps, Elijah did not want him to witness his lowest moments of despair. That first servant had stayed with Elijah in times of glory but quit when things grew dark. In contrast, Elisha's dedication shone brightly. His attitude was, "Master, even if it seems God is done with you, I will not leave. I will serve you to the end." Finally, Elijah recognised this rare loyalty and asked Elisha to make a request ***(2 Kings 2:9)***. Elisha was not seeking glory. All he wanted was to serve. Greatness avoids those who chase after it, but it always locates the dedicated servant who pays no attention to it.

DOUBLE PORTION

SEP 23

"Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?" 2 Kings 2:9 [NKJV]

For the first time in years, Elijah asked his faithful servant what he wanted. Elisha did not ask for money. He had enough before leaving his farming business to follow Elijah. He did not ask for fame. Elisha had already witnessed his master suspend the laws of nature many times. He had seen Elijah call down fire from heaven that consumed his enemies. Just before Elijah asked this question, he had parted the Jordan and walked across on dry ground. Elisha wasted no time in making his request. He asked for a double portion of Elijah's anointing. No one can give what they do not have. Elijah carried his own power, but Elisha was asking for all that and more. Only God could grant such a request. In essence, Elisha was saying, *"I have walked with you and studied your life. The task ahead is difficult. I do not only want what you have. I want twice as much, so that I may serve my generation better."*

Only the truly dedicated can ascend and retain the throne of greatness

This reminds us of Solomon. After he honoured God with a thousand burnt offerings, God appeared to him and said in ***2 Chronicles 1:7, "Ask! What shall I give you?"*** Those were the same words Elijah spoke to Elisha. To receive such a blank cheque, whether from God or from a revered mentor, you must serve with dedication. True mentors are not deceived. They can discern the difference between pretence and loyalty. Only the truly dedicated ascend to the throne of greatness. Finally, the chariot of fire came for Elijah, and Elisha saw it. He cried out, tore his garments in grief, and then caught the mantle meant for him (***2 Kings 2:12–13)***. May we never miss the crown that is destined for us. Amen.

BE PERSISTENT

SEP 24

"Elisha then picked up Elijah's cloak that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan." 2 Kings 2:13 [NIV]

Suddenly, the chariot of fire came for Elijah while he was still speaking with Elisha. Elisha then picked up the mantle of Elijah which had fallen from him. This was the same mantle with which Elijah had struck Elisha ***(1 Kings 19:19)***. The mantle had finally become Elisha's. Have you noticed that when you first gave your life to Christ, it seemed as though your prayers were answered much faster? Miracles were common, fellowship was sweet, and reading the Scriptures felt effortless. Later, it might have seemed as though God's presence was withdrawn. Over time, praying required more effort, and studying the Bible felt difficult. This is synonymous with Elijah's mantle. It struck Elisha and was withdrawn. Elisha, however, pursued Elijah for years until the mantle finally became his.

Passion is proven by pursuit

Everyone receives a foretaste of the powers to come, ***(Hebrews 6:5).*** This often happens soon after salvation. However, only those who place a high value on fellowship with God will keep pursuing it, no matter how distant He may seem. Some give up along the way, believing their early experiences in Christ were only emotional. They no longer feel God's presence as before, and the birds of the air pick up the seed that God planted in their hearts, ***(Matthew 13:4)***. Even if fellowship has been lost, God calls us to follow hard after Him. Keep pressing into God. The mantle will soon be yours for keeps

DOUBLE HONOR

SEP 25

"The company of the prophets from Jericho, who were watching, said, 'The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha.' And they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him." 2 Kings 2:15 [NIV]

As soon as Elisha received the mantle, the first thing he did was repeat Elijah's last miracle by parting the Jordan River. Only Moses had performed this miracle before ***(Exodus 14:21),*** when God dried up the Red Sea so that millions of Israelites could cross. Elijah, however, had his own private passageway built across a river so that he would not get his feet wet, and this miracle was witnessed by fifty sons of the prophets ***(2 Kings 2:7).*** When Elisha repeated this special miracle, the sons of the prophets were in awe and bowed before him. No one ever reverenced Elijah this way in his lifetime, except for the private obeisance from Obadiah ***(1 Kings 18:7)***. Moreover, on Elisha's first day of ministry, fifty men publicly acknowledged him. He received double honour on top of the double anointing.

Genuinely waiting on God may bring pain, but it pays

The men who bowed to Elisha had been watching for a long time and from a distance. In the same way, the world is watching you and I. There is nothing hidden under the sun. If you live in pretence, even once, someone is silently watching, and one day the entire world may hear from that witness. That person could be your infant child, a timid staff member, or a loyal spouse. Their perspective may change tomorrow, and they will speak

WATCH YOUR WORDS

SEP 26

"And he turned back… and cursed them in the name of the Lord." 2 Kings 2:24 [NIV]

Elisha wasted no time in manifesting the spirit and power of Elijah that had come upon him. In the very chapter where he received power, he performed three miracles in quick succession. First, he parted the Jordan. Then, he healed a poisoned water source. Finally, he cursed forty-two youths who mocked him because of his bald head, ***(2 Kings 2:14, 20–24)***. Two she-bears came out of the bush and mauled them. Anyone might wonder why Elisha cursed the children ***(2 Kings 2:23–24)***. Were they not just being playful? Should he not have ignored them? Consider that anyone would feel upset if publicly mocked for a physical defect.

Remember, ***Mark 11:12–24*** is the account of Jesus cursing the fig tree. He was hungry and had hoped to find fruit on it. Although it was not the season for figs, He still cursed the tree. When the disciples drew His attention to the incident, Jesus did not apologise. Instead, He taught them that they would always have what they declared if they believed without doubting. It is better to curse a tree than to curse people.

Mind your speech when upset. There is an unexplainable connection between heightened emotions and curses.

The great lesson here is to watch your speech when upset (according to ***Colossians 4:6)***. Later, when Jesus's disciples requested permission to call down fire on a city that had rejected the gospel, Jesus turned and rebuked them, saying, ***"Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." (Luke 9:54–56).*** If He had not corrected them, they might have destroyed an entire city. Such is the power that can manifest when anger is stirred. There is indeed a mysterious link between heightened emotions and curses. For this reason, parents should refrain from speaking curses over their children when upset.

SOUND OF MUSIC

SEP 27

"And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him."
2 Kings 3:15 [NIV]

The kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom united to subdue the king of Moab. Along the way, they ran out of water and faced the risk of losing their soldiers, cattle, and camels. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, was a lover of God and asked his companions if they could find a prophet to consult. Someone recommended Elisha, and the three kings went to him. Receiving three kings was a great honour, but Elisha was not impressed. He was particularly displeased with the presence of Jehoram, son of Ahab, and he expressed his displeasure openly. His anger disconnected him from God's presence. To realign himself with the Spirit, Elisha asked for a minstrel. As the minstrel played, the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied the way out of the kings' predicament.

Solutions come faster in joyous atmospheres

Psalm 49:4 (TLB) says, ***"I will tell in song accompanied by harps the answer to one of life's most perplexing problems."*** Here, the psalmist shows that solutions to life's challenges often come in an atmosphere of joy. ***Isaiah 12:3*** adds, ***"With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."*** In joy, solutions appear; in gloom, problems deepen. This was exactly what Elisha did, he turned away from agitation and refocused on God's presence through music. Research has shown that music reduces blood pressure and anxiety while improving mood by lowering stress levels. It is a powerful tool for changing your atmosphere. Put it to good use.

THE PROPHETIC

SEP 28

"The sun was shining on the water. To the Moabites across the way, the water looked red like blood."
2 Kings 3:22 [KJV]

One of the benefits of our faith is the prophetic. When God decides to do a miracle in your life, He will announce it in advance. ***Amos 3:7 (NIV), "Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets."*** It is just the modus operandi of God to announce His plan in advance. Sometimes, a few hours before it happens. Other times, a thousand years in advance. The trouble is that God will never reveal the how. That is where faith and patience come ***(Hebrews 6:12)***. Unless you have those two virtues, you can never benefit from the prophetic.

God often announces what he wants to do, but he rarely reveals the how.

In today's scripture, God announced that the desert will be filled with water, even though they will not see wind or rain. Mysterious. You do not need wind or rain. What you need is water, and that water you will get. Simple! You see, when God is involved, you do not need menstruation to conceive; you do not need to apply or be interviewed to start a job; you certainly do not need anyone to get to that height that God has promised you. If He says it, consider it done. Unfortunately, when God promises a thing, the natural brain starts calculating how things can work out. But, God does not take kindly to the prophetic being questioned. He only wants you to believe. *In* ***Luke 1:8-20 (NIV)***, angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah to announce that his aged wife will conceive and birth a child. In doubt, he questioned ***"how can I be sure of this?"*** The angel was displeased and told him that he would be mute until the child was born. Do not question. Just believe!

THE BLOOD

SEP 29

"The sun was shining on the water. To the Moabites across the way, the water looked red like blood."
2 Kings 3:22 [KJV]

According to the prophecy of Elisha, God would not only provide water without rain to the three kings but also deliver them from the King of Moab ***(2 Kings 3:18–19)***. Yet, God did not reveal how this would happen; the how belonged to His wisdom. By morning, water had filled the valley, and the kings and their armies drank, along with their livestock. To the Moabites, however, the water reflected in the early sun appeared as blood. Believing the three kings had turned against one another, they rushed forward and were met with a mighty force. By this appearance of blood, the prophecy was fulfilled and their defeat was certain.

Blood is the ultimate weapon in the spirit realm

When the King of Moab realised what had happened, he gathered 700 men to break through in battle, but failed. In desperation, he offered his heir as a sacrifice ***(2 Kings 3:26–27)***. Through this act, he managed to escape. What 700 warriors could not accomplish, the blood of one achieved. Blood is the ultimate weapon. It is the currency of transaction in the spiritual realm. Whenever blood is shed, whether through crime or sacrifice, something shifts in the unseen realm. Those who practise evil know this, but how many believers truly understand it? When the battle is overwhelming, it is time to call on the blood of Jesus. His blood is superior to every other.

THE JAR OF OIL I

SEP 30

"My husband is dead, and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord." 2 Kings 4:1 [KJV]

A widow ran to Elisha for help. Her husband had been one of the sons of the prophets. According to her, he was not serving God with lip service; he truly feared the Lord. If his wife could bear such a testimony, then it must have been genuine. No one can hide their true character forever from a spouse or children. Pretence is exhausting, and in time the mask always slips. This prophet loved, feared, and served God. Yet, these did not prevent him from dying young and leaving debts behind. Why is it that people who love God still suffer common tragedies? There are two explanations. The first is ignorance, which is the greatest weapon Satan uses to oppress people. If he can deprive someone of working knowledge in any area, he can punish them in that area.

Ignorance is not an excuse, whether in a court of law or in heaven.

Jesus said, ***"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 16:19).*** You may own both a house and a car, but the house key cannot start the car. Each of us, therefore, needs a set of keys to function. Again, Jesus said, ***"Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge." (Luke 11:52).*** Information is a vital key to accessing God's provisions. Satan seeks to hide the very key that makes people free, ***(John 8:32)***. Some believers may be wealthy, yet remain sick. They hold the key to prosperity but lack the key to health. Access to God's blessings is a matter of possessing the right keys. May we receive our full set of keys, in Jesus' name. Amen.

THE JAR OF OIL II

OCT 01

"My husband is dead, and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord…" 2 Kings 4:1b [KJV]

The second explanation is similar to the first. Every creature is subject to certain laws. For human beings, our reality is to walk on the ground because of the law of gravity. If we saw another person flying without visible aid, we would be disturbed. But this is not the reality of birds. The law of gravity does not restrain them; they fly at will because they operate under another law, the law of aerodynamics. In the same way, while some people live under the curse of the law, others function under a different spiritual law, even though they share the same world. A husband and wife may live under the same roof, yet each may be operating under a different law. Our realities can be very different.

We are all geniuses. We just need to find the law (or key) that works for us.

I had a friend in high school who loved to play. He would spend months playing, but when examination time came, he became serious. Even then, he never joined us for night reading. While we were in class, he would hide to sleep and relied on our returning footsteps at 9:30 p.m. as his alarm clock. That was when he began his study. Amazingly, he always passed with distinction. Meanwhile, I followed the school's schedule and struggled for years. It was not until my final year at the university that I discovered my own formula, by accident. For optimum concentration, I needed to eat, then sleep. When I wake up, I tried avoid wasting energy on talking or playing. My friend discovered his routine earlier, and because of it, he was on scholarship until he earned his PhD in the UK. Spiritual laws work the same way. We are all geniuses. We simply need to find the law that works for us.

THE JAR OF OIL III

OCT 02

"How can I help you?" 2 Kings 4:2 [NKJV]

Over the past two days, we have explored two reasons why a God-fearing individual can live a defeated life. A third reason lies in the widow herself. She cried and complained, yet none of her words contained a clear request. Instead, she used self-justification, lamentation, and accusation. By saying that her husband feared God, she implied that a righteous man should not suffer. When she told the prophet, ***"You know that he feared God,"*** she was indirectly accusing him of knowing her problem, and doing nothing; a subtle attempt to guilt-trip him. Finally, she lamented that creditors were coming for her sons.

One of the greatest challenges of a poverty mindset is its refusal to take responsibility. Such a mindset makes people expect the world to always notice their problems. It creates a sense of entitlement, as though others are responsible for their suffering and must do something about it. But this is not how life works. No one owes anyone anything. Furthermore, the Creator designed the world to respond only to those who make specific demands.

Life responds faster when you ask direct questions and demand specific answers

We see blind Bartimaeus a similar case in ***Mark 10:46–52***. Though he shouted, ***"Son of David, have mercy on me,"*** and got Jesus' attention, Jesus still asked him, ***"What do you want Me to do for you?"*** Although his condition was obvious, Jesus required a direct request. In five verses (46–50), there was much drama, but in just two verses (51–52), Bartimaeus received his healing because he asked specifically. Napoleon Hill once said, ***"Set your mind on a definite goal and observe how quickly the world stands aside to let you pass."*** Until you make a direct request, you may continue to wander without answers.

THE JAR OF OIL IV

OCT 03

"How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?" 2 Kings 4:2 [NKJV]

Elisha owed the widow nothing, but thank God for mercy. He taught her a valuable lesson that should benefit us all. Yesterday's lesson reminded us that life responds faster when our requests are specific. Today's lesson is that we must learn to take responsibility. From the scripture we read, the prophet did not instruct his treasurer to give her money, nor did he use his influence to dissuade the creditor. Instead, he addressed the real issue behind her poverty – the mind. Her initial response was, ***"Your maidservant has nothing in the house…"*** Then she added, ***"…except a jar of oil."*** That jar of oil, which she had disregarded, was her way out.

Her late husband was a son of one of the prophets. By general rule, they were full-time ministers who lived on the gifts people gave them. But, as we have seen in previous studies, getting ahead in life requires finding what works. The world operates by general rules and expectations it imposes on everyone. Yet those who break ahead in life are those who think differently. The prophet challenged the woman to engage her mind and resources to find a permanent solution rather than dwelling on pity.

One of the key problems of a poverty mindset is that it blames everything but never accepts responsibility for anything

In addition to personal effort, we also need God's mercy. ***2 Chronicles 15:3*** says, ***"For a long time Israel has been without the true God, without a teaching priest…"*** We therefore need both effort and divine guidance. Elisha was the teaching priest to the widow, and her breakthrough came when she heeded his counsel. May God direct our thoughts towards the necessary actions that will lead to our breakthroughs. Amen.

THE JAR OF OIL V

OCT 04

And he said to her, 'There is not another vessel.' So, the oil ceased." 2 Kings 4:6b [NIV]

The widow obeyed the prophet's instruction and ran with it. True to his word, the oil flowed miraculously, and all her vessels were filled. At some point, she asked for another vessel, and her son replied that there was no more. Immediately, the flow of oil ceased. Every miracle in our lives, as well as every difficulty, is voice-activated. The oil stopped flowing only in response to what the boy said. ***Proverbs 18:21, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue."*** You can speak yourself into health, and you can also speak yourself into sickness.

A study shows that women speak an average of 20,000 words per day, while men speak about 7,000. The question is: how many of those words truly matter to our purpose? ***Matthew 12:36*** warns that we shall all give account for every idle word we speak. ***James 3:6*** also says that the tongue is a world on its own, a world of iniquity. Verses 2–5 reveal that where your speech goes, your life follows. ***James 3:8*** adds that no one can tame the tongue, for it is a restless evil. The only way to exercise control is to guard the source, which is the heart. ***"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life," (Proverbs 4:23, (NKJV))***. Words are also issued from the heart, as ***Matthew 12:34*** explains. Therefore, life itself is shaped by the words we speak. May we continuously speak life into our future, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Every miracle, as well as every difficulty, is voice-activated

THE JAR OF OIL VI

OCT 05

"Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left." 2 Kings 4:7 [NKJV]

Once the flow of oil ceased, the widow approached the prophet to give feedback on what had happened. The prophet then instructed her to sell the oil. With the proceeds, she was to settle her debt and live on the balance. We do not know exactly what percentage of her sales cleared the debt, but it is likely that what remained was far more than what she owed. It was enough to sustain her for life. The greater lesson the prophet taught her was the importance of faith and works. She trusted God for a miracle, and He gave her one. Yet she also put in a great deal of hard work. The oil likely flowed all night as she and her sons filled the vessels. Her diligence was also evident when she went out to sell the product God had miraculously provided.

Scripture reminds us that dependence on faith alone may fail ***(James 2:17)***, just as relying only on the arm of flesh will also fail ***(Jeremiah 17:5–9*** and ***Psalm 44:3)***. ***Proverbs 3:6 (TLB)*** says, ***"In everything you do, put God first, and he will direct you and crown your efforts with success."*** The widow acknowledged God and His prophet at every stage of her miracle. Once her vessels were filled, she did not assume what to do. Instead, she returned to the prophet for the next instruction. Many who began well later grew overconfident and said to God, "*Thank You, but I can take over from here."* Never push God out of the driver's seat. He sees far better than we ever will.

PERCEPTION

OCT 06

"And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God." 2 Kings 4:9 [NIV]

One day, Elisha travelled through Shunem, and a prominent woman urged him to stop and eat. Each time he passed that way, he did the same. Elisha never announced himself or carried himself with pomp. He simply ate and went on his way. Yet, in speaking with her husband, the woman said she perceived that Elisha was a holy man of God. We must acknowledge that women were created specially and possess an uncanny ability to see beyond men. A preacher once said that women are spiritual gates; through them all people enter the world, and through them many depart. He also said that if you have a ministry and women are not part of it, you are not serious.

The Scriptures demonstrates this truth. The birth of Jesus was first announced to a woman ***(Luke 1:26)***. At His resurrection, a woman was the first to meet Him **(*John 20:11–18)***. During His earthly ministry, women also supported His work, ***(Luke 8:2–3*** and ***Mark 15:40–41)***. From the beginning, Adam had been in the garden yet did not notice the serpent. But when the woman appeared, she immediately discerned the serpent and recognised that it could speak.

A woman's power of perception and intuition is unparalleled

Even today, a woman may wake up and say to her husband, "*Darling, do not travel today."* A wise man will not ignore her voice. With this exceptional quality, the rich woman of Shunem recognised greatness in Elisha simply through perception. This gift attracted miracles for her family. Perception is heightened intuition; the sixth sense. It is a gift of God, and it grows stronger with use, ***(Hebrews 5:14)***. Use this gift often and wisely.

DO GOOD

OCT 07

"According to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son." 2 Kings 4:16 [NIV]

The Shunammite woman perceived the holy man of God and proceeded to honour him. She provided him with free accommodation and even furnished a room for him. In fact, she modified her house just for Elisha, ***(2 Kings 4:10).*** She had no plan of asking for any favour from the man of God. She simply acted out of honour. But Elisha was moved to reward her. He invited her to make her request, yet she said she was content. Still not satisfied with leaving her unrewarded, Elisha asked his servant Gehazi for counsel. Gehazi quickly pointed out that she had no child and that her husband was old, ***(2 Kings 4:14)***. Elisha then called her again and prophesied that she would bear a child within nine months. Doubtfully, she replied, ***"No, my lord. Do not lie to me,"*** ***(see verse 16)***. Nevertheless, the prophecy came to pass, and she embraced her own son, as verse 17 records.

Dr. Mike Murdock once said, ***"The key to favour is honour."*** If you desire to be favoured, honour greatness whenever you encounter it. If you meet a great man or woman in a restaurant, offer to pay for their meal. Rich and great people are not used to receiving favours from those who have less than they do. When you honour them without expectation, they will often move heaven and earth to return the kindness. The same principle applies with God. When you serve Him selflessly, you may not even need to ask before He blesses you, ***Isaiah 65:24*** reveals. Honour opens the door to God's favour. Give without expectation, and His blessings will pursue you.

The key to favour is honour (Mike Murdoch)

FORTITUDE

OCT 08

"It shall be well." 2 Kings 4:23b [NIV]

The Shunammite woman's son grew up and one day went out to join his father in the fields during harvest. Then tragedy struck. The little boy cried out, ***"My head, my head!"*** This seemed to be a severe migraine. His father told a servant to take the boy back to his mother. On the very day they were to reap the fruits of their labour, death came to harvest their only child. The boy died on his mother's lap.

The enemy is truly evil. He sentenced this couple to a life without an heir, but God changed their story. Yet, the enemy did not relent. However, the woman's response in such a critical moment revealed her inner strength. She did not cry out or spread the news that her son had died. Instead, she laid him on the bed of the man of God, asked her husband for a donkey and a servant, and set out to see Elisha. When her husband questioned her about travelling so late in the day, she simply replied, ***"It shall be well."***

When you are squeezed, what is in you comes out.
If you are an orange, only sweetness will come out.
If you are bitter leaf, only bitterness will come out.
(Anon)

This is an amazing display of inner fortitude in a time of crisis. Many people are quick to share bad news to attract sympathy, but this woman had enough strength to remain composed. Our faith and character are often tested most in times of crisis. Someone once said, *"When you are squeezed, what is in you comes out. If you are an orange, only sweetness will come out. If you are bitter leaf, only bitterness will come out."* When the Shunammite woman was squeezed, she oozed positivity. Let us build our inner strength, for it does not just come, it is developed, ***(Proverbs 24:10)***.

MAKE DEMANDS

OCT 09

"Did I not say, do not deceive me?" 2 Kings 4:28 [NIV]

As soon as the Shunammite woman met Elisha, she grabbed his leg and said, ***"Did I desire a son of my lord? Did I not say, do not deceive me?" (2 Kings 4:28)***. Earlier, in verse 16, she had already told Elisha that she was not looking for anything else in this world, but Elisha insisted she would have a child.

This shows why God often waits for us to ask before He blesses us, ***(Matthew 7:7)***. Many times, when God blesses people without them asking, they later turn around to blame Him when things go wrong. For example, God gave Adam a wife, and when he sinned, Adam quickly said in ***Genesis 3:12, "The woman You gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit and I ate."*** He was indirectly blaming God for Eve. In another instance, God gave Solomon wealth he did not ask for, and he abused it by engaging a thousand women and building temples for false gods ***(1 Kings 11:3-5).***

Therefore, when people have needs and do not ask, many times they do not receive. But when you ask, God also expects that you ask according to His will, ***(1 John 5:14*** and ***James 4:3)***. You must also take responsibility for the blessing, ***(Mark 11:24*** and ***Matthew 7:7)***. It must be clear that when God blesses you, all the thanks must go to Him, and when things go wrong, we must look inwards. God is always good. When we settle this truth in our hearts before asking, we will receive answers to our prayers much faster.

GOD IS ALWAYS GOOD

OCT 10

"Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me."
2 Kings 4:27 [NIV]

When the Shunammite woman grabbed Elisha's leg, Gehazi attempted to push her away, but Elisha restrained him. He said, ***"Leave her alone; she is in anguish, and the Lord has hidden the reason from me."*** The woman had earlier warned Elisha not to deceive her, and now she felt it would have been better never to have had a child than to bury one. May we never face such a painful trial. Elisha understood her grief. Yet one truth must remain clear: God never does evil, as ***(Ecclesiastes 3:14*** and ***James 1:17)***. When evil occurs, we must not be quick to blame God. This is a common strategy of Satan to create division between God and His children. Sadly, many people fall into this trap and withdraw from God.

I once met a young man who had not attended church for ten years. His mother, who had trained him through school, died of cancer before he could repay her sacrifices. He felt God had failed him. This is how Satan often sows bitterness. Job also struggled in his pain and was quick to blame God ***(Job 19:6, 8-12)***. But when God revealed his error, Job repented in ***Job 42:6***, and God restored him. Never allow your pains to drive a wedge between you and your Creator. There are many things we may not understand, but ***Ecclesiastes 5:6*** warns us not to let our mouths cause our flesh to sin. God is always good.

THE WORKING OF MIRACLES

OCT 11

"Elisha turned away and walked back and forth in the room and then got on the bed and stretched out on him once more." 2 Kings 4:35 [NIV]

Elisha was one of the few men in the Old Testament who walked in the powers of the world to come ***(Hebrews 6:5)***. Raising the dead was always seen as a spectacular miracle reserved for the Messiah. Yet Elisha, uniquely among Old Testament prophets, raised the dead and performed several creative miracles. Even after his death, his bones brought a man back to life ***(2 Kings 13:21).*** What was special about Elisha? He was endowed with a gift of the Holy Spirit known as the working of miracles.

According to ***1 Corinthians 12:7-10,*** every believer in Christ has received a manifestation of the Spirit for the benefit of all. These gifts are never meant for selfish gain or self-glorification, but for the good of others and the glory of God. Among the gifts of the Spirit listed in ***1 Corinthians 12*** are wisdom, faith, healing, prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues, and interpretation. But notice that the working of miracles carries the emphasis on "work."

Some miracles do not come instantly; they are worked out.

In today's passage, Elisha did not simply pray. He acted under divine instruction. He stretched himself over the child, eye to eye, nose to nose, hand to hand. Then he rose, walked around the room, and repeated the motion until life returned. How did he know what to do? By the guidance of the Spirit. In ***John 9:1-7***, when Jesus healed a man born blind, He spat on the ground, made clay, applied it to the man's eyes, and then instructed him to wash in the pool of Siloam. The miracle unfolded step by step.

THE LAW OF SUBSTITUTION

OCT 12

"But he said, 'Then bring meal.' And he cast it into the pot… and there was no harm in the pot."
2 Kings 4:41 [KJV]

In ***2 Kings 4:38***, there was a gathering of the sons of the prophets under Elisha's leadership. At that time, the land was experiencing drought and food scarcity. As they prepared a pottage, one of them unknowingly added a poisonous herb. When the error was discovered, someone cried out that there was death in the pot. Instead of discarding the food and letting everyone go hungry, Elisha requested some meal. He cast it into the pot, and by faith, the poisoned food was made safe. This same principle was seen in the miracle of the floating axe head in ***2 Kings 6:1-7.*** When a borrowed axe head fell into the river and sank, Elisha cut a piece of wood and threw it into the water. The wood went down, and the iron floated. These two miracles reveal what is called the law of substitution.

In the spiritual realm, this law is powerful, though not many understand or apply it. God Himself used it to redeem humanity. When Jesus gave up His life and descended into hell, the dead saints were set free and appeared in Jerusalem, ***(Matthew 27:50-53)*** and ***(Ephesians 4:8-11)***. Through the substitution of His life and blood, we received eternal life. We must learn to engage this law in our daily lives. Every loss, pain, sickness, or death can be reversed when we present the sacrificed blood of Jesus. Amen.

THE LAW OF MULTIPLICATION

OCT 13

"For this is what the Lord says: 'They will eat and have some left over.'" 2 Kings 4:42 [NIV]

In ***2 Kings 4:42***, a man brought Elisha a gift of twenty loaves of bread as a tithe. Though it seemed little, Elisha commanded that it be served to the sons of the prophets who were with him. One of them protested that the food would not be enough, but Elisha declared that not only would everyone eat, there would also be leftovers. This mirrors the miracle of Jesus ***(Matthew 14:13-21)***. If such a miracle can be replicated, then clearly there is a law of multiplication.

This spiritual law follows certain principles:
First, you multiply what you sow, not what you own. Every seed that multiplies must first be released. If you hold on to it, it remains as it is, ***(John 12:24)***. The time between Elisha receiving the seed and giving it up was only seconds.

You multiply what you release, not what you hold.

Second, you must have compassion for others. Each recorded multiplication of bread sprang from compassion. Elisha consistently sought solutions for people. Unlike Elijah, who often withdrew into solitude, Elisha drew crowds to himself, not to exploit them but to bless them. He also supported other prophets so that they could follow in his steps. Third, you must be a person of gratitude. Abundance is attracted to a grateful heart. ***Matthew 14:19*** tells us that Jesus gave thanks before the bread multiplied. Whenever you have little, give thanks and act in faith.

BE A BLESSING

OCT 14

"And Naaman…told his master… 'Thus and thus said the girl who is from the land of Israel.'"
2 Kings 5:4 [NKJV]

The story of Naaman's leprosy and his healing is so important that it occupies an entire chapter in Scripture. The chapter begins by highlighting Naaman's greatness. He rose to prominence by bringing victory to his country, despite his limitation. In those days, lepers were isolated because the disease was highly contagious. Yet, Naaman's exceptional military skill kept him in service, though most likely at arm's length. Despite his contributions, his condition left him socially handicapped.

Then, we meet his slave girl, taken captive from Israel. This young girl became the key to her master's healing. She was neither bitter nor angry about her slavery. Instead, she showed compassion toward her afflicted master. Through her simple word, a mighty commander of an army approached his king, quoting her counsel.

We must never underestimate the power of a small act of goodness. The world has seen enough anger, bitterness, wickedness, and sadness. Let us instead become oasis of love and hope. Like Naaman's servant girl, let us look beyond our unfortunate circumstances to bless others. If we focus only on our troubles, we will never be a blessing to anyone else.

When you focus on being a blessing, your own life cannot remain without light.

Have you seen someone with an ingrown toenail? It cuts into the flesh and causes injury and infection. Often, such toenails are surgically and permanently removed. Likewise, when we focus only on problems, we breed depression. But if we choose to shine, darkness loses hold over us.

UNSPOKEN LANGUAGES

OCT 15

"So Naaman arrived with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's home." 2 Kings 5:9 [TLB]

Humans have many ways of communicating without words. In fact, author Robert Greene insists that 65% of all human communication is non-verbal. People around us are always "speaking" and "hearing." The question is: are they "speaking" or "hearing" what was intended, or something else entirely? First, the king of Syria sent a letter with lavish gifts to the king of Israel, asking him to heal his leprous servant Naaman ***(2 Kings 5:5–6).*** The Syrian king expected the king of Israel to direct them to Elisha. This was standard courtesy: nations typically approached the head of another nation when they had official business. Otherwise, it could be seen as an act of aggression or espionage.

Non-verbal communication is powerful. Be intentional, because it can either open or close doors in your life.

However, the king of Israel interpreted the request as an invitation to war. Likewise, Naaman came to Elisha's door with horses and chariots. Who does that? Horses and chariots create loud, intimidating noise. A more respectful approach would have been to stop at a distance and walk, or arrive on a single horse. No one appreciates it when their personal space is violated. But Naaman showed up in full pomp and pageantry, and so Elisha refused to come out to see him. Elisha may also have perceived Naaman's grand entry as an arrogant way of demanding a miracle. The lesson is clear: examine yourself and pay attention to your verbal and non-verbal cues. Sometimes, these unconscious signals can cost us favour, even when we never intended harm.

BE APPROACHABLE

OCT 16

"But his officers tried to reason with him and said, 'If the prophet had told you to do some great thing, wouldn't you have done it?'" 2 Kings 5:13 [TLB]

Elisha refused to come out to see Naaman because his approach suggested arrogance. Instead, he sent his servant to speak with him. Since Naaman was displaying self-importance, Elisha also used unspoken language to remind him that the prophet too was important. In truth, Elisha was right. Naaman, however, reacted in anger. He said, ***"I thought at least he would come out and talk to me!"*** He spoke many other angry words and went away, ***(2 Kings 5:11-12)***.

The ability to receive criticism with humility as you rise in life will save you one day

Regardless of our flaws, if we are approachable, those around us will notice our errors and correct us. No one fully sees his or her own actions. Others often see us better. ***Proverbs 18:17, "The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbour comes and examines him."*** It is therefore important to give others room to offer honest feedback on our conduct. The higher you rise in life, the more you need feedback from close people. It is a safety net. This was precisely what saved Naaman. His subordinates reasoned with him and asked an intelligent question. He stopped to think, and that saved him from a lifetime of leprosy. When people speak to you sarcastically, do not take it too personally. Pause and think, even if you reacted at first. You may find an important message hidden in their words.

BE HUMBLE

OCT 17

"Then he and his entire party went back to find the prophet; they stood humbly before him."
2 Kings 5:15 [TLB]

After Naaman obeyed Elisha's instructions, he received his healing. This experience humbled him completely, and this time, the prophet Elisha attended to him in person. On this second approach, Naaman and his attendants did not ride their chariots to Elisha's door as before. Instead, they came on foot and stood before the prophet. Naaman then declared, ***"I know at last that there is no God in all the world except in Israel." (2 Kings 5:15b)***. He urged Elisha to accept gifts, but the prophet refused. Naaman had been healed and saved at the same time. From that day forward, he resolved to serve only the God of Israel. He even asked permission to accompany his king when the king went to worship another god, as custom demanded, and Elisha permitted him ***(2 Kings 5:18-19).***

Life has a way of levelling everyone. Time will place us all in our rightful place.

Naaman's transformation was both drastic and dramatic. At first, he approached with arrogance, forgetting that he was the one in need. But after learning humility from his servants and receiving his healing, he realised that pride brings no benefit. To humble ourselves does not diminish who we are, but pride can take much from us. Human nature often pushes us to display our full glory so that others will respect us. But life has a way of levelling everyone. Time will place us all in our rightful place. God alone deserves all the pomp and pageantry.

GREED

OCT 18

"Elisha asked him, 'Where have you been, Gehazi?'"
2 Kings 5:25 [NIV]

While Elisha and Naaman were conversing, Gehazi was listening. He wondered why Elisha would turn down such an opportunity for wealth. Naaman came with ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of garments. In modern terms, one talent of silver weighs about 28 kg, and one shekel of gold about 0.011 kg. Naaman's gold was worth around $4.026 million at the current price, and the silver about $197,120. Yet, God had instructed Elisha not to accept the gifts ***(2 Kings 5:16)***. It was not the time to collect gifts ***(2 Kings 5:26),*** but to give God all the glory. But Gehazi would have none of that. He ran after Naaman's chariot, lied in Elisha's name, and received two talents of silver weighing 56 kg and two garments. What he failed to consider in his greed was that he was serving under a potent prophet, not a blind one. Elisha saw all that transpired and pronounced a curse: Gehazi and his descendants would carry Naaman's leprosy forever.

It is a dangerous thing to tamper with God's glory

For just $39,424 and two suits, Gehazi procured a permanent case of leprosy for himself and his unborn generation. He missed the greater opportunity; the double anointing he could have received if he had served faithfully as Elisha served Elijah. But he disqualified himself through greed and the urge for instant gratification. Greed robs a man of destiny. It is a dangerous thing to tamper with God's glory. Life is not always about possessions.

THE PURPOSE OF BLESSING

OCT 19

"And the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, 'See now, the place where we dwell with you is too small for us…'" 2 Kings 6:1 [NIV]

Today's verse reveals much about the person and character of Elisha. About a hundred sons of the prophets lived with him ***(2 Kings 4:43)***, and he provided for their daily needs. Feeding a hundred men and their families, ***(2 Kings 4:1*** and ***38)***, was itself a miracle. When the sons of the prophets realized their growing families were inconveniencing him, they sought permission to build a larger place. This makes one wonder why Elisha refused Naaman's cash gifts worth millions in today's value ***(2 Kings 5:15–16)***, despite his great responsibility.

The sons of the prophets first appeared in ***2 Kings 2:3***, when they told Elisha that his master Elijah would be taken up. Verse 7 adds, ***"And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood facing them at a distance…"*** Elijah was not very accommodating, so they kept their distance. Elijah even tried to send Elisha away ***(2 Kings 2:4),*** but Elisha refused. After Elijah was taken to heaven, the sons of the prophets bowed to Elisha ***(2 Kings 2:15)***. From fifty, they grew to a hundred and kept increasing, yet Elisha still housed and provide for them.

The purpose of any blessing is to be a blessing to others

Jesus said in ***Matthew 24:45, "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master has made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?" Luke 22:32b*** adds, ***"…and when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."*** God blesses us to strengthen and bless others. The purpose of every blessing is not to hoard it but to share it.

HEAVILY DEFENDED

OCT 20

"Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." 2 Kings 6:16 [NIV]

One day, the king of Syria sent an army to arrest the prophet Elisha. The troops surrounded the city where the prophet was, cutting off any escape route. What was Elisha's offence? The king of Syria had set ambushes for the king of Israel multiple times, but Elisha saw them in the Spirit and warned Israel's king, who escaped every trap. This enraged the Syrian king, so he turned his military might against the prophet.

An elderly man once said, *"When a tree falls on another tree, but you need to retrieve the bottom tree, you must first saw off the upper tree."* This is the lot of intercessors. They are like the top tree shielding the one beneath. Naturally, the lumberjack strikes at them first. Intercessors often face attacks head-on because they stand in the gap for others.

But, thank God for Elisha's spiritual vibrancy. He was prepared. When his servant panicked and asked what they should do, Elisha reassured him: the heavenly host with them was far greater than the soldiers outside. Then Elisha prayed in ***2 Kings 6:17***, and God opened the servant's spiritual eyes to see the chariots of fire surrounding Elisha. It is crucial to be reassured of God's divine security. Without it, fear of the world's dangers can overwhelm us. Truly, the world is full of frightening events, and no place feels safe. But the children of God have this confidence: heaven's defence is always present. Believe it, and rest in it.

BLINDNESS

OCT 21

"And Elisha prayed unto the Lord, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness."
Kings 6:18 [NIV]

Elisha prayed that God would strike the men who came to arrest him with blindness, and God answered. Next, he offered to lead them to the man they were seeking, the king of Israel, and guided them straight into the hands of their enemy ***(2 Kings 6:19–21).*** Elisha knew that when a person cannot see, they are helpless. All our boasting, hustling, and energy is because we can see. Once that light is switched off, everyone calms down. This truth applies both to physical sight and spiritual sight. Spiritually blind people are often easily deceived by false prophecies.

There is a story of a man who worked in a multinational firm where he was well paid and treated kindly. Unfortunately, he met a false prophet. First, the prophet told him that his wife was a witch, and he believed. He drove his wife and children away. Then the prophet claimed that his boss was an occultist who was using him to gain wealth. Again, the man believed and confronted his boss. Naturally, he was dismissed immediately, and from that day forward, his life collapsed.

When the light goes off, everyone finds somewhere to lay down.

The night is the quietest part of the day simply because visibility is reduced. In the same way, when spiritual or physical sight is lost, people believe whatever they are told, depending entirely on the counsel of others, whether sincere or deceptive. This is what Elisha did. He rendered an entire army helpless simply by removing their sight. May we never lose our sight, whether spiritual or physical. Amen.

CONQUEST BY LOVE I

OCT 22

"And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel." 2 Kings 6:23 [KJV]

Although the army that came to arrest Elisha was hostile, the prophet treated them with magnanimity. After he led them into Samaria, and they were surrounded by the Israeli army, Elisha prayed that their eyes be opened. When the king of Israel asked if he could slaughter them, Elisha refused and instead instructed that they be fed and treated well. Afterwards, they were released and sent back unharmed.

The outcome was remarkable (***2 Kings 6:23):*** the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel. What neither force nor resistance could achieve, love accomplished with ease. Feeding and serving an enemy is not natural. Most people would prefer to destroy or distance themselves from an enemy. Yet, love can be a powerful weapon of war. ***Romans 12:20 (NIV)*** says, ***"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."*** This passage does not suggest superficial niceness but reveals love as a divine strategy that disarms hostility.

Miserable people want to spread their misery, but love conquers every time.

Most who hate or attack others often do so because of secret pain. Miserable people try to spread their misery, and angry people lash out without cause. But as believers, we are called to be filled with love. Love is not weakness. Love is both a weapon and a defence.

CONQUEST BY LOVE II

OCT 23

"Then he prepared a great feast for them; and after they ate and drank, he sent them away and they went to their master." 2 Kings 6:23 [KJV]

My father once told me a captivating story from his younger days. As a young man, he rented a single-room apartment where he shared close quarters with his landlady, an old witch. He had the habit of praying all night, and the woman constantly complained that his prayers disturbed her. Even when he prayed quietly, she still complained that fire burned her in her own room. For this reason, she hated him deeply.

One day, she prepared a very sumptuous meal and gave it to him. He placed it on a stool and went to see off a guest. On his return, he noticed water flowing from under his door into the passageway. Surprised, he entered his room and traced the source back to the food. If he had eaten it, he could have become bloated and died. Another time, the Holy Spirit instructed him to present a gift of salt and kola nut to the old woman. When she received the gift, she stared at him intently and asked, "Who taught you this wisdom?" He was lost for words. That marked the end of her antagonism, and she soon died afterward.

1 Corinthians 2:7–8 (NKJV): "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew…" Through God's hidden wisdom, we are preserved from the plots of the enemy. Love is one of such hidden wisdom of God.

DEPEND ON DIVINE HELP

OCT 24

"Then he answered, 'If the Lord does not help you, where can I get help for you?'" 2 Kings 6:27 [KJV]

After a long while, the king of Syria rallied his army again, and this time he laid siege against Samaria. The people shut themselves in. No one could go out or come in. Fresh supplies stopped, and food became extremely scarce. Things grew so desperate that a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver (about $642 in today's value), and dove droppings for five shekels (about $4.56 in today's value), ***2 Kings 6:27***. First, who eats a donkey's head or dove droppings? Sadly, poverty can push people to do the unthinkable.

Poverty causes people to do unthinkable things

In high school, I had a teacher who was eccentric and rarely spoke to anyone. One day, however, he gathered a few of us and shared a chilling story. He had fought as a soldier in the Biafran war, and hunger became so severe that they resolved to eat any soldier too weak to survive. They ate the flesh raw because lighting a fire would expose their position to the enemy. They also ate any kind of leaf they could recognize. That is what war can reduce human beings to.

As the king of Israel passed by, a woman cried out for help. She and her neighbour had cooked and eaten her child the previous day, and now her neighbour had hidden her own child to avoid the same fate. The king responded: ***"If the Lord does not help you, where can I get help for you?"*** His words remind us that whenever we receive help, human beings are only agents. God alone is the true Helper. ***Psalm 60:11, "…vain is the help of man."***

THE FRAILTY OF MAN

OCT 25

"Elisha said to the elders, 'Don't you see how this murderer is sending someone to cut off my head?"
2 Kings 6:32 (KJV)

Today's scripture demonstrates the frailty of man. In ***2 Kings 6:9–10***, Elisha saved the life of the king of Israel repeatedly. Then, ***2 Kings 6:19–21***, Elisha captured the enemies who sought the king's life and handed them over in Samaria. At that point, the king even called Elisha, ***"My father, my father."*** However, in verse 31, the same king who once honoured the prophet swore to behead him because of the famine ravaging the city. This proves that when times and circumstances change, people's loyalty can also change.

A former friend can become the most dangerous enemy because they know your secrets. Thankfully, the Spirit of God had already revealed the king's plot to Elisha. Before the messenger arrived, the prophet told the elders sitting with him that ***"the son of a murderer"*** (referring to the king, being a descendant of Ahab) had sent someone to kill him. As he was still speaking, the messenger arrived, but the elders stopped him at the door. The king's words were harsh: ***"This disaster is from the Lord. Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?"*** Thus, the king blamed Elisha for the siege and the famine.

A former friend is the worst enemy anyone can have

People can hate you for countless reasons. Often, wicked men do not even need a valid reason to harm the innocent. ***"Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end…" (Psalm 7:9)***. But when you walk in the Spirit, God will always reveal the plots of the enemy and provide an escape route. Amen.

JEHOVAH'S TURNAROUND

OCT 26

"Thus saith the Lord, Tomorrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria." 2 Kings 7:1 [KJV]

After Elisha stopped the king's messenger of death, he prophesied the end of the famine as quoted in today's verse. The prophecy sounded so unbelievable that the king's adviser and technocrat expressed doubt. He said that even if God were to open the windows of heaven, such a prophecy could not come to pass ***(2 Kings 7:2)***. In response to that mockery, the prophet declared that he would see the miracle but would not partake of it.

Why did the adviser doubt? Because the miraculous always sounds ridiculous. At the height of the famine, a scoop of dove's dung was sold for $4.56, and a donkey's head was sold for $646 in today's value. Meanwhile, the prophet was now saying that one measure of fine flour and two measures of barley would each be sold for one shekel of silver. One measure equals three gallons, or 13.65 litres. That means 13.65 litres of fine flour and 27.3 litres of barley would each be sold for about $8 in today's terms. They had been paying nearly $5 to eat dove's dung, but by the next day, abundant quality food was to be sold cheaply!

The miraculous always sounds ridiculous

Our God alone can call the impossible into being. Sadly, when people suffer long, they often find it hard to believe any prophecy. But the word of God is always the way out of every mess. David said in ***Psalm 119:162, "I rejoice at Your word, as one who finds great treasure."*** That is the right attitude to the prophetic.

THE PROPHETIC

OCT 27

"And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof." 2 Kings 7:2 [KJV]

In ***2 Kings 7:2,*** the king's special adviser and technocrat sarcastically asked a question intended to mock the prophet's verdict. Unfortunately for him, the prophet was in no mood for banter. He declared that the man would witness the miracle but not partake of it. Whenever the prophetic is in play, there are always casualties. Some will benefit and some will die in the process. ***"Behold, this child (Jesus) is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against." (Luke 2:34)***. That means those who believe will rise, while those who oppose God's word will fall. Prophets are often victims of public opinion.

In ***Numbers 12:1-15),*** we read of three siblings who were all prophets: Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. Moses was the youngest, while Miriam was the oldest. She loved Moses deeply. In fact, she was the one who boldly rescued him as a baby ***(Exodus 2:1-8).*** However, later she spoke against him because he remarried. She also questioned his leadership. God responded by striking her with leprosy, and after that incident, we never heard of Miriam again in Scripture.

Prophets are often victims of public opinion

When you do not understand the prophetic, behave like Mary. ***Luke 2:19*** *says,* ***"But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart."*** Do not question the prophetic because it sounds unbelievable. Keep silent and ponder it. Science cannot always explain matters of faith. Do not allow head knowledge to rob you of your miracle.

COINCIDENCES

OCT 28

"Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate; and they said to one another, Why sit we here until we die?" 2 Kings 7:3 [KJV]

Just about the time Elisha prophesied that there would be a turnaround for the people of Samaria within twenty-four hours, a series of events was unfolding. Some leprous men happened to be at the gate of Samaria. Remember, lepers were not allowed near healthy people, not even at the gates, because their disease was contagious. They lived in the bush or deserted places, and if they came near wilfully, they were stoned to death.

On this occasion, however, every healthy person was hiding within the city of Samaria from the Syrian army. The outskirts of the city were deserted, giving the lepers the liberty to move closer to human habitations. They then came up with an idea to visit the Syrian army camp. This was untold boldness. Their own people would have stoned them if they came near, yet they were proposing to walk into the enemy's camp. It may look like coincidence, but it was not so. When the prophetic word goes ahead of you, motions begin to take place. Creation realigns to bring the word to pass.

When prophecy goes forth, all creation will realign to bring the word to pass.

George Müller (1805–1898) ran an orphanage purely by faith. One day, there was no food to feed the children. He gathered them around the dining table and led them in a prayer of thanksgiving. The hungry children looked at him expectantly while his own heart ached for them. At that moment, a man rang the bell and brought in loaves of bread and milk. There was great joy and rejoicing that night. So long as you believe, God will move heaven and earth in your favour.

WHEN GOD ARISES

OCT 29

"For the Lord had caused the army of the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots and the noise of horses…" 2 Kings 7:6 [KJV]

Enemies may rage and threaten for a long time, but whenever God decides to intervene, it does not take much to scatter them because the flesh is feeble. The entire host of Syria was dispelled simply because they heard the sound of many chariots approaching. Perhaps it was the same sound of the chariots of heaven that surrounded Elisha ***(2 Kings 6:17).*** All God did was open their ears to hear what was happening in the spirit. This reveals that the spiritual realm is far busier than we can imagine.

If we were fully aware of all that goes on around us in the spirit, many would lose their sanity. For this reason, we must be grateful to God for the countless battles He has fought and won for us without our knowledge. Occasionally, He allows one or two battles to come to our attention, serving as reminders that we should live with constant gratitude.

In ***Matthew 26:48–53),*** when Jesus' enemies came to arrest Him, Peter drew his weapon and struck, but only managed to cut off a man's ear. This shows how clumsy human defence can be. Instantly, Jesus corrected him, saying, ***"Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?"*** One legion in the Roman army numbered between 3,000 and 6,000 soldiers. If one angel could kill 185,000 Syrian soldiers, as recorded in ***2 Kings 19:35,*** imagine what 72,000 angels can do. God has already made provision for our protection; we only need to call on Him for help.

DIVINE RESCUE

OCT 30

Elisha had said to the woman whose son he had restored to life, 'Go away with your family … because the Lord has decreed a famine in the land that will last seven years." 2 Kings 8:1 [KJV]

Before the famine that gripped the entire nation, Elisha privately warned the Shunammite woman to leave. Unlike Joseph, who warned all of Egypt through Pharaoh, Elisha only warned a woman who had shown love and invested in God's kingdom. While others were reduced to eating their children and even dove droppings, this woman lived abroad in comfort. This confirms that nothing takes God by surprise, and He will always save His loved ones. ***Psalm 84:11 (NKJV), "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly."***

The Shunammite woman was very wealthy. She had property, and her husband owned farmland. Yet divine warning made her abandon everything and flee for her life. Through that warning, God shielded her from evil, and in the end He crowned her with grace and glory. After seven years, she returned home and approached the king to have her land restored. Unknown to her, God had also planned her complete restoration. The king had summoned Gehazi, Elisha's servant, to recount the prophet's miracles. At that very moment, Gehazi was telling the story of the woman's son being raised back to life when she walked into the palace ***(2 Kings 8:5).*** She did not have to plead her case; instead, she was gloriously restored. The king even ordered that all the revenue her land had produced during her absence be returned to her.

When God leads, He keeps

SERVE GOD

OCT 31

''Thy son Benhadad king of Syria hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?''
2 Kings 8:9b [KJV]

After the siege and famine, Prophet Elisha travelled to Damascus, the capital of Syria. When King Ben-Hadad heard of the prophet's visit, he sent one of his men, Hazael, to inquire if he would live or die from his illness. In ***2 Kings 6:8-24,*** the same King Ben-Hadad had repeatedly attacked Israel and sent soldiers to arrest Elisha in the past. Elisha had thwarted this king so many times, that he had come to respect the prophet. This is a pure demonstration of power. ***Psalm 66:3b (NKJV), "Through the greatness of Your power, Your enemies shall submit themselves to You."*** Thus, King Ben-Hadad, the enemy of Israel and Elisha, acknowledged the spiritual authority of Elisha and was introduced as "***your son, Ben-Hadad."*** May God grant us such power that will humble our enemies.

In addition, Ben-Hadad sent gifts to the prophet. The gifts were mounted on forty camels ***(2 Kings 8:9).*** Research shows that one camel can carry as much as 270 kilograms. Thus, the forty camels brought more than 10 tonnes worth of gifts meaning the gifts possibly exceeded 10 tonnes in weight which is equivalent to nearly four Range Rovers.

This was, therefore, a massive acknowledgement of the person and office of Elisha. This time, Elisha did not reject the gift as he did in the case of leprous Naaman. Note that Elisha's miracles were not offered to the highest bidder. He was simply a servant of the Most-High God, who enjoyed the protection, provision and honour from the God he served. Indeed, it pays to serve God.

FAITH IN GOD AND NOT SELF

NOV 01

"Why is my lord weeping?' asked Hazael."
2 Kings 8:12 [KJV]

Elisha stared intently at Hazael, King Ben-hadad's envoy, until Hazael became uncomfortable. Then, Elisha began to weep. Though he appeared to be merely staring, he was seeing a vision of what Hazael would do. We all become uneasy when someone fixes their gaze on us for too long. No one enjoys being stared at, except in admiration.

But what did the prophet see? Elisha foresaw that Hazael would one day take over the kingship of Syria and prove more wicked than Ben-hadad. He would murder pregnant women and infants. This vision moved Elisha to tears. Startled, Hazael said to Elisha, ***"Am I a dog? … I would never do that sort of thing,"*** as recorded in ***2 Kings 8:13 (TLB)***. ***Jeremiah 17:9 (TLB)***, declares that ***"the heart is the most deceitful thing … and desperately wicked. No one can know how bad it is!"*** Hazael had never imagined he was capable of such evil, but the very next day, he executed a coup, killed Ben-hadad, and seized the throne.

No one likes to be stared at except in admiration

When Jesus told Peter that he would deny Him, Peter insisted otherwise, yet, events unfolded exactly as foretold in ***Matthew 26:34***. The difference between Peter and Judas was mercy. If God were to unveil the full contents of our hearts, we would shudder at what we see. ***Philippians 3:3 (KJV)***, ***"For we … have no confidence in the flesh."*** Never trust your flesh; there is nothing good in it. Instead, let your confidence rest in Christ, for He is able to keep you. ***Jude 1:24 (TLB)***, reminds us that ***"He is able to keep you from slipping and falling away, and bring you sinless and perfect into His glorious presence."***

THE ART OF TIMING

NOV 02

This is what the Lord says: "I anoint you king over Israel. Then open the door and run; don't delay!"
2 Kings 9:3b [KJV]

Elisha summoned one of his protégés, a son of the prophets, and sent him on a sensitive and dangerous mission: to anoint Jehu as king. He gave the young man specific instructions. First, he was to dress neatly, tucking his coat into his belt. Second, the anointing was not to be done publicly or in front of the officials, but in a private room. Finally, once the anointing was completed, he was to run for his life without hesitation.

Why these strict instructions? And why did Elisha not carry out this assignment himself? The anointing of Hazael and Jehu as kings of Syria and Israel were direct instructions given by God to Elijah, as recorded in ***1 Kings 19:15–17***. For reasons unknown, Elijah never carried them out before being taken to heaven. It seems he passed the responsibility to Elisha, who also delayed for years before acting.

Timing is critical to the actualization of prophecy

This reveals something important: divine assignments are often time-bound. God may reveal a clear message to you, but it may not be for immediate implementation. Both the message and the timing of its execution are equally important. Many have lost their lives by running prematurely with a divine vision. In ***John 2:1–4,*** Mary pressed Jesus to turn water into wine, but He responded, ***"My hour has not yet come."*** Learning the art of timing is crucial in the fulfilment of prophecy.

THE ART OF TIMING II

NOV 03

"Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." Hebrews 5:8 [KJV]

Still on the art of timing in the fulfilment of prophecy: Jesus did not come from heaven with a perfect knowledge of how divine instructions worked. He had to learn, just as we do. Today's scripture tells us that even though Jesus was the Son of God, He learned obedience the hard way. He suffered in order to grasp the weight of disobedience. How much more should we pay attention and learn, since we have a smaller measure of the Holy Spirit than Jesus did, as ***John 3:34 (KJV)*** reminds us. Many of us have faced difficulties that arose from disregarding divine directives, and such disobedience never ends well.

Consider Abraham, who received the promise of a son. Doubting that God could deliver, he agreed to a human plan and had a son through Hagar. To this day, the world still bears the consequences of that decision. We see the same principle ***in Hebrews 6:12***, which urges us to ***"be … followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."*** One of the key instruments in the actualisation of prophecy is patience. Patience is like the brakes on the speeding train of faith. A fast car without brakes is headed for disaster. Both the accelerator and the brakes are necessary to steer safely. May we never wreck our destiny or that of our dependants through impatience. As ***2 Peter 3:9*** assures ***us, "The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise … He is always on time."***

Patience is like the brakes on the speeding train of faith

TACT

NOV 04

"This is what the Lord says: I anoint you king over Israel. Then open the door and run; don't delay!"
2 Kings 9:3b [NIV]

Elisha delegated the critical task of anointing Jehu to an inexperienced young man and gave him a set of unusual instructions. Earlier, we asked: Why these peculiar instructions? And why did Elisha not carry out this sensitive task himself? The anointing of Jehu was essentially treasonous, since there was still a reigning king. The young man could easily have been arrested or executed. Furthermore, the prophecy was directed at a hardened man chosen to wipe out the house of Ahab, so the mission required someone quick and discreet. Elisha also recognised it as a teaching moment for his protégés: some prophecies must be delivered with tact. For example, when God reveals someone's death, the message must be handled with care. Ultimately, the messenger cannot choose the message or the recipient, but must faithfully carry out God's instructions.

Once you are sent, you must go. However, you must also be tactful. In ***John 4:1–42***, Jesus ministered to the woman of Samaria. He knew, by word of knowledge, that she was living in sin and that she had a history of broken marriages. Yet, He did not confront her directly. Instead, He said: ***"Go and call your husband and come back," (John 4:16)***. She replied that she had no husband. Jesus affirmed her answer, telling her that she was right, since the man she lived with was not her husband and she had already had five husbands in the past. This tactful approach opened her heart, instead of shutting her down. Therefore, tact is vital when delivering some divine messages.

THE PROMISES OFGOD

NOV 05

"If the Lord does not help you, where can I get help for you?" 2 Kings 10:1 [NIV]

When Elijah told Ahab that his generation would be cut off because of how he executed Naboth, Ahab humbled himself and expressed genuine remorse ***(1 Kings 21:21–29)***. For this humility, God delayed the judgment until after Ahab's death, sparing him from witnessing the horror. The judgment came about fourteen years later, during the reigns of Ahaziah, Ahab's son, who reigned for two years, and Joram, who reigned for twelve. At first, it may have seemed as though God had forgotten, but God never forgets, whether it is His promise or His judgment.

In today's passage, we learn that Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. They were thriving and well cared for. Their only offence was being related to Ahab. Yet, on the day of judgment, the very people entrusted with their care beheaded them and sent their heads to Jehu, ***(2 Kings 10:6–7).*** This shows clearly that there is no safety anywhere except in the Lord.

No one is safer than the one kept by God

The only indestructible element is **God's Word**. ***Matthew 24:35*** declares, ***"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."*** Think about this: the earth we live on, which has existed for ages, will pass away. Even the heavens will one day pass away. Yet, God's Word stands above all creation. Is there a promise God has given you? Do not be troubled. He is more than able to bring it to pass.

PROPHETIC ACTIONS I

NOV 06

And he said, 'Open the east window'; and he opened it. Then Elisha said, 'Shoot'; and he shot …"
2 Kings 13:17 [NKJV]

Sometimes, God instructs us to take prophetic actions that may appear foolish. Yet, we must be careful to follow through with such instructions. In today's scripture, Elisha was ill and about to die. Joash, the king of Israel, came to visit him, and Elisha prophetically asked him to shoot an arrow. This action symbolised his victory over the Syrians, Israel's mortal enemies at the time. Elisha then told King Joash to strike the ground with arrows. The king struck three times and stopped. Elisha became annoyed and said he should have struck five or six times ***(2 Kings 13:18–19).*** This meant Joash would defeat the Syrians only partially and not destroy them completely. Simple as it may seem, prophetic actions often determine outcomes in life.

In ***Joshua 6***, the children of Israel were instructed to carry the ark and walk around the city of Jericho once a day for six days. On the seventh day, they were to march around the city seven times, making a total of thirteen rounds. Stressful as it may sound, the prophetic rarely makes sense until the result becomes evident. When the instructions were completed, the fortified walls of Jericho collapsed.

The prophetic hardly makes sense until the result becomes evident

Some time ago, I was on daily injections for several months to treat an ailment. This was very uncomfortable. One day, I heard a clear instruction to go to the church premises and lie face down on the bare ground. After obeying this, the need for those daily injections stopped completely.

PROPHETIC ACTIONS II

NOV 07

"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." ***Matthew 4:4 [NKJV]***

Many people do not believe in the spiritual. They often say that anything without scientific proof does not exist. However, the absence of evidence does not negate the fact. Although, we need physical food to survive, but today's scripture reveals that food is only one of the essentials for life. The other, is the word of God; His instructions. You may have lived without paying attention to this, but that only means you have been deficient in vital spiritual nutrients.

The human body has five primary senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. However, there is also much talk about a "sixth sense." In his book "*The Fourth Dimension*," David Yonggi Cho wrote about living beyond the physical realm. Likewise, Watchman Nee, in "*The Spiritual Man*," explained how the human spirit works and the different functions of man's inner life. Some believers have developed this spiritual sense through practice ***(Hebrews 5:14)***, while others have neglected it, relying only on their five natural senses.

The absence of evidence does not negate the fact

A human being can be likened to a car. The Land Rover Defender has about 8,900 individual parts. The driver may be familiar with no more than a hundred, but the manufacturer knows them all. Though the driver paid for every part, ignorance can prevent him from accessing the vehicle's full potential. In the same way, ***Matthew 4:4*** is the manufacturer's instruction for our lives. You will do well to pay attention.

GODLY CHARACTER IS VITAL

NOV 08

"They threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life…" 2 Kings 13:21b [NIV]

Bible scholars say that Elisha served Elijah for six years before stepping into the office of the prophet. He then served as prophet for about six decades, living to witness the coronation and fall of several kings. Though a prophet, he lived like a king. He was untouchable, and Kings bowed before him in reverence.

The books of ***1*** *and* ***2 Kings*** were written to record the reigns of monarchs; yet, Elisha features more prominently than most of the kings themselves. Such was his anointing that even his bones raised the dead. This reveals that despite years of mentoring many "sons of the prophets," none was prepared to carry his mantle. A residue of anointing went with him to the grave. Why did none of them step into his shoes as he had stepped into Elijah's? Gehazi could have been that vessel, but greed disqualified him. One thing is certain: God would rather withhold His power than entrust it to an unprepared vessel.

No amount of anointing can compensate for character failure

The height of any building is determined by its depth. Jesus' three and a half years of ministry were preceded by thirty years of preparation. David's forty-year reign was preceded by thirteen years of wilderness training. Moses' forty-year ministry followed forty years of preparation in the desert. Likewise, in your own years of preparation, focus on building character, for no measure of anointing can cover the cracks of character failure.

THE BIRTH OF SOLOMON

NOV 09

"Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The Lord loved him."
2 Samuel 12:24 [NIV]

Today, we turn our attention to one of the Bible's most fascinating figures – Solomon. His father, King David, left big shoes to be filled. David had eight wives, Michal, Ahinoam, Abigael, Maachah, Haggith, Abital, Eglah, and Bathsheba and twenty-one recorded children, not counting those born by his concubines. According to ***1 Chronicles 3:5***, Bathsheba bore him four children: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon. This makes Solomon the fourth-born child of David's last wife. The marriage between David and Bathsheba was scandalous. David took her forcefully from her husband, and God was angry with him at first. Still, God pardoned David's sin and accepted the children of Bathsheba. Out of all David's children, Solomon was the only one of whom scripture records that "the Lord loved him." God Himself named him Jedidiah, meaning Beloved of God.

What was unique about Solomon that made God love and choose him out of dozens of others? Despite the scandalous circumstances of his birth and his position as one of David's youngest children, Solomon was chosen to succeed his father. His story demonstrates what God can do for His beloved. It shows how God's love, grace, and mercy can compensate for human faults. You do not need to do anything extraordinary before God singles you out for mercy. You can never pay for it. But when God loves you, He openly gives you preference and displays you for the world to see. In the days ahead, we will examine Solomon's life more closely. May you obtain the same mercy and grace from God that Solomon enjoyed. Amen.

TEACH YOUR CHILDREN

NOV 10

"I am about to go the way of all the earth. So be strong, act like a man." 1 Kings 2:2 [NIV]

On his deathbed, David gave Solomon a final charge. It is a fact that everyone must die. No matter how wealthy or poor, great or small, the way of the whole earth is predetermined. Times will change, the elderly will exit the stage, and their children will take their place. One of the greatest worries of any parent is, "*How will my child cope when I am no longer around?"* We fret and often end up micromanaging them. We interfere in their lives, sometimes suffocating them with love. We may even try to leave them an inheritance to make life easier. While these things are good, the truth is that most children will still have to make their way in life. They will make mistakes, learn, and grow.

I remember a colleague from junior high school. His parents fretted over him constantly, as he was an only child. Every month, they would travel 300 kilometres to check on him, while my father, who lived less than 60 kilometres away, hardly visited. My father's parting words were always, "*Remember the child of whom you are.*" I received meagre provisions and a small stipend, but I adapted. I envied my friend, whose parents fawned over him. Yet later in life, I saw the wisdom in my father's actions. Tragically, while travelling to see their son, the couple had an accident and died. Despite this, the young man went on to become very successful. Today, he runs a business on a global scale. Here is my conclusion: it is better to teach your children how to fend for themselves. That way, both parent and child will have rest, as ***Proverbs 22:6*** reminds us.

THE WISE KING SOLOMON

NOV 11

"Now you know what Joab did to me… Deal with him according to your wisdom." 1 Kings 2:5–6 [NIV]

David gave several instructions to Solomon. Among them was a list of dignitaries who had wronged him, and he asked Solomon to use wisdom to ensure that none of them died peacefully, ***(1 Kings 2:5, 8–9).*** For someone like David, a man of God, one would expect him not to harbour resentment. Why then, did he not execute these disloyal subjects himself? Why hand his son Solomon a kingdom filled with treacherous people? David tolerated them for political expediency. To act against them would have destabilised his reign. Yet, he knew they could pose an even greater threat to Solomon and to the stability of the throne. So, he instructed his son to bring them to justice.

As written in ***Matthew 13:24–30,*** Jesus told the parable of a farmer who planted good seed. While his workers slept, an enemy sowed weeds in the same field. When the weeds grew alongside the wheat, the servants asked if they should uproot them, but Jesus said no, lest the wheat also be harmed. Instead, both were to remain until the harvest.

An African proverb says: "*When a mosquito lands on your testicle, you will appreciate the value of diplomacy in conflict resolution."* There will always be malicious people in our circles. Given the chance, they will not hesitate to cause harm. Jesus knew who Judas was, yet, He did not act against him until the damage was done. But the day always comes when God vindicates His own and repays everyone according to their work.

THE FRIENDLY ENEMY

NOV 12

"Bathsheba asked him, 'Do you come peacefully?' He answered, 'Yes, peacefully." 1 Kings 2:13 [NIV]

Did you know that God's love for you does not make you immune from enmity? In fact, divine favour often attracts enemies, just as sweet scents attract flies. Solomon faced three categories of domestic enemies: the friendly enemy (Adonijah), the religious enemy (Abiathar), and the violent enemy (Joab). We shall consider how each of them operates.

When enemies perceive you as a threat, they tend to unite against you. They may have nothing in common, but their shared hatred fuels their alliance, making the combination highly volatile. The earlier such alliances are disbanded, the safer. Solomon's first priority was to deal with his domestic enemies. The foreign enemies could wait, for those within are often far more dangerous.

The enemy without can never catch you without assistance from the enemy within

The Yoruba people of western Nigeria have an adage: *"The enemy without can never catch you without assistance from the enemy within."* This means the most dangerous enemy is often the friendly one. In Solomon's case, it was his own brother, bound to him by blood. Adonijah approached Solomon's mother to request a favour. To reassure her, he said, ***"I come peacefully."*** Though, he knew that Bathsheba was Solomon's soft spot. ***1 Kings 2:17,*** Adonijah pleaded, ***"Please ask King Solomon, he will not refuse you."*** He appeared peaceful, quiet, and meek, but carried deadly intentions. Fortunately for Solomon, these three enemies had already revealed themselves ***(1 Kings 1:7).*** Though it was a mistake, Solomon noticed it. May your enemies also expose themselves by error. Amen.

THE FRIENDLY ENEMY II

NOV 13

"Bathsheba therefore went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah." 1 Kings 2:19 [NKJV]

Adonijah had only one motivation for stealing the throne from Solomon: to inherit King David's concubine, the beautiful Abishag. ***1 Kings 1:1-4*** describes the beauty of Abishag, who was considered a trophy fit only for a king. Adonijah also knew that only the next king could inherit her. However, their father David was weak and dying, so Adonijah exploited the situation by inviting other disgruntled men to support his cause. His allies did not fully understand his motives, for he had no concrete plan for the kingdom. What he truly desired was what many kings of the time pursued: Beautiful women.

When Solomon finally sat on the throne, Adonijah's objective remained unchanged: he still wanted Abishag. This time, he tried a new strategy by approaching Solomon through Bathsheba. She believed the request was harmless and brought it before her son. Solomon, however, immediately recognised the plot. Rising from his throne, he bowed respectfully to his mother but firmly rebuked her and then gave the order for Adonijah's execution.

It is not enough to know that you have enemies; you must also understand their motives. Abiathar the priest and Joab the military general both ended up on the wrong side because they failed to discern Adonijah's intentions. Even Bathsheba was unwittingly involved, though she escaped unscathed. The lesson is clear: think for yourself and never let the foolish lead you into danger.

THE RELIGIOUS ENEMY

NOV 14

"So, Solomon removed Abiathar from being priest to the Lord." 1 Kings 2:27 [NKJV]

Abiathar was a key figure in David's administration, one of the two prominent priests alongside Zadok, and very loyal to David. He suffered with David even before his coronation and smuggled the ephod to him when David needed to hear from God, ***(1 Samuel 23:6)***. Yet, in David's final days, Abiathar sought a king who would serve his future interests, revealing that his decades of loyalty were insincere. He had known David was anointed to be king and worked his way into his heart, but when David became weak, Abiathar switched sides. We must be highly discerning about why some people work their way into our lives. Not every show of loyalty is genuine, no matter how long they remain close.

Time is a beautiful gift. Tomorrow will expose what was hidden yesterday.

The religious enemy is dangerous because people naturally assume that God is with them. Adonijah wanted some form of legal endorsement for his coup, so he found that in the corrupt priest, Abiathar. When all of Israel saw Abiathar with Adonijah, it appeared that God had sanctioned it. Although the priest had nothing personal against Solomon, he became an unwitting tool in the hands of the enemy. Solomon's response was to put him at arm's length. Do not be sentimental about enemies, even the anointed ones. This is especially true if you hold a delicate position in government, the corporate world, or business. Time is a beautiful thing; it always reveals whatever is hidden.

THE VIOLENT ENEMY

NOV 15

"The king commanded Benaiah, '…Strike him down and bury him." 1 Kings 2:31 [NKJV]

Joab was King David's nephew and one of David's mighty men who served as head of the army for several decades. He was among the few who could boldly confront David without facing consequences, ***(2 Samuel 19:7)***. He also arranged the death of Bathsheba's husband and Solomon's stepfather, Uriah, ***(2 Samuel 11:14-17)***. Later, David and Joab disagreed, and David planned to replace him with Amasa as army chief, ***(2 Samuel 19:13).*** But Joab assassinated Amasa and kept his position, ***(2 Samuel 20:8-12)***. He also killed Absalom, David's favourite son, despite David's plea that Absalom should be spared, ***(2 Samuel 18:5-17).***

Joab was violent, ambitious, and uncontrollable. He was simply too powerful for David to manage. Consequently, it was worrisome when Joab teamed up with Adonijah against Solomon. So, one of David's dying wishes ***(recorded in 1 Kings 2:5-6)*** was that Solomon find a way to eliminate Joab. But how does one deal with such a powerful and violent adversary? The only smart way is to stay low until you have gained your own strength. If David, despite all his might, could not control Joab, how could Solomon?

Power is the only language that the wicked understands

In ***1 Kings 2:12***, Solomon was firmly established as king. Later, in ***1 Kings 2:29)***, we see how this establishment held because he had another military general, Benaiah, on his side. A Yoruba adage says, *"As long as the child cannot grip a sword, he should not be asking wicked relatives how his father died."* ***Psalm 66:3*** *also declares, "****Through the greatness of Your power, Your enemies shall submit themselves to You.****"* The only language the wicked understand is power. Empower yourself now; ask questions later.

THE MOCKING ENEMY

NOV 16

"The king also said to Shimei, 'Now the Lord will repay you for your wrongdoing." 1 Kings 2:44 [NIV]

Solomon had dealt with all the direct conspirators against his enthronement. But there was still one enemy left: Shimei. When David was distressed and fleeing his son Absalom's coup, Shimei hurled curses and stones at him, ***(2 Samuel 16:5-13)***. He mocked David and called him unprintable names. This embarrassed David, yet he restrained his bodyguards from retaliating. However, David's last recorded request was that Solomon should not spare Shimei. Why would David use his dying breath on a man who mocked him, even after God had vindicated him? It is because mockery cuts deeply like a knife. ***Proverbs 18:8, "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly."***

Not long ago, a young and vibrant Ghanaian nurse committed suicide after colleagues mocked her for stammering. Even after her death, internet trolls ridiculed her for ending her life over what they considered trivial. Those who have faced mockery know it is one of the cruellest experiences to endure.

Harsh words cut more deeply than a knife

Solomon knew he could not simply eliminate people without cause. How could he justify killing Shimei just for mocking his father? People were watching, and he could not appear as a despot, destroying enemies without reason. So, Solomon placed Shimei under house arrest. After three years, Shimei carelessly broke the order, giving Solomon the excuse he needed to execute him. In reality, all Shimei had done was exercise his freedom of speech through criticism, yet it cost him his life. Be kind to those around you; an unkind word can wound more deeply than you realise.

KINGDOM ESTABLISHED

NOV 17

"Thus, the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon." 1 Kings 2:46 [NKJV]

Today's Scripture implies that the establishment of the kingdom in the hands of Solomon had a direct connection to the execution of Shimei, Joab, and Adonijah. Earlier ***(1 Kings 2:12)***, he did not have a firm grip because of his domestic enemies. It is possible to be in office but not in power. When there is a power vacuum, evil will thrive in the land.

History provides a sobering parallel. In 2003, Saddam Hussein, the President of Iraq, was unseated on the premise that he was linked to terrorism and possessed nuclear weapons. These allegations later proved false, yet the wars between 1990 and 2003 culminated in his overthrow. The United States spent over $1 trillion in operations such as Desert Storm and Desert Fox, with about 200,000 Iraqis and 10,000 US troops losing their lives. The continual weakening of Saddam and, ultimately his death unleashed massive instability in the region, giving rise to ISIS and other splinter groups, who in turn trained even more radical factions such as Boko Haram. After Saddam's fall, the world realised that his iron grip, though harsh, had kept many insurgent groups in check.

Evil must never be pampered; otherwise, it will tamper with the future.

Evil, if left unchecked, will fester. A king is responsible for ensuring that righteousness reigns. ***Proverbs 8:15–16 (KJV)***, declares, ***"By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth."*** This is why Solomon's decisive move was necessary. Evil must never be pampered; otherwise, it will tamper with the future.

STAY UNDER AUTHORITY

NOV 18

"Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David …" 1 Kings 3:3 [NIV]

Solomon was one of the most successful kings in history, and today's Scripture shows us a glimpse into one of his secrets. He followed his father's instructions, even after his father had died. This consistent obedience may have been one of the qualities David observed before selecting him as his successor.

David had other sons, such as Adonijah, Absalom, and Amnon, whom he spoiled simply because he loved them. ***1 Kings 1:6,*** David never corrected Adonijah, and it was no surprise that his life ended in ruin. Absalom actively sought to kill his father, ***(2 Samuel 15:14)***. He even raped his father's concubines in public, ***(2 Samuel 16:22).*** Yet, when Absalom died, David wept and wished he had died in his son's place, ***(2 Samuel 18:33).*** Amnon also raped his stepsister, and ***(2 Samuel 13:21)*** notes that David never disciplined him. These examples reveal that David was not a very good father.

Living without accountability is a risk

So how did Solomon grow up with such strong character? It seems his mother played a vital role. His ability to listen to elders and be guided by their wisdom contributed greatly to his success. David had charged Solomon in ***1 Kings 2:3–4***: ***"If you want to prosper in all you do, observe what the Lord requires, walk in obedience to Him, and keep His decrees, commands, laws, and regulations as written in the law of Moses."*** These instructions became the guiding principles of Solomon's life. Later, he would stress the importance of following a father's charge in ***Proverbs 4:1***. It is dangerous to live as we please. Remain under authority, even if that authority is no longer alive.

WRONG ATMOSPHERE

NOV 19

"Solomon showed his love for the Lord … except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense in high places." 1 Kings 3:3 [NIV]

Though Scripture tells us that Solomon loved God and was obedient, the same passage also highlights his mistake. He offered sacrifices and burned incense in high places rather than in the sanctuary, as stipulated by God. ***Deuteronomy 12:13–14 (TLB),*** clearly warns: ***"You are not to sacrifice your burnt offerings just anywhere. You may only do so in the place the Lord will choose …"***

In Solomon's time, idolaters built altars on elevated grounds, ***Isaiah 16:12*** explains. The Israelites saw this practice all around them and copied it, and Solomon, though sincere, also got carried away and continued to offer sacrifices to God in high places. Unfortunately, this seed of compromise, planted early in his mind, eventually led to his downfall. Later, when he married many wives, ***1 Kings 11:7–9*** records that he built high places for their gods. Because he had already excused sacrificing to God in the wrong places, it became easy for him to sacrifice to idols in those same places. The line between obedience and disobedience blurred, and Solomon did not realise when he crossed it.

There are atmospheres where God's children should not be found

Usually, the things that destroy men do not appear suddenly. They have been present all along, growing quietly, until they manifest at the point of glory. This is why periodic self-examination is crucial. Samson carried divine presence, yet he often patronised brothels, ***Judges 16:1*** records. Because he got away with it many times, he did not recognise the moment when God finally withdrew from him. There are certain atmospheres where God's children should never be found, and some friendships that must never be kept. May it not be too late before we correct our foundational errors. Amen.

HONOUR THAT ATTRACTS FAVOUR

NOV 20

"The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices … and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar." 1 Kings 3:4 [NIV]

When the average Israelite made a burnt offering, only one animal was required ***(Leviticus 1:2–3)***. However, Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings, which was unprecedented. Imagine the work involved in slaughtering a thousand animals. ***Leviticus 1:1–17*** details how a burnt offering must be handled. Each animal had to be without blemish, meaning the king spent considerable time and resources selecting the fittest cattle before the sacrifice. The one making the offering laid his hand on the animal's head before the priest slaughtered it. The blood was then sprinkled around the altar, the animal skinned, and all the extracted fat and the head arranged on the altar. The internal organs were washed and placed on the altar as well, and finally, the entire animal was burnt. This process was repeated for each animal.

Solomon did not simply deliver the cattle to God's house and leave them there. He had to participate by laying his hand on each one before it was processed. He also stayed as the priests carried out the rituals. In this way, Solomon honoured God in an unusual manner like no one before him. He invested both his resources and his energy. That same night, God appeared to him in a dream.

Dr Mike Murdoch once said, "*The key to favour is honour.*" When you genuinely honour those greater than you, they will go out of their way to favour you. When Solomon honoured God, God gave him a blank cheque to request whatever he wanted. Seek to honour God in all you do.

THE POWER OF GRATITUDE

NOV 21

"The Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, 'Ask for whatever you want me to give you." John 3:5 [NIV]

By offering a thousand burnt offerings to God, Solomon activated one of the most powerful secrets to answered prayer. You must honour God with respect, reverence, and gratitude before you ask Him for anything. Ingratitude, complaints, and apprehension are some of the reasons prayers go unanswered. Some people spend forty days on mountains asking God for miracles, but in vain, because such requests may be perceived as self-centred. Grateful people do not need forty days of prayer before God shows up.

While teaching His disciples how to pray, Jesus provided this pattern in ***Matthew 6:9–13***:

- Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name
- Your Kingdom come, Your will be done
- Give us this day our daily bread

In the first point, God's name is hallowed. This means holy, revered, or respected. Notice also that 'Your' comes three times before 'our'. This shows that regardless of the urgency of our needs, God must be acknowledged, and gratitude expressed at least three times as much.

The grateful is a candidate for breakthrough

Before giving the Lord's Prayer, Jesus advised us to avoid vain repetitions because God already knows what we need before we ask ***(Matthew 6:7–8). Ecclesiastes 5:2*** reminds us that God is in heaven and we are on earth, so our words should be few. Answers to prayer are not determined by how loudly or frequently we cry, but by how much we acknowledge His greatness. Before feeding the five thousand with multiplied bread, Jesus gave thanks, ***(Luke 9:16)***. Before David defeated Goliath, he testified of God's faithfulness in delivering him from the lion and the bear ***(1 Samuel 17:34–37).*** Before any breakthrough, there must be gratitude.

REQUEST FOR WISDOM

NOV 22

"Give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong."
1 Kings 3:9 [NIV]

Following the pattern described in the Lord's Prayer yesterday, Solomon began by thanking God for showing kindness to his father. He praised God for giving David a son to sit on the throne. Then, he thanked God for choosing him out of David's sons to be the one who would rule. He found three reasons to be grateful, as recorded in ***1 Kings 3:7–8***, before asking God for wisdom to govern His people.

Let's also note that Solomon was not fully alert, since this was all a dream. Most people do not take dreams seriously. However, certain dreams are visions of the night. These are vivid, and when you wake up from them you KNOW it was no ordinary dream, because you can clearly remember the details, unlike casual dreams. Solomon acknowledged that he was still a child. Some Bible scholars estimate he was about twenty years old when he assumed the throne. He knew he had to adjudicate matters that required wisdom and experience. So, he used his blank cheque to request wisdom, showing he already understood what he needed most.

Recall that David had described Solomon as a wise man twice before he died, in ***1 Kings 2:6 and 9***. In those verses, David instructed Solomon to make difficult decisions in handling evil men. Likewise, we need more wisdom today when dealing with the shady people who roam freely on this earth.

LONG LIFE

NOV 23

"…If you walk in obedience to me…I will give you a long life." 1 Kings 3:14 [NIV]

God commended Solomon for asking for what he truly needed and not merely what he wanted. Most people desire long life, health, wealth, and safety from enemies. But Solomon focused on one request only: wisdom. He understood that wisdom would naturally bring long life, health, and wealth. Later, ***(Proverbs 4:7), "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom."*** That night, God granted him wisdom. He also blessed him with wealth and honour as bonuses, ***(1 Kings 3:13)***. However, God did not give him long life automatically. Long life often comes with conditions. God promised Solomon long life only if he walked in obedience and kept His commandments. Sadly, Solomon did not meet this condition. Combining wealth and honour with long life would have been the ultimate blessing.

It is not easy to remain prosperous for a long time without stumbling along the way. Someone once said that nearly all major mistakes happen when things are going well. Adam and Eve were doing well when they defied God's law. They were meant to live forever, but sin shortened their lifespan and led to their banishment from the Garden of Eden.

Tread more cautiously when things are going well, for that is when most mistakes happen.

Ephesians 6:2–3 (NIV): ***"Honour your father and mother,"*** which is the first commandment with a promise, "…***so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."*** Thus, long life is tied to obeying God and honouring our parents, among other things. Imagine Adam and Eve living for millions of years while in sin. God would not want sinners to dwell with Him forever. That is why sin is a terminator, and why God attached conditions to long life. Long life is not automatic; it is the reward of obedience.

DREAMS

NOV 24

"And Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream…"
1 Kings 3:15 [KJV]

Solomon's dream was so real that when he awoke, he must have been surprised that something so vivid could be a dream. Yet, a dream is one of the avenues through which people can tap into the spiritual. Many people encounter destiny through dreams, and you too can draw value from them. What makes the difference is how you respond.

As soon as Solomon woke up, he returned to Jerusalem from Gibeon and went straight to the ark of God. There, he stood before it and offered burnt and peace offerings, ***(1 Kings 3:15)***. Then, he made a feast for his servants. He was literally in a celebratory mood because of that dream encounter. Solomon recognised that the dream was not a chance occurrence but a direct message from God. We all know what he gained from that dream: he became the wealthiest, most celebrated, and most honoured monarch the earth had ever seen. Such was the level of value and virtue Solomon drew from it.

Why does God choose to appear to people in dreams? When you are awake, the flesh is very active. ***Romans 7:18, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing."*** When the attention we give to the flesh is elevated, the activity of the spirit spirals down. The opposite is true when the power of the flesh is curtailed. When we are asleep, our spirit begins to stir, for the spirit never sleeps and never dies; though it can become dormant. That is why spiritual people understand the value of reducing the activity of the flesh through fasting, meditation, prayer, and quiet moments to nurture their spirits. According to ***2 Corinthians 4:18***, we are called to place value not on what is temporary but on what is eternal. May the Lord help you to place value on eternal things and to obey the voice of His Spirit.

PRACTICAL WISDOM

NOV 25

"When all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held the king in awe…" 1 Kings 3:28 [NIV]

Soon after God granted Solomon wisdom, he was confronted with a complex case. Two women who lived together and worked as prostitutes had babies just days apart. One accidentally slept on her child, killing him, and then secretly swapped the dead baby with the living one. There were no witnesses. The king had to decide who should go home with the living baby. There was no DNA test to help identify the true parent, which made the case even more difficult. These women were living wayward lives, so any word spoken by either of them was unreliable. Moreover, new-born babies all look alike. Even in modern hospitals, crooked nurses sometimes swap babies without anyone noticing. In today's context, a judge might have removed the child from both women and placed him for adoption. Such was the difficulty of the case that was presented before the youthful Solomon.

Wisdom is demonstrated not only by what is said but also by what is left unsaid

The uniqueness of Solomon's judgment was that his decision was not based on what the women said, but on what was left unsaid after they had both spoken. Solomon was not confused. He decided on the spot, and everyone acknowledged that this was beyond human wisdom. As today's Scripture records, all Israel heard of this judgment and stood in awe. The king made one decision that reverberated through the nation. In ***Mark 1:23–28***, Jesus delivered a possessed man, and His fame spread far and wide. May divine wisdom guide you into that one deed that will announce you to your world. Amen.

PEACE AND STABILITY

NOV 26

"During Solomon's lifetime, Judah and Israel lived in safety, everyone under their own vine and under their own fig tree." 1 Kings 4:25 [NIV].

One of the benefits of wisdom is all-round peace. ***Isaiah 33:6* (*NKJV*)** says, ***"Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times."*** Whenever there is turmoil or disturbance within or around you, it often indicates a lack of wisdom, because true wisdom always produces peace. Today's Scripture shows that the kingdom enjoyed safety and stability during Solomon's lifetime. He reigned for forty years; and in all those years, he never struggled with anyone or fought a war. This was not because there were no enemies. Enemies will always be present, no matter what we do. The secret was that Solomon knew exactly what to do to keep everyone in order. Some of his actions to maintain peace were unpleasant, and some were even harsh, ***(1 Kings 12:1–4).*** But, the results were undeniable: peace and stability. Sometimes, a show of strength is necessary to preserve peace and tranquility.

All-round rest is one of the evidences of wisdom

David, his father, never had a single year without battle. He fought for thirteen years to ascend the throne. He ruled over a divided Israel for seven years before finally uniting the nation for the remaining thirty-three years of his reign, ***(2 Samuel 5:5).*** He even faced battles within his own household, among his children, and within his family of eight wives and twenty-one documented children. By contrast, Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, yet there is no record of household disputes, civil war, or conflicts with neighbouring nations. How did he achieve this?

In the course of this study, we shall examine some of Solomon's actions. May God grant you the wisdom you need in every area of your life where peace is required.

ORDER

NOV 27

"King Solomon ruled over all Israel, and these were his chief officials…" 1 Kings 4:1-2 [NIV]

One of the secrets to the peace Solomon enjoyed and brought to Israel was order. Yes, Solomon ruled, but he also appointed capable officials to oversee his affairs. The following seventeen verses in ***1 Kings 4:3-19*** list these officials by name and duty. He had priests, secretaries, recorders, the army chief, district governors, and Adoniram in charge of forced labour in ***verse 6***. Sometimes, order is kept by applying force, because human beings are the most difficult to govern. Tell a child not to open a jar of cookies, and you immediately activate that child's curiosity. He will not rest until he has tasted some. Rebellion is ingrained in all of us, dating back to Adam and Eve.

To keep everything in place, Solomon specified and enforced order. **1 *Kings 10:4-5* (*NIV*)**, ***"When the Queen of Sheba saw the food on his table, the seating of his officials, the attending servants in their robes, his cupbearers, and the burnt offerings he made at the temple of the Lord, she was overwhelmed."*** She was a monarch herself and a guest in Israel. Solomon did not have to say a word; she observed the order. Even the seating and arrangement of food on the table followed specified standards. The Amplified Bible records that she was ***"breathless and awed"*** by what she saw. The outcome was that Queen Sheba blessed Solomon with more wealth, ***(1 Kings 10:10)*.**

When you introduce order, the little you have appears significant.

Many complain they do not have enough, yet they fail to manage what they already have. How you present yourself can impress others. Cluttered desks, messy clothes, and unruly children create an environment that repels blessings. Arrange what you have, set everything in order, and more will come.

BUDGETING

NOV 28

"Solomon's daily provisions were sixty cors of meal, ten head of stall-fed cattle, twenty of pasture-fed cattle and a hundred sheep and goats…"
1 Kings 4:22–23 [NIV]

Today's scripture records the vast quantity of food consumed each day at Solomon's table. The sixty cors of meal equal about ten metric tons. In modern terms, if it were rice, that would amount to two hundred bags. Each day, thirty cows, and one hundred sheep and goats were slaughtered, enough food to feed a small town. Those to be fed included his immediate family, his numerous women and their children, and his officers. Solomon also had twelve thousand horses ***(1 Kings 4:26),*** each of which ate daily, together with their groomers, drivers, personal guards, and eunuchs.

Years ago, I was a guest at the Nigerian Embassy in Germany. The first thing they did was collect my phone at the entrance. When they served my food, I was shocked. I thought the fish was meant for the ten of us at the table until I noticed the same size of fish on every plate. I could not finish half of what was set before me, even though I tried. Then I understood why my phone had been taken. Records of how the diplomats lived like royalty must not reach the public, or the people might riot. Solomon, however, chose to make this information public. Recall that he had a recorder who kept track of everything.

Responsible people do not spend as the need arises; they budget for it.

Knowing and monitoring your daily, weekly, or monthly expenses is essential for success. Depending on your income, you can plan for the needs of your family, business, or community. Responsible people do not spend as the need arises; they budget for it.

STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

NOV 29

"Geber son of Uri ruled in Gilead, the country of Sihon king of the Amorites and the country of Og king of Bashan. He was the only governor over the district." 1 Kings 4:19 [NIV]

Today's scripture mentions two kingdoms that were reduced to a single district under the rulership of Geber, one of Solomon's many officers. These kingdoms were not friendly, but they dared not make trouble. Before Solomon, Israel had many wars, and ***2 Samuel 11:1*** explains that there were seasons when kings went to war. These seasons were expected; if your kingdom did not go to war, other kingdoms would bring it to you. Yet, throughout Solomon's forty-year reign, not one battle was fought, ***(1 Kings 4:25)***. As soon as he died, the battles resumed in the time of his son, Rehoboam, ***(1 Kings 14:30)***.

The question, therefore, is: what was Solomon's tactic for achieving continuous peace despite the ever-present enemies? Aside from enforcing order, he formed strategic alliances. The hint is found in ***1 Kings 3:1***, where Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh and married his daughter. Once he saw that it worked with Egypt's Pharaoh, Solomon scaled up to seven hundred wives, all of whom were princesses ***(1 Kings 11:1–3).*** He married from every known kingdom that could have been a threat to his own. Those kings thought Solomon was being friendly, but he had personal objectives.

Provide your enemy with fork and knife, and he may forget his sword

While it may not be practical to forge alliances through multiple marriages as Solomon did, there are other applications of this wisdom. Subduing weaker enemies is one strategy, but proposing a mutually beneficial alliance with stronger ones is a wiser move. Choose your battles wisely.

STRATEGIC ALLIANCES II

NOV 30

"The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones." 1 Kings 10:27 [NIV]

Someone might argue that Solomon's marriage to seven hundred wives as a strategy for lasting peace was an unnecessary expense. Yet, if you consider the cost of war, peace is actually more economical. The United States was drawn into World War II after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour in 1941. By the close of the war in 1945, the United States had spent the equivalent of four trillion dollars today. In contrast, the nation allocated ninety billion dollars for foreign aid in 2020. The top twenty-five recipients of this aid include hostile countries such as Afghanistan, Somalia, Yemen, and Iraq. These funds are not given out of generosity alone; they are a strategic investment in maintaining peace and stability.

The lesson is clear: it is cheaper to invest in alliances, diplomacy, and reconciliation than to pay the exorbitant price of war. The Second World War cost over two hundred and twenty times what is now spent on aid. The war in Ukraine began in February 2022, and in just a few months, much of the infrastructure that took decades to build was destroyed. It is estimated that it will take over one trillion dollars and many more decades to replace what was lost. How about the lives taken and the traumatised survivors? No amount of money can restore them.

People may argue about your methods, but they will not argue with your results.

Today's scripture says Solomon made silver as common as stones, and ***1 Kings 10:25*** records that foreigners voluntarily brought much of it into Jerusalem. As a result, everyone enjoyed prosperity. Solomon could have obtained those treasures by plundering other nations through war, but he achieved the same result through peace and wisdom. Only those who have never experienced war clamour for it. We might fault Solomon's methods for attaining peace, but we cannot fault his results.

BE PREPARED

DEC 01

"Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots and twelve thousand horse riders"
1 Kings 4:26 [NIV]

Another way Solomon secured peace was building a formidable defence system. Though he pursued diplomacy, he was not naïve enough to dismantle his army. He maintained a large military force and displayed its strength openly. Today's scripture says he had forty thousand stalls for his horses, the equivalent of forty thousand car garages and twelve thousand drivers in recent time. These were not ordinary soldiers, but personal elite guards, similar to the State Secret Service agents who protect world leaders. The army itself was under the command of Benaiah ***(2 Chronicles 1:2),*** which also mentioned the commanders of thousands and hundreds. Also, the Bible tells us about the large gold shields Solomon made and kept in his palaces ***(2 Chronicles 9:15–16).***

What lesson can we learn from this? Even in peaceful times, always have contingency plans for defence. Hope for the best but prepare for the worst. Sometimes, the mere appearance of strength deters an attack. The strong will always prey on the weak; that is the law of the wild. Bola Tinubu, a political strategist and current Nigerian President, once said, *"I plan for betrayal, I plan for backstabbing, I also plan for reunion and forgiveness long before they happen. In life, I expect nothing; I expect anything, I expect everything."*

Make a show of your might. Sometimes, the enemy will hold back when he sees your power.

This mindset reflects the wisdom of preparedness. In life, a friend today may turn into an enemy tomorrow, and vice versa. The higher the stakes, the more prepared you must be for the unexpected.

REST

DEC 02

"The LORD my God has given me rest on every side, and there is no adversary or disaster" 1 Kings 5:4 [NIV]

After dealing with all his enemies, both domestic and foreign, Solomon made the statement in today's scripture, acknowledging that his rest came from God. Despite his wisdom and effort, He recognised peace was a gift of mercy. ***Psalm 127:2*** declares, ***"It is vain for you to rise early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He gives His beloved sleep." John 3:27*** adds, ***"A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven." Proverbs 21:31*** concludes, ***"The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is of the LORD."*** These verses reveal that human effort is wasted without God's blessing. Solomon planned and worked diligently, but ultimately, God was the source of his peace. Many successful people cannot sleep at night because they fear for their lives, health, or possessions. That is not the kind of success God endorses. When God is the giver, He adds rest as a bonus.

Joseph Stalin (1879–1953), the former communist leader of the defunct USSR, accumulated great power but was constantly paranoid and distrustful of his followers. He ordered the execution of his best friend and confidant, Sergey Kirov, because Kirov was becoming popular. He also dismissed his most competent officials because they made him feel insecure. In the end, Stalin suffered a stroke and died neglected and alone. The stress of his achievements consumed him.

The wealth that God gives comes with rest as bonus

Success without God is not worth it. May the Lord help you wait patiently for the blessings that only He can give, and may you never weigh yourself down with inordinate ambitions.

PURPOSE OF PEACE

DEC 03

"The LORD has given me rest... I intend, therefore, to build a temple for the Name of the LORD my God" 1 Kings 5:4–5 [NIV]

When God grants you all-round rest from your enemies, delivers you from sickness, and blesses you with prosperity, it is so that you can fulfil your divine purpose. Looking at ***2 Samuel 7:12–13***, God told David that his son Solomon would build the temple for His Name. That was Solomon's destiny. But he could not begin immediately until he dealt with domestic enemies and manage foreign relations. For the first four years of his reign, Solomon focused on establishing peace and stability. Only then did he start building the temple, ***(1 Kings 6:1***). Many great destinies are delayed by battles within and without: Domestic enemies, ancestral forces, ailments, lack of favour, and spiritual opposition.

Luke 8:26–39 tells the story of a man possessed by many demons, called Legion. Thousands of evil spirits tormented him as he lived among the tombs, harming himself. When Jesus came to deliver him, the demons stirred a violent storm to stop him ***(Luke 8:22–25).*** Yet Jesus prevailed and set the man free. After his deliverance, Jesus instructed him to share his testimony. ***"The man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him." (Luke 8:3).*** This was his divine purpose: To evangelise to his people. The devils that enslaved him were trying to prevent him from fulfilling it. Jesus could not enter that town because the people rejected Him ***(Luke 8:37)***, but the delivered man entered on His behalf and fulfilled the mission. Peace is not for idleness but for purpose. When God grants you rest, He expects you to rise and build; in service, in obedience, and in gratitude.

GRACEFUL WORDS

DEC 04

"When Hiram heard Solomon's message, he was greatly pleased… So Hiram sent word to Solomon: 'I will do all you want in providing the cedar and juniper logs." 1 Kings 5:7–8 [NIV]

Hiram, the king of Tyre, was a close friend of David. When he heard that Solomon had succeeded his father, he sent condolences. Solomon used the opportunity to request Hiram's skilled workers and cedar timber for the temple, offering full wages. In verse 6, he praised the craftsmanship of Tyre's woodworkers, admitting Israel had none like them. His graceful words pleased Hiram deeply, who, moved by Solomon's humility, vowed to do all he asked, and even shipped the timber to Israel with his own vessels as written in verse 8.

There is an innate desire in everyone to be praised or acknowledged

The lesson is clear: gracious speech moves people to go beyond duty to help you succeed. Everyone desires to be valued. The wife longs for praise for her cooking; the husband desires appreciation for his provision. The employer wants employees to value the opportunity given by serving well. The employee also desires recognition for faithful service. Even the waiter expects a tip for good service, though the meal is already paid for.

Even God delights in thanksgiving and cherishes hearts that remembers His benefits. Everyone thrives where they feel appreciated. Gratitude and gracious speech open doors that effort alone cannot. This is not flattery, which is false or exaggerated, but sincere acknowledgement of value. Take a moment today to appreciate the skill, effort, time, and resources others have rendered. It is a hidden key to receiving more, for every heart longs to be seen and valued.

GRACEFUL WORDS II

DEC 05

"Praise be to the LORD today, for he has given David a wise son to rule over this great nation."
1 Kings 5:7 [NIV]

Today's scripture was the response of King Hiram to Solomon's message. As an elder who had spent many years on the throne and in international relations with kings, Hiram could discern that Solomon's words were inspired. What we say and how we say it are indicators of our level of education and wisdom. People can often gauge who we are through our speech. Pride is one of the most subtle vices in man. It is often difficult to detect it in oneself; rather, it usually takes the honest feedback of others to reveal it.

Years ago, I had a friend who struggled with severe halitosis (bad breath). We managed him but found it difficult to tell him without hurting his feelings. We were with him for years, but none of us said anything. However, when he got engaged, his fiancée quickly pointed it out, and he began to take precautions and improve. She showed him more love than we did. ***Proverbs 27:6, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."*** A true friend will tell you the bitter truth you need to hear; they will not massage your ego.

May the Lord help you detect every unwanted vice in your life. May He grant you the grace to improve in every area that needs attention. And may He also give you the gift of sincere friends; those who will tell you what you need to hear, not just what you want to hear.

GOD'S CALENDAR I

DEC 06

"In the 480th year after the Israelites came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the LORD." 1 Kings 6:1 [NIV]

In the next few days, we shall look at the importance of God's calendar in the life of an individual or nation. Sometimes, we wonder why there are delays in life. We try so hard, yet nothing seems to change. But at the appointed time, everything begins to fall into place effortlessly. ***Ecclesiastes 3:11, "He hath made everything beautiful in His time."*** Most modern translations render it as ***"in its time,"*** but the King James Version captures the truth more clearly: no one owns time; only God controls it.

Today's scripture presents figures that many often overlook, yet they reveal how God works. The beginning of the temple's construction was intentionally tied to the anniversary of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. The month of Ziv and the fourth year of Solomon's reign were also mentioned for their divine significance. In ***2 Samuel 7,*** David told the prophet Nathan that he wanted to build a temple for the Ark of God. But God responded through Nathan, saying in verse 7, ***"I have not dwelt in a house since the time I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt, but have moved about in a tent and a tabernacle."*** God also told David that he was not permitted to build the temple even though he had the resources. Instead, his son would be the one to do it. If David had attempted to build, he would have failed because it was not yet time on God's calendar. Understanding God's timing is critical to success in life.

An understanding of God's timing is critical to success in life

GOD'S CALENDAR II

DEC 07

"In the 480th year after the Israelites came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the LORD." 1 Kings 6:1 [NIV]

In God's calendar, numbers are significant, representing specific dimensions of His nature and purpose. The number four symbolises creation, creature, or creativity. ***Ezekiel 1:5–17*** describes four living creatures, each having four faces, four wings, and four sides. The Garden of Eden had one river that divided into four great rivers ***(Genesis 2:10–14)***. Water sustains life—it is essential for creation. The month of Ziv, the second month in the Hebrew calendar, means "*light*" or "*glow*." In ***Genesis 1:14-19***, God made the lights (the sun, moon, and stars) on the fourth day to mark the four seasons, summer, winter, autumn, and spring. [Please read *The Arithmetic of God* by Don Kistler for more information].

The 480th year of Israel's freedom from Egypt is a multiple of four. The temple was a new creation**,** a project requiring divine creativity, the first of its kind in almost five centuries. Until then, only Saul and David had ruled Israel, each for forty years (a multiple of four). Solomon also ruled for forty years, but he began the temple project in his fourth year which is the first four of ten. Combined, the three kings ruled for eighty-four years. Eighty-four divided by four equals twenty-one, which is seven multiplied by three. The number seven represents perfection. God accepts nothing less than perfection and excellence. He designed the precise timing for the building of the temple. The kings were merely instruments in His plan.

In God's calendar, numbers are significant.

GOD'S CALENDAR III

DEC 08

"I have not dwelt in a house since I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt but have moved about in a tent and a tabernacle." 2 Samuel 7:6 [NIV]

When David proposed building God a temple, God asked, ***"Did I ever say to any of their rulers, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'" (2 Samuel 7:7)***. God deliberately refrained because He does not dwell in buildings; He inhabits people. The temple construction was an honour offered to God by David and Solomon, reflecting His permissive will rather than His perfect will. When Jesus died, the veil that separated the Holy of Holies, where the ark was kept was torn in two, ***Matthew 27:50-51*** records, granting us access to God without intermediaries.

Hebrews 11:9 explains that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all lived in tents even though they could afford to build houses. God had shown Abraham the Promised Land He planned to give his descendants, yet Abraham knew that God could command him to move at any time. So, like God, his friend, he chose tents over buildings. ***1 Corinthians 6:19*** declares that ***"your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost,"*** not your church building. God is back searching for those who will accommodate the Ark. He is seeking those who are ready to move at His command, not those who think they have arrived. We are soldiers of Christ and pilgrims on the battlefield of life. Be fluid enough to move as God directs.

THE FINISHER'S ANOINTING

DEC 09

"So Solomon built the temple and completed it."
1 Kings 6:14 [NIV]

Today's scripture states that Solomon completed what he started. You may not see much in that sentence, but it is a big deal. It is one thing to conceive a project; it is another to complete it. It is yet another thing to enjoy it. When you can achieve all three, you have a gift from God, which I call the finisher's anointing. Not everyone carries this anointing. Many have all the resources they need, yet the grace to finish is not given to them.

In ***Deuteronomy 28:30,*** one of the listed curses says that a person under a curse will build a house but not live in it; they will plant but not eat from it. Conversely, ***Ecclesiastes 3:13, "every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labour—it is the gift of God." Isaiah 65:21–22*** also says, ***"They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses for others to inhabit, nor plant for others to eat."*** Jesus also said in ***John 4:34, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."***

Robert Kiyosaki once observed that only 10% of all business start-ups survive the first five years, and 90% of those do not make it to the tenth year. Even biology teaches that a man releases between 40 million and 1.2 billion sperm cells during ejaculation, yet only one succeeds. If you are reading this, it means you are that one who won, and by God's grace, you will keep winning. Amen.

GOD IS WATCHING

DEC 10

"But Solomon took thirteen years to build his own house." 1 Kings 7:1 [NKJV]

While advising his son, a man once said, "*Ignore whatever anyone says before the word 'but'; pay attention to what comes after it, because that is what they truly mean.*" For example: "*That young man is hardworking, brilliant, and talented. He has a first-class degree from Harvard, but he is rude."* The last clause reveals the speaker's true intent, regardless of the praise that came before. Today's scripture opens with the word "but." The previous chapter ends by noting that Solomon spent seven years building God's temple. The next begins, ***"But he spent thirteen years building his own."***

1 Kings 6:2 records that the temple measured sixty cubits long and twenty cubits wide (1,200 square cubits). Solomon's palace, however, was one hundred cubits by fifty cubits, 5,000 square cubits, ***(1 Kings 7:2)***. His residence was four times larger than the national temple where thousands were meant to worship. This reveals Solomon's grand sense of taste and self-indulgence, and God noticed it. Moreover, he also built a house for Pharaoh's daughter, his wife, ***(1 Kings 7:8)***.

Man sees what was given, but God looks at what remains after giving.

Matthew 12:41–44, Jesus observed a widow giving her mite and told His disciples that she had given more than everyone else because she gave out of her poverty. God is always watching and taking account of our liberality. We are told to give according to what we have purposed in our hearts, in ***2 Corinthians 9:7.*** Yet, ***1 Samuel 2:3*** reminds us that God weighs our actions. Man sees what is given, but God looks at what remains after giving.

LET GO, AND LET GOD

DEC 11

"When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the Lord, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud."
1 Kings 8:10–11 [NKJV]

After completing the temple and the king's palace, Solomon dedicated the temple. He had the Ark of God brought from Zion, the city of David, into its resting place in the temple. The structure was patterned after the tabernacle of Moses in ***Exodus 25 and 26***. It had three distinct sections; the outer court, the holy place, and the Holy of Holies. These represent the parts of every human being: the body, the soul, and the spirit (or heart).

When the priests placed the Ark, representing the Word of God as noted in ***1 Kings 8:9***, in the Holy of Holies, they withdrew to the outer court where the congregation was gathered. Then the glory of God descended. God waited for the priests to withdraw before releasing His glory. The flesh must step aside for the Spirit to take over.

The flesh must step aside for the Spirit to take over

Whenever we give God His rightful place in our hearts, His glory fills our entire being: body, soul, and spirit. We will no longer need to rely on self-help, for God will handle our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. ***Hebrews 4:9–10*** assures us that, ***"There remains a rest for the people of God."*** May your struggles cease and your rest in God begin today. Amen.

DO NOT TURN AWAY

DEC 12

"The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, who had appeared to him twice." 1 Kings 11:9 [NIV]

There was no one on earth whom God blessed with such honour and riches as Solomon. God gave him peace, prosperity, and wisdom beyond measure. In addition, He revealed to Solomon the key to sustaining those blessings. Twice, the Lord appeared to him in ***1 Kings 3:5*** and in ***1 Kings 9:2***, repeating the same message: His continued blessings depended on Solomon's continued obedience to His word.

Sadly, comfort and wealth often blind people to what truly matters. As Jesus said in ***Matthew 19:24, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."*** When we are sick, poor, desperate, or in trouble, we make all manners of vows, promising God that if He helps us, we will never disobey Him again. Yet, once comfort returns, we forget our promises. It is a weakness of the flesh, but no one is exempt from the consequences of disobedience.

Comfort and wealth often blind people to what truly matters

It is difficult to believe that Solomon, who prayed and witnessed God's glory fill the temple, later bowed to strange gods ***(1 Kings 11:1–9).*** The same Solomon who encountered God twice drifted from Him. Pride and self-sufficiency can quietly lead even the strongest heart astray. ***1 Corinthians 10:12*** warns, ***"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall."*** Every person who has fallen from grace once felt invincible. At all times, we must recognise that God alone is our source, our keeper, and our helper. To remain in His grace, we must continually walk in humility and obedience.

GENERATIONAL BLESSINGS

DEC 13

"Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime."
1 Kings 11:12 [NIV]

Solomon disappointed God in his later years, and the Lord became angry with him. Yet, even in His anger, God remembered His promise to David and spared Solomon from the full measure of His judgment. Before Solomon committed these sins, God had already said to David, ***"I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul." (2 Samuel 7: 14 – 15).***

This prophecy revealed that God already knew Solomon would falter, yet He made provision for mercy in advance; not for Solomon's sake, but for David's. This is how God's mercy flows through generations, and how children can benefit from their parents' faithfulness. This truth also reminds us to be cautious about the people we join our destinies with. Some may be walking under certain generational blessings we know nothing about, while others may still be bound by ancestral curses that you might not be aware of.

Be careful what 'ship' you join – be it 'friendship' or 'courtship'.

Prof. Wole Soyinka is a highly revered Nigerian. He is the only Nobel Laurette in a country of over 215 million people. In contrast, Israel has thirteen Nobel Laureates with a global Jewish population of 14.8 million. Soyinka identifies with Ogun, the god of iron. Yet, he described his mother as a 'Wild Christian', and he was raised in a parsonage. Although he no longer subscribes to the faith of his parents, it is evident that the blessing he enjoys is generational. Let us also strive to leave a good heritage for our children.

SPIRITUALITY VS SECULARITY

DEC 14

"Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in front of the whole assembly of Israel…" 1 Kings 8:22 [NIV]

One of the key takeaways from the life of Solomon is the importance of maintaining balance between spirituality and secularism. Today's scripture shows that Solomon was deeply spiritual in a religious nation, yet dealt with outsiders wisely and fairly. He never imposed nor enforced his beliefs, but the impact of his spirituality was evident to all.

The Queen of Sheba captured the typical response of an external observer. She commended Solomon's wisdom, his palaces, the order and discipline of his officers, and concluded in ***1 Kings 10:4–9, "He (God) has made you king to maintain justice and righteousness."*** Oliver Wendell Holmes (Snr) once said, "*Some people are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good.*" This reflects a major issue in African spirituality; we are deeply spiritual, yet its tangible results are rarely seen. We export spirituality to the world but offer little practical impact, which is not how Jesus intended it to be.

Some people are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good. (Oliver Wendell Holmes, Snr).

A close look at Jesus' life shows that He was never a public nuisance despite His limitless anointing. He allowed His results to speak for Him. Whenever His works attracted large crowds, He quietly withdrew to avoid disturbance ***(Matthew 12:15–16).*** When He prayed aloud, He sought solitude ***(Mark 1:35).*** Isaiah prophesied, ***"He (Jesus) will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets."*** (***Matthew 12:19*** and ***Isaiah 42:2*** records this). Let us focus on adding value through our spirituality and tone down on public display that brings no real transformation.

SPIRITUALITY VS INTELLIGENCE

DEC 15

"Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the detestable god of Moab, and for Molek, the detestable god of the Ammonites." 1 Kings 11:7 [NIV]

Spirituality has a direct impact on human intelligence. Many of the world's greatest intellectuals are deeply spiritual. There are divine and diabolic dimensions to spirituality. Solomon was an exceptional intellectual who wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs ***(1 Kings 4:32),*** demonstrating extraordinary intellect. By comparison, Michael Jackson, a global music icon, wrote about 150 songs, while the Beatles (John Lennon and Paul McCartney) are credited with 200. The Beatles remain history's most successful music band, selling over 600 million albums. They once travelled to an ashram in the Himalayas to meditate and tap into spiritual powers, during which they wrote over 40 songs, about 20% of their total, in just weeks.

Solomon's wisdom came directly from God, yet today's scripture shows that he later devoted that same intelligence to demonic purposes. Many modern intellectuals behave like Solomon. They begin with God, but over time, the devil takes the credit for their gifts. God did not withdraw the gift of wisdom from Solomon even after he backslid. ***Romans 11:29***, ***"For God's gifts and his call are irrevocable."*** When God gives a gift, He does not take it back.

Moses was also a remarkable intellectual. Through him, we understand the origins of humanity and the world. Even after his death, the devil tried to seize his body, but God intervened ***(Jude 9*** and ***Deuteronomy 34:5–6)***. The devil is still at work today, trying to rob God's kingdom of intellectuals so that he can take the glory. Let us strive to stay faithful to our calling and honour God with our gifts.

SPIRITUALITY VS RELIGION

DEC 16

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees... You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to." Matthew 23:13 [NIV]

There is a world of difference between **spirituality** and **religion.** What we truly need is spirituality. Religion, however, was meant to help people reach spirituality. Spirituality is a personal encounter, a meeting point between humanity and divinity. Spiritual people recognise the part of themselves that connects with God. When they make contact with divinity, they know its meaning. They expect it, embrace it, and are transformed by it.

The non-spiritual person denies this reality entirely. Many genuinely spiritual people tend to share their experiences with others. As they begin to teach others "*how*" to experience what they encountered, religion is formed and becomes a set of rituals designed to reproduce spiritual encounters. Unfortunately, even the most well-intentioned spiritual leader eventually dies, and what remains is a system - religion. Religious leaders try to build monuments around their past authentic experiences, hoping to replicate and preserve them. Some even fake experiences to maintain followership or control people, because followership translates to influence and income. That is the tragic endpoint of many religions.

Today's scripture illustrates this clearly: religious leaders are often interested in controlling people. They often prefer acting as middlemen between God and people. But the veil has been torn; everyone now has direct access to experience true spirituality ***(Matthew 27:51)***. King Solomon had direct contact with divinity twice ***(1 Kings 3:5 and 1 Kings 9:2)***, but he later drifted from that divine connection. If you are in touch with divinity, treasure it deeply.

ENABLERS

DEC 17

"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."
Romans 13:14 [NKJV]

In ***1 Kings 3:3***, we read that ***"Solomon loved the Lord…"*** But by ***1 Kings 11:1–2,*** we see that ***"Solomon loved many foreign women."*** Solomon undoubtedly loved God, but he tried to share that love with those who did not respect God, and that can never work. When you take a strange god beside the true God, He withdraws, "***He is a jealous God***." ***(Exodus 34:14)***. Jesus speaking in ***Matthew 6:24*** said that no one can serve two masters: ***"You cannot serve both God and mammon."*** You will choose one and despise the other. ***Matthew 22:37 (NIV)***, Jesus also declared, ***"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."*** This tells us that God wants everything or nothing at all. He does not share His place with another. All means all. A preacher once said, "*When you leave a little love for the devil, he takes over everything."* This was Solomon's grave error. Apostle Paul also warned in today's scripture: ***"Do not make provision for the flesh."***

The late Rev. Kenneth E. Hagin once received a distress call from a single woman asking him to visit her at home. His spirit, however, urged him to go along with his wife. When they arrived, he rang the bell but allowed his wife to enter first. As soon as she stepped inside, the naked woman jumped on her, and waiting photographers snapped pictures! Rev. Hagin was saved from blackmail because he had the foresight to act wisely. He had a knowing that visiting a single woman in her house was not ethically correct (although it was technically not a sin). His ministry and message would have been ruined forever. His story reminds us that some situations require divine intervention, while others demand common sense.

GREATER THAN SOLOMON

DEC 18

"Now someone greater than Solomon is here—but you refuse to listen." Matthew 12:42c [NLT]

Jesus made the statement in today's scripture when some people asked Him for a sign to prove that He was the Messiah. He replied that no sign would be given except the sign of Jonah, who spent three days and three nights in the belly of a fish: an allusion to His death and resurrection. Then He added that even the Queen of Sheba would testify against the Pharisees on the day of judgment because she travelled from afar to hear Solomon's wisdom. Yet, the Pharisees would not listen to Jesus, who was right there with them.

The distance from Sheba (modern-day Ethiopia) to Jerusalem is about 4,112 kilometres. If the Queen had travelled non-stop, it would have taken her roughly nine days to reach Jerusalem and another nine to return. Considering rest stops and the desert heat, her journey probably stretched to a month each way, to just hear Solomon's words!

But now, we have someone greater than Solomon, and that is Jesus Christ. He is not far away; He lives within us through the Holy Spirit. God has given us this precious privilege so that we no longer need to struggle or travel long distances to hear from Him. Remember the price that Jesus paid to be near us. So, what price are you willing to pay to hear and obey His voice if He were far away? May the Lord help you always to listen to Him and follow His wisdom. Amen.

KNOWLEDGE

DEC 19

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance…" Galatians 5:22–23 [KJV]

We begin this brief study of the fruit of the Spirit as outlined in today's scripture. Notice that the word "fruit" is singular; it is one fruit, yet it contains nine vitamins. This fruit can be compared to a peeled orange or tangerine with nine lobes. Once peeled, you can enjoy the fruit by eating it one lobe at a time. Everyone who has the Spirit of God is entitled to all nine vitamins. However, it is possible to peel your fruit, set it aside, and while distracted, lose one or two lobes without realising it because they are so many. We must not allow the enemy to steal from us.

The first step to enjoying all you have is knowing that you have them. ***1 Corinthians 2:12, "Now we have received…the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."*** The Spirit of God is the Spirit of knowledge, whose primary role is to make us aware of what we are entitled to.

If you are not aware of what is yours, it is as good as lost

Jesus said in ***John 14:26, "But the Holy Spirit…will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."*** Ignorance opens the door to loss. The only power the devil has over a believer is to make them ignorant of a truth; once that happens, he gains control in that area. May we fully enjoy and appropriate all that has been made available to us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

LOVE

DEC 20

"The fruit of the Spirit is love." Galatians 5:22 [KJV]

The first fruit of the Spirit mentioned is love. This is not surprising because God Himself is love, ***(1 John 4:8 and 16)***. This means that no one truly understands God until they understand what love is. Love is what motivates God to do all that He does. No one feels threatened in the presence of love. When you radiate love toward people, they feel at ease and want to stay around you.

I once visited a garden in San Antonio, USA, where a squirrel boldly came to my feet. I expressed my surprise to my host, telling him that where I came from, animals keep a respectful distance from humans lest they become dinner. My host laughed and explained that those animals are protected by law. Over generations, they have become accustomed to humans and no longer understand what fear of people means. Even when an animal is wild and dangerous, the law still protects it and provides forest reserves for its safety. This made me realise that this is exactly why God tolerates many of us.

No one feels threatened in the presence of love

There are murderers, adulterers, liars, and all kinds of sinners, yet God sends His rain to all, ***(Matthew 5:45).*** Many people wonder why God watches without intervening when evil seems to thrive. Some even conclude there is no God because He does not judge instantly. But we are all like that squirrel, protected by a covenant, even when we are unaware of it. The love of God allows us to roam free for a season. God has so much compassion and patience with us because He knows that we are flesh that will soon pass away, ***(Psalm 78:38–39).*** Such is the love of the Father.

LOVE'S LIMIT

DEC 21

"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." John 15:13 [NIV]

In today's text, Jesus described the highest boundary of love. When you are willing to give up your life to save someone else's, there is no greater expression of love than that. Jesus did not only say it, but He did it. He laid down His life for us voluntarily, ***(John 10:18).*** Jesus also established the lower boundary of love when He said to love your neighbour as yourself ***(Mark 12:31).*** This lower limit of love means doing to others what you would have them do to you, ***(Matthew 7:12)***. No one would willingly take their own life. We all make efforts to care for and comfort ourselves. Jesus teaches that we should not treat our neighbour with any less kindness than we show ourselves.

At a higher level of love, however, when you lay down your life, you have loved your neighbour more than yourself. Yet we do not need to wish for death to prove our love for God, our families, or our neighbours. There are other ways to reach love's upper boundary while still alive. Paul explained this beautifully in ***Galatians 2:19–20: "For I died to the law so that I might live for God… The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."*** Therefore, we are called to reciprocate God's love by living for Him. In ***Romans 12:1***, Paul urges us to present our bodies as living sacrifices. This is an oxymoron, for a sacrifice is expected to be dead, yet we are admonished to become living sacrifices: the living dead. Jesus' death is enough; let us live for Him.

JOY

DEC 22

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy…"
Galatians 5:22 [KJV]

Joy is the second mentioned ***vitamin*** of the fruit of the Spirit. There is a clear difference between joy and happiness. While happiness depends on happenings, joy is unconditional. Happiness is stimulated by external events, but joy is generated from within. Happiness is temporal and fluctuating, whereas joy is constant. ***Isaiah 12:3***, ***"With joy, you will draw water from the wells of salvation."*** Life, in general, is like a well. Have you ever looked down into a borehole? All you would see is total darkness, even though there is water in it. Life is filled with many beautiful things. Yet the natural eyes cannot see them.

It is almost impossible to draw water from a borehole through manual effort; you need an electric pump to bring the water up. Joy is that electric pump. It ensures that all the benefits of salvation flow into your life, even when others are struggling through the darkness of life's challenges.

Depression blinds people from seeing the good that is coming. Joy causes you to see it.

Depression is the consequence of the absence of joy. Many have given up hope. But ***Proverbs 17:22*** assures that, ***"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones."*** Therefore, joy in our hearts functions like an inbuilt medicine cabinet. It is like a happiness hormone that secretes continuously, just as saliva does in the mouth. It keeps your soul watered and alive. Without joy, life loses its worth. This is the very essence of the gospel: Christ came to rescue us from the darkness called life. Yet, to experience this light, you must have joy, for it helps you see what others cannot see.

JOY ILLUSTRATED

DEC 23

"With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." Isaiah 12:3 [NIV]

Today's text can be illustrated by the story of Jesus and the woman at the well of Samaria. Jesus asked her for a drink, and she replied, ***"Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." Psalm 64:6*** says, ***"The heart is deep,"*** and ***Proverbs 4:23*** adds, ***"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."*** The heart, therefore, is deep like a well. To draw meaning and fulfilment from that well, you need a tool, just as the Samaritan woman said. That tool is joy, which only the Spirit of God can provide.

The Samaritan woman had lived with five different husbands and was living with a sixth ***(John 4:18).*** She had been searching for satisfaction through relationships that could never fill her inner void. No one is truly happy living in emptiness or sin. But that day, Jesus quenched her thirst by revealing that what she needed was not in any man or place, but in the everlasting well of the Spirit of God. Overwhelmed with joy, she left her water jar and ran to tell others about Him ***(John 4:28–30).***

Joy is like the pump that lifts water from a borehole

This mirrors the story of Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple, the most valuable company on earth by market capitalisation, worth over $2.6 trillion, ahead of Saudi Aramco, Microsoft, and Google. On his deathbed, he reportedly said, *"I reached the pinnacle of success in the business world. In the eyes of others, my life is the epitome of success. However, aside from work, I have little joy."* There is a thirst in every human heart. You do not have to spend your life searching for satisfaction like Steve Jobs or the Samaritan woman. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, and it is only given by Jesus.

PEACE

DEC 24

"The fruit of the Spirit is… peace."
Galatians 5:22 [KJV]

Another manifestation of the Spirit of God is peace. This is one quality that is scarce on earth and missing in the lives of many. Do not be deceived into thinking that peace of mind can be found in places, things, or people. Since the creation of man, our species has continually sought peace in a world filled with wars, economic uncertainties, health crises, political unrest, food shortages, and failed relationships. These challenges existed long before we were born and will remain long after we are gone. However, Jesus said in ***John 14:27, "My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled."*** God may not remove the causes of life's problems, but in the midst of them all, He grants peace; true rest.

Pablo Escobar, a name synonymous with drug trafficking, was once listed by Forbes among the world's richest men. He built a luxurious estate, Hacienda Napoles, as a haven of comfort and rest. It looked like paradise on earth, guarded by numerous security men and filled with exotic animals like giraffes, Ostriches, hippopotamuses, and elephants. Yet Escobar himself could not spend two consecutive nights there because his enemies were always on his trail. Eventually, they overran the estate and destroyed it. Today, Hacienda Napoles lies in ruins. Peace is not found in any place, person, or possession. It is purely a gift of the Spirit.

Peace is not found in any place, person, or possession. It's purely a gift of the Spirit.

LONGSUFFERING

DEC 25

"The fruit of the Spirit is long-suffering"
Galatians 5:22 [KJV]

Another fruit of the Spirit is long-suffering. The contemporary meaning includes forbearance, stoicism, being uncomplaining, or patient. A stoic is someone who can endure pain or hardship without showing their feelings or complaining. Why do we need to be stoic? Because the Christian race is not a sprint; it is a marathon. If you approach the Christian life with the mindset of a sprinter, you will soon drop out.

I once heard a funny but true story of a young man who decided to join a marathon race where participants were required to go around a 400-metre track ten times (4 km). Having never participated in such before, he dashed ahead of everyone as soon as the race began, using all his might. His group of loud, supportive friends cheered him on, but the more experienced runners behind were unbothered. They knew that the real winner does not emerge at the start; it's not about speed, but consistency.

Very soon, the young man had exhausted all his energy within the first two laps and began to slow down. By the fourth lap, he had become the last runner. Out of shame, he quietly abandoned the race and blended into the crowd at a safe distance from his friends. Many Christians are like this young man. They start their spiritual race with great enthusiasm, but with the wrong mindset; that of a 100-metre sprinter. But the Christian walk demands endurance. Like the angel told Elijah, ***"Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for thee."*** Elijah went in the strength of that meal for forty days and forty nights ***(1 Kings 19:7–8 (KJV))***. Long-suffering strengthens you to endure the journey and remain steadfast until the end.

GENTLENESS

DEC 26

"The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness"
Galatians 5:22 [KJV]

Gentleness is synonymous with being mild, kind, tranquil, benign, or tender. In a world as wild as ours, gentleness is often mistaken for weakness. However, today's text shows us otherwise. Have you ever seen a well-rounded pebble? It's smooth and beautiful. As children, we often collected them, while artists use them for artworks and decoration. Yet, the process that gives the pebble its beauty is unpleasant.

A rough rock is carried along the riverbed by strong currents. As it tumbles, it rubs against the riverbed and other rocks. Gradually, its rough edges are smoothened. This process takes years, but eventually, a thing of beauty emerges; the pebble. Life is like that river, and we are the pebbles. As we journey through it, life smoothens our rough edges, shaping our character. Though He was a Son, Jesus learned obedience by the things He suffered ***(Hebrews 5:8, KJV).*** The beautiful character of obedience to the will of God was not automatic; Jesus learned it through suffering, just as we all do.

Consider the river itself. It never argues with the rock. Whenever it meets an obstacle, it doesn't collide endlessly; it simply bends around it and continues to flow. However, the river's persistence and consistency will eventually wear down the rock, even if it takes years. Are you surrounded by frustrating people? Respond like the gentle river. Do not argue or fight. Move with grace, but remain firm. Ultimately, gentleness prevails over hardness.

GOODNESS

DEC 27

"The fruit of the Spirit is goodness"
Galatians 5:22 [KJV]

Goodness is the quality of being morally good or virtuous. It would be naïve to assume that everyone around us is good. Man was created to be good, but somehow, he is not. ***Genesis 6:5-6 (NIV), "The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth."*** This is a very disturbing statement, made as far back as the days of Noah. ***"But Jesus did not trust them, because He knew all about people. No one needed to tell Him about human nature, for He knew what was in each person's heart," (John 2:24–25 (NLT)).*** Jesus, though all-powerful, was very cautious around people.

When you see people in fine clothes and pleasant appearances, you may be tempted to trust their words: do so at your peril. A truly good person is one upon whom the Spirit of God has breathed. Such people are rare. Often, good people are like endangered species. When evil people identify them, they take advantage of their kindness, exploit them, and cheat them until the good person begins to wonder what they did wrong.

A good person often assumes that everyone else is like them. This is why Jesus said in ***Matthew 10:16, "I send you out as sheep among wolves; be wise as serpents and gentle as doves. Be wise as serpent but gentle as a dove"*** It takes divine wisdom for a good person to survive among evil people. Do not be careless. Let goodness be guided by wisdom.

FAITHFULNESS

DEC 28

"The fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness"
Galatians 5:22 [NIV]

Faithfulness can be defined as the quality of adhering to a promise or fulfilling one's duty to someone beyond oneself. It is fidelity, constancy, dependability, and trustworthiness; a very rare quality among human beings. ***Proverbs 20:6 (NKJV)*** says, ***"Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, but who can find a faithful man?"*** This means nearly everyone you meet will speak only of their good qualities while concealing their weaknesses.

Have you ever seen some curriculum vitae where someone lists their shortcomings? Probably not. Unfortunately, our senses have been trained to believe what we see and hear, which makes deception easy. Industries built on deception rake in trillions of dollars annually because deceit is often the quickest way for people to get what they want. The media, advertisements, and fashion industries were all built to project a certain image of people that are far from reality.

Faithfulness is best recognized by its track record

Faithfulness, on the other hand, focuses on the interests of others. To identify a faithful person, you must train yourself to look beyond appearances and words. Instead, observe what they do consistently over time. ***Matthew 7:16 (KJV)*** says, ***"By their fruits you shall know them."*** Sometimes, we fail to recognise the faithful people God has placed around us because the faithful rarely promote themselves. They come to serve quietly and will not impose themselves on others. It is therefore your responsibility to discover, honour, and elevate the faithful ones around you, just as Pharaoh recognised Joseph, and the land of Egypt prospered as a result. Faithfulness is best recognised by its track record.

FAITHFULNESS II

DEC 29

"Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" 1 Corinthians 4:2 [KJV]

Today's text highlights two key words: steward and faithful. Every believer is expected to be a faithful steward of the grace and calling entrusted to us. A steward is someone employed or appointed to oversee the property or affairs of another. Before anyone can be entrusted with managing a nobleman's estate, there must be a high level of trust. Most employees are required to provide referees or guarantors before being hired. In the same way, Jesus stands before the Father as our guarantor. He put in a good word for us and vouched for us. All He requires in return is our faithfulness.

Years ago, I helped a young man secure a job at my office. I also signed as his guarantor, accommodated him, and supported him until he could stand on his own. Years later, he got married and began to build his life, and I was proud of him. Then one day, I received a call from our employer asking me to produce him. He had resumed work at another firm without resigning or informing anyone. Worse still, he had obtained a car loan from our company and left with the vehicle without repaying the loan, yet continued to withdraw salaries being credited to his account.

When a guarantor stakes his hard-earned reputation for you, don't betray it.

As his guarantor, I was held responsible for the firm's losses. I had unintentionally misled my employers into trusting a man without character. The embarrassment was overwhelming. Thankfully, he was eventually found and compelled to restore what he had taken. In the same way, Jesus is our guarantor before the Father. Let us not bring Him shame by living unfaithfully. Be faithful, so that your Guarantor will be proud to present you before the Father.

MEEKNESS I

DEC 30

"The fruit of the Spirit is meekness."
Galatians 5:23 [KJV]

Dictionary.com describes meekness as a state of being docile, overly compliant, spiritless, yielding or tame. In a world as wild as ours, those are not qualities we naturally want to display. If you look like a sheep, the evil people of this world will make you into sausage and serve you for breakfast. Why, then, does the Spirit of God include meekness among the fruits? Meekness is the number one requirement for a teachable spirit. Unless you possess the very qualities described above, you cannot make significant progress in spiritual things. The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way ***(Psalm 25:9 (KJV)).*** To be guided and taught, you must be docile. The meeker you are, the faster you benefit from the ministry of the Spirit.

Remember that the primary reason God gave us the Spirit is that we might know and receive divine insight, as taught in ***1 Corinthians 2:12 (KJV),*** and ***John 14:26 (KJV).*** A stubborn, combative, opinionated and rebellious child is rarely a teacher's favourite; such children often receive correction while others learn. When the Spirit of God imparts meekness to you, you become teachable, able to learn not only from God but also from others. Meekness puts you in a listening posture; you allow others to speak because you recognise they may have knowledge you lack.

A stubborn and opinionated pupil is rarely a teacher's favourite

Meekness does not make you foolish. You must still discern and process what you hear, judging swiftly what is right or wrong before taking the appropriate steps. Meekness makes you teachable; discern quickly, then act wisely.

MEEKNESS II

DEC 31

"Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth."
Numbers 12: 3 [KJV]

Today's text testifies of Moses as the meekest man that ever lived. However, Moses was not born meek; he acquired it. The circumstances surrounding his birth already suggested that he was destined for greatness, where every male child born at that time was sentenced to death, ***(Exodus 1:22)***. Miraculously, Moses not only survived but was raised in the very palace of the king who decreed the death of his generation, ***(Exodus 2:10).*** He grew up in royalty; bold, privileged, and self-confident, ***(Exodus 2:11–14).*** However, though God desired to use him for great things and Moses himself sensed his divine calling, he was still not ready. God could not use a man who depended on his own strength, wealth, or pedigree.

Therefore, God sent him away for training. Moses became a servant to his father-in-law in the remotest part of the desert, where he was soon forgotten. By the time God was done pruning him, Moses had lost confidence in himself. That was where he learned meekness. When God appeared to him and commanded him to deliver the Israelites, Moses resisted repeatedly ***(Exodus 3:10–11, 13–18 and Exodus 4:1–8, 10–12)***. God had to cajole, encourage, and even rebuke him several times. By the fifth time, God was angry with him, ***(Exodus 4:13–14)***. Moses wasn't being rebellious; he had simply lost confidence in his own ability. And that was exactly the kind of man God could use. From that point onward, every step Moses took was strictly according to divine instruction, ***(Exodus 40:16).***

Rigid and opinionated people cannot be used by God

This complete submission became the secret of his greatness, as recorded in ***Exodus 11:3***. The more yielded we are in God's hands, the greater we will become, just as ***Psalm 147:6*** and ***Matthew 5:5*** affirm that the meek will be lifted and inherit the earth.

Other books by the Author

Such Is This Life

(Vol 1)



Such Is This Life (Vol 1) is more than just a book! It is a mirror that reflects your journey, a balm for your painful pasts, and a guide for anyone walking through life and quietly asking, *"Why me?"*

In seven raw and reflective stories drawn from the deeply personal experiences of the author, **Gbenga Omole** opens the door to moments that shaped his life: family separation, loss, disappointment, shame, fear, and emotional storms. But this isn't just about his story, it's about *yours* too.

Each chapter is paired with powerful life lessons that don't just teach, they resonate. These are not theories, but truths forged in the fire of real-life trials; truths that speak directly to anyone who has faced heartbreak, felt unworthy, or battled the fear of the unknown. And the beautiful thing – this book is a quick read, you can finish it in an hour, but its impact will last a lifetime! It will make you pause. Reflect. Heal. And most importantly, hope again.

With the grace of a storyteller and the wisdom of a teacher, Gbenga Omole reminds us that life doesn't reward guesswork, rather, it rewards wisdom. And the kind of wisdom tucked into these pages could just change the way you see your journey.

If you've ever desired God's guidance, if you've truly longed for meaning in your mess, or if you simply want to walk wiser through life's ups and downs, this book is for you! You can't read SITL Vol. 1, and not ask for Vol 2.

Such Is This Life

(Vol 2)



In ***Such Is This Life (Vol 2),*** the author, **Gbenga Omole** returns with raw honesty, heart-stirring storytelling and hard-earned wisdom that transforms ordinary moments into timeless lessons.

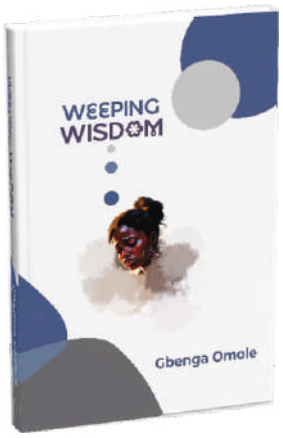
Written seven years after the first volume touched hearts, this sequel continues the author's wholehearted delivery of truth, vulnerability, and divine insight. From a near-fatal car crash and months of painful recovery, to seasons of divine insight and silent growth, Gbenga shares life as it happened – unfiltered, unguarded, unforgettable.

This volume is more than a memoir; it's a mosaic of grace, grit, and God's unwavering love. With each page, you are invited to sit at the wall like that wise orphan boy of old, ears tuned and hearts open, to glean wisdom from another's walk.

Whether you're rising from a fall, healing from life's scars, or searching for meaning in the mundane, this book is for you.

Read. Reflect. Rise.
And when you've learned—pass it on.

Weeping Wisdom



Weeping Wisdom is a sacred invitation into the soul's quiet wrestle with pain, purpose, and the presence of God. In these pages, **Gbenga Omole** masterfully captures the raw language of tears and transforms it into a symphony of divine wisdom. Through personal stories, heartfelt reflections, and piercing insights, this book explores the hidden treasures found in seasons of sorrow. It reveals how God often speaks — not in thunder, but in the stillness after we weep.

"Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets…" *(Proverbs 1:20 KJV)* — this is the heartbeat of *Weeping Wisdom*. In every breaking, there is a beckoning. In every ache, a whisper. God's wisdom is not distant; it cries out in public places, in the streets of our experiences, in the quiet chaos of our hearts.

Whether you are navigating loss, confusion, betrayal, or simply seeking answers in a dry season, *Weeping Wisdom* offers a voice of comfort and clarity. It reminds you that your tears are not wasted, they are collected, counted, and converted into living wisdom for you, by a God who sees beyond the surface.

So embrace your vulnerability, discover deeper strength, and encounter the gentle voice of God in the most unexpected moments of life.

Lessons
From The Wild

(Coming Soon)



What if the wild held the wisdom you've been missing?

From the strength of the Ox to the strategy of the Spider, ***Lessons from the Wild*** by **Gbenga Omole** uncovers timeless truths and divine insights hidden in nature's most fascinating creatures. Discover how Ants inspire productivity, Eagles reveal vision, Lions ignite courage, and even the Raven teaches provision.

This compelling book draws powerful parallels between the instincts of animals and the principles that shape victorious living. Get ready to see the natural world through a fresh, faith-filled lens.

Sometimes, the wild is God's classroom.

MEET THE AUTHOR



GBENGA OMOLE is a rare blend of intellect, inspiration, and insight. A prolific author with a heart for the hurting, he writes with a bias for those navigating life's toughest seasons, offering wisdom, light, and comfort through every page.

Gbenga holds a doctorate in Civil Engineering and serves as an Associate Professor of Water Engineering at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. With over a hundred academic publications and ground-breaking research spanning water quality, sustainability, and environmental law, his impact stretches beyond Nigeria, to other continents and disciplines.

Gbenga Omole's remarkable academic journey includes a PhD and Master's degree in Water Resources and Environmental Engineering, and a Bachelor's in Civil Engineering. He has earned prestigious recognitions such as the IFS Research Grant (Sweden), the NRF KIC Grant (South Africa), and a fellowship from the German Development Institute.

But beyond the laboratory and lecture hall, Gbenga is a man of deep spiritual insight – wise as Solomon, discerning like Daniel, and graced with a King-Priest mandate like David. His pen flows with purpose, giving birth to bestselling works like ***Such Is This Life*** (Volumes 1 & 2), *Weeping Wisdom*, *Lessons from the Wild*, and the *Food for Your Faith* devotional series (Volumes 1–4). Each book is more than a message; it is a legacy.

Through every page, Gbenga Omole reminds readers that even in life's wildest storms, wisdom still speaks, and healing still comes.

FOOD For Your FAITH

Food for Your Faith is not just a devotional, it's a daily meal served to feed and strengthen your faith.

In a noisy world filled with doubts and distractions, this series draws you back to the Word of God as your source of life and power. Each volume blends anecdotes and devotional insights with topical Bible studies to ignite your spirit, renew your mind, and guide your walk with God.

Whether you're new to faith or seeking to grow deeper, these daily readings offer nourishment for every season of life, suitable for both young and old. Volumes 1–4 provide a steady journey of faith-building, helping individuals and families alike to believe again, grow intentionally, and walk boldly in the Word.
Feed your faith daily!



Gbenga Omole

Gbenga Omole is an inspiring author and Professor of Water Resources and Environmental Engineering at a leading South African University. With a PhD in Civil Engineering and over 100 academic publications, he is a renowned researcher.

Beyond the classroom, Gbenga writes with a deep passion for healing broken hearts and renewing minds. His books, Such Is This Life (Vols. 1 & 2), Weeping Wisdom, Lessons from the Wild, and *Food for Your Faith (Vols. 1–4)*, deliver wisdom with warmth, offering spiritual clarity for all seasons of life.

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