

LAYMAN



A GUIDE FOR A CHRISTIAN LAYMAN

Table of Contents

WRITERS, EDITORS, REVIEWERS, ADVISORS, TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANTS	1
INTRODUCTION	2
CHAPTER 1	
JESUS—OUR UNCHANGING TRUTH!	17
CHAPTER 2	
WHO IS A LAYPERSON?	23
CHAPTER 3	
THE WORD OF GOD	40
CHAPTER 4	
WISDOM IN RELATING WITH YOUR PASTOR.....	56
CHAPTER 5	
RESPONSIBILITIES	68
CHAPTER 6	
BROKEN LEADERSHIP	86
CHAPTER 7	
A FATHER OR GUARDIAN AS A ROLE MODEL	96
CHAPTER 8	
NO EXCUSES.....	108
CHAPTER 9	
MINISTRY FOR PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, BE INCLUSIVE)	123
CHAPTER 10	
CLAIMING THE PROMISE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALING	128
CHAPTER 11	
CHILD UPBRINGING	134
CHAPTER 12	
CHILD UPBRINGING	154
CHAPTER 13	
CAUTION.....	195
CHAPTER 14	
BEING A GOOD HOST	205
CHAPTER 15	
HOW TO BE A GOOD GUEST	216
CHAPTER 16	
TEACHING SEX EDUCATION TO YOUTH AND ADULTS	224
CHAPTER 17	

BEING MARY MAGDALENE IN A MARTHA’S WORLD	245
CHAPTER 18	
STEWARDS OF GOD	253
CHAPTER 19	
LIVING AN ORDINARY LIFE	271
CHAPTER 20	
CREATION	285
CHAPTER 21	
HOLY MATRIMONY.....	298
CHAPTER 22	
MARRIAGE PROBLEMS.....	312
CHAPTER 23	
ADORNMENT	318
CHAPTER 24	
THE ALPHABET OF PARENTING.....	342
CHAPTER 25	
THE LAY MOVEMENT AND SPIRITUAL LEADERS	349
CHAPTER 26	
MENTORING OTHERS TO BECOME LAY MINISTERS	354
CHAPTER 27	
MEDIA, MUSIC, AND ENTERTAINMENT	363
CHAPTER 28	
CULTURE AND OTHER ISSUES AT WORK.....	378
CHAPTER 29	
LOVING THE WIFE.	388
CHAPTER 30	
WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE ON EARTH?	391
CHAPTER 31	
STRESS.....	399
CHAPTER 32	
TALKING WITH GOD-PRAYERS.	407
CHAPTER 33	
BEING A LEADER.	416
CHAPTER 34	
LAITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP	430
CHAPTER 35	
THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN DOING GOD’S WORK.	432

CHAPTER 36	
CHURCH PLANTING.	444
CHAPTER 37	
MEDICAL MISSIONARY/MEDICAL LAYPERSON.	449
CHAPTER 38	
SELF HEALTH EVALUATION.	459
CHAPTER 39	
HOW TO DETOX THE BODY.	466
CHAPTER 40	
TEN HEALERS.	470
CHAPTER 41	
EXPERT FRAUDS (QUACKERY OR QUACKS).....	521
CHAPTER 42	
REASONS FOR GIVING UP MEAT AND FISH	543
CHAPTER 43	
HOW TO HEAL AND THRIVE IN CHURCH.....	550
CHAPTER 44	
FORGIVENESS (ALTAR,GUILT, FORGIVING OTHERS AND BEING FORGIVEN)	570
CHAPTER 45	
MUSIC, WITCHCRAFT (words, beat, rhythm, melody, harmony)	582
CHAPTER 46	
MODERN COMMUNICATION AND OTHER INPUTS WE ENCOUNTER ON OUR JOURNEY	588
CHAPTER 47	
PHYSICIANS AS EVANGELISTS	602
CHAPTER 48	
HOME AND FAMILY WORSHIP	606
CHAPTER 49	
PREPARATION TO RECEIVE THE LATTER RAIN	610
CHAPTER 50	
PROMOTING THE BOY TO BE A PRIEST TO MANAGE HIS HOME (promote the son to be married to male and parents)	622
CHAPTER 51	
RAISING A GIRL TO BE A PROVERBS 31 WOMAN - Lessons for Mothers and Daughters	644
CHAPTER 52	
UNION AND THE ETERNAL GIFT	684
ETERNAL UNION	687

WRITERS, EDITORS, REVIEWERS, ADVISORS, TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANTS

Grace Momadi-Masaka, New Jersey, USA	Kwandu Kasiri, Kibaha, Tanzania
Daniel Masaka, Kisii, Kenya	Daniel Matekere, Majita, Tanzania
Bunga Dettu-Lamadi, Tanzania	Mbusi Mpagalushu, Bariadi, Tanzania
Evans Mobegi, Kisii, Kenya	Methuselah Mahumbi, Bariadi, Tanzania
Musa L. Budodi-Shinyanga, Tanzania	Bettie Magesa Muasya, Machakos, Kenya
Stephen Letta-Masasi, Tanzania	Paulo Momadi Masaka, Jersey, USA
Debbie Bishelli, Nairobi, Kenya	Daudi Jabez Masaka, Pennsylvania, USA
Herry Mhando, Hedaru, Tanzania	

Dedication

Jemima Nyafanga Kivunge, Arusha Tanzania

Asenath Upendo Momadi, Kibaha, Tanzania

New Filipo-Nyasaland (Malawi)

INTRODUCTION

Can you feel your heart beating? Place your hand on your chest and sense its rhythm. Are you breathing? Watch your chest rise and fall. Is your blood flowing through your body? If all these signs of life are present, then you are among those chosen to share the message of hope. Anyone who truly encounters Jesus cannot help but desire to become His follower—that means telling others about the Good News.

This book is inspired by conversations with fellow lay believers we've met at gatherings in places like Singida and Dodoma. The central mission is to glorify God and nurture His people by spreading the timeless message of the Gospel. The book of Revelation refers to it as the “eternal gospel”—this is just a reminder! As the saying goes, “Repetition strengthens memory,” even in Kiswahili.

Being in church is not enough; the true goal is to be rooted in Christ and to run this race of life to the finish. It's a four-fold journey—grounded in Scripture, prayer, a Christ-like lifestyle, and service to others. These reflections are simple truths that many laypeople already live and teach.

We've written them down to encourage discussion, share insights, and strengthen one another as we await the glorious return of Christ.

Every believer has a calling and something unique to contribute—gifts that others may not possess. Let us collaborate. One key issue that arose is that most literature for laypeople is written in English, a language many of us don't fully grasp. It was strongly expressed that Kiswahili, with its widespread reach and cultural richness, deserves more books—not just brief leaflets. There's beauty and depth in our national language.

Over 100 million people speak Kiswahili in countries like Congo, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi. Yet books by and for laypeople remain scarce. Together with my husband, we decided to document some of our key messages from the talks we give on lay ministry. Through our journey, I've come to believe that true happiness only comes when we help others make an eternal decision to follow God. “He has done wonders I cannot describe” is the song carried in the hearts of many lay believers—and they long to share it.

We've launched a Kiswahili lay ministry platform: hudumazawaleikiswahili.com. If you have feedback, additions, or ideas to help us grow this mission, reach out at jambomuhimubooks@gmail.com.

We're deeply grateful to church leaders and laypeople from Tanzania, Congo, the USA, Kenya, Brazil, and Venezuela for allowing us to speak at lay gatherings in their countries. Every follower of Christ has something valuable to offer. In all my meetings with fellow laypeople, I've never left without receiving something that enriched me. Share your testimonies too—they inspire us and give strength in our spiritual battles. “They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” — Revelation 12:11.

What truly matters is to treat what matters most as most important.

So, what matters most to you as a lay believer?

We currently run a lay ministry called Samaritan Laymen Ministries, officially registered in New Jersey, USA. You can contact us via jambomuhimubooks@gmail.com.

We sincerely thank Sister Rose Mwakipunda Kabeta, who introduced us to the work of literature evangelism. Many others also played a role in guiding us through various forms of ministry, which motivated us to engage in this calling as laypeople. Once someone believes in Christ, they instantly become a follower, a disciple, and a lay minister by default. There is no way to truly know Christ without serving others—this is how heaven teaches us to overcome selfishness: by caring for others and lifting them up in prayer. A meaningful life cannot be experienced unless we serve others spiritually, physically, socially, and economically. We don't want to live religious lives and still end up lost, as Paul warns in 2 Corinthians 9:27. We are seeking the truth and asking God to help us put it into action.

At times, I've asked myself, “I haven't been trained in counseling—how can I guide others?” We stand on God's promise: “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt; open your mouth wide.” He assures us that when we speak, He will give us wisdom to share healing words—words that teach, guide, and encourage. Our mission is to search for the lost children of God. Attending church, singing, and giving small offerings are not our main focus. Our true calling is to give our time and resources—it is a lifestyle. We are returning to the paths of the early apostles, who dedicated themselves to reaching the lost, and we pray for a deep

and genuine love for people. We must love them as we would our own children, grandchildren, family members, or relatives.

Cultural approaches and spiritual leadership may vary across churches and countries, as noted by Pastor Russell Burrill in his research titled *The Revolutionized Church*. Every layperson should read this book. I also read a book by Pastor Nicky Gumbel from the UK on revival, referencing Psalm 85:6. He pointed out that, according to their statistics, there are 30,000 pastors in the UK, but 80,000 registered witches and fortune tellers. This highlights the intensity of the spiritual battle. Even in our own country, pastors are few. And even if we had more, the task of reaching everyone remains. The command is clear: “Go into all the world and preach to every creature” (Matthew 28:19-20). It’s a vast assignment that requires the involvement of everyone. Jesus came to seek and save the lost—He confirmed this when speaking with Zacchaeus. While this work is truly meant for angels, we’ve been given the honor of doing it ourselves. Though financial contributions are helpful, it’s also vital to personally go out and reach people.

Imagine having a lost child, and someone comes to visit, sings songs, and gives you money but doesn’t help find the child—how would that feel? While money is valuable, at that moment, searching for the child is far more important. Arise and shine, for your light has come, even though deep darkness covers the earth. Lift your voice without hesitation! Confront Jacob with his wrongdoing. Every year, about 134 million people are born and 56 million die—have those who pass away heard the good news? This is a question for all of us to consider.

The Chinese have a saying: “Don’t open a shop unless you’re ready to smile, bring joy, and offer blessings to others.” A lay preacher serving in a remote village might be the most capable person there when it comes to lifting up the name of Jesus. They’ve opened a shop for the gospel. The gospel is the most important mission in the world. Such a person must strive wholeheartedly—being cheerful, constantly learning, praying, reaching out, and building relationships. Never be idle. Always carry your Bible, a hymnbook, and spiritual literature. Whether waiting or in any setting, take time to read—and speak to everyone you meet. For some, it might be their final opportunity. Ask God to give you a vision of someone grinding their teeth in agony, crying that it’s too late on judgment day, begging for mountains to fall on them, and fearing the fire prepared for the devil and his followers. If

God grants you such a dream, you'll never be ashamed to help someone choose the Lord's side—the side of eternal victory.

Layperson, don't be afraid of reading the Bible. If you struggle with reading, the Lord can help. Last year, a laywoman from Katesh prayed for the ability to read, even though no one had the time to teach her. While we were in Singida, Tanzania, she shared her story: one day, she took a booklet containing Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and went out to the fields. There, she opened it and began reading on her own, without any formal instruction. To this day, she continues to read! Praise the Lord! God still performs miracles—not just in the Old and New Testaments, but even today.

What does a faithful layperson look like? We have many ideas: someone passionate about winning souls, resourceful in finding ways to fund ministry, living humbly, enthusiastic about serving, devoted to studying the Word, active in media outreach, consistent in prayer, encouraging others to evangelize, involved in health ministry, loving toward others, a respected preacher, someone who visits and supports others, offers wise counsel, and lives out what they teach. What's your view? This is a question for both you and me.

The Titanic sank, killing over 1,500 people. Only about 700 were rescued. Although lifeboats had room, only one went back to save six more. The next day, a ship from Nova Scotia, Canada, found 328 frozen bodies floating—still wearing their lifejackets—victims of the icy waters. They were prepared to be rescued, but the lifeboats that had room never returned. A layperson shouldn't be content with simply knowing Jesus and being safe in the "lifeboat," enjoying the company of fellow believers, singing songs, or focusing only on building bigger ministries. That kind of Christianity is inward-looking and self-serving.

Many of us have shelves full of sermon notes and religious books, we know a lot of doctrine, we attend many church events, and our "lifeboats" have space—yet we don't fill them. We are spiritually overweight but don't share the message with others. Our plan for heaven often includes only ourselves and our families. In church, we focus on family programs, budgets, child care, and cooking—things that don't concern eternal life or death. Don't get so involved in these that you neglect to guide others toward salvation. We store up offerings, but we don't have the "beautiful feet" described in Isaiah 52 that carry the Good News.

I recall an elderly woman, 86 years old, who we worked with. She visited three different times and shared that she had been diagnosed with stomach cancer. She asked what she should do. She had worked as a nurse for over 50 years and said, “I think I’m going to hell. I’ve never accepted Christ.” I didn’t have the courage to speak to her directly or urge her to believe. Later, I heard she went in for surgery and passed away. I asked myself, why didn’t I speak up when I had the chance? I was afraid of offending her—but God had given me that opportunity, and I missed it. Every layperson should take advantage of evangelism training whenever possible. Schools like Kibidula in Tanzania offer excellent year-round programs. There are also seasonal trainings organized by churches in different regions, which are very helpful in reaching others. Ideally, a layperson’s first training should come from their home church to ensure they stay aligned with biblical teachings and avoid confusion. Many preachers have studied in institutions of various denominations and have been effective in sharing Christ. However, it’s best to build your foundation in your own church first, so you can serve well and remain steady in doctrine. You must always teach truth—not personal opinions or traditions.

Your wife should be involved in your ministry. It helps the work progress. A wife should respect her husband, and a husband should love his wife—to the point of dying for her as Christ died for the church. That is love; pray that God enables you. Respecting one’s husband is also a form of love, though on a smaller scale compared to the husband’s love. I advise that if more laymen attended training together with their wives, the zeal would be more fiery. You’d be on the same page, and she wouldn’t give you the cold shoulder! Women may not be as physically strong as men, but if she gives you the silent treatment or causes drama, it can really shake a person.

In my husband’s church, there was one lay preacher whose wife would stay outside during prayer meetings, pretending she was watching the child. But she never entered the church any week! Many preachers’ wives are not converted, as they haven’t received sufficient spiritual light. One ministry publication once said, “In a survey conducted in the ’90s, it was found that 75% of preachers’ wives were not born again—they were like worldly people.” I believe this problem is more prevalent here at home than in Western countries, based on my experience.

In the West, whether laypeople or pastors, they often marry someone they met at school or in ministry, where love and choice play a role. But in Africa, I’ve seen

laymen or preachers have their spouses chosen for them by friends, relatives, or parents. Often, those wives do not share the same spiritual enthusiasm. What helps is that African cultural norms still encourage women to respect their husbands (not opposing them openly).

If such a scenario happened in the West—where a wife lacked interest in the work—it would be easily noticeable that her heart wasn't in it. I believe our culture hides many secrets, even weaknesses. Someone helping a man find a wife at home is often just looking for a wife—not someone with a heart for effective ministry. Some focus on physical appearance instead of finding a wife suited to support lay ministry, or they're chosen by parents or spiritual leaders. My preacher friends who married literature evangelists or women with spiritual zeal and visible interest in ministry have had more successful ministries. Literature evangelists possess many spiritual qualities.

They are always in prayer, doing the tough job of door-to-door ministry, often facing rejection. They understand that their success depends solely on God. It seems that during times of persecution, only literature ministry and healing prayer may remain. I saw fellow preachers I studied with in the U.S. saying their wives didn't want to return to Africa for ministry, preferring the good life and jobs they had in the U.S. They were ready for their husbands to quit pastoring rather than return home. The mission of preaching wasn't in their hearts. Their husbands insisted on going back, but the wives wanted to stay. It became a test, and many stayed behind to work jobs like “changing old ladies' diapers, feeding them, and cleaning their homes.”

I know even that is a form of ministry, but I don't believe it's what they were initially called to do. I say this cautiously because many of us have faced it—even I am stuck because my husband hasn't decided to return, even though we're doing health ministry. Perhaps we would have found more joy in the more vibrant service in Africa! Even after 26 years here, we have reached only one person for Christ. Though we've distributed thousands of books, visited people, and conducted several lessons, we still need your prayers—this is our greatest need. Many here are like Felix in the book of Acts. Revival and reformation are necessary to reach people, and we must pray it starts with us. The apostles had neither education nor wealth, yet they reached the whole world and wrote books people still read today.

What's important is that a layman finds a wife with a calling and a love for God. If he is already married, then God is merciful—he should pray that God gives his wife a calling and a passion for lay ministry. Even Joseph married Asenath the Egyptian, and she changed. But he made a mistake thinking he could ignore that principle and married others who led him astray. Above all, God is able—hold on to that power in your heart and believe. One person may look at Goliath and say, “He’s too big to hit,” while another says, “He’s too big to miss.”

In other places, when a person receives a calling to lead spiritually, the wife has a choice. That's why before marriage, she should know what she's signing up for. Yes, it's true that men have strong decision-making powers and can push their will—but you won't see good results if your wife doesn't love the Lord! It's not just Delilahs who sink ships; many spouses do. What about those who receive the calling after years of marriage? I believe that to serve the Lord effectively, both husband and wife must agree, so that the Lord's work is fruitful and they don't abuse or emotionally exhaust one another.

A wife needs to be her husband's 100% helper. Supporting lay ministry is a vital task. My fellow layman Brother Mpenzwa once reminded me that the Holy Spirit is a helper, yet has a huge role that no one else can fill—and He never complains of being diminished. A husband must also be his wife's defender. One laywoman said, “I have a husband who doesn't defend me—if a man came and asked, ‘Where's your wife?’ and took me away, he wouldn't even ask!” But look at how he defends his relatives—even when they're wrong, you'd be shocked.

A layman should avoid in-law issues and making his extended family more important than his marriage. Your relatives come after your God and your marriage. Many laymen have ruined their marriages, reducing them to spiderweb strands. They continue to preach, but without power. Some dominate at home and mistreat their wives in shocking ways—this weakens their ministry. When I was in college, we were shocked to find that almost all the men who beat their wives were lay preachers. Even others found it surprising.

It's true that perhaps you don't yet have biblical knowledge about living with a wife—but learn. It is said that the man of God and reformer Martin Luther, who challenged the Roman church by nailing his 95 theses, used to beat his wife, believing that women don't listen and must be disciplined with the rod. Nearly

600 years have passed since then, and there was much that this great preacher didn't know—even something as basic as baptism by full immersion in water.

As a Christian today, you now know these things—so live them out. Stop beating your wife. A wife is not a child; if she were a child, you wouldn't have married her. She is your helper. You cannot love and beat her at the same time, and she cannot respect and beat you either. Women must also be wise. I discovered that in the U.S., four million women are seriously assaulted every year. It was found that they are the ones who usually start the conflict by hitting the men, but because they lack strength, they are overpowered and end up being beaten badly.

Layperson—whether husband or wife—do not hit your partner. Seek peaceful and respectful ways. There is no avoiding the command to love your wife! Love your wife, love your neighbor—even if they are unpleasant. You are not free from this obligation, because we are commanded to even “love our enemies.” So, if your wife is your enemy, love her.

Take your calling seriously. Don't serve expecting certain benefits, like being hired by a church or sent for training. If such an opportunity arises, that's good—and I believe God will provide—but it should not be your primary goal as a layperson.

A layman's wife is not obligated in any way to do public ministry, just as no woman participant is required to do so! That is, she is required to love Jesus and support her husband in reaching others. Likewise, the layman should be actively involved in the ministry his wife is engaged in, bearing witness to Christ.

This spiritual work of leading others comes with a reward from God. Timothy wrote to the elders of the churches, who were also laypeople: “The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.”

We, the authors, hope that the ministry you perform with your spouse will be a fragrant aroma to the congregation and to our God in heaven.

Do it with love, effectiveness, and joy. Make every effort to gain knowledge from God's Word, and seek counsel on how to serve. Take time to fast and pray, making the most of every opportunity. God is able! Let us encourage ourselves and have faith. I know the trials of fear and doubt come to us all.

I read about the elders of faith like Moses and was amazed that he asked his brother-in-law Hobab to accompany them to be like their eyes or lamp—even though they had a cloud and a pillar of fire to guide them, like a divine GPS (Global Positioning System)! He was even astonished when the LORD said He would provide meat for everyone! Moses asked if they should slaughter all the animals and fish? At that time, he had already crossed the Red Sea and witnessed many other miracles!

He heard the reply, “Is there anything too hard for the LORD?” Let’s also say this from our hearts today: “Behold, You are the God of all flesh; is there anything too hard for You?” There is nothing! That is the answer! Yes!

Make your plans and programs—but pray over them, because only the LORD can make them succeed. The ultimate purpose of life is to expand God’s Kingdom by reaching lost souls. For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost. He who began a good work in our hearts will bring it to completion one day, and we will hear those sweet words: “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful with little, enter into the joy of your Lord.” Maranatha—the LORD is coming again soon!

Back Cover

When someone comes to know and confess God, they become converted. Then a disciple, then a messenger (apostle), and then a believer—this is when the calling to reach others, just as they themselves were reached, begins. Such a person becomes a layperson.

We cannot claim to accept God without telling others the Good News, so that one day, when the books of judgment are opened, they may enter into eternal life. We are saved so that we may help save others. Our Jesus does not permit us to live for ourselves. We cannot remain stuck in conversion—we must move toward mission.

There are five essential things for every human being, regardless of who they are, because we are all created by one God:

1. Know God, confess Him, repent sincerely, and live according to His will
2. Read the Holy Scriptures—they are God’s voice to you, human

3. Pray without ceasing, even when you are tired—it is your voice of communication with God
4. Join a fellowship that is ready to follow God's Word and not just traditions
5. Tell others about the Kingdom so that you may enter heaven with them; some will be difficult, but God desires that all may reach eternal life—that is the greatest gift

Every human is a worker hastening the coming of the LORD. These workers are grouped into three categories:

1. Full-time ministers
2. Laypeople who engage in small-scale activities like farming, business, or labor to meet their needs while doing the work
3. Laypeople who have financial means and sponsor the work of full-time ministers and other laypeople to reach more people

This book, which the English might call a “nugget to enhance” or a “snack,” is simply a motivational tool to encourage laypeople to carry out the calling they’ve received, so as to hasten the coming of the LORD—by reading, discussing, and sharing strategies with others.

The work of lay ministry is something one learns—no one is born knowing it. The author’s intention is that the proceeds from this book will help fund lay training and support the ministry.

God bless you. Maranatha! The LORD is at the door—we’ve begun to hear the sound of His approaching footsteps. (“I can hear the footsteps of an approaching God”)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the lay ministry organization in the United States called ASI Laymen Ministry. We have been members since 1996, when we were introduced by Dr. Israel Magesa from Rusoli, Majita. The lay ministry has been a great source of encouragement and a means of equipping us

to reach others through mutual support, sharing work strategies, and studying the Word together.

I would also like to thank the many churches across Africa with whom, by God's grace, we have partnered—hundreds of lay members and their pastors. Each generation must pass the baton to the next so they may run their race, because Abel, Noah, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Hosea, Deborah, Luke, Paul, Peter, Mary, John, or Phoebe are no longer here—but you and I are. What a joy it is to work together. It's true that an individual can be a layperson along with their family, but their impact may be limited. By nature, we are not creators, but pastors and laypeople have created initiatives and included us in them, and when they came to fruition, our hearts rejoiced. Our prayer is that one day we shall “rejoice as those who harvest.”

I would like to thank the following people—and many others I may not have the chance to name—for assisting us in lay ministry: Layperson Damas Kivunge and his wife Jemima Nyafanya Kivunge, who welcomed me into their home where I stayed for months as I began writing this book. Pastor Musa Mitekaro and his wife, Evangelist Esther Abayo, Teacher Temboh, Pastor Zadok Butoke, Brother Jason Fournier, Brother Barry Mosier, Pastor Mtenzi, Evangelist Ellen Nyagori, Pastor Yosefu Otieno, Pastor Wilson Waritu, Evangelist Esther Abayo, Pastor Oldingidi Laizer, Pastor Mswanyama, Teacher Peter Marwa, Elder Highness Nyagabona, Pastor Daniel Ndiegi, Pastor Robert Mitande and his wife Rehema, Pastor Herry Mhando and his wife, Pastor David Mbagu, Evangelist Scolla Masawe, Pastor Wanjara, Pastor Christopher Ungani, and Pastor Musyoka Muasya and his wife Bettie Magesa Muasya.

I have taken it for granted—with no need for questioning—that every layperson should have a local church to worship with and should work with the church (1 Timothy 3:14-15). Even though the church has its weaknesses, Christ has bestowed upon it great honor and regard. There is no bee without a hive or a soldier without an army if they wish to work effectively. Choosing not to attend church contradicts God's Word and plan. Many say there is no need, and they remain at home. Please, do not deceive yourself. Jesus, in Luke 4:16, went to the synagogue, fully aware it was filled with hypocrites and other challenges. Some things are difficult to understand on your own, and people in your household may not be able to point out your weaknesses directly. But someone from afar may speak truth you can receive with reason rather than emotion.

When you read the Book of Acts and the life of Jesus, you'll see that He debated with the Pharisees on how to observe the Sabbath, but He did not forsake attending synagogue on that day. The word church (ecclesia) means those called out from the world, those chosen. Read the chapter on how to be healed within the church! In Isaiah 55, the LORD says: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." The LORD is able to do all things; His power is limitless.

The LORD wants to work with you and with His church, for which He died and which is His Bride. Work with the church and keep seeking the truth day and night—truth is a continuous journey. Don't be afraid to correct the church when needed, in the right way, regarding certain challenges. Follow the proper steps, but work with the church. And those you bring to the Lord should be connected with a church. Don't let bad people cause you to do wrong! Let us remain in Jesus and ask Him daily to fill us with His Holy Spirit.

We also thank the church in Magomeni and Layperson New Filipo from Nyasaland, who led me to faith in 1977 by giving me Bible studies. He was employed by the German ambassador and lived behind our residence in Oysterbay when I was in secondary school. I hope one day to reconnect with his children.

I continue to pray that one day we shall have many lay training institutions in Africa to equip laypeople. Universities are few, and even when available, they are expensive and not accessible to most adult laypeople. Many come to Christ while already bearing the responsibilities of family and other commitments, but they need short-term training to reach others. And sometimes, academic studies do not bless people to be diligent workers in ministry but instead give rise to a desire for luxurious living, an unwillingness to live in simple homes made of mud or grass, and so on. A layperson must have true Biblical or theological teachings (right doctrine). Do not deceive people—Revelation 22:18-19 says that if we add or take away from His Words, we will face great suffering and trouble.

We are also thankful for the local church in Tranquility, New Jersey, and its pastor Mark Jagstish and Elder James Hunt, who provided us a place to write. We also thank Revelation (Ufunuo) for helping us with the "Bible Says" lessons. We have tried to cite everyone whose writings we used, but at times we've repeated materials for certain studies or books, and those thoughts have become part of

our own thinking. Sometimes we even wonder who originally shared them with us. For that, we ask for your forgiveness.

We thank our children, Daudi and Paulo Masaka, for encouraging us and giving us feedback, and for consistently attending all lay meetings with us, whether in Africa, the United States, or elsewhere.

This book belongs to all of us, for these words did not come from us alone: they are the contribution and counsel of many. He who began a good work in all of our hearts will complete it. Let us be the salt of the earth and not pepper. You today, as a Cushite, have been given the opportunity to run and share the Good News. Take that opportunity and prepare yourself so you don't end up like Ahimaaz, son of Zadok, who failed to prepare and deliver the message wisely. When he tried to speak, he ran in confusion, having no message, and said only, "I saw a cloud of dust."

Above all, we thank our Father in heaven for His love, mercy, and kindness toward us. Hallelujah, HE IS ABLE! Glory and honor be to Him forever and ever. Amen.

Daniel and Grace Masaka

Back page message ,It is very important for every human being—both believers and non-believers—to read Daniel chapters 2 and 7 and to offer special prayers, because the world has reached the edge of its historical timeline. Every kingdom that was prophesied to rule the world has come and gone; only the final kingdom remains. The signs show—even to those who do not know God—that nearly all prophecy has been fulfilled. As laypeople and believers who love God, we cannot say we do not have time to respond to the call of Matthew 28:18-19: "Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations. Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

If we had the cure for cancer, Ebola, or HIV but failed to tell others because we claimed we were too busy or gave other excuses, would that be just? Let us tell people about what is coming to the world so that they may prepare. If there were a fire somewhere, you wouldn't be afraid to warn people to get out or give them an alert. Fire only kills in the first death, but not the second death—which is eternal.

In today's dust and turmoil, let us ask Almighty God to give us Mission, Vision, and Provision so that we may go. Let us remember that we are the salt of the earth, not pepper. May God help us to love people with true, sincere love—so much so that when we see them perishing, we cry tears. Let us intercede for them with groanings and prayers, and love them like our own children, grandchildren, relatives, families, or tribes.

Jambomuhimubooks@gmail.com says, “The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.”

The five most important things for every human being are:

1. To believe in God with our hearts and minds, confessing and repenting of our sins with true repentance.
2. To pray every day without ceasing.
3. To read the Word of God daily, meditate on it, reflect on it, love it, and live it.
4. To attend worship in a fellowship that follows the Holy Scriptures.
5. To tell others about Almighty God and the coming of His eternal kingdom.

Dedication

To be called to serve the Most High and Only God of heaven—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—is an honor and a priceless gift of the highest order. This book is dedicated to all laypeople who have been honored with that calling, who work tirelessly day and night, 24/7, bearing witness to Jesus and spreading the sweet fragrance of the Good News of the Gospel. We are living at the very edge of the world's history—Jesus is coming! These laypeople are building another ark today. Every nail that is driven is a sermon; people are being invited to enter the ark before the door of mercy is shut.

These laypeople have learned to focus on three great things: to love the Truth—that is, the Word of God; to love their brothers and sisters in the faith; and finally, to love those who have not yet heard the Word of God and to take time to tell them. These three things form a triangle. Balancing them is a grace that only comes from God, and it is the only way a person can be enabled to do this work. If one side fails, the work cannot be completed! For it is easy to be a hypocrite

and a legalist without love—or a worldly person who disregards God's commands. God calls us to be true Christians first, and then to do good Christian works. No one can do this unless HE empowers us.

If today we were to be taken suddenly to heaven, we pray that when we arrive, we may be safe and ready to live in alignment with the ways of that place. Let us ask, “LORD, help me to love people sincerely—when they are in trouble, let me feel sorrow and weep tears.” God will act. When we choose Him, HE makes Himself responsible for bringing us to Himself. He wants us there more than we even want it for ourselves.

The voice belongs to the LORD—who will go? Many laypeople have said, “Send me, LORD.” Let us continue to ask the LORD of the harvest to send laborers. One day, may we all hear that voice: “Well done, good and faithful servant! You were faithful over a few things; enter into the joy of your LORD.” Tears of joy will fall, and we will all declare, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” The greatest joy will be to follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

May the LORD help us to belong only to Him, and to no one else! And on that day, let us sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, saying: “Great and marvelous are Your deeds, O LORD God Almighty; just and true are Your ways, O King of the nations. For You alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before You, for Your righteous acts have been revealed.”

Glory, honor, power, and dominion be to You forever and ever. Hallelujah!

Elohim, Yehovah, El-Shaddai, Adonai, Yehovah-Yireh, Yehovah-Rapha, Yehovah-Nissi, Yehovah-M’Kaddesh, Yehovah-Shalom, Yehovah-Tsidkenu, Yehovah-Rohi, Yehovah-Shammah.

CHAPTER 1

JESUS—OUR UNCHANGING TRUTH!

When you ask many Jews about Jesus, they generally acknowledge that He truly existed. Their historical records and oral traditions confirm His presence—it's as undeniable as the ground beneath your feet. They don't dispute it; to them, it's an established fact. They say He was an exceptionally kind man, and some even regard Him as a prophet. If you ask whether He was insane, a sorcerer, or a criminal, they're taken aback and strongly deny it, insisting He was a good man. But when you ask, "Was He God or the Son of God?" many react with offense and say no! In most religions, removing the founder doesn't dismantle the belief system. But in Christianity, take away Christ, and the entire foundation crumbles. For instance, if you remove Buddha from Hinduism, the religion still carries on. But remove Jesus from Christianity, and there's nothing left. So, what exactly sets Jesus apart?

Around 2,000 years ago, Jesus came into the world, joining the Jewish community. He fulfilled more than 300 prophecies—such as Daniel 9, which foretold that He would be baptized the same year Emperor Tiberius began his reign, that is, in 27 A.D. That was the year He was anointed and began His ministry, according to the Gospel of Luke. His family lived in poverty. He spent 33½ years on earth—30 years as a carpenter, and 3½ years ministering to people and His disciples. He died by crucifixion and ascended to His Father in heaven, where He now lives forever, interceding for us. One day He will return in the clouds, announced by the trumpet of angels, to take us home as King of kings.

Jesus changed the course of history so significantly that the entire calendar revolves around Him—Before Christ (B.C.) and Anno Domini (A.D., "In the Year of Our Lord"). Almost everyone today uses this calendar in one form or another. No one can deny that Jesus lived. No one else has left such an indelible mark on human history.

Jesus has a divine presence that draws every human being to Him. We don't need to embellish or invent things to make Him attractive. He is more than a good man, a prophet, or a moral teacher—He is God. Every Christian must confidently affirm this truth. Don't be afraid of sounding narrow-minded. This is the reality: Jesus is the great "I AM" who spoke to Moses and told him to remove his sandals—and Moses obeyed. He is the ALPHA and the OMEGA—the Beginning and the End. Jesus

is described throughout the Old Testament as the “Anointed One.” Scripture clearly and repeatedly affirms His divinity. For example, Luke writes that the angel said to the shepherds, “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.” Titus tells believers, “While we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearance of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” John chapter 1 shows that Jesus existed from eternity past and will continue into eternity future. He possesses all wisdom, all power, and is present everywhere (all-knowing, all-powerful, ever-present).

In Matthew, Thomas confesses to Jesus, “My Lord and my God.” Jesus made it unmistakably clear that He and the Father are one. He allowed Himself to be worshiped because He is God. The Gospel describes Him as Emmanuel, which means “God with us.”

He was accused of blasphemy for forgiving sins and for declaring that He and God are one. Even when this placed Him in danger of being executed, He stood firm. When questioned under oath by the high priest—whether He was the Christ, the Son of God—

Knowing the consequence would be crucifixion, He affirmed His identity: “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, coming with the clouds of heaven.” The high priest tore his garments in outrage, and this statement became the charge against Him—not because of any crime He committed. This moment clearly confirms His divinity.

Isaiah chapters 9 and 53, often called the “Gospels of the Old Testament,” speak of God being born into the world: “And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace...”

The Jews were not primitive or ignorant people. They were educated, respectable, and well-versed in the Scriptures. They understood the prophecies and awaited the coming of the Messiah, whom they referred to as “the Hope of All Generations.” Whether someone knows Him or not, Jesus is indeed the hope for all humanity.

Many people openly confessed that He was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Jesus Himself affirmed His divinity. No other person in history has ever claimed to be God and been willing to die for that claim. No religious founder ever claimed divinity while living a sinless life.

Jesus boldly declared He is God and left no room for other interpretations. You cannot say Jesus was merely a moral teacher and still call yourself a Christian. You cannot truly be a Christian and deny His divinity.

He made His identity as God clear—for our sake. If He were not God, He might have gone to places like ancient Egypt, where belief in multiple gods was common, and claimed to be one of them. But instead, He came to the Israelites—people who already knew and worshipped the one true God.

Some hesitate to call Him God because they want scientific evidence. But John anticipated this and wrote in his Gospel: “But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.”

Let us be bold like David, who, before becoming a father of faith and a prophet, may have thought to himself, “Goliath is too big for me to miss,” instead of fearing, “He’s too big for me to fight.” In our lay ministry, we must adopt a positive mindset—that the LORD can act through us when we come in His name, not by our own strength. The divinity and resurrection of Jesus cannot be proven through science. Not everything is subject to scientific proof. For instance, how do we know people like Ibn Battuta or George Washington actually lived? There’s a difference between historical verification (through evidence) and scientific verification. Science involves forming a question, conducting experiments, collecting and interpreting data, and drawing conclusions.

Scientific research is rooted in observation and data collection. But historical truth is determined through eyewitness accounts, written records, and artifacts like clothing, tools, or weapons. How would someone prove you attended a lay seminar today? You’d rely on witnesses who saw you, notes you took, the teacher’s testimony, or even a forgotten jacket someone recognized. Science only verifies repeatable phenomena.

It cannot verify individuals, events, or historical facts. For example, science can’t confirm that Chief Mkwawa ruled the Hehe, or when the Mau Mau or Maji Maji uprisings occurred, or that Abraham Lincoln was President. Likewise, it cannot scientifically confirm Jesus’ resurrection—though this event happened and was witnessed by over 500 people (1 Corinthians 15:6). This was a miraculous event: someone rising into the sky defies gravity, yet people saw Him ascend and angels

spoke to them. Scientific method involves observation, data gathering, forming hypotheses, logical deduction, and experimental verification. Christianity is not blind faith; it is a faith based on knowledge and reason. Jesus said, “You shall know the truth,” not “ignore it.” We are commanded to love God with all our hearts—and not just that, but with all our minds as well. We should love God fully—with heart, mind, and will. “My son, give me your heart.” When we love God, doing His will comes naturally, like an orange tree naturally producing oranges—it doesn’t have to struggle to do so. Personally, my heart cannot truly rejoice in something my mind rejects. My heart and mind were made to work in harmony. When Christ calls someone to surrender, He does not ask them to abandon their intellect. Heart, mind, and will all cooperate. We have abundant evidence for the truth of Jesus. Pontius Pilate testified about Him, so did Herod, Pilate’s wife, and the apostles. Jesus is the only religious leader recognized by other religions. He is even mentioned in the Quran in verse 93, often called the Son of Mary and mentioned around 12 times as the Messiah. In Surah 2:46, it says, “He shall preach to men in the prime of manhood and lead a righteous life”—a significant witness.

The Scriptures provide solid evidence. The book of Luke ranks first among ancient writings in terms of authenticity. It’s a highly accurate historical record. Scholars investigated the 34 towns, people, and events mentioned and found them as described. For instance, you can Google Caesarea Tiberias, who began ruling in the year Jesus was anointed (baptized), or Herod Agrippa and Bernice. The prophecy in Daniel 9 predicted the exact year of Jesus’ baptism and crucifixion, which is why people called Him by name, “Son of David, have mercy.”

Our loving God longs for us to know Him more than we desire Him, so we can be with Him forever. After Adam and Eve sinned, heaven was filled with sorrow. Angels stopped singing. God’s love for humanity is boundless—He poured all of heaven out for us.

The vast number of ancient manuscripts also supports the truth of the Bible. Most ancient texts have only a few copies—some as few as 10. But when researchers studied New Testament manuscripts in Greek, Arabic, and other early languages, they found 25,643 copies. It would be impossible to forge that many handwritten copies, spread across distant lands, all with consistent content.

The apostles and those who saw Jesus lived for two generations and passed on these truths both orally and in writing. Even those who disliked Him testified to

the truth. In 130 AD, historian Eusebius wrote that Mark recorded what Peter, a disciple of Jesus, had told him. Historians affirm that no ancient documents are as verified and reliable as these. All the apostles were willing to die for their faith because they saw the truth with their own eyes—it wasn't secondhand. These were firsthand, eyewitness accounts.

Dr. Subodh Pandit of Maryland notes that over 600 Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled, with more than 300 concerning Jesus. Statistically, the chance of one person fulfilling even eight prophecies is 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000 (17 zeros!).

Jesus is alive—our Jesus is real. Just as surely as your foot touches the ground right now, He lives. While we may not understand everything as humans, we know Jesus rose from the dead. The fact that I live and do what I do is enough proof for me. He alone conquered death. If He hadn't, Satan would reign forever, and eternal life wouldn't exist. Say it: Hallelujah! Jesus answers the core questions of life: "Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going?" Ask yourself these daily to gain guidance from heaven.

The heart has many holes people try to fill with weddings, food, alcohol, family, wealth, beauty, parties, or entertainment—but they don't satisfy. The answer is JESUS CHRIST, also known as Isa bin Masih.

Josh McDowell once asked a group of students with good character, kindness, and love what changed their lives. When they replied "Jesus Christ," he got angry, saying, "Don't give me that. I'm tired of religion, church, and the Bible." The Christian calmly responded, "Brother, I didn't say religion—I said Jesus Christ." Josh was stunned. Christianity isn't a religion—Jesus is far beyond religion. Words fail to describe who Jesus truly is.

Religion is man's attempt to reach God through good works, but Christianity is God coming to man through Jesus to offer relationship. Many think going to church makes you a Christian, but does standing in a garage make you a mechanic? A Christian is someone who places their hope, trust, and faith in Jesus. As a layperson and follower of Jesus, remember—salvation is free, but being a disciple costs everything, maybe even your life. We cannot be believers without being disciples. If every church member were a true disciple, the world would be reached quickly, and Jesus would return sooner. Let's pray our lives don't turn out like Judas

Iscairiot's. He loved Jesus, but he loved money more. He thought Jesus would escape arrest and become king—and maybe he'd be vice president!

Even Judas could've been forgiven if he had repented. He escorted soldiers to arrest Jesus and identified Him—but later denied Him. They both died on the same day, on two different trees—Jesus for us, Judas for himself. Judas wasn't just a layperson—he was a disciple, even an apostle. Let us learn from him with humility, realizing that only God's grace will get us there. But our fruits will reveal us—even to unbelievers. Christianity works—it changes lives. No one's ever been transformed by math or chemistry. Jesus Christ is in the life-changing business. Humanity was lost, and He came to find us. We receive Him by faith. How does this faith come? Faith comes by hearing—and hearing the Word of God. Faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we do not see. Sin separated us from God; we couldn't talk to Him face to face anymore. Only a few saw Jesus when He became flesh. But by faith, we've seen Him in our lives—and one day, we will see Him face to face.

Jesus changes lives—yours, mine, and those we're called to reach today. Christianity isn't about forcing anyone to swallow a belief—it must be lived out, seen, and chosen freely by others. Our Jesus is available to us directly through prayer—no need to beep Him or press certain buttons to get a response. He doesn't leave voicemails asking for airtime or send confusing spiritual texts.

Pray this today: “Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for me. Forgive me and cleanse me. Give me a humble, broken spirit. I trust and believe in You as my Lord and Savior. Help me give myself completely to You. Fill me with Your Spirit—give me vision, mission, passion, and the tools I need. Be in me, and let me be in You. Help me love You deeply and love others. In Jesus' name, Amen.”

Now go and make disciples—and then apostles. That's the mission of Jesus: “Go and make disciples of all nations...” To learn more, see *Come and Search with Me* by Dr. Subodh Pandit of Maryland. Keep living a fully surrendered life—a person of prayer, a student of the Word, humble and free from greed, consumed with the passion for others' salvation, denying self and worldly desires. My prayer is that, even if we were suddenly taken to heaven today, we would be ready—that our characters would reflect Christ.

CHAPTER 2

WHO IS A LAYPERSON?

A layperson, in the literal sense, is someone who does not possess professional training or deep knowledge in a particular subject or field. However, the Church has adopted the term “laity” to refer to someone who is not a pastor or has not studied theology in depth. A layperson is someone not employed by the church. They are a follower of Jesus and a disciple who brings others to Him. Americans use the term “dummy,” for example: learning carpentry for complete beginners, etc. The laity assist church pastors or bishops in spreading the message of salvation. Every layperson should have a Bible, a hymn book for singing, and then spiritual books. My friend Zuzo from South Africa once told me that if he were locked on an island and couldn’t get out, he would want to have three books: the Bible, the hymn book, and The Safe Path, which explains the steps to knowing and following Christ.

These books should be read repeatedly, and the songs sung every day and revisited often. I believe Jesus took time to sing when He was sad or joyful, and it refreshed Him. We are told that even God sings. Songs give us strength and praise God. Read the Bible, love it, meditate on it, memorize it, reflect its light, and follow it. The Bible is the lamp to guide us in following and witnessing for God. Do not say that your religious leader told you not to read it, because it is the Word for all of us human beings, not just a few people. Indeed, the dictionary does not provide much explanation for the word “layperson,” so I will not bother with it at all.

The primary role of a layperson is to lift up JESUS. A layperson knows that the Word of God is the true knowledge, the absolute truth, and nothing else. You will lift Jesus up before people if you know Him! You must have a spiritual awakening to know Jesus; you are the one to take the initiative. Lifting Jesus before others is closely related to how well you know Him. Are you deeply studying the Word, or just skimming over it? A layperson should not be someone who takes news or events and twists them to fit some prophecy in the Bible. The Word is the “true knowledge” that transforms our hearts, and it is the Spirit of God who guides us to understand it—not events or news.

A spiritual leader must be rooted in the Word and allow it to transform his life. This was seen during the times of the Judges or the Kings. When they experienced revival and reform, the people followed suit. When they fell into idol worship, the

people followed them too. So that we may not be like the Pharisees, who speak of things for others to do but do not do them themselves, we must be doers. Let us not focus on others, like the Pharisee who, while praying, forgot and started looking at himself, then compared himself to others and talked about them—yet he was supposed to be talking to God.

They say all your preaching and testimony should center on JESUS. Jesus clearly told us: “As the Father has sent Me, so I am sending you.” First, He said to the disciples, “Come to Me,” and later said, “Go into all the world” after He had spent time with them. This calling continues to this day. The Book of Acts, which began to be written 2,000 years ago, continues today. The acts of today’s laypeople and clergy are being written. God continues His work through us. So even today, we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses and are part of the picture of salvation and the history of the world. Have we been told what to do in that great commission to “Go”? We must not go without a message or purpose—we must know the command of our Commander-in-Chief:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the FATHER and of the SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT, and teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” - Matthew 28:19-20.

The main action we are told to do in this passage is to make disciples of all nations—not just to “GO!” without a goal or message. Have you ever asked yourself what it means to make someone a disciple? What is the difference between introducing someone to know Christ and follow Him, and making them a disciple? Then Jesus continued by saying to baptize them, and then to teach them to observe all He commanded. Only then did He promise to be with us to the end of the world.

We need to build another ark and live inside it. Many today say churches are full of conflict or problems, so they stay home. But Noah stayed inside the ark to be saved. There must have been a lot of stench from what the ark carried. We, too, must endure and live within the Church, knowing that outside the ark there is no safety! At the end of the world's history, we witness God at home, in churches, in small groups, and everywhere.

There are three types of workers in the LORD’s field:

1. Those who are professionally employed in some field or run their own businesses (like Daniel, Luke, or Job). They witness for God through their skills or wealth. Even in their daily work, they strategize to share the Good News (witnessing at the marketplace).
2. Those who are self-supporting preachers. They use manual labor or self-employment to earn a living while continuing to spread the gospel (like Paul, who was a tentmaker). The English call them self-supporting workers. This group includes medical missionaries. There is a cost to medical evangelism. We see Jesus bore our weaknesses and diseases. It cost Him to work with human beings! That is why He said, “I feel power has gone out from Me.” A layperson must not view this ministry as just a way to profit financially, without bearing any form of burden.
3. Those who are employed by the Church to preach the Word of God (clergy or the priesthood) as their full-time vocation. These are also teachers of the Bible and other fields, and they are paid by the Church.

Categories one and two are laypeople; the third is someone who is paid.

All are engaged in the Lord’s work in their own role or function. All have one calling. Every Christian must belong to one of these three categories. You cannot be a Christian without being a disciple. All are important. None is better than the other—it is like lungs, brain, and heart. Which one is more important?

A layperson should have a passion for mission and vision, and then the LORD will provide (Mission, Vision, Provision). The duties of a layperson are as follows:

Love the truth of the Word, read it, and share it.

Be on your knees in prayer.

Proclaim God so that people may return to a good relationship with Him.

Lift up Jesus, for His sacrifice is what has healed us.

Preach the truth as it is found in the Bible.

Make disciples through evangelism, which is the primary goal of a layperson.

Love God and your neighbor (Mark 12:30-31). This includes loving fellow believers.

Support fellowship in worship, be the light/salt of the earth, and help build up other believers to fulfill the call of Matthew 28:19-20. We speak of the second coming of Jesus while half the world has never heard about His first coming. God could have used angels to preach this Good News, but that would not help transform and revive our character to grow in grace. Having a large church is not the goal, but rather to have “many laypeople going into all the world...” The job of a pastor and a mature layperson is to teach people to plan and teach so that “all the laity go out to reach the lost...” The reason for the Church’s existence is only one—to fulfill the commission to go into all the world and make disciples. This means preaching the Good News of salvation: the birth of Jesus, His life on earth, and ultimately His death on the cross so that we humans may be justified.

The command to go is not optional—it is a command. Christ has sent all of us as His ambassadors. More than 50% of laypeople think this is the pastor’s job, saying “he’s paid for it.” That is a big mistake. Let’s remember: the gospel is only Good News when it reaches people at the right time. Time is running out, friends! We need reformation and revival to reach this goal—to tell every language, nation, and people group. Let us seek God’s face daily (2 Chronicles 7:14) and then set aside time for lay ministry, for prayer, study, and using every means to reach people—be it media or simply speaking to a neighbor.

A layperson has a great reward, in serving the LORD of lords and King of kings. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! To serve Him—He who never fails to reward His servant—more and more, even to the point there may not be enough room to contain it all! Remember, every layperson or believer has a lamp or light; the difference is that one hides it under the bed, while another lets it shine! Which side are you on between these two? Your responsibility is to examine which group you belong to in the great calling. Sometimes, we’ve seen great envy toward the first person, the second, or the third. We’ve seen the work they’re doing, how God is blessing it, how everyone knows about it, and we think, “I wish I could do the same!”

Don’t have that mindset—each of those three has their own role. And if you were given their task, you’d be surprised at how unappealing or undesirable it really is! One person said he saw his calling as making the church look beautiful and keeping it safe. If someone enters the church area, they shouldn’t find uncut grass, cluttered corners that look like storage, or wires strewn across walkways. This too is an important ministry for a deacon or someone who is convicted—who testifies to others and urges them toward salvation, along with other church

responsibilities. Sometimes out of compassion, we can witness to someone. You meet someone who tells you their problems, and you take time to listen or help them with something—be it food, advice, clothing, or shelter when they have nowhere to stay. That is already ministry.

We see Joseph's brothers were cruel, even though they knew God. They were eating when their brother, who had brought them food, was in a pit listening to them. Being compassionate rather than cruel is a powerful tool in missionary work. Always be "ready" or sharpen yourself and pray to God in every situation so you're prepared to explain the hope you have. A man named Warren Sears shared 52 testimonies of how he reached people in Maryland, USA. Whenever he met someone, he would find a way to start talking to them—whether it was a Jewish Rabbi, a Muslim, a Buddhist, or a backslidden believer who had forgotten their witnessing mission.

Even when he went to sing at a nursing home, he began with, "I know someone who can keep us from aging and help us live forever." He went on to quote Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, and Revelation 21 and 22—about there being no more tears, death, sorrow, or pain.

When he traveled, he carried his books, tracts, and Bibles. The Gideon Bible people gave him free Bibles, which he handed out. We are on duty 24 hours a day—your job of earning food is a minor one, but helping others make a decision for their eternal salvation is the most important.

The moment you wake up, kneel and thank God, and say, "Today I will meet many people. Give me the words to tell them about You, about their salvation, and help them make a decision." The book of Acts shows us that the works of the Holy Spirit continue even today. Your own Acts are still being written in the book of heaven. The book of Acts hasn't ended—just like the Faith chapter of Hebrews 11 hasn't ended.

These acts are by the power of the Holy Spirit! Today your name continues to be written among those people of faith. Be strong in heart! Remember, it's not your deeds that matter most, but the acts of the Holy Spirit!

If you are a self-supporting layworker and you begin to desire money and seek to gain more, it's better that you get employed or start a business and serve God in another way. Pastor W.D. Frazee enlightened me on matters of the self-supporting

layworker. That's when I realized that such a layworker is a very special person and must recognize that, so they don't compare themselves with others. His sermons to self-supporting layworkers are available for free on his website. I advise every layperson to take the time to listen to them.

In the year 2000, I had the opportunity to attend a Christian church conference in Toronto, Canada. This meeting had about 70,000 participants. One pastor stood and asked how many people came to faith and to Christ through pastors. About 10% stood. When he asked how many came through friends or relatives, 90% stood. This reveals several things. For example, there are too few pastors to reach everyone, so laypeople must rise up and work. Everyone is a layperson—no one is born in Christ just to sit and relax, because each person has an influence that others don't have. This statistic also showed that many churches need laypeople and that they help support pastors' education. A very important thing to remember is that every person can reach people that no one else can! Always remember and repeat this: "I, -----(insert your name), can reach people that no one else can!" And this is a reality. Don't look at a layperson with ten talents and say, "Let me just sit back, that one will do the work." Absolutely not! You will reach those that he can't, no matter how hard he tries, no matter how much he knows the Word of God, or how close his relationship is with those people compared to you!

Therefore, as a layperson, use your influence very well so that people can see the Kingdom. Remember, some plant, others water, and others harvest. Everyone has a different gift in the LORD's vineyard. Never think or say anything about withdrawing from fulfilling this calling. You will be punishing yourself and the people that only you could have reached. I've tried many times to make excuses, but deep down in my heart I know I'm deceiving myself—there's no escape. "Woe unto me if I do not preach the Gospel!" Let us do our part.

If your hand enables you to do something, do it with all your strength. I give examples from the church I know a bit about. But this applies to all Christian denominations. I will speak briefly about the ratio between laypeople and trained, certified leadership (priests or pastors) based on data shared with me by friends. These are approximate numbers to give us a general idea. To get exact figures, it's best to contact the leadership of these churches.

The Lutheran Church globally has about 72 million members, though we couldn't get the number of its pastors. But the Lutheran Church in Tanzania has about 7 million believers and pastors.

The Catholic Church has about 1.3 billion members worldwide and 414,313 priests. This number has decreased, even though members continue to grow—because in 1970, there were about 419,728 priests and about 700 million Catholics. The Baptist Church has 50 million members, and though we couldn't get global pastor data, the U.S. branch has 16 million members and 600,000 pastors, including retirees, military chaplains, hospital, school, prison, seminary, and leadership pastors.

A few years ago, the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church had 14 million members and only 55,000 pastors! In Tanzania recently, there were 500,000 believers and about 280 pastors, including those in offices, hospitals, or seminaries. Examine your church in your country: how many members are there, and how many pastors? What's the ratio?

Remember, the number of members often no longer includes those who've backslidden, those who don't regularly attend services, or children not yet baptized or ready to decide. It's a mistake to exclude them because even they consider themselves part of the local pastor's flock. They report it in government censuses, believe it, and answer accordingly when asked.

In short, many spiritual leaders have heavy responsibilities, overwhelmed by the number of members—so without laypeople, it's impossible to reach all types of people.

So, who really is a layperson? Often, a layperson is someone who is not employed by the church but offers their services—like preaching or ministering to others—without pay. They are a follower of Jesus who volunteers, whether highly educated or not. For instance, in many Western countries, I've noticed a rise in laypeople going to training. Even those with advanced degrees are enrolling in short evangelism courses, such as those from Amazing Facts College of Evangelism, Emmanuel College of Evangelism, First Baptist Ministry Counseling Courses, or Harvest Time International Institute.

These are just a few among hundreds of lay training institutions globally. Just because you studied engineering, accounting, or nursing doesn't mean you have

biblical or evangelism education! Never think you're too important to be a layperson, or that laypeople are weak or poor! Absolutely not. Anyone who is not employed by the church and usually didn't study theology is a layperson. Look at the biblical laypeople like Job, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Isaac, and hundreds more who were not on anyone's payroll.

It is said that Moses had five degrees, though I'm not sure if he received a salary for his work—perhaps he only received his daily necessities. However, he worked around the clock, being called day and night (on call), just like medical professionals. If everyone were to respond to this great calling, Jesus would have already returned. We, both laypeople and pastors, have the power to bring Jesus' coming closer by spreading the Good News. And this is the only positive sign of Jesus' return! “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached as a witness to all nations, and then the end shall come.” Be a witness—do your best, but don't give up if the message isn't received! You have given your testimony, and after all, who knows? “Cast your bread upon the waters, and after many days you will find it again.” It is very important to receive sound teaching so that you can speak the Word accurately, explain it to others, and also be blessed yourself by living according to it. Don't think only the uneducated will end up there. Some have left their thriving businesses to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn how to reach others. Evangelism and lay ministry should be your primary profession or work, and others can come later. Remember, sin is not a joke or something funny. It brings pain and death. Perhaps you and I can ignore it, but God feels the pain—and it won't end until sin is eradicated. That is the message of the pulpit: to show people how God deals with salvation and the disease of sin. God will not rest until sin is removed and the relationship between God and humanity is restored—until there is peace and unity between God and man.

The world and everything in it will pass away. Eternal life is much longer than the 70 years you may live on Earth! Write down your ministry activities somewhere—get a notebook or file. Even record the prayers you make for others and the ones that are answered—you are on duty. You are employed by the Almighty God Himself. Don't be lazy in your work. Then write out strategies for reaching people and how to implement them, just like someone managing an office. I repeat, you are in a great office! You work for the LORD OF LORDS. Don't think you have a small job; live up to the great calling you have received. Pray to God every day

when you wake up: “Please help me reach at least one person today!” And He will help you—just don’t be lazy!

A lay evangelist currently serving in Congo told me: “I prayed this prayer every morning, but one day while riding my motorbike, I saw three people on a path waving at me. They had a sick person lying on the roadside. When I got closer, they asked for help to transport the sick person to the hospital. I told them I was too busy, as I saw it as a disturbance. They owed me nothing, so they said okay. I went on, but they looked disappointed. After about three miles, I asked myself, ‘Didn’t I pray this morning for someone to reach? Why did I leave that sick person behind?’”

He turned around, picked up the patient, and took her to the hospital. Her family followed later when they got transport. While riding with the patient, after about 30 minutes, she began to speak: “My friend, what’s your name?” The evangelist introduced himself, and a conversation followed that formed a bond. He encouraged the patient to accept Christ as her Savior. When someone is in distress, they tend to have less pride and resistance, making it easier for God to work with them—like a drowning person. When they reached the hospital, he had to pay around \$2 (Tsh 3,000); this made the evangelist a bit upset, thinking he had to spend his own money again! But a voice in his heart told him to give the \$2 for the hospital service and another \$2 for the patient’s personal needs.

This happened in Mbeya, Tanzania. He did it with a bit of grumbling. The next day, when he went to visit the patient, he found that she had died! Her relatives were outside the hospital waiting to collect the body for burial. He talked with them and went with them to the village for the funeral. The villagers had already heard how he had helped. Three years later, pastors held public evangelism meetings there, and many surrendered their lives to Jesus in an astonishing way. Upon inquiry, they found that the evangelist had built a bridge, which made it easy for them to cross. Many people in heaven will say, “I am here because of the work of a lay preacher—thank you so much.”

God’s work will be completed by both pastors and laypeople. These two roles are crucial, and neither can replace the other—each is important. It is said that sheep produce sheep! At the same time, pastors have studied their work in depth and provide essential teachings for laypeople, making outreach more effective. We

have attended lay meetings for 18 years. At one lay gathering, we saw a young man, around 24 years old, who seemed to be from Africa.

He was standing with a renowned international preacher named Mark Finley, who was about to interview him before 4,000 laypeople gathered from various parts of the world. They walked near us, and I greeted him in Swahili, “Habari yako?” He was silent. When I greeted him again, he replied in English, “I’m from Zimbabwe, I don’t understand Swahili.” I introduced myself. Though he was young, the next day when he gave his testimony at the podium, I was amazed. His name was Reginald Sibanda, and we have continued corresponding.

He said he graduated from Solusi Seminary in Bulawayo. He was then assigned to a district with 300 members. He developed a plan to mobilize 1,000 laypeople to reach others. They visited people in police stations, health centers, prisons, schools. They initiated various strategies: forming new groups, nurturing members, building small churches, conducting public evangelism, training laypeople, offering community services, and more. After three years, church membership grew from 300 to 21,000—a 7000% increase. Take your lay ministry work seriously, like a business. There is nothing God cannot do if you fully dedicate yourself, plan strategically, and pray about it. Fast and pray regularly for revival and reformation. All things are possible with Him. Years ago in Jersey City, where I lived for nine years, I was out on a morning walk and saw a man with an enormous dog. I had never seen a dog like that. I ran over to ask how much it weighed. He said 280 pounds—about 140 kilograms! That’s like two large adult humans. I was amazed and asked what he fed it. He said the dog cost him \$500 every two weeks—\$1,000 a month, or about 1.5 million Tanzanian shillings! I was shocked, especially when I compared that to my family—we were six and spent only \$600 per month on food! But then the thought came to me: “That’s his passion, and he takes care of it!” Even though he complained about the cost and having to clean up its huge messes, he did it all joyfully. And then I thought—if God can enable someone to afford that kind of pet for their enjoyment, can’t He also enable us laypeople to gain knowledge, success, and the tools for His work?

When many of us first came to live in Western countries, we were very poor. No cars, no public transport where we lived, no computers or education. But after a while, I realized God had been incredibly faithful. We all got jobs, education, and other things. Many stopped attending church after gaining these blessings. When they had no work permits or citizenship, they came to church. Once they got their

papers, they stopped coming! When asked to do God's work, it suddenly seemed impossible—but pursuing personal gain was very possible! One day, with some friends, we wondered: why did God bring us so far? We came with no education or resources, yet now we are blessed.

If we ask for success and the tools to do His work, would God say, “No!? I only wanted you to have computers—but not to do my work!”? Does that sound right? Often, we imagine God as being like us—that what we can or cannot do, so can or can't He. We minimize His greatness. Yet He is the Almighty—El Shaddai. There is nothing He cannot do if we surrender to Him and ask Him to bless our lay ministry work. Martha once gave up—her brother was dead and already buried. She thought to herself, “Jesus, my friend, could have healed Lazarus, but now it's too late.” What things in your life today have you given up on like Martha—things you haven't entrusted to Jesus to resolve? Jesus knew in His heart, “My friend Martha has good intentions, but sadly she doesn't really know who I am or how powerful I am.” Martha didn't know she was speaking to the One with all authority. Then Jesus said, “I AM the Resurrection and the Life!” I AM—here and now—not somewhere else. The One you're talking to, Martha, is the Resurrection and the Life. Isn't that a powerful message?

A lay evangelist from the Sukuma tribe in Singida, Tanzania, once made me smile as we knelt to pray. He said, “Heavenly Father, King, You are the One who reigns and rules—not Satan. Because if Satan had succeeded when he rebelled, then you would have split heaven in half—he'd take one half, and you the other!” The fact that he was cast down (Revelation 12) proves that God reigns.

We often think of the verse “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” and focus only on material wealth. But what matters most to God—your possessions or people's souls? Many say, “I'll give money to others to do God's work; I'll just relax.” But, my brother, start thinking about the truly valuable things we'll take to heaven. List them all! In my mind, I've only listed two: ourselves and the converts we brought to the Lord!

If someone has lost their child and you sit beside them and say, “Relax, don't worry, take these few coins to calm you down”—will they truly be comforted? Wouldn't it be better to help them search for the lost child than to give money? What good is the money? God has lost His children—and we go to church, give a couple of coins, sing a couple of songs, and don't really care! It's time to get up

and go with Him to search for the lost. In this great controversy between God and Satan, you have been included to make the choice to help set others free from the devil's captivity.

The Laymen Ministries evangelist from Idaho made me laugh, saying that many of us have been in the field discussing the crop—like oranges. We talk about the weather, how to prune branches, watering, and how to harvest. We've sat from morning to evening talking about the orange tree, yet everyone is afraid to start picking the fruit. And if someone starts, they are told to stop and wait until they get a degree in it, or do this or that—basically, we keep discussing the crop without ever harvesting it. Others have rested, relaxing and saying that the pastors are there and they are paid. This is a sad thing because there are so few workers; however, everyone is a messenger or a disciple. And the command to love your neighbor as yourself goes beyond just greeting them or smiling with them. Because if someone misses heaven because you didn't tell them—either out of shame or negligence—they won't see that you were doing them any good.

I continue to say that those who have had hands laid on them to shepherd are few. Let me give an example: I visited with my husband in Kisii, Kenya, and had a chance to speak with his pastor. As we were walking along the road, one of his church members passed by, came closer, and said, "Pastor, I'm one of your members." The pastor asked, "What number are you?" He replied, "I'm number 7343!" The pastor told me that he had more than 10,000 members and had to assign them numbers to identify which church they came from. I didn't quite understand how that helps performance, but I saw they were very many. Imagine if you were serving so many people like that.

I visited many places and saw primary school teachers with many students—some had 120 children. In Mvomero, I heard of a primary school teacher who had about 700 students. So, how effective can learning and performance be in such a situation? Another time, I visited my grandmother's village in Shirati, Tanzania, and found a woman overseeing 54 churches and groups! Even if she went to one church per worship day, it would take her about a year to reach all the churches under her. This shows that lay preachers have a huge task and responsibility.

Lay ministry is about serving to help people have health, joy, and sanctification. Jesus came to serve people and gave His life for all humanity. Jesus wants you to enlist to fight. The battle continues until the day He appears in the clouds. It

began in heaven (Revelation). It's not a typical army of a few years, but one of a lifetime. When we enlist in His army, Jesus assigns us what work to do. You are unique—you will reach people no one else can. Don't think others may do a better job than you. They might—but not in the exact way God has called you. There are no players on the same team doing the same role to win—a win requires every part.

As we've said, there are three types of workers in God's field. I can't tell which one you are, but the Lord knows. The church was established and formed for work. Acts—like those in the 28 chapters—are what you are doing today, led by the Spirit of God. Pray for love and unity like the apostles, and you will be filled. A layperson must be loving and lovable! We can have love, but if people don't find us lovable, we're not truly loving. We pull away or become difficult. For example, when someone gives us a gift, we receive it reluctantly—we are the only ones who want to give.

Friendship doesn't work that way. People will start saying, "This person thinks they have better things than us. Let them stay with their good things, and we'll stay with our bad ones." A layperson should be compassionate. We need the Spirit to guide us every minute to know God's will and what He wants us to do. God will feed and clothe the layperson, for He is the one who called them. A layperson should be gentle as a dove but shrewd as a serpent. They must realize that in reaching people, God uses everyone—even those we call heathens. We see Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Pilate's wife, and Cyrus being used by God through dreams to accomplish His work. Here is the patience of the saints—those who keep God's commandments and the faith of Jesus.

Many laypeople have taught about the Antichrist and understand the meaning of Babylon doctrinally; but as laypeople, let's remember—we ourselves can be Antichrist. It's not just about seeing the beasts in Revelation 13 and thinking those are the Antichrists. We, as laypeople, through selfishness, if we hold teachings not of Christ or have actions that go against the Word of God, then we have become Antichrist and have Babylon in our hearts. If our hearts are rebellious, it doesn't matter which church we attend—many will be saved in other religions because they are sincere and have chosen to follow the truth and live it. Let us read the Scriptures and ask the Spirit of the Lord to help us act—not just be talkers who know much but don't do. Let's not spend the whole day discussing or attending many seminars without applying what we are taught.

Great Calling

There is no higher calling than preaching the gospel. Do you know why you live where you live, study where you study, or work where you work? There is a reason you live where you live—even if it's in a desert, God has a purpose for you to live in dryness. The Israelites lived in the wilderness; it became their school and purification ground so they could receive salvation. So, it's not by chance that you are where you are—you are an ambassador of Jesus there. You are there to represent Christ and help those people get to heaven.

Just as we handle newborn babies with great care, so should we be with those we bring to Christ. Let us strive to build bridges, learn their language or culture, be present in their sorrow and troubles, and show genuine concern for their lives. Let us pray for them and with them.

Many of us have felt that our lives are busy, but something is missing—something that makes us feel joyful or satisfied. There is a certain joy that cannot be explained to someone else, which you experience when serving. We receive a certain rest that only heaven gives, and no job, friendship, game, relationship, school, or business can fill that gap. God has made our hearts restless until we fulfill our calling in Matthew 28:19-20, “Go therefore into all the world...” He has given us a hunger, as Mary said in Luke 1:53. We do not feel we've arrived, as Paul says in Philippians 3:12-13. That stirring desire to share in His work in His harvest field comes from Him—and it is holy.

Those who lead many to righteousness will shine like stars forever and ever (Daniel 12:3). Many of us have been doing the same things for years, like Moses in Egypt—we have jobs, businesses, or relationships. Our lives may not have many changes, but God is calling us, as in the prayer of Jabez, to “expand our territory and give us a vision for His work.” We are called to work with Christ in seeking and saving the lost. We are saved so that we may serve and save others.

When Moses was in Egypt, he was told in Exodus 3:10, “So now, go. I am sending you.” There is no greater impact we can make in our lives than helping someone get to heaven. It starts with our families, neighbors, and communities. We will be asked, “Where is the little flock I entrusted to you?” The knowledge of God is the greatest education on earth because it saves and is eternal (in essence, redemption and education are the same).

A layperson from Laymen Ministry in Montana gave us a story that I will now tell. He said there was a seminar on how to harvest mangoes. He invited people of all kinds to attend the seminar in the orchard. Thousands came, and the seminar was held right in the orchard. From morning till evening, the seminar went on, discussing everything about mangoes—preparing the soil, selecting seeds, watering the seedlings, transplanting, weeding, fertilizing, harvesting, selling, and more. By evening, the orchard was full of ripe mangoes, yet no one had picked any fruit; they had only talked about mangoes all day. One person asked, “These trees are full of ripe mangoes, and soon they’ll rot. Why don’t we harvest? Isn’t this seminar about harvesting mangoes?”

We’ve received many ‘mango harvesting’ seminars, yet some of us have hesitated—we’re not acting on the teachings.

When we read how God describes those who don’t know Him, we are struck with awe and could even break down in tears. Let’s look at a few passages:

1. “Rescue those being led away to death... save those staggering toward slaughter”
- Proverbs 24:11
2. “Your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear” - Isaiah 59:2
3. “The people living in darkness... those living in the land of the shadow of death”
- Matthew 4:16
4. “The lost” - Luke 19:10
5. “The wrath of God remains on him” - John 3:18
6. “Whoever does not believe is condemned already... because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God” - John 3:18
7. “Those who are perishing” - 1 Corinthians 1:18
8. “Without hope, without God” - Ephesians 2:12
9. “In the power of darkness” - Colossians 1:13
10. “They will be punished with everlasting destruction, shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might” - 2 Thessalonians 1:9

11. “Because of fear of death, they were subject to slavery”

12. Revelation: “They will be thrown into the lake of fire” - 20:15

These words are not just theological terms; they describe people that you and I know—our neighbors, relatives, fellow travelers, etc. These are all people who have never had a chance to hear the story of salvation through the cross, and that Jesus forgives their sins and wants a relationship with them so they can live with Him in heaven forever.

Try inserting the name of someone you know into this line:

----- (Name of Person) is being led away to be killed, his/her sins have hidden God's face from him/her, he/she is lost, the wrath of God remains on him/her, he/she is under the power of darkness, will be punished with everlasting destruction, and will be thrown into the lake of fire.

Dear layperson, I believe you now understand—these words are devastating punches, terrifying and full of deep sorrow.

Just as Christ performed the ministry of reconciliation between God and us, He has entrusted this ministry to us, and thus we are ambassadors. Being an ambassador is a high-ranking position. From childhood to adulthood, we lived near the residences of several ambassadors, for example, from the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia, the United States, Burundi, Syria, Egypt, Algeria, etc. I saw how they were honored — all had drivers, staff, official cars, many special ceremonies, and numerous job perks. They were like the president of their country while in that foreign land. Even if they made a mistake, such as accidentally hitting someone in a car accident, the case would be referred to the United Nations and not handled locally. They were given “a status like that of a President.” We saw how well-dressed their children and spouses were and the many beautiful things they had, and we even wished our own father could be an ambassador! We often asked him, “Why don’t you become an ambassador?”

All laypeople have been given the high office of being Ambassadors of the King of the entire universe — the King who lives forever — a position greater than representing any earthly leader.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 says:

“But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation. We are therefore ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” Those who are lost do not know the Word of God, nor His laws. They seek the truth and have a longing in their hearts because they experience a certain kind of loneliness, even if they do not want to admit it. Often, they do not speak our language, and we confuse them when we use certain terms, for example, “Holy Trinity,” “salvation,” “book of Revelation,” “reformation,” “three angels,” or “revival.” With that in mind, it is important in this business of preaching Christ to express our words clearly so that they understand what we mean, and thus be able to board the boat of salvation.

At times, we must be like Queen Esther and say, “If I perish, I perish,” even if our safety will be at risk — because this is a matter of life and death. Prayer is the first step in the work of salvation. Then, it is good to spend an hour each day contemplating the life of Christ, every step He took — especially His final days on earth. The better we understand the sacrifice He made for us, the firmer our hope and courage in Him will be. Our love for Him will increase, and His Spirit will govern our lives.

Laypeople! In order for us to be saved and to be channels of salvation for others, we must study the lesson of sacrifice and humility in the footsteps of the cross.

CHAPTER 3

THE WORD OF GOD

It's clear that many people aren't fond of reading. One person even joked that if you want proof that people don't read, hide a \$100 bill inside a book—you'll probably find it untouched years later. Some say they've left their books on a bus and returned days later to find them still sitting there. Maybe books don't appeal to everyone, but when it comes to the Word of God, reading it is absolutely essential. We can't thrive spiritually without it—it is God's voice to us.

In the community where I live, statistics show that 65% of believers do not read the Bible. The common excuse is a lack of time. Ironically, while most recognize the Bible as God's Word and respect it, and many homes even have multiple copies, it's still neglected. For example, we have over 50 Bibles in our home, yet it remains a challenge to carve out time to read even one. Is this something you also struggle with? It's heartbreaking, especially considering that in parts of the world like China, India, and the Middle East, many people have never even laid eyes on a Bible (source: forgottenchristmas.org). Around the globe, people are sincerely searching for God day and night. This is evident in book sales too—the Bible remains the most purchased book worldwide.

Last year again, it was the best-selling book, followed by the Qur'an in second place and China's Communist Manifesto in third, which is treated almost like a religion in that region. Many people around the world acknowledge the Bible as God's Word but claim they don't have time to read it—until life throws them into crisis. Then they scramble for answers. When life is smooth, they fall back into either worldly living or hypocrisy. It's easy to treat the Bible lightly unless we invite the Holy Spirit to guide us in understanding it. This isn't just another news article or storybook.

The Bible functions as a map, a light, and a library. It's remarkable that one book can serve all these roles. It's a map because it directs us along the safe path—a path that leads to Jesus, who has already won victory over Satan. Jesus is that path. The Bible is a lamp that lights our way, clearly showing us the road that leads to eternal life. Although the enemy has tried to extinguish its light, its radiance continues to reveal the truth. Pick up your Bible and read it. It's a library made up of 66 books that talk about people, places, and events from the past,

present, and future. All of them point to the ongoing conflict between God and Satan—and every day, each of us must choose which side to stand on.

The Bible presents real-life examples, warnings, and encouragements to help us patiently and wisely choose God's side. The books of the Old Testament were written before Christ's birth, and the New Testament books were written after His death and resurrection. Every book plays a vital role in helping us understand God, His character, and His salvation plan. They help us grow into His likeness. Why not read the Bible daily? List four personal reasons! Anyone who reads it learns to trust in God and sees how God works to rescue us from Satan's traps (Psalm 119:9-11).

Four truths about the Bible:

1. No other book is so loved that people are willing to die for it.
2. No other book is so hated—many have tried to destroy it.
3. No other book is so widely owned—yet so rarely read.
4. No other book is so highly praised—yet so little understood.

Which group do you fall into among these four?

The Books of the Bible Categorized into Ten Groups:

1. The Five Books of Moses (The Pentateuch):Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.
2. Historical Books:Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job (possibly written by Moses).
3. Poetic and Wisdom Books:Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon.
4. Major Prophets (longer writings):Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel.
5. Minor Prophets (shorter writings):Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.
6. The Gospels:Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.
7. New Testament Historical Book:Acts of the Apostles.

8. Letters Written by Paul:Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews.

9. General Epistles (Letters by Others):James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude.

10. Prophetic Book:Revelation.

Give Me the Bible(Take time to memorize this hymn by Priscilla Owens)

1. Give me the Bible, star of gladness,

To shine for those who are on the journey;

Nothing can hinder the peace,

For Jesus has saved us.

Refrain...

Give me the Bible, the holy word,

Its light will guide me;

Its law, promises, and love

Will continue to the end.

2. Give me the Bible when I am sorrowful,

Filling my heart when burdened by sin;

Give me the good word of the Lord Jesus,

To see Jesus my Savior.

3. Give me the Bible that I may see

The dangers present in the world;

The light of the word of the Lord Jesus

Will illuminate the path of truth.

4. Give me the Bible, lamp of life;

Comforter when we are grieving;

Show me the light of heaven,

That I may see the glory of the LORD.

The value of a layperson does not come from their education, but from spiritual nourishment, which should be the priority. Every day, when they wake up, they should say, “Lord, I am here, what do you want me to do today?” Do not be a hypocrite, living a life of productivity and many leadership activities while forgetting yourself. The people of the Old Testament struggled with many gods; those of the New Testament had the problem of hypocrisy; today, we have both problems—and in addition, we struggle with materialism. Both the rich and the poor want possessions. A hypocrite is someone who says something but does not follow it—you will only deceive yourself, not others! People will notice quickly, and often they will not tell you. This happened to the Pharisees. They knew a lot, down to the letter—but they did not do it.

One day, my seven-year-old child saw I was late leaving the house for church and said, “Mom, you’re a Pharisee!” I asked what he meant. He said, “Pharisees say things, but live differently, and expect others to do what they say.” Ask yourself these questions as you read Psalm 139 (“Search me”): Am I truthful? Transparent? Pure? Or selfish? We don’t need to be aerospace engineers to be hypocrites. It’s very easy to be one—that is, to have outward good deeds but an unchanged mindset and heart.

The Pharisees, who were religious leaders, left their work and traveled many miles just to try to trap Jesus. Being a Pharisee also has its costs, just like people spend to sustain their lifestyles. Let us pray that the LORD delivers us from such bondage. Too many activities reduce our effectiveness and blur the vision of our calling to develop our evangelistic gift. Many people have two jobs, and when they get home, they have too many projects. This makes us dull. Speaking from my own

life, reducing busyness is a gift. Christ was always ready to answer the Pharisees and face everything because He spent time with His Father. Many believe the Word is inspired and powerful—but they don't read it! It's surprising, but since I struggle with this too, I understand it well.

When many were asked how they hear the voice of God, they answered, "Through prayer and events!" Learn to love God's Word. Not having time is not true—it's a matter of priorities. We have 24 hours a day and 168 hours a week. Reading the Bible from beginning to end at a regular pace takes about 70 hours. Do you have time to bathe? To cook? To go to school or work? Then you have time to read the Word. Let's not read it just like fire extinguishers, only during emergencies or disasters—but all the time. I know people who finished reading it in two weeks. I'm not saying we all should do that—but it shows we do have time. Although I've been a Christian for over 35 years, it's only in the last few years that I've truly paid close attention to reading it. Satan has stolen my time with Jesus. I pray that Jesus helps me use my time to nourish myself spiritually.

For about 10 years now, I've been intentional. Before, I would read it, but skip some days due to being too busy. Our refuge and protection is God's Word. If you received a letter from the President or someone you love, would you say you have no time to read it? I heard of a girl in a news report who sent 6,000 text messages in a month! Satan keeps us busy with things—even good ones—that are not sinful, but he doesn't care, as long as they distract us from focusing on the goal: the Word.

People used to tell me the Word is sweet to read. I wondered, "What do they see that is sweet?" Now I understand. My 80-year-old teacher from England used to say, "I can't go without reading the Word—it gives me comfort—it's the first thing I long for when I wake up!" Now I understand, friends. The Word guards the heart and nurtures humility. Live to build a relationship with Jesus—not to show others how much we study the Word, only to be rejected on Judgment Day. Many of us live by tradition, scrambling here and there, but don't read until we are old. Then we blame the youth for not reading. They reply, "You're about to die, so you need to be close to Jesus." Who knows their day? Nowadays, age doesn't matter—anyone can fall asleep in death at any moment.

I advise young people not to make this mistake. Many think that the workers hired at 5 PM getting the same pay as those hired at 6 AM is completely fair. Not so!

Those who came early built deep relationships with the LORD. Imagine someone you want to spend all your time with—and you get to do so—wouldn't you be happy? Learn to memorize verses. No debate needed. In times of trouble, you will claim the promises—if you know them! That's reason enough.

There's a website to help people memorize scripture called "FAST memorization of scripture." Some people in our church have memorized Jesus' thoughts from the Mount of Blessing—that is, Matthew 5, 6, and 7.

Also, the book of Ephesians—which is an excellent book for relationships and is concise. It helps summarize nearly everything. Try memorizing Ephesians! Psalm 91, Isaiah 53, 1 Corinthians 13, etc. The Bible is a marvelous book—and it belongs to God Himself.

It was written over 1,700 years, has 66 books, and 40 authors. 400 years passed between the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament has 39 books, and the New Testament 27. These people never met each other, yet they wrote in a unified sequence.

Prophecies like Daniel 2, Daniel 7, and Daniel 8 have already been fulfilled. Start reading these chapters from Daniel. My father never paid attention to the Scriptures—but he was a historian. When I showed him Daniel 2 and 7 and talked about Alexander the Great of Macedonia and those kingdoms, he was amazed and said, "This is truly incredible! We studied all of this in history." The Bible! Read it. Believe it. Value it. Meditate on it. Memorize it. Obey it. There are over 600 fulfilled prophecies in the Bible. You'll see that even Matthew quotes the Old Testament more than 27 times as fulfilled before his very eyes.

The probability of even 8 prophecies being fulfilled is extremely rare—1 in 100,000,000,000. Look at how Daniel 2 and 7 were fulfilled and compare it with world history books written by historians. Let's not just read and marvel at the wonders of the stories, but let them change our hearts and minds. God speaks to me through the Bible—He gives me wisdom, clarity, and the blessings I need. He wants me to sit at His feet and listen. Prayer is me speaking to Him. The Bible is Him speaking to me. You will be like a tree planted by streams of water. These days, many people struggle with low self-esteem. Psychologists and cosmetic sellers sell us their products to help us feel confident. Are you discouraged? Are you afraid? Do you want a character with spiritual depth? Do you have terrifying

nightmares? Then read this book and confess Him as LORD. We are told that a person in God becomes like a tree planted by the river. Look at the lives of those who valued Him: Job, Paul, Joseph, and Daniel. God was the center of their lives. God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of love, power, and a sound mind!

Read the Bible and make it the center of your life. A person whose Bible is worn out and torn is usually not broken themselves, but rather strong. Other books by nature are chaff, they are empty, they lack depth. Stick to the Word. Do not go a day without reading it. Remain in Christ, pray to the Spirit of God before you open the Word so you can understand it. This is crucial. Read it, listen to what God wants to tell you, believe it, obey it, and you will prosper. In Psalm 119, we see David taking and meditating on the Word. He referred to the Word as commandments, testimonies, statutes, etc. Psalm 119 should be read again and again!

Many people today waste time watching our entertaining videos, comedies, and dramatizations in churches instead of reading the Word. These things are not bad in themselves, but they make us lose the focus of where we are needed—and the enemy loves that. Sermon and Bible recordings are very important; few people have actually recorded sermons or the Bible to listen to. When it comes to songs praising God, we should meditate on the words, not just be entertained. Don't glue your eyes to "our good shows" all the time; they can never take the place of the Word—never! We also often have debates about certain topics. I heard that in Tanzania, the ambassador of a certain country said he would come with his gay partner.

I believe he meant a man who has married another man. I saw people entering into debates about whether it was good or bad! But truly, God has already shown us how marriage should be. Homosexuality is a sin—there is no debate, period! It is not up for discussion. Even living with a man or woman without marriage is a sin. God's Word is clear about a man marrying a man or a woman marrying a woman—do not waste your time in fruitless debates. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory, but we must ask for forgiveness, not claim it's not sin. We should say, "Open my eyes so that I may behold wondrous things from your law" (Psalm 119:18). The Bible is pure truth, and only truth.

Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in heaven. In heaven, there are no questions about it—not even from the most brilliant minds. In heaven, God's Word is not

questioned or debated—they've accepted it, love it, and joyfully pursue it day and night. He emphasized to us that heaven and earth will pass away, but His Word will never pass away! This is a very weighty matter. If you don't understand something, ask God to help you understand. For He shows things to the weak, but the proud and lofty might miss the real meaning. You can argue night and day but still fail to understand.

I studied in seminary, and people there would stay up all night debating, for example: "Is Jesus 100% God and 100% man?" By midnight they'd be tired, speaking carelessly, and quarreling. I realized I didn't have much intelligence and didn't understand these things. They say if you're tired and sleepy, your performance is like someone who drank four bottles of alcohol. I walked away because it was over my head. I advise—even if you're a tech-savvy person who uses CDs or other formats—get a physical copy of the Bible. You can share it more easily with someone else than an iPod.

All Scripture breathed out by God is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work—Paul reminds us in 1 Timothy 3:16-17. The Bible is authority—the authority of God Himself. When God speaks, we stay silent and follow. The discussion ends there. The English say, "The Lord says it, and I believe it, and that settles it." Meaning, God has said it, I believe it, and that's the conclusion.

The Bible has changed the lives of people who were deeply sinful and wicked. No one ever said, "I studied accounting and it changed my heart to stop stealing." Or "Mathematics changed my heart and I stopped committing adultery." Absolutely not! It is only the Bible—God's Word—that changes us. I believe, as a layperson, you will examine your life and see that you are continuing in your journey and being transformed by the Word. "I have hidden your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you." His Word is the only and final authority. "You think you have wise ideas, and I think I have many wise ideas too!" That doesn't matter—my wise ideas or yours are foolishness.

When the LORD speaks, we have no need for debate. Our experience is not the authority over the Bible. You may have a good experience, but if it contradicts the Word of God, that experience is meaningless—it should be discarded. Always measure your experience against the Bible. Don't make yourself or your

experience the center, but rather the Word of God. Our experience is not the whole truth. Some lay evangelists get things from dreams or traditions that contradict the Word of God and preach them, causing people to stumble. Avoid this. Many Christians here in America talk about near-death experiences—saying they died and came back to tell the tale. This contradicts the Word of God. Yet many have believed it and had more dreams about it. This is not a revelation from God.

Many claim to be prophets and say the LORD has revealed to them things outside of the Bible. Stay away from such people! They may seem zealous, but be cautious. The Bible is the only authority of God's voice. The Bible is God's voice and God's revelation—it is not a psychology or self-help book. "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). Keep God's testimonies with your whole heart, not half-heartedly. Let us pray David's prayer: "Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees! Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands" (Psalm 119:5-6). Let us pray in true repentance and remain in Christ—He is the true vine.

Let us remain in Christ. There are Christians who have sneaked in among other Christians and are not true believers. This is a great danger. The advice to the Laodiceans in Revelation 3 must be read often. "I know your deeds." We have many works of God, but He says He will spit us out. We make Him nauseous! Sometimes our works, as laypeople, make Him sick. We think we're serving Him, but we're actually making Him vomit! I have been reflecting on this for the past five months. I have asked Jesus for forgiveness—that my works or deeds may not make Him sick. I don't want to tire myself with many deeds and be distressed, only to realize they're just nauseating to the Creator. Even service works must be led by the Holy Spirit.

It is easier to do Christian things than to be a Christian. I have realized this and asked God to forgive me—that I may not do my own works and make Him vomit, but be in Him and do what He wants me to do, not what I want. It is very easy to be a hypocrite—I believe you've noticed that. Study the Word deeply. We started on milk, but now we must eat solid food. Serious prayers must be sent to heaven. Pray for others you are reaching. Don't pray with anger. Don't just see the sins of others—see your own and confess them. We must surrender ourselves to God and resist the devil. Only the Creator can help us do this.

We have been given power to overcome sin. When we begin, we might not see clearly—just like the blind man who said, “I see people like trees walking”—but later he was able to see well. We launch spiritual missiles and move forward. It is a battle, and we must advance. We don’t stay in the same place. Justification is the work that God does for us. But man must allow God to work. The Word of God is not meant to inform us, but to transform us (not a Book of information but transformation). It is said that 50 leaves from an apple tree produce one apple. Likewise, our reading of the Bible will reflect in our fruits. Otherwise, it will be just leaves like the fig tree with no fruit! He said, “By their fruits you shall know them.” These fruits are the fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5.

The Word is like a hammer; it strikes and reveals sin, prejudice, and every form of evil. Psalm 119:14 says, “I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches.” It is sweeter than honey. Tasty things are eaten quickly and finished. But you savor slowly to enjoy the delight. The Word is the same—don’t rush through it or skim over it. Martin Luther, the German reformer, would spend three hours reading and praying, even on his busiest days. Don’t be in this work with a distracted mind—saying “people have called me so I must go” without reading. Remember, even Jesus Himself, who wrote the Word, took time to read it! He said, “It is written.” Isn’t it amazing that He didn’t say, “I know it—I wrote it Myself!”

The Word is a sharp sword; it discerns even thoughts. People’s thoughts may be true, but not completely true. But the Word of God is a mirror of reality. It is not like carnival mirrors that make your head look bigger than your body or your feet large and your head small. How will I know who I really am? Some people have claimed we came from apes. One day, while in a clothing store, a 16-year-old came to me and asked, “Ma’am, I mean no offense, but are you from Africa?” I said “yes.” She then asked, “Do they wear clothes there?” I gently explained the reality to her. She was amazed.

Many people believe strange things! One missionary in Musoma in the 1950s, according to a relative of mine, came with children’s clothes that had holes for tails—thinking people here hadn’t lost their tails yet. Many have a partial truth about reality. The Word of God is what will tell you the full truth about who you are. It will never deceive you. Are you living according to God’s Book? For the youth: “How can a young man keep his way pure?” Psalm 119:8-9. Not by life at college or in the village. We once visited the University of Nairobi from Baraton

MaarifaMtandaoni.Com RohoYaUnabii.Net pg. 49

University in Eldoret and witnessed shocking things. In many African universities, men and women share dormitories, bathrooms, and toilets—so-called modern ways. They say they are following the West—gender equality (Co-education?).

We saw a curtain separating beds in one room. While sleeping, we heard a man's voice coughing. I asked, "What's going on here?" Apparently, they live together. All bathrooms and toilets are shared. These modern practices that contradict the Word of God have brought many tears to our daughters and youth. The way that is not of God brings much sorrow. They said, "It's not a problem; they use condoms." I was shocked. Does a condom erase sorrow and guilt? Haven't people still gotten HIV or pregnancies even with condoms? Truly, there is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is sorrow—Proverbs 14:12. Only the Word will help us. For we have all gone astray—how shall we find the way without the Word? Anything outside of the Word brings great sorrow.

In some countries like the United States, people respect the Bible—each household owns an average of four—but they don't read them. Sin will keep you away from this Book, and this Book will keep you away from sin. I advise a layperson to read and complete it at least once every year. Read it, memorize it, meditate on it, record it, and live it. It is the soap for sin—reflect on it daily, and pray. The Word is holy; it cleanses us by the miracle of God. It makes us holy through His grace. When temptation comes, the Holy Spirit brings to mind the verses we've read to help us overcome. Don't just read out of duty—meditate on it and be a doer of the Word, not merely a speaker or reader. Don't blame the mirror, which is the Word. Don't have a head full of scripture but a heart full of sin. The Word wasn't given to make us clever sinners—it was given to transform us. Just as the message of health is not just so we live long lives while continuing to sin, but so we can be transformed and resemble Him.

Some laypeople who preach on TV have been heard, instead of exalting the Word, saying "send money to us and you will receive many blessings." Some have turned their programs into fundraising rather than feeding people the Word. If you get the chance to preach in public, on the radio, or anywhere, avoid this habit of Gehazi. He was a good servant, but he valued wealth more than the Word of God. Don't waste time reading the works of unbelievers thinking those are the best examples—you may only have an hour to preach. Preach JESUS—don't let other things rob your time.

A top surgeon once waited for his patient. When the patient arrived, he found the surgeon reading the Bible. The patient asked, “Does reading the Bible help you before or after surgery?” The surgeon replied, “During surgery.” That’s how it is for us too—it helps us in our daily tasks. Every day, be in the Word. We repeat: Read it, memorize it, and obey it! If you don’t have time, use this method—it helped me a lot. Say this: “Today I’m so busy, I don’t have time to read the Bible—so I also don’t have time to eat.” And don’t eat! Until you’ve read it. If you skip two or three meals, you’ll get going and read it. That’s the method I’ve used, and it works.

An old hymn said:

1. All mountains and valleys shall melt away, but the Word of the Lord will stand firm.

Chorus: Stand firm and guard yourself, the Word of the Lord stands firm. Stay alert, pray daily, and stand.

The Word of God is more than good advice or opinions—it is command, instruction, and the final authoritative Word in heaven and on earth. Millions of people have died for this Word. Let us pray: “Open my eyes that I may see the wonders of Your Word.” You’ll be amazed—what issue has this Word not addressed? It has answers for every situation you face. It truly comes from God Himself.

There are many ways to read the Bible—perhaps even thousands! But I’ll mention a few I know. Never read the Bible without praying for the Spirit of God to show us our faults like a mirror and to inspire us. Read it to help in saving souls. You are not the one who saves souls (“I will convert him”)—God does. Even if you know it well, you’ll be surprised by the new light revealed in that same verse. And as we said, Christ, who is the Word, inspired people to write it. While on earth, He read the Scriptures and quoted, “It is written.” How shall we escape if we ignore the Word? Even children benefit. Paul encourages his young son Timothy that he has known the Scriptures from childhood—2 Timothy 3:15. The Bible has 1,189 chapters. You could read one per day and finish in three years, or three per day and finish in one year.

Types of Bible Study:

1. Chapter Study: a. What is the main idea? (e.g., Genesis 1 - Creation)

- b. What is the leading theme?
- c. What is the key verse in that chapter?
- d. What is your favorite verse in that chapter?
- e. Who are the key people mentioned in the chapter?
- f. What does this chapter reveal about Christ?
- g. What important example can you follow in your life today?
- h. Are there any promises for me in this chapter?
- i. Is there any responsibility I need to fulfill for someone after reading this chapter?
- j. Prayer points from this chapter.

2. Paragraph Study

3. Topical or Thematic Study - for example: the parables of Jesus, prayers of various people, miracles, events, and conversations of people mentioned in Scripture.

4. Verse Study - for example: Romans 8:28.

5. Word Study - for example: The Old Testament in Hebrew has 8,674 words and the New Testament about 6,000.

6. Study Based on Prayers of People - for example: the Old Testament has 83 prayers and the New Testament 49.

7. Biographical Study - for example: the life of King David or Joseph, husband of Mary. The Bible mentions the name Zechariah 30 times in the Old Testament and 15 times in the New Testament; Jonah 7 times and James 5 times.

8. Study Based on Fulfilled Prophecy - for example: Daniel 2 or 7.

9. Study All Verses Referring to Christ in the Entire Bible - Luke 24:27 says that all Scripture and the prophets spoke of Him.

10. Read an Entire Book in a Day - for example: the whole book of Matthew, and meditate on it.

11. Copy the Bible by Hand to the End.

12. Question-Based Bible Reading.

Pastor Ivory Myers from Power of the Lamb Ministry taught us PHOTOTHEOLOGY. He said that sometimes when we read the Bible, we only see “caterpillars,” but if we place the picture into five dimensions, we make our study more enjoyable and fruitful. A picture speaks more than 1,000 words. When reading the Bible, it’s good to observe the following in the story or chapter:

1. The literal story itself.
2. How it relates to Christ.
3. How it relates to me and my life (e.g., do I need to learn something or confess?).
4. How it relates to the great controversy between God and Satan today.
5. How it relates to my church today.

If a story doesn't fit into one of these six categories, it may be understood in the future—but don’t force interpretations or invent things that aren’t there.

Example: The story of Elijah and Elisha, as commonly known, and as explained in the books of Kings and Chronicles.

Elijah resembles John the Baptist here, and Jesus is like Elisha. John the Baptist left the work for Jesus and disappeared, and his disciples became Jesus’ disciples, just as Elijah’s did for Elisha.

It relates to my life in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the need to earnestly pray for a double portion.

It relates to the church today, as we await the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to continue the work.

It relates to the great controversy today: the enemy Satan resists God’s work and wants to enslave us to his side, as with the people on Mount Carmel—but we must choose whom we will serve: Baal or God.

Nothing strengthens the brain like reading the Word of God.

God has given His people very good things to read. Let the Word of God be in our hearts and homes. Place the Bible—Bread of Life—in a visible place. Always choose books that lift you and make you love the Bible. Strive to understand the teachings of God’s Word. Don’t busy yourself with shallow, false stories or things that Satan uses to destroy us. Avoid being intoxicated with reading novels that do not nurture our love for God. The LORD has given us eyes and ears, and through them, we guard the paths to our hearts.

Things That Help the Human Brain (Come Let Us Reason Ministry)

1. Use your brain to think—just as physical exercise benefits the body, so does exercising the mind help it grow in intellect.
2. Love the truth and thirst for it—no one has fully attained all truth, for God is eternal and reveals His truth daily through His Word, science, and our experiences.
3. Test all theories about God and Scripture.
4. Because of the certainty of God's existence and His faithful and loving character, fully surrender to Him; each day begin by inviting His Spirit.
5. Daily meditate on God’s loving character, love the truth, and purpose to know His character, His kingdom of love, and His creation.
6. Trust and depend on God for your life today and tomorrow, especially as you see His faithfulness and truth.
7. Stay in God’s plan. Live a life of giving—serve others and tell them about His kingdom. You will never lack and will be blessed more.
8. With deep intention, determine to tell many about God’s kingdom and His love. Join groups that do this. Start a ministry and teach people God’s Word. Join a fellowship that believes in God’s Word and encourage one another. Testify about God’s power to heal and restore what’s lost.
9. Live according to God’s design—avoid toxins to the body and mind such as alcohol, tobacco, drugs, worldly entertainment, violent games, unclean books, and distorted thoughts about God.

10. Exercise daily—both mind and body. Your memory and body will improve, and your thoughts will be freed from sadness, anxiety, and fear.
11. Get at least 8 hours of sleep, eat a healthy diet, use water both internally and externally, get fresh air and sunlight—they help your brain.
12. Live according to God’s natural laws—good food and water reduce disease.
13. Forgive others—let go of grudges or vengeance.
14. Resolve guilt—it undermines peace and increases insecurity and the risk of manipulating others. Confess your sins and move on with your life.
15. If fear or insecurity tempt you to act against your conscience to gain others’ approval, pause and ask:
 - a) What is true? What is just/certain? What is healthy? What is wise? What steps should I take?
 - b) Ask yourself: If one person rejects me or gets angry at me for what I do and believe, is that person truly my friend? Do I need their approval?
 - c) Be willing to let others feel free to perceive you however they choose. If you think, “If I do what they want, they won’t be mad,” consider giving them the freedom to think as they wish. In doing so, you free yourself from the pressure of caring about their opinions.
 - d) Remember: Love does what is right for life and wisdom—not just what feels good at the moment. Look ahead and apply God’s principles even when they don’t seem convenient.
16. Fix your eyes on the Lord Jesus—live with confidence and boldness in the goodness of God, knowing the truth of His laws of love, the creativity of life, and the daily heart-hope of His return. Now go and study the WORD and hide it in your heart—that is the cure.

CHAPTER 4

WISDOM IN RELATING WITH YOUR PASTOR

The success of your ministry is largely determined—about 85%—by how well you relate to people. You may be diligent and hardworking, but without strong interpersonal skills, your progress will be limited. Often, highly knowledgeable individuals may struggle with personal relationships (though this isn't always the case). It seems Jesus understood this when choosing His disciples—He selected those who would follow Him humbly and without causing much strife. Interestingly, the one disciple who was the most educated among the twelve was also the one who caused serious trouble. This isn't to discourage education—far from it—but to remind us that academic knowledge alone won't improve our relationships with others.

Today, many of us hold degrees in communication, yet our social skills have deteriorated. We avoid people or complain when they are busy with important matters. We assume that just because someone serves God, we can demand their time at any moment without regard for their schedule.

Even if you're not a gifted speaker, your personal relationships will often be more effective in reaching people than sermons. It's easier to build connections with a multitude than to connect deeply with one individual. My friend Chuaro had a pastor who favored modern worship styles. The services included upbeat singing and dancing, sometimes in dimmed lighting with theatrical smoke effects. After an hour of this, a brief thirty-minute sermon followed. The pulpit was small, and the pastor dressed casually in jeans rather than traditional suits. Biblical teaching wasn't emphasized—they focused on drawing young people into church by making it an entertaining environment so they wouldn't seek distractions elsewhere.

After two years, this pastor requested a transfer, saying, “The members here are wonderful people, but they're stuck in the past—they belong to the Stone Age.” This showed wisdom: even when facing disagreement or resistance, it's better to part peacefully than to cause division, so that the message of Christ can continue. To serve effectively, we must nurture good relationships. Positive connections motivate people, open opportunities, and bring unity. Make yourself approachable—let people know where and when they can reach you. Smile, greet others warmly, respect them, learn their names, and offer help. Set time aside to meet with people, but avoid being monopolized by individuals who just want

constant attention—unless they are facing serious matters like illness or loss. Be loving and don't exploit others. Since lay ministry isn't a paid job, your leadership, kindness, and service are what will earn you respect and effectiveness in soul-winning. Love covers many faults. When you make mistakes, they'll be seen as minor if people know you genuinely care. But if you're indifferent, your errors will be scrutinized and amplified. Jesus said in Matthew 7:15-23 that people will recognize us as Christians by how we act.

As a layperson serving Jesus and working closely with the church, you must understand how to interact not only with members but also with your pastor. Constant opposition to church leadership goes against the very structure and mission of the church. Of course, churches make mistakes. But these should be addressed with grace, not public conflict. Reconciliation should be sought through established biblical steps, such as those outlined in Matthew 18:15-17. The church is precious to Christ—He died for it. A layperson's role is to support, not fight against it. They should also encourage others to build up the church.

When I worked in a hospital, I observed frequent tension between ambulance staff and medical professionals. Paramedics, who often train for only six months, seemed to clash with doctors and nurses who had studied for years. Some of it seemed rooted in jealousy or insecurity. Doctors would often complain: "These paramedics act like they know everything. Why don't they get proper training? When they bring in a patient, they give us orders and claim they already know the diagnosis." Paramedics would boast, "We may have studied for just six months, but we know more than the doctors!" They'd point out a doctor's oversight or mistake, sometimes blaming them if a patient died.

This kind of behavior often stems from feelings of inferiority. To feel superior, some people put others down. Avoid this mindset. If you want to correct or help someone, do it gently, respectfully, and privately. Our Christian walk doesn't give us license to do whatever we please. Some educated laypeople may look down on pastors who lack formal education or material wealth, forgetting that their authority comes from God and the Church. This is dangerous and should be avoided. Don't argue over God's work.

Stay humble, but speak the truth. Whether salaried or volunteering, you are serving the Lord—you're running a relay, handing the baton to the next runner. Avoid conflict with your pastor and fellow members; if you don't, you'll end up

representing yourself instead of Christ. If you know something your pastor doesn't, or have an opinion—as everyone does—speak to him privately and with love. He is your teammate, not your rival. Yes, pastors are busy and cannot fulfill their duties without help from lay members. But approach them with wisdom, gentleness, and compassion.

Don't stumble over gossip or conflict concerning your pastor. Even in the days of Eli and Caiaphas, people likely knew the faults of their leaders, but they still showed them respect. How much more should we honor the good pastors we have today? Ask God to help you avoid strife with your pastor and fellow believers. Be trustworthy with church matters shared in confidence, so that you can nurture others and support the ministry. Pray for your pastor, help with outreach efforts, and show him respect. Be mindful of boundaries when visiting him at home—he has a family and private life, too. Avoid gossip, show appreciation, and be considerate, recognizing that the work of pastoring is difficult, filled with spiritual challenges, and often lonely.

When someone is moving away, it is good to visit and bid them farewell properly as fellow workers in the Lord's vineyard. Meet with your pastor regularly to reduce conflicts. Love covers a multitude of sins. You can invite one another to your homes or pray together as a fellowship. Hold revival meetings together. Be a strong team in working together. Do not remain on the side of hostility; promote unity. Every layperson needs a friend in this difficult work. Hostility increases stress and poor health. A layperson should not only be a friend to their wife, children, or relatives but also to members of their fellowship.

Avoid insisting on being employed. It's true that many people desire employment, but if the opportunity hasn't come, don't be someone who insists on it. Whether you are paid or not, you are serving as a layperson by witnessing for Christ! Pray to God—if there is an opportunity to be paid, that's good, but if not, it's still okay. The LORD Himself will reward you beyond measure in His own way.

Do not involve yourself in church politics! This is very easy to fall into. In Arizona during a laypeople's meeting, one layperson, Denzil McNelius, reminded us that our work as laypeople is unpaid. We serve willingly and with a willing heart, without salary, and we know we are working for our CREATOR. If we get into politics, we are not paid! But salaried workers like pastors—when they engage in

church politics, they are paid! Yet we tire ourselves with politics without any pay, so let us be wise.

In some places, members and laypeople get involved in criticizing their pastor by standards such as, “He has brought few souls to Christ,” or “I have done more work,” or “He doesn't know how to preach on radio or handle children's and youth ministry.” Remember, your pastor is not the angel Gabriel to know everything or to do everything better than all humans. He is just a human being, a servant of God—learn to respect him and avoid arguments. This will help you do your work in peace and with good effectiveness.

Many have been banned from preaching by their churches due to competition with their pastors. This has weakened the ministry and led many to fall from the faith without cause. Others have been left as chaff or withered stalks for no good reason. Are you defending Jesus or defending yourself? Often we defend ourselves and not Jesus. I heard President Bush say he was defending God and therefore opposed Osama. And Osama also said he was defending God, so he opposed President Bush. I was surprised because I didn't know God needed help defending Himself—and these two were helping Him! Or were they just defending themselves, thinking they were defending God? This also applies when you are teaching others—don't start arguments over beliefs trying to prove that you are the one who is right. Love diminishes, anger rises, sparks fly, and you find yourself alone. Those who might have become new believers flee from you; you are left empty and alone. I used to love to argue a lot, but these days, when I feel an argument rising in my heart, I pray that the Spirit of God will help me stop. Let us be gentle and wise.

I'm not saying all pastors are easy to work with, but many are easy to work with if you are ready to be a humble and wise layperson. Do not ignore people—make them feel valued. Respond when greeted; don't create social classes. Do not be boastful or full of pride. Selfishness is a great sin. If we can overcome the old self, then we have crossed from death into life.

If you have a gift, people will recognize it. There is no need to exalt yourself. Be cheerful, not someone who always talks about problems—people will avoid you. Encourage others. Tell them what good things you've seen them do and how to find solutions. Don't criticize or hurt others, not even yourself. Instead of criticizing yourself to the point of harm, correct yourself to build yourself up. If

you are constantly self-critical, you will also start criticizing others! It's said that those who heavily criticize others are on the road to eventually criticizing God. Be someone others are happy to be around. Make friends with strangers too. Don't despise people when they make mistakes, instead, be helpful. Avoid the spirit of argument—you are representing Christ.

Appear neat and well-dressed. Elegance can conceal poverty, and besides, God loves cleanliness. Don't be someone who desires the best for yourself and the least for others. Be like Abraham, who told Lot to choose the best first. This servant surpassed Adam in wisdom, even though his trials were greater than Adam's. Don't be cold, unapproachable, or intimidating. Some of us are lively only on the phone, but when we meet people, we freeze. Or perhaps that's just being like Paul. Be someone who knows how to keep secrets and gives people hope. Don't forget to be thankful—a grateful person, both to people and to God, is a great blessing.

Overall, let's pray for one another to have the fruit of the Spirit! (Galatians 5:22). The work of a layperson complements the pastor's; it is not in opposition. You are not there to show off your knowledge, authority, or power over your pastor. Respect him and cooperate in the work. He may be young and just starting out—perhaps he hasn't even been officially ordained—but respect him and work together. We see many in the Bible who were capable, yet they never disrespected God's servants. Doing so would have diminished their own service.

God sees your good work—there's no need for competition. I repeat, always be humble and ready to learn. We received news about some laypeople in Tegeta, Tanzania, who physically assaulted their pastors. That saddened us deeply. I don't think boxing is part of the lay ministry or evangelism. Pastors often move around. Perhaps this place is your hometown, and your influence as a local is greater for reaching people. Use this opportunity well. Maybe you know the language and culture of this area. Use this chance to assist your pastor in reaching the people. Don't feel inferior, because you are doing great work. Don't say, "Even though I haven't gone to school, my preaching is better than those who have." Or speak ill of others. They say that when the rabbit couldn't reach the grapes, it said, "I don't want those—they're sour." Don't join that group. Also, don't discriminate against those who help you or those more educated than you. In heaven, we won't be judged by our education but by our character and the souls we brought to salvation.

God will measure the work you did for Him, not your competitions with others. “I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was naked, and you clothed me; I was thirsty, and you gave me water.” I once worked in a hospital for brain-injured patients who had suffered road accidents. We were caring for a 22-year-old girl who had been in an accident. Her life had been shattered from a young age. She couldn’t express hatred toward people of her own race, but if a Black person helped bathe her, feed her, or dress her, she would punch, pinch, and bite them, saying, “I don’t want a Black person feeding me,” etc. She hurled humiliating words at us. You’d be surprised—these tasks were rarely done by white people! We weren’t the cause of her suffering, but as her closest caregivers, she took out her anger on us.

The English call it displacement — for example, someone is beaten by her husband and then goes to beat the dog. Do not take revenge; let God handle that (vengeance is mine). He will do it better than you. You should be like Nehemiah when faced with Sanballat and Tobiah. You will make your enemy join you and see that the LORD is working with you. They will say, “Where can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?”

Even though Joseph’s brothers wanted to destroy him, others preserved him. I want to say, know that your work is unto God, not to compete with others. Even if you preach powerful sermons but people’s lives don’t change because of your conduct, what will that help?

You might be working with a pastor who has a difficult character and may not even be born again — just like some laypeople aren’t — but you won’t lead him to Christ through stubbornness, pride, or hostility. Be a good example so that he feels ashamed if he is the arrogant, hypocritical, or quarrelsome one. Remember you are working for your Creator, not for him. If you keep that in mind, you won’t have conflict with anyone. And even those who cause trouble, God will turn it into a blessing for you. Your work is not small, but it requires humility and to be a person of God. This work has been done by many in the Holy Scriptures. Go back and reflect on both the Old and New Testaments.

How many served God without pay? Many! Only a few were paid. The Bible mentions about 1,188 men and 182 women. Those who were paid were priests, kings, etc. All others like Abraham, Joseph, Jacob, Noah, Paul, etc., were laypeople.

Do not despise small beginnings. The LORD is passing by your way to bless you. Do not be idle or He may pass you by and bless someone else. God is in the business of blessing; therefore, be courageous, push through with determination and diligence. Be creative and find ways to reach people. There is rejoicing in heaven over even one sinner you bring to Christ.

Remember, sometimes you thought working with people was easy – but once you're in their shoes, you'll realize it's not easy at all. For example, someone once wondered, "Since Tanzania has large lakes like Victoria, why don't we use them for irrigation?" Why doesn't the regional leader take this up? He later discovered that during the colonial era, laws were put in place, and even after that, there are legal constraints – some sensible, others not – that prevent people from moving forward. I asked, "What kind of laws?" He replied that when Britain governed East Africa and the Nile River nations like Egypt, they feared that if water was used for irrigation in East Africa, Egypt and Sudan would suffer. So they put a law in place that the Lake Zone should not use the water in certain ways.

He said that before blaming anyone, whether a pastor or a church member, he wants to know such things and then pray for God to open the doors. The enemy sets roadblocks, but it is God who removes them to empower His work. Your age or the pastor's – whether young or old – should not hinder your ability to work with him or his members. Always think positively when problems arise, and sometimes even take the blame – that is maturity and growth. A person who complains about everything and everyone won't get far unless they wake up and make a firm decision about where they want to go and how they will get there. That is, they must want to do God's work and plan how to do it. Others may be unfaithful, but try to find people who have been tested and are full of the Holy Spirit, wisdom, courage, diligence, and faithfulness.

Don't expect others – whether the church, pastor, or members – to support your luxuries. If you are reaching people, be authentic. In all of this, you may gain some and lose others, but don't be the source of discord. We are not called to fight or quarrel with people. Your effectiveness in God's vineyard is a matter of character – the character of discipline. If you handle money in church, like a treasurer, be faithful to both the pastor and members. Understand that even if you're good at math, it doesn't mean you know how to manage time or money – those are skills you learn. Money has a role in spreading God's work; learn how to earn it, use it, save it, and give it to God's work and those in need (read more in *The 7 Habits of* MaarifaMtandaoni.Com RohoYaUnabii.Net pg. 62

Highly Effective People by Stephen Covey). You need to understand leadership and how to use money – don't be ignorant; educate yourself.

Avoid mistreating people who work under you – that itself is a powerful sermon. Workers – yes, even your livestock – understand more about being Christian than you think! (Proverbs 12:10). I've seen workers, even small children, wake up at 5:00 a.m. and sleep at 11:00 p.m., carrying heavy verbal abuse. I wonder where such harsh words even come from? Treat your workers the way you'd want your children to be treated (Matthew 7:12). Avoid arguments – you may win the argument but lose a precious soul. When you go to the market to buy something, even when haggling, watch your words. Don't go saying things that aren't true. I know vendors say "It's expensive, expensive," but when they leave, they say, "I tricked him." Use polite words to negotiate, and when you see that you're cheating someone who is very poor, let your heart feel compassion. Don't see a small child selling goods and want to cheat them or discourage them with harsh words like, "What kind of rotten onions are these? Give them to me for 100 shillings – no one in all of Dodoma would buy such things!" We are on duty 24/7 – people look to you like a harbor light; they come from the villages and respect your leadership. Avoid speaking carelessly without reflection.

Many of us speak without gentleness or wisdom, even though we are adults – we blurt things out and end up crushing someone's spirit, then move on with life as if nothing happened. If someone said such words to you, would you like it? Let us learn to be like Barnabas – "a son of encouragement." I know in some of our cultures, our words are like iron on iron – we strike everyone. We see kind words as weakness or self-debasement. So we end up using words that burden others like stones. Let us learn, even at home, where we were raised on such words. Jesus still saves, and sweet, comforting words are the language of heaven!

Reduce your criticism of new believers unless it's to build them up. God does not entrust His new believers to those who devour people. Welcome and draw people in, not chase them away. Yesterday, we attended a prayer meeting, and they asked how many had invited at least four non-believers into their homes this month. Not even one person raised a hand. To build bridges to reach people, you must build relationships – especially by welcoming them into your home, your office, or going somewhere together. Perhaps you're like me – I reached a point where I saw most relationships were full of arguments and conflicts, like popcorn

– people discriminate without reason, especially believers in the place where I lived – others harbored hypocrisy in their hearts.

Some people clash like popcorn popping violently in a hot pan. I once chose to isolate myself and stay hidden! Even when someone approaches me with the intent of starting a relationship, I only offer a shallow level of friendship, fearing that things might fall apart like they have in the past. Building healthy relationships is a skill—almost a gift—that every layperson needs to intentionally develop. If it means seeking advice from others, don't hesitate to do so. We live in a world where conflicts are inevitable, but that shouldn't become your daily message or constant complaint.

You might assume your relationships are fine, yet unknowingly push people away or keep them at a distance. It's important to practice four essential words in any relationship: thank you, sorry, please, and forgive me. These don't diminish you in any way.

One of my husband's relatives once told me, "In our culture, we don't say thank you—we repay with greater generosity. If someone gives us a chicken, we respond with a goat." I didn't fully grasp what he meant. I've also seen in some cultures people thank a child instead of directly thanking an adult. For example, when a mother cooks a great meal and guests enjoy it, they'll say "thank you" to the children or tell them, "Thank your father for the hoe." They feel awkward expressing gratitude face-to-face. That's something I observed in the West—where helping each other is uncommon, so when it happens, gratitude is expressed earnestly because it's seen as a favor, not an obligation.

In our context, we often assume that when someone helps us, it's their duty. But when they stop, we complain. It reminds me of the saying, "If you hit me, you're unfair; if you leave me, you fear me!" Speak kindly—it's not degrading. Communication is crucial in lay ministry. Some laypeople are unreachable when ministry calls—they don't answer phones, are absent when you visit, and only show up when they have personal needs. They say they're busy! But every adult is busy. Even a national president makes time for recreation and priorities. I've seen the U.S. President go hiking, play sports—what excuse do we have?

Don't be deceived—any adult can tell when you're truly committed to a ministry or just making excuses. It's no secret. You don't need to be an expert to recognize someone who is genuinely occupied, lazy, or simply unwilling to take part.

Even if you have a full-time job, make time. When retirement comes, the joy of serving in lay ministry will far outweigh any job you held. You'll avoid loneliness and feelings of worthlessness in retirement. Studies show many men die early after retirement due to lack of purpose. This doesn't happen as often to women—they tend to have household roles and grandchildren. But you can make your retired life more fulfilling than your working years. I've seen a pastor named Godson from Hedaru, Tanzania, still actively reaching people and planting churches even as he nears 90—he's full of joy! I've met many others like him.

As a layperson, there's always something to do, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You might not get paid, but you can't say there's no work for you! As my sister Takomana from Malawi said: Hallelujah! Don't focus on what your church will do for you—think about what you can do for your church or for your Lord Jesus. That's how you live a long, meaningful life by God's grace. I've never heard anyone on their deathbed say, "I wish I spent more hours at the office." Instead, many regret not spending enough time with their families or serving God. Regardless of how high your position is, once you pass away, someone else fills that spot immediately.

Learn from fellow believers—iron sharpens iron. Don't assume you know everything. I've learned from my two-year-old child, not just once, but many times. For example, she'll say, "Mama, the food is burning," and I'll think, "What does she know?"—only to discover she has an incredibly sensitive nose! A short while later, the food is indeed burnt. Even when fish is being sold nearby, she says, "maki maki," meaning "fish," and moments later someone walks by with fish!

A fellowship group of laypeople supporting each other through prayer, collaboration, sharing tools, and encouraging one another is vital. It helps build strength, share new strategies, and uplift each other. Because of the many disputes within churches, it's important for laypeople to take up the role of mediators early—before small issues grow into major problems. Some churches like the Baptists have been effective in this area. Pastor Sande and others from the Ministry of Reconciliation have written extensively on this subject. Often, it's

surprising what sparks a conflict. In one nearby church, members fought over whether a piano should be placed on the pulpit. Some said the pulpit was too sacred, so the piano should be placed elsewhere. Every morning, one group would put it back on the pulpit; the next day, others would move it again. This went on until it escalated into an actual fistfight! One excommunicated member told our pastor that he insisted on taking part in the Lord's Supper. He was ready to fight—even use weapons—declaring, “I must eat the Passover, even if I have to kill someone—I'm securing my salvation; I want to go to heaven!”

There is a spirit of strife, and the enemy has used it effectively to hinder laypeople. The old nature hasn't truly died—we were baptized while still alive. It's selfishness. I've noticed this spirit exists in many families. People use their words or writing to tear others down. Tempers flare, faces change, and people stop thinking rationally—they act on raw emotions. If you identify this spirit in yourself as a layperson, get on your knees and pray. It doesn't matter if your tribe is known for a hot temper. You might be able to cast out demons, yet still struggle with internal conflict. Strife and love cannot coexist. Love is deeply humble. You have to be willing to speak kindly and show affection when you love someone.

What do you do when you're full of pride? Pride and strife go hand in hand—you can't have both pride and love. Strife escalates—voices rise—and it's no longer about Jesus or the gospel, but about winning and proving a point. Logic disappears, and people behave irrationally, sometimes violently. May God have mercy—it's tragic that the enemy is always on the move. This is true for both laypeople and leaders. Strife robs us of our focus and the energy meant for evangelism, redirecting it to arguments and resolutions while time slips away and Satan rejoices as we sing along to the conflict he started.

Suddenly, we're arguing about: the church logo, where the cross should be placed, whether women can preach, what a certain layperson or pastor said... The enemy's goal is to keep us tangled in endless debates and disputes. The enemy of the cross knows that if he can keep us busy fighting, he can distract us from our mission. He knows the power of a united church. That's why he stirs up division and weakens our focus. We need deep prayer and the fullness of the Holy Spirit to guide us to sing the right spiritual songs—not the choruses started by the evil one, as advised by Layperson Jeremiah Lima.

Love humbles itself. You can't love someone and still insist on winning an argument. I say this after many years of battling quarrels. It's not cowardice that makes people flee! It was a humble servant, Joseph, who ran and triumphed—even when he was stripped of his clothes. Yet the strongest man in history, Samson the Nazarite—the "president" of his people—fell while fully dressed and capable, because of pride.

Strife can be a generational spirit we must avoid. I discovered it in my own family, and I pray against it constantly. People have written hurtful letters to destroy others. In some churches, physical fights have broken out—pastors have been attacked, and police called in! This is the ministry of Jesus, a ministry of love—not a boxing match.

CHAPTER 5

RESPONSIBILITIES

It is true that there is no specific list of duties for you! However, the situation can vary depending on the church. The priority is spreading the message of the cross or the gospel to all nations, languages, and families. Preaching publicly, and individually. Preaching through actions, and not causing people to stumble (appearance of evil). Do you know that those who will be cast into the lake of fire are ordinary people we see every day? (Revelation 20:15, 2 Thessalonians 1:8, Acts 16:31). Urge people to trust in Christ. There is no greater honor than introducing Jesus to someone.

Being born again is a miracle that we, as laypeople, should celebrate with joy alongside heaven every day! Proverbs 21:1 shows that prayer helps open people's hearts. We are like midwives that the Lord uses to bring people to be born again. Lift up JESUS. He is the message and the mission itself. He is the beginning, the end, and the greatest above all. If you get an opportunity to witness or preach, let your stories not be for self-promotion or about groups like the Free Masons, or media scandals. The main focus of your work as a follower of Jesus is to testify and exalt JESUS.

Every sermon must include JESUS, and it must be for saving the lives of people. Everything should be in the light of Christ. This week, we faced the challenge of battling the flu. It brings fever, congestion, and cough, and sometimes even diarrhea and vomiting. It was said that of the 310 people in America, about one-third had contracted it, and it was present in 46 out of 50 states! The school my children attend closed because three-quarters of the students did not show up. The teacher wondered why these infectious germs work so hard. If only we could spread the gospel like these germs spread illness, things would be amazing! Layperson, your focus should be on infecting people with the gospel and nothing else. The world desperately needs spiritual leaders today. Those who:

1. Have encountered God face-to-face.
2. Maintain their relationship with God through prayer, reading the Word, and praying for the anointing of the Holy Spirit daily.
3. Are deeply committed to restoration and revival.

4. Strive for excellence, working hard and even pursuing further training in areas such as effective communication, reaching people, health, and counseling.
5. Maintain a positive attitude toward handling leadership challenges and never lose focus.
6. Trust and obey God, ready to support His church no matter what.
7. Are ready to be persecuted or opposed by people, yet remain enthusiastic, knowing that some things are prophecies being fulfilled.

Your pastor, under whose leadership you are, will provide more guidance based on the church's direction. However, those you lead may have their own expectations and mental lists that they don't share, but they expect you to fulfill them! Which list should you follow? Their list? Your own list? The church's list, or the list that God wants you to follow? Every person has a list - our spouses, children, relatives, and friends too! Other expectations can weigh us down.

Even our children are expected to have certain behaviors, and believers! One believer once told a layperson, "That lady doesn't come to church, why don't you go visit her, isn't that your job?" Ironically, this believer was also a layperson and could have visited the woman himself!

Let's help each other in love, not be critics who sink the boat of unity. People can wither by criticizing others and trying to correct them while forgetting to look at their own faults. They focus on where someone is going, what tie they're wearing, how their hair is styled. We've been advised not to judge people but to inspect their fruit so that we aren't led astray. Critics are many, but their behavior is often characterized by:

A spirit of blame, where they discuss people rather than issues, leaving their own problems aside to focus on others, sometimes even using lies.

Many have frustrations, whether it's because they weren't chosen for something or they are struggling with personal issues, which causes inner pain.

Others struggle with family problems, such as infidelity, loss, children's issues, or social concerns.

Some have financial problems, whether due to poverty or their reluctance to faithfully tithe and give offerings, and they are filled with jealousy, rather than seeking help.

Others struggle with low self-esteem, stemming from their childhood, and they love to bring others down to elevate themselves. When allowed to preach, their sermons are harsh, and they target specific people.

Selfishness and greed are other traits that lead them to think their opinions are the only spiritual ones, and that the best Christians are those who agree with them, while others are rebels.

Some have a mindset that their ideas are more important than others', and if you don't support them, they see it as a lack of democracy, or as their thoughts being inferior.

Emotional problems or mental health issues may also contribute (e.g., obsessive-compulsive disorder). Those entrenched in these struggles view others as their enemies and oppose God.

Critics often generalize (Ezekiel 18:20). They claim to have greater knowledge of God's Word and other prophetic scriptures or writings inspired by the Holy Spirit than others. They quote only those parts that support their views, leaving out what contradicts them. They recite long paragraphs to appear more enlightened. Recitation is good, but not for criticizing others - it should be used to build others up. Every day, they criticize leaders, claiming to be saving the church from them, dividing the congregation and presenting themselves as though they are more faithful. Beware of destructive church critics who don't build faith but bring division in the Body of Christ. Use Matthew 18 and then continue your work in the Lord's field.

It's good to do things that align with your pastor's plans. Ask your pastor how you can support them, but in your own time, you can reach anyone you wish because this work has no boundaries, even if you go to a neighboring country with religious freedom, you can still carry on. I have lay friends near the borders of Mozambique, Kenya, and even Congo who cross over and continue working without hindrance, collaborating with local church leadership. Keep witnessing one-on-one; you can do this anytime, 24/7, any day of the week, with everyone you meet - it's the business of every layperson.

Truly, the teachings of a layperson are about reaching people. No one should feel envious or think they don't have something to do like an evangelist because God's work has no boundaries, from Timbuktu to Australia, you can do it. It's everywhere, but it doesn't come with worldly rewards, typically. However, God is faithful; if you read Deuteronomy 28, it says you will be blessed in the fields, at home, lending to others without borrowing! Aren't these blessings?

The layperson should read and learn all aspects of ministry, witnessing, health, social issues, and the economy, etc. There are many types of courses available online or in classrooms.

The layperson has a vital role that isn't written down, but they are expected to be flexible, like a ball or rubber band, always ready to go anywhere. These tasks include assisting the pastor, preaching, leading worship or prayer meetings, welcoming and serving guests, holding marriage seminars, prayer ministries, midweek prayer meetings, visiting the sick, visiting prisons, counseling, resolving conflicts, helping restore marriages, aiding the needy, teaching various subjects like child-rearing, health, cooking, hospitality, entrepreneurship, marriage and home life, drying vegetables, serving God, God's Word, sewing, choirs, how to dress, and setting up tents, and much more that you know from your own experience!

A lay preacher often becomes a spiritual leader when the pastor has to lead multiple churches. I once met a pastor who was leading 32 churches and groups, some of which spanned three government districts without transportation, and some churches were as far as 150 kilometers away. Laypeople are used as elders, Bible teachers, preachers, and in other roles determined by the church leadership and pastor. The Bible gives examples of spiritual leaders like David, Moses, Samuel, and Paul. As a leader, don't let the sheep wander as if they have no shepherd, and don't be like the blind leading the blind (Matthew 15:14).

Today's world needs spiritual leaders who can bring about transformation and revival even nationally. Some leaders have this gift, and God chooses them, like King Cyrus. Spiritual leaders guide people based on God's leadership. The greatness of service depends on spiritual awakening, which comes when a person encounters God. Leadership is a gift from God that brings blessings. Leadership is about serving people as Jesus served.

Your relationship with God should be number one. The responsibility of leading people spiritually is about shepherding God's flock, being led by Him, and using His methods. When people see that you are being led by Him, they will glorify Him. Don't be harsh; go gently, and you will change people simply by being transformed by Jesus. Let us pray for our hearts to be changed as we work for God, so that we don't just do things but that our intentions are transformed. Prayer is a duty for every layperson; you can't lead others through prayer if you haven't reached that level yourself. A layperson has a responsibility to love the people they reach. Let's strive to be more than just good preachers, as many will preach in the last days and lead people, but they themselves will be lost. Preaching may just be a gift of speaking, but it isn't necessarily about conversion; let's be cautious about this. Let's remember even deceptive politicians know how to speak, especially during campaigns, until they win us over.

Another person knew how to impress people with sweet words that made them think. He said, "If you choose me, I will build a bridge for you," and this district had no river anywhere. A leader should lead with love and be ready to serve, glorifying God. Do not be a proud person, seeking only to fulfill your own desires. If your church needs revival, as a leader, you must wake up. When a leader faces disputes in the church over teachings, worship styles, or workers, it is important to handle it with peace and reconciliation. In order for people to trust us, we must have good morals as leaders; otherwise, we will lack the courage to rebuke sin. Be a person of mercy, positivity, and wisdom. Be ready to take responsibility for teaching others the work and to have a vision as a leader.

Another responsibility is to love your family, your wife, your children. Take special days to spend time with them, thank them when they help you with the work of reaching people, talk together. Not every time do we have other people or be on TV all the time. Wish them well. Love them as you love yourself. If we succeed in the work of leadership in the church but fail at home, we have failed. Loving your spouse will also help you love the believers. Your spouse is your first neighbor. Do not be afraid to make mistakes, but learn from them, and be a person who is willing to be led by others! Be bold to tell a friend or 'enemy' when they make a serious mistake, do not ignore it or ruin things.

Carefully study to know what spiritual gifts you have and use them to improve your service. There are ministries, and then teaching others in the church. Some gifts you know, and others your pastor and believers will help you with! Read a

little to understand, because gifts are important for two things: one is to glorify God and the second is to build people (1 Corinthians 13). The greatest gifts are faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love. Without love, there is nothing, so let us all pray to God to give us true love for Him and for humanity. We cannot touch the heavens without touching humanity.

Strive to know your group well, and make your preaching or teaching relevant to the people present, using examples that relate to their circumstances. Study deeply so that when you speak, they will know that you are not just rambling, but that you know what you are saying, and they can listen and ask questions that will help you grow. The calling is "Fear God and glorify Him for the hour of judgment has come, He who created the heavens and the earth." The world is full of things to listen to and read, and people focus for five minutes, then their thoughts quickly shift elsewhere. Pay attention to those you speak with and remember that our eyes and bodies communicate more than 93% of the message, and words only communicate 7%.

Emphasize where necessary, and let your words be infectious. Learn to use your voice and silence. Not every time do you need to speak; sometimes silence also carries a message. Do not be quick to anger, for in this work, you will meet many who will offend you. As you rise in life, you must also remember the people and consider their situation because ordinary people may fear you. You cannot deceive people; if you change, they will notice. Also, if you are stingy or overly attached to money, they will know. Strive to have a place to shelter yourself, do not live a life of luxury while renting a house, and instead build your home gradually.

In Zambia, we saw people living in grass houses, yet driving Benz cars. A leader must realize that godliness and contentment are great gains. Pray to God to help you not be a person of the world, and at the same time, not be so out of touch with the present that you fail to reach people in modern ways. Pray that God helps His yoke to be light and His burden easy. Pray that He gives you a Mission, Vision, and Resources.

When entering people's homes, avoid showing eagerness to watch their televisions, as many of today's things, even advertisements, try to tempt people into evil to make them appear strong, which will not help your work in reaching people. Do not grow weary of doing good and His work, take time to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, for they bring strength. Pray that God blesses you with words of

wisdom and humility. Remember, Jesus had the power to come down from the cross, but He did not. Can God boast over you as He boasted over Job? May the Lord help us so that when we reach heaven, we do not come weary, but full of strength.

The Wife of the Leader:

To reiterate, the character expected of the wife of a worker or a religious leader is the same as that of a person of God. You will see that there are not two standards, but one for religious leaders, the leader, or the leader's wife. Look at Titus 2, the Word of God does not separate. Remember, you have become a spectacle to the world, people, and angels (1 Cor. 4:9).

For female laypeople, I understand that women are rarely mentioned in the Word of God because they were represented by their husbands, even in census counts. There are approximately 1188 men in the Bible and only 182 women, which is about 10%. I think this is still true today. However, this does not matter; women have many responsibilities for their husbands, children, and ultimately for their God. Our homes testify whether we truly care for people or love them more than we think or preach. Moreover, everything God has told a man in the Word of God, which is not gender-specific, also applies to women! Take the Bible and read an example, Hebrews 13, you can read all of it. These words were written to the Hebrews, and I think men are the ones who read them: "Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing, some have unwittingly entertained angels. Remember those who are in chains, as if you were chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also. Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have, for He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?' Remember those who rule over you...". Are these words only for men, or only for the pastor or leader? Certainly not, they are for all of us.

The wife of the leader is also expected to be a certain way. Since her husband is a spiritual leader (other roles may not be relevant or apply to her!). The wife of a lawyer does not need to go with her husband to court, but the wife of a religious leader is expected or required to go to places where other wives may not go. If

she does not go, she may ruin her husband's work or calling, weaken it, or perhaps even destroy it completely.

Other expectations may discourage or break the spirit of this wife of a spiritual leader. Be ready to be criticized by many and thanked by few. But do not develop a habit of constantly criticizing people; instead, do so with love, calling them aside. It is said that a person who loves to criticize others is on the path to criticizing God. Some will call her lazy, though they don't pay her, and if she works too hard, they will say she is just showing off with too many activities. It's like the story of Aesop, the donkey and the child. Remember, you are there to please your Lord in heaven first, then people. Do not be discouraged, for the Devil has four major weapons to bring people down: the first is suffering or tribulation, the second is lust and worldliness, the third is discouragement, and the fourth is hypocrisy. Let us be cautious, for a person of God is brought down by three things: authority, money, and women or men (Power, money, and women). The enemy is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, so let us be watchful and pray. Avoid greed and failing to fast. I spent three years without fasting until Evangelist Amon visited us in the U.S. and asked when I last fasted. I said it had been three years, and he gave me the knowledge of prayer and fasting. The Garden of Eden was lost because of food, do not be a gluttonous evangelist with a large belly. Start cutting down; it diminishes the appeal of your preaching. When I went to Congo to preach, many said, "Mama, you are the heaviest of them all, and you are preaching God's plan of salvation while in the temple of the body!"

You will find some believers saying things like, "She's too forward, wants to lead everything!" or "She's the one running things there, not the pastor—she wants to take all the authority!" Be careful of troublemakers who want to use you to create conflict between you and your pastor—just like children who, when their mother says no, go to their father knowing he'll say yes! Communication with your pastor is crucial to stay united, because ultimately, we are supposed to work together. You can't change people's minds while doing this work—but the Spirit of God can.

A laywoman must understand the ministry work among women, especially when working with fellow women, as there are certain difficulties. I believe even nurses face this challenge, since nursing is traditionally a female-dominated profession. Female nurses often do not receive as much respect as their male counterparts, even when they have the same qualifications. They are given less honor—almost like doctors. Some women may believe they know more, even within churches or

MaarifaMtandaoni.Com RohoYaUnabii.Net pg. 75

places of worship, than you do. As we know in real life, women's work often comes with its own unique package of challenges. Women support each other greatly, but at times, they can be more critical and harbor deeper resentment when working with other women than with men.

Also, the expectations of believers in a place of worship can be overwhelming. You may have seen this happen to a neighbor or family member. A man can sit idly or play a board game, but you, as a woman, are expected to be involved in certain tasks. When people visit your home, they expect something from you. If you don't believe it, "just sit and play a board game" and see the looks they'll give you!

The wife of a certain pastor once told me, "Before I got married, I was admired and seen as a lovely flower. My husband was the one seen as rough or problematic. But after marriage, my husband's relatives and church members began scrutinizing me and left me feeling broken! It's strange—I've lost value, while he is seen as good by everyone. Every day it's complaints and grumbling!" I believe she's not the only one; other women have experienced this too.

A female layperson, just like her male counterpart, must know: Who are you? Where do you come from? Why are you here? And where are you going? That is your identity. A complete answer might be: "I am Neema, created by God, living on earth after the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, and now in the process of restoration—I'm headed to heaven." People may label you with certain tags, but you know that in the end, it's not people who matter—it's your relationship with your God. Don't let people cause you to miss paradise through their words—don't let their comments change your good conduct, make you bitter, hateful, unforgiving, argumentative, or anything else. Absolutely not! You are there for a specific reason—yes, to dismantle the devil's nests, not to build them! Don't align yourself with those who sow evil—they'll all be left to hell on Judgment Day! There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

You must learn how to receive well-intentioned corrections and make improvements—constructive criticism. But when you're criticized with ill intent, recognize it, so you don't take it too much to heart and become sorrowful for no reason. Understand that the world has people who are self-centered and who don't know how to deny themselves—they have the spirit of selfishness.

Since you're not being paid and you're working for the King of the universe who sent you, some believers will project unrealistic expectations onto you—when you can't meet them, pray to God. For example: “We need a layperson who dresses well, is neat, gets along with everyone, meets our demands, has well-behaved children, dresses respectfully but not old-fashioned, sings and plays the keyboard, speaks wisely, is organized, an entrepreneur, etc.” Only the angel Gabriel could fulfill all those expectations! Ask God to give you visions and dreams as promised in the book of Joel.

Remember again that you are working for the King of the universe. Dr. David Livingstone of Scotland said, “If it is a great honor to serve the Queen of England, how can it be considered a sacrifice to serve the King of Kings?” At times, believers may act like politicians and use this woman (the laywoman) for their own benefit. Pray for wisdom. The Word of God says in James, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God...”

Realize that you cannot touch God without touching humanity. Westerners say, “You cannot touch Divinity without touching humanity.” Some people claim to love God but don't love people. Since you've never seen God—and human beings are made in His image—pray for wisdom and love to live among them. Don't just give them space or pretend to love them—pray for genuine love from heaven for them. Because we, as human beings, don't naturally possess that love—and it is the love that will help us reach people with the help of the Holy Spirit.

If your pastor assigns you to preach, prepare yourself well! Don't go up there to fumble and wing it. I remember a lay friend of mine here in the U.S. told me he was used to preaching often, and then one day as he climbed the pulpit, he heard a voice say, “I have left you; you're going on your own—have you really prepared, or are you going to entertain people?” He began to tremble, and when he reached the pulpit, he told the person he was with, “I can't preach—I feel the Holy Spirit has left me. Find someone else, or you preach.” He ended up not preaching.

This same thing happened to Balaam—he insisted on going to preach, and even his donkey spoke to him. But due to greed for money, he answered the donkey as if it were a fellow human without realizing how strange it was. Layperson, pray diligently when preparing a sermon, that it may transform others—and you too. We shouldn't go up to “entertain” people—let us strive to prepare sermons and be filled with the Spirit before standing in front of others. Preaching is not just

another profession—even if you used to be a great preacher, it doesn't mean you still are today. Let's avoid lay preaching that lacks authenticity or is hypocritical—people will eventually notice. When I was in New Jersey, I heard a believer say about a preacher from Kenya, "That guy used to be so spiritual, but nowadays it's all politics and jokes." Let's pray for God's help—I've been there, preaching without preparation and with rushed prayers. But I ask God to help me learn. Remember to urge people to be baptized in the name of Jesus—and to become part of church fellowship. Don't start your own separate church—we've seen many fall into that trap. In the book of Acts, we see how the apostles brought people into the church; they weren't their personal followers. Some say, "With the way believers are in church, if I take these people there, they'll be discouraged." Pray for wisdom and seek counsel from others. In the multitude of counselors, plans are established.

When Jesus called Peter, John, and Andrew, they were entrepreneurs and self-supporting evangelists. They didn't have any promises of food or wages, yet they went. They had no purse, but their bread and water were assured. Even Jesus Himself lived a self-supported life. He walked often, had no fixed income during His ministry years. Jesus, like those workers He called, will pay you what is right! Go to the field—He is the one who decides your just reward, and He will pay you. He said so, knowing that He would indeed pay! Don't start complaining that someone else is getting more. He is faithful! He who called you is faithful, and He will do it. But be diligent—because in the 33½ years He lived, He worked hard with His hands—and that included preaching and ministry.

Some individuals are professionals or employees who can change their jobs. For example, if Matthew had chosen to follow Christ while continuing his work, he could have remained in his profession or as an employee. However, Matthew chose to become self-employed. You can also engage in book evangelism while remaining self-sufficient and sharing the gospel. Being a self-employed layperson is a way to reach others with the good news.

Jesus and the apostles led lives full of hardship, often going without food and growing weary from traveling. Self-employed laypeople humble themselves, understanding that they can do nothing without the power of the Lord. They struggle with their work, facing many challenges. They shed tears and pray on their knees, asking God to save souls and provide for them. For some, this might be the only way God has chosen for them to learn to trust and obey Him. If you

wish to become a self-employed layperson, pray and ask God to help you avoid the temptation of relying on a monthly salary and to avoid stumbling in that area.

Do not compare the three types of work that God has given us. All three were present in the Old Testament and continue through the apostles to today. We need all three, and we must support each other. The work of a self-employed layperson, an employed layperson, and those who are not employed by the church are all important. Comparing them is like asking which is more essential: the lungs, the heart, or the brain! What would you choose if you had to give up one of these?

As a self-employed layperson, you may face difficulties if you rely on being paid and dislike working with your hands. Few laypeople follow the fourth commandment, taking six days to work! Instead, they rest on all seven days! Missionaries came to Tanzania to study the work of church members in some villages in the Kilimanjaro region and found that people worked less than four hours a day! A self-employed layperson should not be lazy or rely on others for help. If you receive assistance, it is fine, but it should not be your primary source of income. Learn to work with your hands to provide for yourself and for preaching. Our leader, Jesus, was a carpenter, and He was not afraid of hard work! Let us pray that we remain faithful.

A self-employed layperson, like the apostles, such as Matthew, was not promised anything. He was told to “follow Me,” but they never lacked. In fact, they may have even helped others.

Remember that your success comes from God. Psalm 1 says: “Blessed is the one who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law, they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield fruit in season, and whose leaves do not wither; whatever they do prospers.”

If today you don’t know what work God wants you to do (among the three), keep asking Him, and He will show you. Your Heavenly Father is ready to guide you.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS THE GREATEST BUSINESS OF ALL.

Being a layperson or spiritual leader in your local church involves more than just hard work. We must be diligent, knowledgeable, and confident, without being

arrogant. Those who work with you should not be afraid to approach you, knowing you are genuine. You should be a magnet for people to come to you, and you must remain calm in times of trouble. You should be able to influence others to do evangelistic work and strive to deliver messages that bring life, encouragement, hope, and are easy to understand. You must care for people, as you are the caretaker of your brothers and sisters, and you should be able to address their emotions and concerns. Be cautious with those you have worked with in the past; do not treat them as if they know nothing, nor should you give in to their desires just because they were once your friends. I have often seen people in positions of authority abandon old friendships when they gain power. While this is sometimes necessary, at other times it is simply human nature, and you may not want someone to know too much about your life or continue a friendship with someone who knows you too well.

Being diligent is important—finishing tasks rather than just starting a Bible study or program in the church and abandoning it halfway. Supporting those you work with, whether they are above or below you in the ministry, is crucial. Some face challenges in life, such as work, evangelism, children, marriage—assist them in finding solutions.

You must stand out. Your appearance and communication with fellow evangelists and those you are reaching matter. Dress neatly and with respect. If you are speaking about something, whether it's science or history, be sure to speak accurately. Always read up on topics, and with resources like Google available, there's no excuse not to get your facts right. For instance, instead of saying a person has 306 bones, say they have 206. Incorrect information will cause people to stop listening and start criticizing. Always keep learning by reading books on relevant subjects so you can speak with confidence. Be responsible for your duties, whether it's handling transportation or solving work-related issues. Do it without complaining or being overly critical. Delegate tasks when needed and avoid carrying everything yourself. Be a person who thinks positively. Motivate and encourage people. Work as a team; don't always insist on doing everything yourself. Be honest—if someone asks you something you don't know, admit it and tell them you'll find the answer and get back to them.

Join with your fellow evangelists in strategizing as one team. Respect their ideas, for no one person can do it all. The gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 show that we are members of the Body of Christ. Some are noses, some are mouths, some are heads,

others are stomachs. No member is independent; all depend on each other. Lead using your brain, ears, and eyes. Your intention, attitude, and direction are crucial in serving the LORD. The Pharisees had good works, but their intention, direction, and attitude were seriously flawed. Put the important things first. Seek God and His kingdom first, and all else will be added to you. Even if you dedicate just two hours a day or ten hours a week to the work of the LORD, you will be amazed at how things progress. If you aim for zero, you'll get zero. Strategize in your mind.

Strive to understand people rather than expecting them to understand you; this helps solve problems and shows you care. Always seek ways to improve relationships with people in evangelism. Balance and refresh your tools, energy, lifestyle, and health with prayer, exercise, rest, recreation, moderation, good nutrition, and fresh air.

We know in this business, we are approaching the fierce storms of the end times. We don't want to frighten you, life has many challenges. With Jesus, you will face struggles, and without Him, you will face struggles. The final battles are certain, but blessed are those who serve God. Nothing will refresh and satisfy you like HIM.

Learn to pray, it is the number one aid: praying, reading the Word of God, and fasting. Do not do His work without prayer, reading His Word, and fasting. It is not by power or strength but by the SPIRIT of the LORD that we succeed. Pray for the Holy Spirit to fill you. Take notes while reading and memorize verses to sharpen your mind.

Learn healthy habits like resting, good nutrition, and exercise (see doctors 10). Some evangelists neglected their health, and in the end, they had to stop working early and enter the grave when they could have served God much longer.

Have true Bible teachings, such as God's love and His desire to save all people. The mission of the 12, 70, or 7. Be an ambassador of heaven. Aim to make people disciples; evangelism is marked, and if we are faithful, God will show us the fruits of our labor.

Include laypeople and other pastors to work as a team. Do not build a wall between laypeople and pastors. This work cannot be done without total commitment, being in Christ and Christ in you. This work requires humility, which only God provides. Do not love money while doing this work, nor should you borrow from your participants or people you reach out to without a valid reason. Your burning desire

in your heart should be this work, and the power from heaven will descend upon you. Remember, people have great value; Jesus did not come to redeem plants, animals, or things, but humans. These are precious jewels.

Successful laypeople are not those with excessive intelligence but those who do not take shortcuts, respect people, and care for their communities with much love. They have learned to know the names of the people they reach and their children, know how to encourage them by praising them when necessary, and show that they care. They are not suspicious of people.

The best laypeople are those who care for their spouses, whether husbands or wives, know how to share responsibilities properly, are close, hospitable, and above all, do not give up easily, and are not easily discouraged. Some participants have harsh words for their wives; know how to speak to them with wisdom. A woman, the wife of an elder in the church, said, "When I receive a call from people without even a greeting, they ask about the Evangelist, as if I am not a person!"

Evangelism is an ongoing task; teach people, encourage them, oversee, and empower them. You must decide and commit every day to do the work of God, pray, speak to people, and you will see opportunities arise every day. Learn creativity, relationships, and improving what you do. Do not fear failure; commit to the work, and do not try to change people to be like you but to be like JESUS. Do not focus on criticism, but praise people you work with in front of others, and do your criticism privately with them.

People like to follow something good with a good reputation. Present Jesus with His unparalleled beauty, which is impartial. Just as the reward is great, so is the sacrifice. Winners are those who strive, not those who are born that way, so do good to people without expecting anything from them. Do not make big decisions based on emotions but through kneeling alone and with others. Here, your ego must end, and you should prioritize what matters.

Make people see that Jesus is theirs; give them the freedom to express themselves. Do not think that if they oppose something, they are not with you. Learn to think and solve problems, or make decisions; people will come to you with various challenges, be on your knees praying. Learn arithmetic; this is helpful for thinking quickly about the station you are in and the plans of people living there (demographic data), as well as how to manage time.

Share challenges with your fellow evangelists about a particular topic to see if you understand it in depth. Learn to use websites, libraries, and read to learn things that will help you. Assign someone you are accountable to. It's easy to slip or become lazy if you are not accountable to someone.

Learn to speak in front of people, organize your words (public speaking). If you can speak to people clearly, persuasively, confidently, and forcefully, you can sell anything—ideas, the gospel, worldviews, and you will advance in persuading people. Learn to write well, not just grammar, but also to make your thoughts clear. Writing opens many doors to persuade people.

Learn to organize your things (self-management), have discipline, deny your flesh, and adopt behaviors that lead to success. Wake up on time, not staying in bed all day, and avoid a disorganized lifestyle without plans.

Be a compassionate person, love the community you belong to, and have a deep concern for others, even shedding tears when you witness someone going astray. It's essential to remain faithful to the task God has given you. Think boldly and make grand plans in serving the Lord. Be courageous like Noah, follow God's commands, and do the work while sharing the gospel with others. When you are faithful, patient, and consistent, restoration and revival will happen.

To succeed, one must be diligent in their work. You can't afford to sit idly by, avoid communication, and expect God's work to move forward. Plan your strategies, get a notebook to track your goals, and follow through with them. A positive mindset is crucial. Success begins in the mind. Respect yourself, for if you don't, others won't. Focus on your work, and the actions will follow. If you aim for nothing, you'll achieve nothing. If successful ministry were easy, everyone would do it! As the saying goes, "If it were that simple, everyone would do it."

Basic knowledge of accounting is necessary, as money plays an important role in today's world. It's vital to know where your money is going and manage your time wisely. This will prevent you from borrowing excessively and help you spend wisely while offering sound advice to others.

Since your time is limited, don't waste it. Don't let others' opinions discourage you—keep striving for excellence in your work. Find something you truly care about to reach others and pursue it with passion, even if it's not financially rewarding. Don't hold grudges or resentment. Learn to maintain balance in your life, and don't

fear failure because success is possible when you're working for God. Always be diligent and avoid mere talk without action. Leave the past behind and don't let past failures waste your time or confidence.

Avoid surrounding yourself with negative people who always focus on failure rather than success. Stay away from unnecessary arguments, and seek peaceful resolutions.

Keep your vision, purpose, resources, and giving in mind. Be diligent and brave in networking, investing in people, and addressing challenges, starting with prayer.

Don't hesitate to ask for guidance. Understand that doing too many things at once often leads to inefficiency. Many people today juggle multiple tasks—talking on the phone, reading, and using devices at the same time. For an Evangelist, this can cause things to fall apart. One woman once saw her phone fall into her soup while multitasking.

Don't deceive yourself or others. Don't be the person who says, "I'll do it tomorrow." Procrastination only causes harm.

Have a clear list of goals, tasks, people to reach out to, future plans, personal development objectives, areas of discouragement, and strategies to revive them, along with creativity, resources, and financial management (place money in your mind, not your heart).

What else? Save for your work. "God has assigned each person their own task. It is their responsibility to complete it, but the devil's job is to prevent you from fulfilling it. Just as God gave you a mission, the devil will try to stop you. He may bring temptations or distractions. He may try to deceive you with worldly promises or attack you with false accusations, forcing you to defend your character, misrepresenting you, insulting you, and even bringing people against you. You might even find yourself betrayed by someone close to you. You may wonder why this is happening, but recognize that these are the devil's attempts to distract you from your work and your reverence for God. "Save for your work; don't slack off just because the challenges seem loud. Don't waste your time chasing distractions. Do your job, let the liars do their thing, let the critics argue, and let the devil cause his chaos, but stay focused on the task God has entrusted you with.

“He didn’t send you to pursue wealth. He didn’t command you to become rich. He didn’t prevent you from defending your character, but he didn’t send you to engage in false competition with the devil and his followers. If you follow this path, you’ll end up working for yourself, not for God. “Do your work with determination. Stay focused on your goal, even when the world around you is chaotic. You may face insults, mistreatment, slander, and rejection. You may be wronged and abandoned, but face it with courage and stand firm. Keep your focus on your mission, and in the end, you’ll be able to say, ‘I have completed the work you gave me.’”

CHAPTER 6

BROKEN LEADERSHIP

The primary duty of a priest is to proclaim the Word of God, love God, and love others. A priest should also manage his household properly, as this reflects true love. In the book of 1 Samuel, there is the story of Eli, the high priest, whose family faced serious issues. His children were known for their wicked behavior. Although there's no record of their birth or upbringing, the narrative reveals the unfortunate downfall of his children's character. People used to offer sacrifices—either oxen or sheep—according to the proper procedure. But Eli's sons took the meat by force and ate it without following the rules. They desecrated the sacred worship rituals. They also committed immoral acts with women who worked at the tabernacle gates. Initially, Eli was unaware of this, but he eventually heard of his sons' sinful lives. By that time, he was elderly and did warn them, as seen in 1 Samuel 2:25.

Eli had delayed too long in taking action with his sons. His wife is not mentioned, and we do not know the reason. Perhaps she too was involved and received punishment, or maybe she did her best, but the spiritual leader failed in his role. Eli had lost touch with his children for too long and was unaware of what was happening. Perhaps he had become too old to connect with them, as they were of a different generation. He had lost authority over them, and they had become too corrupt to be helped. The Word condemns his actions, indicating he made mistakes.

Priests should not descend from this line; they would die young, and Eli's family would fall into poverty or become beggars. Eli failed to guide his children to honor God. This is a sorrowful story. The priesthood and spiritual leadership, like fatherhood, is a divine calling. Priests are required to live righteously. Your children should easily see that you represent God. Our children need their fathers to be actively involved in their care, no matter how busy you are! Many seminars and committee activities will continue, but your children have only one opportunity in life to receive the proper care they need! As a father, you must plan and discuss this with your spouse. Don't focus selfishly on your own children but work to help them develop good character. Character is the only thing that will take them to heaven—not their clothes, food, cars, homes, or possessions. God created children to have two parents. God is love. Some fathers neglect their

families and their responsibilities, even those serving in God's work. They go far away, spending time in seminars and other activities, but they don't show interest in their children's daily growth. They eat good food, wear fine clothes, but their children are neglected. No one, at the end of their life, regrets saying, "I wish I had spent more time at the office!" But many regret not spending more time with their children, their wives, or serving God's work.

We can see the consequences of failed or ungodly fatherhood, which are heavy for the father, wife, and children. Many pastors and their wives may be experiencing the same judgment as Eli. They resemble him by having lost communication with their children a long time ago, and their children have gone astray. The children despise their father's work and do not obey God. They live immoral lives without shame. It is necessary for parents to reflect on where they were when their child reached this point. God have mercy, for among us, there are children who have reached this stage. Walk with your children wherever you go, let them learn from you, and don't leave them behind at home, especially if they are boys; they need a father to guide them.

We often hear, "Ah, the children of religious leaders are like that, they don't listen." But it doesn't have to be that way! By God's grace, let's pray for them and help them so they can love God and serve Him.

We need to investigate why young people leave the church or become discouraged. Sometimes it's because the devil is tormenting them, and it's not your fault. But sometimes, young people leave the church because:

They want a break from the church.

They are tired of being judged by hypocrites.

They have moved away.

Their work prevents them from attending church; they've let go of it.

They have too many activities in society, with friends, family, and relatives.

They are tired of the politics in the church.

They didn't truly know God; they came to church to please others.

The church doesn't address their everyday struggles.

Their parents set a bad example.

Their personal sins convict them.

Read books on child-rearing and seek advice from those who love God and have experience. Don't be afraid of books. Read them! They say that if you want to hide something from a black person, write it down! Many people who have invested in books have found them to be valuable because no one opened them. Books are treasures! Many of us don't like to read. Let's break that habit! Even writing letters of encouragement is disappearing; we're now in the age of SMS! If Paul had done this, we wouldn't have many epistles. Write letters to encourage your church members; many people wrote letters when courting, and when they got what they wanted, they stopped writing. Your children will also be happy if you write them encouraging letters. I saw an astronaut who died in 2007; before going to the moon, he recorded a sermon to speak to his children and wrote that they should read it while he was on the moon. Use writing as a means of communicating with your children, even if you travel a lot; write words that will build them up and strengthen them.

Don't just focus on your child's academic performance and neglect their spiritual growth. No one has ever said, "Math made me stop stealing" or "Geography made me stop lying." It's the Word of God that transforms our hearts and even the hearts of children.

If you learn how to care for your children, you will even be able to help children in the church or community and preach to them. I like to say that no parent has mastered parenting! It is God who helps us, and we must pray for our children. Every parent has their struggles. The priest who succeeded Eli was Samuel. His children also had similar issues. But he was not blamed. It shows he did his best, but those children chose the wrong path. A home that loves God and is well-ordered is a greater example and sermon to the community than any sermon a father might give from the pulpit.

Let our homes be refuges for children or youth facing challenges and temptations. If we show concern for the youth and surround them with care, it will make a significant difference. Teaching and caring for children with needs is important. If you have something small, don't be complacent thinking only about your own

children. You must care for others as well. Help other children in your community, and you'll be surprised—those children may remember you more. More importantly, you'll have reduced the number of evil people in your community.

I've seen a pastor and his wife take in 10 children from a Maasai village to help them with their education. Helping others doesn't always require big things. It's a great blessing to help children other than your own. In God's Word, caring for orphans will bless you and your children, and many well-known saints were recognized for such good deeds. Welcoming children and youth into your home is a friendly service that builds bridges and reaches their hearts! That's how we ensure our children stay in the church.

Boys are at risk of spiritual death, just like Pharaoh Ramses and Herod killed the male children. There are very few boys in the churches, and it's easier for them to be influenced by the things happening outside. Find ways to help them in your community, and even the girls. You cannot succeed if young people are outside the church (Success requires those who will continue the work). Your children are also "under observation" by the congregation and other children. The most important thing is for them to have a personal and strong relationship with their God. They should not try to please others because they expect preacher's children to behave a certain way. They should do so because God wants them to. A father may pass away, but if they know their God, it will not be a problem.

Children learn more by what we do than by what we say. Parents need to be mindful; let's not be hypocrites like the Pharisees, saying one thing and doing another, confusing them. Some fathers are good providers but have certain deficiencies. Deficiencies such as being stingy in helping the community, having many debts, engaging in schemes for quick wealth, and rejecting good advice. One person told us that when he wanted to rent his house, he escorted the person to their car, and when he saw it was dirty and disorganized, he knew they wouldn't take care of his property properly. Workers of God must avoid things that hinder their influence or the progress of God's work. Some are quick to forbid other children and members from doing certain things, but they fear their own children.

Be cautious of competition and boasting, a friend of mine, a preacher from Nigeria, told me that they have a lot of zeal for spiritual meetings. But when they talk about how someone is dressed or what they have, it seems like they are in competition, trying to outdo one another in appearance or material possessions,

like peacocks. Or they compare who has the nicest car, etc. He said that where he comes from, some people are zealous in deception, while others are very zealous in seeking God. He continued by saying, "The difference between us Nigerians and you East Africans is that you are ashamed to boast, to brag, or to be proud when you are progressing or becoming wealthy. We do not fear or feel ashamed to boast about how we have moved forward in front of people. You do not boast, but you feel it within yourselves, and your attitude and actions show it, but you feel ashamed to openly say, 'we are the ones.'" I took some time to reflect on this. Since we have been in church for a long time, we feel ashamed to show ourselves openly, but there are certain things that show that we would like people to see us, but because we are people of faith, we feel ashamed to show it openly. This happens with both women and even men when they meet. Let us use the time we have, which is just a talent, wisely for the glory of God, for those who have ability and those who do not.

What do we learn from the children of Eli as laypeople? Do we serve God for a salary or for our own benefit? Some laypeople have been calling others to pray for certain things, and they insist so much that they even begin to irritate others. But when their lives improve economically and poverty ends, they abandon that work of devotion and become people who care about wealth and business like the people of the world. When they meet people who helped them rise, they act as though they don't know them at all. Have you ever encountered people like this? I think this story repeats in many of our lives, and it is only by grace that we avoid this. Elisha cried when he saw that Hazael would become king and oppress many. Hazael wondered who he was to do such things, but he was king and oppressed many. Are we humble and keep ourselves for poverty, or is humility the character and attitude of Christ?

Start today by making your children disciples. Don MacLafferty was a very busy preacher. When he left in the morning, he would say goodbye to his children, and they would say, "Dad, you are always away, why don't you stay with us today?" This is when God called Don to start a ministry for his children and to build bridges with his children to make them disciples of Jesus. We must invest in our children now because, after a while, they will lose their enthusiasm.

Many of our children grow up without:

1. Being sure of their salvation,

2. Having personal time for prayer and Bible study,
3. Knowing the foundation of their faith,
4. Using their gifts in worship, mission, and service,
5. Entering into the joy of bringing others to be disciples of JESUS.

The Word says God will pour His Spirit on our sons and daughters, and they will dream dreams, prophesy, and see visions in the book of Joel. God wants the hearts of our children to be turned toward their parents. God wants our children to love Him with all their hearts, souls, and strength. And we should teach our children as they stand, sit, and walk. Our children are like good soil where we must plant good seeds, water them, let them receive sunlight, add fertilizer, and weed them. We should teach them gently, not harshly. We water them with the water of prayer, love, and forgiveness when they make mistakes. We teach them to serve the poor and help younger children (mentoring). Protect your children from temptation by using the Word of God so that they will not fall away from God's love. Start making your children disciples. Discover their gifts and encourage them to serve at school, church, and at home.

A few ways to help children

13 Simple ways to build relationships with your children:

1. Take your child with you every time you go somewhere by car. This will give you time to talk together. Your children will learn from you as you shop, serve, or drive, and they will learn to serve with you.
2. Work together. In the garden, kitchen, and at home. Not only will this give you more time to talk and teach your children about the work you are doing, but it will also save you time and leave more time to be with them on other things.
3. Read books and look at pictures together as a family. Even the youngest child can enjoy looking at book pictures and listening to you read aloud. Besides creating shared memories, it will cultivate a love for learning and open up opportunities for discussion, seeing, and discussing appropriate pictures together also helps your children develop important thinking skills and spiritual awareness.

4. Talk to them - and listen! Take time when putting them to bed, ask them how their day went or tell them a short story. Listen patiently when they want to explain something to you. Start this early, and even when your children grow up, they will still enjoy talking to you.
5. Show kindness and engage together as a family. Reduce the time they spend with peers and spend more time together as a family, doing activities together, welcoming other families into your home, and inviting your children's friends over.
6. Find family projects to do. Sharing common goals as you work and serve together will bring your family closer. Find ways to serve together through your church, help those in need, or visit elderly homes together, start small businesses, host family events, help grandparents, start livestock, or play musical instruments together! Provided freely by Pam Forster, © Doorposts - www.doorposts.com
7. Show interest in the things that interest your children. My father did this very well. The security I got in his love and the direction of my life was based on the foundation he gave me with this great gift of his! Stay and listen as your daughter plays the piano, go to a football game with your son, build a playhouse together, draw pictures together, enjoy building big buildings, and listen to them carefully.
8. Show your children physical love. Hold their hands, hug them, say "I love you," and hug them again!
9. Plan one-on-one time with each child. Pray together! Deal with issues related to temptation and sin, tell them you are on their side, pray for each other. Learn the Bible together. Teach your children how to learn the Bible as you go through appropriate topics together. Read books and discuss them together (Conversations for Girls, God at Work, People of the Future, Breaking Strongholds, and Thoughts for Youth are just a few examples of books we have read). Also, read books just for fun. Go out for walks together. We found this to be especially good for our teenage boys! They talk more when we are out walking than when we sit with them on the couch. Go out and have a meal together! It doesn't have to be fancy food. Even just ice cream cones can provide good time just like an expensive meal. Go out and camp together! When we were all young, we all "camped outside" in the living room every Friday night! We also camped outside at night on the floor with the kids and emergency camping during the summer on the floor. It's amazing how much more the kids talk when we are lying in the dark! Have "girls' night

out” once a month or “boys’ night out.” This is an idea I was inspired to implement after reading Carolyn Mahaney’s great book, *Conversations with a Girl*. Once a month, the girls and I would go out in the afternoon (or sometimes for the whole day) and enjoy ourselves. We visited tulip gardens, iris gardens, rose gardens, tea rooms, bookstores, parking lots, and more, and we always had a great time. Always have time to discuss and set goals. We tried to do this at least once a year. It seemed to be a very helpful routine, and we were always encouraged when we looked back and saw how many goals had been accomplished by the end of the last year. See Pam Foster’s article, © Doorposts - www.doorposts.com.

10. Discipline your children. One of the best ways to show love to our children is to discipline them sincerely, with love, and without ceasing. Proverbs 13:24 says, “He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.” A child who is free to do whatever they want will not feel safe in their parents’ love. When left alone, they will also be a child who finds it hard to show love. Embrace the environment of discipline as an opportunity to grow closer to your children. Humbly facing our sinful hearts, rejoicing in God’s grace and the Gospel that covers our sins, praying for forgiveness and forgiving - all of these will draw both children and parents together as brothers and sisters in the Lord. Embrace the environment of discipline as an opportunity for teaching. We have much to teach our children in the few years we have them at home. Every bad behavior, every sin, is an additional opportunity to teach from the Word of God.

11. Speak clearly about the work you see the Lord doing in your children’s lives. One word of encouragement is better than a ton of corrections. Expect growth and tell your children what you see God doing in their lives. You may not realize how much this will encourage them.

12. Do not withdraw excessively. When your children graduate from college or reach the age of 18, it may be tempting to withdraw too much, especially when they reach the age of making major life changes (work, life partner, etc.). Stay connected to your children as they reach adulthood. Be aware of their friends. Encourage them to stay home until God leads them to marriage. Continue to offer guidance and advice, knowing that relationships change as your children reach adulthood. After the age of maturity, we must shift our roles from those of authority to being trusted mentors and counselors.

13. Thank God for your children and pray for them every day.

12 PRINCIPLES FOR RAISING REBELLIOUS CHILDREN

1. Start from childhood by giving the child everything they want. In this way, they will believe that they are entitled to live on earth.
2. When they learn bad words, laugh at them. They will think they are clever. Do not give them any spiritual teaching.
3. Wait until they are 21 and then allow them to "make their own decisions."
4. Avoid using phrases like "that is wrong," as they will feel guilty. This will lead them to believe that when they are punished, society doesn't love them and that they are being oppressed.
5. Pick up everything they leave carelessly. Do everything for them so they get used to passing on their responsibilities to others.
6. Defend them against neighbors, teachers, and the police. They all hate your child.
7. Argue frequently in front of your children. This way, they will not be shocked when the home eventually breaks down.
8. Give your child all the money they want to spend. Do not let them earn their own money.
9. Fulfill their every desire, whether it be food, drinks, or pleasures. Ensure that everything their body desires is available.
10. Allow them to read anything that is printed and listen to any music they come across.
11. Be careful to ensure that food utensils and glasses are clean, except that their minds are fed with junk.
12. When they get into trouble, comfort yourself by saying, "I couldn't have helped them anyway." Prepare for a life of sorrow. Surely, you will experience it.

Taken from a magazine called "12 Principles for Raising a Rebellious Child" distributed by the Houston Police and translated by Eld Highness Nyagabona.

2. PRINCIPLES 11 FOR CHILDREN'S FRIENDS (relating to peer pressure)
3. Parents decide when, where, and with whom their children can play.
4. Friends are not allowed to visit their friends' homes or go anywhere unless their parents have given permission.
5. Friends must respect the house rules of their peers and their standards at all times and in all places.
6. Friends must be kind to everyone in their friends' families.
7. Friends may only play with their peers' toys if they first ask permission, are careful, and return them to their original place before they leave. Friends can share or lend things only if they have received prior approval from their friend's parents.
8. Friends cannot leave until they have finished family activities or schoolwork.
9. Friends should not cause their peers to miss church services or other important family activities.
10. Family members are our most important friends. Therefore, brothers and sisters must be faithful to one another.
11. Children who cause or say things that make their peers unfaithful will not be allowed to play together again until they apologize to each other's parents.
12. Friends may be included in special activities of their peers if they show they can play well in other situations.

By Greg and Josh Harris (Translated by Eld Highness Nyagabona).

CHAPTER 7

A FATHER OR GUARDIAN AS A ROLE MODEL

Being a father is a sacred responsibility, reflecting the image of the heavenly Father. Even when we pray, we say, “Our Father who art in heaven.” The family structure—father, mother, and child—is a divine arrangement. The father has a covenant relationship with his child. Creating a joyful home is not just the mother’s responsibility but also the father’s. A father who loves and cares for his children is a great blessing. Many children listen carefully to their fathers. Children love to boast about their fathers’ abilities in front of their peers. A child should take pride in their father and not be ashamed to introduce him to others. A child should have a positive image of their father. When asked what their father does, they should not say “drinking, playing football, or beating mom.” A father should provide his children with good, truthful lessons. For example, “Where does the child go after leaving the womb?” Know your child—understand which grade they are in or their level of understanding. The father’s role is essential in the child’s life. He is the leader who provides guidance and makes the final decisions for the family.

Children look to their father for leadership. A father should not be quick to scold or reprimand, making children fear him to the point that they are unable to connect with him. Sometimes when a child speaks, we say, “Where did you get those bad thoughts?” instead of listening and helping the child, so they feel comfortable sharing other thoughts that may need assistance. Over time, the child will hide their wrongdoings out of fear, becoming deceitful. They won’t speak the truth, but deep inside, their heart and actions will remain the same, and now you cannot help because you don’t know what they are thinking. You have closed the door or shut their mouth.

Research shows that many fathers are absent in their children’s lives, with over 50% of children raised without a father, even here. Mothers work to ensure their children have food, clothes, do their homework, and attend church. Some fathers, like Eli in the scriptures, though priests, are too lazy to ensure their children live with discipline, fear God, or even work to earn their living in the future. His fatherhood failed, and his priesthood collapsed as a result. He was unaware that his sons were stealing sacrifices and abusing women. He did not honor God by intervening with his children’s wrongdoings because he was too busy. Often, when

a child leads a life of drinking, prostitution, crime, or disrespecting God, it is because fathers have neglected communication with their children and abandoned their duties.

A study in the United States revealed that an average father communicates with his child on relevant matters for only nine minutes a day, compared to twenty-six minutes for mothers! This is a huge gap and significantly contributes to the decline in discipline among children and youth. A child needs a father for much more than just birth. They need a father to grow in intellectual balance, love, physical activities, moral values, upbringing, education, male role models, life direction, protection, integrity, and to show them the image of the heavenly Father. A child needs a father who loves God sincerely, not just one who loves religion. Religion is not God, and God is not religion! Religion is a human system of efforts to connect with God.

There are both true and false religions that do not follow God's Word. Humans have voids and sorrows in their hearts that cannot be filled with anything other than God. A family that loves God with good organization is a greater example and sermon to the community than what a pastor or leader might preach from a pulpit. People know you well, and some will criticize you if what you say does not align with your actions. Many evangelists have softened their message, no longer preaching the gospel but focusing only on marriage and family. One evangelist said, "Many teachings have become about finding a partner, instead of learning to work hard." They emphasize "helping your husband with his shoes or asking him how his day was," which are not bad things but represent a much lighter message compared to the weighty message of life and death. Let's be careful not to confuse simple teachings with the deep truth. We must remember that we are in a "fishing boat," not a warship, cruise ship, or cargo ship. Our ship is for saving people, not for fighting or indulging.

Let our homes be a refuge for children or youth facing challenges and temptations. Surrounding them with care will make a significant difference. Educating and helping children in need is crucial. Even if you have little, don't relax thinking only your children matter. Help other children in your community, and you'll be amazed how they may remember you more. You will reduce the number of wicked people in your community.

I have seen a pastor and his wife adopt ten children from a Maasai village to help them with their education. Helping others often does not require grand gestures. It is a great blessing to help children who are not your own. God's Word teaches that caring for orphans blesses both you and your children, and many saints in the scriptures had good deeds like these. It is important to teach your children that even if they are in a rough place, they are being observed by others. The key is for them to have a solid and personal relationship with their God. They should not try to please others because they expect children of pastors to behave in a certain way; they should do so because God wants them to. A father may retire from pastoral work or pass away, but if his children know God, it won't be a problem.

Priesthood is a divine calling. As a wife, remind your husband if he forgets. In the past, priests who failed in their duties were often punished. The work you do is serious, perhaps more so than you realize. It is a holy calling with a great reward if done well but carries severe consequences if neglected. I am not trying to frighten you, but as representatives of God before people, you are His voice. If you condone evil or fail to warn others about sin, you carry that responsibility. Avoid using church offerings for personal gain. It is true that "the ox should eat while it treads the grain," but don't turn that into an excuse for selfishness. Eli's sons took offerings from the people, and a pastor's wife was heard telling the congregation, "Bring me eggs and firewood tomorrow." This is no longer a gift but an attempt to exploit people.

Some leaders have been caught in adultery, even taking women by force like Eli's sons. Women who are afraid have hidden these secrets, allowing the evil to continue. (See [Clergysexualmisconduct](#) or [hopeforsurvivor.org](#).) Some ministers, like worldly leaders, are feared due to their position and authority. At any moment, we must pray, "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he falls." No human is a commander; only by God's grace do we stand. Always remind yourselves of your divine calling, so it doesn't become just tradition. These events occurred during the birth of Christ. Many high priests were unaware of what was happening, while the elderly priest Simeon and the elderly widow Anna understood. This is a grave danger—better to do regular work than sacred work with blood on your hands. Avoid forcing or coercing people; strive to live in peace with others and within your means.

Avoid taking loans you can't repay. Don't complain or grumble, as God does not respond to complaints but to prayers. Don't offer examples of conflict, avoid

quarrels with others, or blame people. Harsh words discourage your children, so answer with patience! Take time to study God's Word. Focus your mind on developing and understanding what is happening. Pray for true joy in your heart. Our children learn more from what we do than what we say. They are our primary field of service for God, and He will ask, "Where are the children I gave you?" As parents, we must be vigilant.

Let's be very careful about speaking ill or gossiping about others. If our children hear negative talk, it will be a curse on us because they will learn to disrespect others and reject faith, thinking everyone is a hypocrite. I know people who have damaged their children by speaking ill of others, even if what they said was true. If there is something to say about someone, speak privately among adults to avoid causing harm to others or dishonoring the Holy Spirit. Even if it's true, do not share it in front of your children, as they will not see the heavenly Father; instead, they will see those "evil" servants and despise God. This brings a stench. Sometimes, you can do your part as the children of the prophet Samuel, but children must choose their own path, and there is little you can do.

We know no one is perfect except our Father in heaven. In God's Word, we see ministers who fell but returned, like David, confessing and seeking true repentance, saying, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your unfailing love; according to Your great compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me." Read Psalm 51. Don't be stubborn and deny that you've sinned or that God's laws are unimportant. No! The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. God has provided a way to forgive our sins; if we confess, He will give us strength. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Let us ask for forgiveness and start again in the Lord's field, for He is full of mercy.

Expect great things from God and commit yourself to doing great things for Him. In traditional African culture, fathers deeply cherished their children—so much so that they might even marry another wife if the first did not bear children. When couples separated, the children typically remained with the father, unless they were still nursing, in which case they would stay with the mother until weaned and then return to the father. Though a father may be occupied with work, whether at a job or away from home, he should still take time to create a household filled with peace, joy, respect, and reverence for God. He sets the

standards of the home and serves as a model of discipline. He is the pillar that upholds the family structure.

Children carry their father's name, so let him be strong, encouraging, patient, hardworking, and wise. As the spiritual leader of the family, he should guide his household in matters of faith, leading in morning and evening prayers. He represents God in the home and must not neglect his duty to nurture and discipline his children. Let him be a man grounded in the Word of God and prayer, for the task before him is great. He should not be impulsive or childish, reacting without thought—"When I was a child, I spoke as a child..." A man must govern his home with maturity and not behave like an undisciplined youth, using foul language or speaking carelessly. Instead, he should cultivate virtues of good character.

Let every father pursue moral excellence. He should read books and seek counsel from wise individuals. By humbling himself under God's mighty hand, he can raise children with upright character. Avoid displaying harshness at home without love—this only wounds and alienates children. Bring joy to their lives. Even with the pressures of providing, let your life show patience, love, selflessness, and kindness. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

If you struggle with anger, impatience, or a lack of love, fall on your knees and ask God for strength. It is impossible to be a good father without God—especially in today's world. You've seen the news: fathers are often portrayed as careless or irresponsible. Don't allow your children to misinterpret your intentions, thinking you're selfish or self-serving. Show them you care for their mother and are willing to sacrifice for their well-being. When children feel neglected, some grow up valuing only their mother. They support her financially and even bring her to live with them in the city, leaving the father alone and forgotten. He ends up cooking for himself, living like someone without a family, while other respected men at church seem to thrive with their families.

Being a father is no small task—pray for God's help, because you cannot do it alone. Today, the role of a father is under attack by the enemy. It's similar to keeping the Sabbath—people are tempted to disregard this commandment, saying it doesn't matter. But if God established it during creation and referenced it over 500 times, how can it now be meaningless? People often say, "If you want to know how to live, copy the Jews."

I once heard a man say, “Being a man is hard—my wife and kids depend on me. Sometimes I wish I were a woman!” That statement was sad, yet honest. I’ve read many articles showing that in some countries, men have changed their gender or turned to homosexuality to escape the pressures of life. But you are a priest of the Living God—don’t lower your value or sell yourself short. If you’ve fallen, repent and turn back.

Indeed, the role of a man is demanding. He is the head of the household, while the woman is his helper. Prepare as diligently for family worship as you do for work. Don’t be careless to the point that your children notice your lack of spiritual preparation. A woman once said, “My husband is a university professor, brilliant in math, but during family worship, he repeats the same passage—John 3:16—every day. The children are bored, and I’m embarrassed to tell him because I don’t want to hurt him. At least he’s present every evening—many men today have drifted away spiritually.”

Fathers, though your wives assist you, don’t shift your God-given responsibilities onto them. Your wife should support you, but the spiritual and moral leadership of the home is your sacred duty. Govern your household with love and teach your children obedience. Practice self-control. Don’t indulge in excessive drinking or harmful eating habits. Some foods provoke anger and impulsiveness. Choose a diet that supports your calling. You must be informed and intentional about raising your children well.

Let your children see you as a father led by God—full of mercy, grace, and quick to forgive. Your words carry weight; speak to heal, not to wound. Your value is not diminished by kneeling in prayer, asking God to guide your family. Be prepared—don’t be careless. Exercise your authority with humility. The role of a father cannot be delegated to the mother.

Some fathers have even changed careers to spend more time with their children. Don’t go from work to hanging out, returning home late while your children lack proper nutrition. Don’t treat your home like a hotel—be the family’s leader. Your friends won’t shape your children’s lives like you will. Eventually, your children will move out and start their own families—what will they remember about you? Time flies. If you neglect to build a relationship with your children, you may retire one day and feel like a stranger in their lives.

Children bear their father's name, and in many African cultures, lineage is paternal. But if they see that only their mother truly cared for them, they will gravitate toward her. I saw in Kisii that many grown children with good jobs brought their mothers to live with them, leaving their aging fathers alone. Some sent money only to their mothers, who then shared with the father. If the father complained, the children would take their mother away entirely. Some children living abroad even brought their mothers to live with them overseas, leaving their fathers behind. Many of these actions stem from unresolved wounds or a generational curse of fatherly neglect.

Some fathers learned neglect from their own fathers and unknowingly repeated the pattern. Break that curse so it doesn't continue to the next generation. Understand your great responsibility—you represent God on earth. In traditional African society, men supported their siblings and parents. Today, many young men avoid responsibility, waste school opportunities, and fall into bad company. Some marry educated women and then feel inferior, causing damage to their marriages and failing in their role as fathers.

Dr. Nedley of Nedley Solutions observed that in the past, men's IQs were 5% higher than those of girls in the U.S. Today, that gap has reversed, with women achieving higher university entrance scores. Though men were created with great potential, many have chosen paths that damage their bodies, emotions, and minds. Some now pursue wealthy women, reversing the old trend where women sought financially stable husbands. This shift has diminished the value and authority of men.

A man should not wander through life unaware of his heavy responsibilities as a husband and father. He should work diligently. Sadly, about 70% to 80% of members in many congregations today are women, even though God appointed men to lead spiritually. In ancient times, Pharaoh and Herod killed baby boys, knowing that by destroying the males, they destroyed a nation. The same attack was waged against African American men in history. A friend who visited a West African country said, "The men left are only for reproduction." That's a tragic reality—it's destroying communities and the priesthood God entrusted to men. God's purpose for men goes beyond reproduction.

Let us pray for one another—men and women alike—so our homes become beacons of light and support to others. Let us not be the ones who bring division and strife

into our communities. Some men have left their families and burdened the church to raise their children due to sins such as alcoholism, neglect, adultery, abandonment, and disease. God offers joy through a life of holiness. A lifestyle that cares for your children and others will bring abundant blessings.

Take Time Off and Spend Leisure Time with Your Children .Take a break and spend leisure time with your children—go with them to a place where you can happily learn new things and relax together. You don't need to spend a lot of money to have fun. Love and time are deeply connected. Plan local activities or visit people that won't cost much. Play with your children and talk with them. Choose games that do not involve competition but build relationships. Choose your entertainment wisely; these days there are luxurious forms of entertainment that ruin good character. Let what you see, touch, think, hear, and smell be things that will build your children's character.

Guard the pathways of the heart, the eyes, ears, and even the tongue's taste. Entertainment should not waste money or lead children into selfishness instead of caring for those in need. Father, teach your children generosity. Let them see you providing for their mother and giving her money so they understand the importance of generosity. Let them also see you supporting your own parents and in-laws in need. They will learn to do the same for their spouses, parents, and in-laws. You are in a school every minute until your child leaves your care—don't deceive yourself. A father who cares for his children receives great reward both on earth and in heaven. Let a father begin to consider how he will support his children in education.

I know educating a child is very difficult in Africa, but if fathers are blessed with wealth, they should set aside a portion so their children won't be a burden to others. Children should inherit land so they can provide for themselves. When you help your child, and they see you using your resources wisely, they'll learn from your example. Even a poor father who spends time educating his child about life and reading God's Word is truly rich. Many today have neglected to make a special plan to teach their children life skills. Let your children be your friends—let them feel free to talk to you. Don't be shocked when they tell you things; that openness will help you guide them.

It doesn't matter if you have little experience as a father—what matters is your intent. It doesn't matter if your wife is difficult to understand or if your children

are rebellious; the Lord wants you to step into the water by faith in the task He has given you. Cast your bread upon the waters and it will return to you after many days. Hophni and Phinehas were working in God's temple with their father Eli, the high priest, yet they had terrible habits—stealing offerings and engaging in sexual immorality. Scripture says their father did not seriously address their behavior. Perhaps he was too busy with state affairs as a kind of “President” and high priest. But we are told he was guilty—unlike the prophet Samuel, who faced similar issues. Eli's fatherhood was broken and collapsed. God's name was disgraced because he failed to discipline or manage his children, and it is said he couldn't control them. He could rule the nation but failed with his own sons.

It's possible Eli will not be in heaven because of his children. He himself was a man of good character. So can our children keep us from entering heaven? All of us parents are guilty in some way. We rely on schools, churches, or communities to shape our children's character while we continue with our personal lives. Your responsibility as a father cannot be passed on to a househelp, their mother, or anyone else. Pray and speak to God daily for help. Teach them when you rise, walk, sit, and lie down. Write instructions on your doorposts! Train the child—don't just tell them! Let them know that God is on their side, loves them deeply, and is their Father too.

Seek to change their thoughts and hearts—not just their actions. Once the heart is changed, actions and thoughts will follow. This won't happen in a day, week, or year, but you will see good results soon! Let your children know God sees them even when they hide from you or others. Always know where your children are. Reject alcohol, cigarettes, lies, immorality, and bad examples so your children don't imitate evil. Seek first the kingdom of God, and even your children will follow.

Some fathers travel frequently for work. These fathers should look at examples of other working dads. The internet has much on this. I looked on Google and found a 300-page book full of things traveling fathers do with their children. These men call their children upon arrival, think of lessons to teach them by phone, and write letters to their children. When they return home, they schedule one-on-one time with each child. You might take a walk with one child and have a conversation. If a teacher needs to be visited, these fathers try to go instead of the mother. They plan their lives to match the needs of their children, even when far away. They

help their kids learn things like chopping wood, riding bikes or driving, gardening, camping, singing, or doing house repairs.

A father should not have too much or too little authority over a child! Don't be harsh to your children. Learn to adopt God's character so that when your children imitate you, they reflect God's traits. If you lie to your children, they won't know when you're telling the truth! Good character bears fruits such as love, joy, peace, self-denial, obedience, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control, goodness, and faithfulness. People shouldn't judge you by words but by your fruits. Bad character brings fruits such as hatred, impurity, corruption, witchcraft, immorality, greed, selfishness, lack of self-control, boastfulness, arrogance, disobedience, abuse, idolatry, quarrels, enmity, slander, division, jealousy, anger, drunkenness, and intrigue. Lay your bad traits and your children's bad habits before the Lord so He may help you overcome them.

Sometimes you may feel weak, lacking the strength for fatherhood and setting a good example. Ask the Lord for help. Outward obedience won't help—it's inner obedience that brings real transformation! The Lord can protect you and your children from stumbling and present you blameless before His glory with great joy.

The book of Ephesians says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children." This applies to mothers too. Mocking or scolding children happens more than we realize. I don't think anyone is guiltless. We don't do it with bad intentions, but we don't think. Provoking a child is an immature act—it causes lasting wounds. Let's do our best to rid ourselves of it.

Fathers, plan your families. Though the first command in Scripture is "be fruitful and multiply," don't have more children than you can feed and guide, leaving others to do your job. Know who your children's friends are and where they are in the evening. Don't let your sons loiter in street gangs.

Go and look for them! Don't allow them too much freedom—there are many dangers out there. Keep your children close to you. If people say they won't know how to socialize, tell them that's not your priority—your priority is good character. Children learn more bad than good in gangs. Teach them to avoid temptation and flee from bad friends. There are times when it's not wrong to escort your children. Some children have been sent to the bus stop for school or somewhere else and ended up in trouble. Don't let your children sleep elsewhere without knowing

where they are. “Sleepovers” should never happen! Don’t let your child wander to the neighbors’ without purpose.

Many children have been shot or raped in other people’s homes. A woman named Ellen White once said, “When I go to other people’s homes, I don’t let my children sleep in the same bed with others; I ask them to sleep on the floor if no extra bed is available.” Now dear reader, this woman raised her children very well. Make a table of reasons why she said that. In this age of homosexuality, it’s not just girls at risk—even boys are. I once visited a police station and saw a young boy who had been sodomized by his mother—they were in court. The story was heartbreaking. Children today face serious dangers and temptations. In some schools, boys and girls are allowed to use the same bathrooms and changing rooms.

And a boy may report feeling like a girl, and a girl may report feeling like a boy. Just last week, a boy in high school went into the girls’ locker room after swimming, claiming he felt like a girl, startling the girls who fled unclothed. The boy had already reported to the administration and was told to stay with the girls. This kind of situation is a big danger. Teach your children discipline and self-denial. Encourage them to be open with you about their struggles.

Don’t focus only on looking neat in a suit and expensive clothes while your family is falling apart. It’s good to eat with your children! Many fathers used to eat alone while children were given soup or chicken feet, and the father enjoyed the tastiest parts. Your children will take note of this behavior and you’ll see its fruits later. Let your effort be focused on building your children’s character. Other things shouldn’t distract you—plan them only if they’re within your means. You are the head of that government! Every government has laws—teach your children to obey them.

Teach your children to respect themselves, your household, the national government, and the government of God. Care for children’s rights such as education and more. Don’t spoil your children nor abuse them. Place yourself in God’s strong hands so He can sustain you. Help those in need in your community—start when your children are still young. Be the example of giving tithe and offering in your family. Plan your finances well—even giving your children small amounts and teaching them financial discipline. Don’t be wasteful for your own desires but stingy about household needs. Keep financial records well—don’t be a squanderer. Don’t be lazy! Be generous, even to your wife. Have emergency

savings for your family—that's your responsibility as the head of the house. Learn to be a good parent even before the child is born. Dedicate your children to God. Let your household be orderly. Make a godly life attractive to your children—that is where success lies. Be faithful to your marriage and ministry vows—renew them regularly. Don't be like the Laodicean—lukewarm and ready to be spat out—be victorious. If you do your part, you'll find yourself the head, not the tail, in all things that bring glory to your community and even more so to your Heavenly Father.

CHAPTER 8

NO EXCUSES

“There are a thousand reasons for failure, but not a single one that truly counts.”
— Mark Twain Why is it that some people achieve more than others? Why do certain individuals succeed in business, live joyful lives, influence many people to follow Jesus, build meaningful relationships, and make significant progress in their lives—all within the same span of time as everyone else? Authors like Brian Tracy have explored and written about this very question based on their personal experiences. For example, Tracy pushed through high school as an adult, earned a degree in business, and went on to sell \$25 million worth of Suzuki cars. He later established his own offices and began holding seminars, motivating people to pursue their dreams and serve God effectively.

His journey began in humble circumstances—working in warehouses because he had not completed secondary school. But later, he studied leadership and business administration. In his seminars, he often asks participants:

“Who wants to double their income?”

“Who wants to graduate from university?”

“Who wants to influence more people to be baptized?”

“Who wants to build a permanent home?”

“Who wants stronger relationships with family and friends?”

“Who wants to become financially independent?”

“Who wants to spend more time with their family?”

“Who wants to study the Bible deeply every day?”

“Who wants a more powerful prayer life?”

“Who wants better health?”

“Who wants to lose the weight that makes them feel self-conscious?”

Everyone answers, “Me!”

All of us long for such positive outcomes, and we generally know how to attain them—but we keep saying “someday” or “maybe tomorrow.” Before we even begin, we mentally move to an imaginary place called “Someday Island.” We say things like:

“Someday I’ll finish reading the Bible.”

“Someday I’ll complete that spiritual book.”

“Someday I’ll upgrade my skills to increase my income.”

“Someday I’ll learn to manage money and escape debt.”

“Someday I’ll visit my neighbors to share the gospel.”

“Someday I’ll start working out.”

“Someday I’ll start eating healthy and quit junk food.”

“Someday I’ll do all the things I know I should do. One day.”

Sadly, 80% of people dwell on “Someday Island.” They daydream about everything they’ll accomplish “later,” much like a fairy tale. And they’re not alone on this island—others just like them are there too. What do they talk about? Excuses. They sit in circles, trading reasons for staying stuck. They console each other with justifications for inaction.

They ask, “Why are you still here on Someday Island?”

And their answers? Always the same:

“My childhood was traumatic.”

“My parents were harsh—I had no joy growing up.”

“People slam their doors when I try to share the gospel.”

“I don’t even have a few cents to my name.”

“My father never sent me to school.”

“My boss is always critical.”

“My marriage is a mess—my wife is so tight-fisted.”

“My husband drinks too much.”

“No one appreciates what I do.”

“The economy is terrible.”

“I don’t have time to teach anyone the Bible.”

“I leave the house too early to pray.”

These individuals suffer from a condition called excusitis—a disease that kills dreams. Though they may have good intentions, as the old saying goes, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.”

The first step toward success is to vote yourself off “Someday Island.” There’s no more room for excuses. Either take action on the things you’ve been postponing, or don’t—but stop offering excuses. Stop using your brilliant mind to invent convincing reasons that keep you from acting. Either change course or stay quiet. Say it aloud: “If these good things are going to happen, I must be the one to do them. No one else will do them for me.”

People who fail give excuses. People who win keep going. Ask yourself:

“Are my excuses really valid?”

“Is there anyone facing the same challenges who is still making progress?”

If you’re honest, you’ll realize that thousands—maybe even millions—of people have overcome hardships worse than yours and still accomplished great things. They didn’t let their struggles hold them back; instead, they became a blessing to others.

And what they achieved, you can too—if you give it your all and seek God's help to become a fruitful, thriving layperson in every area: spiritually, financially, physically, socially, and in your service. If you used the time you now spend justifying your inaction, you'd be amazed at what you could accomplish. But first, make the decision to leave the island of excuses once and for all.

Anyone committed to succeeding in lay ministry and reaching high goals must read material that supports and strengthens that vision. True success isn't just about wealth—it's about having a mindset that focuses on making an impact. Material things fade away, but developing a strong character—free from laziness and excuses, built on hard work—is what truly matters. What's most important is creating a life of discipline, self-denial, and mastery over yourself (as emphasized in *No Excuses: The Power of Self-Discipline, Self-Control, and Self-Mastery*).

Strive to be an above-average layperson. A man named Elbert Hubbard listed 1,000 things that can lead to success—but the most important one is discipline. The rest depend on it.

Aside from God's grace, discipline is the top ingredient for greatness. Even someone with average talent can go far if they're disciplined—often farther than someone highly intelligent or gifted. Robert Kiyosaki's book *Why "A" Students Work for "C" Students and "B" Students Work for the Government* explores this idea. He noticed that students who earned high grades often avoided risk—they wanted everything to be smooth and safe.

Meanwhile, those who got lower grades were willing to take risks and launch businesses. Eventually, they ended up hiring the "A" students—because those top students had talked themselves out of entrepreneurship, saying it was too risky and full of obstacles.

One of the greatest enemies of personal growth and success is the desire to always take shortcuts or follow the easiest path. Whether it's visiting someone too late, rushing through schoolwork, or reading your Bible without focus—this tendency can become a habit. And over time, that habit trains you to avoid the hard road, just so you can enjoy temporary pleasure or comfort.

In the human mind, there is a daily battle between choosing the path that is good, hard, and necessary, and the one that is pleasurable, easy, and unfruitful. Discipline and self-control are connected; a person who can control their desires—in what they do and how they act—in order to reach both short-term and long-term goals is a great hero. The people who have achieved the most success are those who think long-term. These things involve work, skill, marriage, raising children, money, relationships, and character. Character is something we will take with us to heaven; it is very long-term. We should not take shortcuts in building

character; we should be disciplined and exercise self-control in developing it. Your ability to sacrifice temporary pleasures is the key to helping you in the future.

Those who succeed have learned the things that bear good fruit, even if they take a long time. They don't focus too much on instant results. Before they enjoy honey, they begin with the bitter things. Discipline, or self-control, is something every human being learns. The way we control ourselves reflects how much we value ourselves. We can exercise self-control in three areas of our lives:

1. Personal goals: Discipline helps us recognize that we are responsible for our own success, and that if we don't give up, we will reap the rewards.
2. Business or ministry goals: Discipline and self-denial make you a better leader and help you in entrepreneurship, allowing you to use your time well and solve problems effectively so you can be productive in your work.
3. Your overall happiness: Discipline and self-control help you to be joyful, healthy, and physically strong. Your marriage, child-rearing, and relationships with friends and family are all supported by discipline and self-control.

What does success mean to you as a layperson? What does success look like in your marriage, your health, or your financial status? Success can mean being able to manage your life, serve the LORD, reach people, and accomplish the goals you set for yourself. One major setback for many is making excuses and lacking the discipline to fulfill their dreams.

Maybe only 20% are doing a great job of making people disciples of Jesus, while 80% simply relax and offer excuses. I have been among them for many years, and I pray to God to leave the island of "excuses." Many people achieve success by learning new methods of earning money, reaching people, building their health, and strengthening relationships—but when they enjoy their success and forget to keep learning, they start to decline again.

Many people who succeed didn't inherit that from their parents. Their parents weren't necessarily hard-working or effective in financial matters or God's work. Success comes from hard work. If you sow, weed, and work diligently, you will reap. If you don't sow, you won't reap. If you imitate those who have succeeded in ministry or entrepreneurship and follow their ways, you will succeed as they

did. You must work with planning, without ceasing, and with deliberate, continuous, and conscious effort.

The secret to success is paying the full price. Kop Kopmeyer said we cannot live long enough to learn everything ourselves.

We must learn from other people's experiences, or we will suffer. Keep your brain sharp and care for your physical health. Character is built throughout life. Integrity is very important. Guard your heart and character more than anything else, for from them flow the springs of life. Teach your children good character. Teach them the value of character, money, relationships, and health. Learn from heroes—exemplary evangelists, successful entrepreneurs with good character—what do they do? Follow in their footsteps. Good things are built through repetition. Always be steadfast in good and righteous things. You must be responsible.

Don't be someone who blames and criticizes others when things go wrong. Adam said it was the wife God gave him; Eve said it was the serpent. We need the discipline to take responsibility in order to have joy, health, success, progress, and good leadership. When we were children, our parents made most of the decisions for us. But as adults, we have choices. We can either take responsibility or blame others when things fall apart. But that kind of excuse-making brings no joy. Let go of what your parents or others in the past failed to do for you. Maybe your parents punished you by not showing you love, and you came to think you were less than others or that others were better than you.

Some people have sued hotels for spilling hot tea on themselves—they didn't want to admit it was their own fault. Some people blame everything, even inanimate objects. They kick things when things don't go right. Discipline will free you from this problem. Many of our issues stem from money—how to get it, spend it, invest it, and lose it. You have a responsibility to improve your financial life. Don't be someone who is always blaming and explaining why they didn't achieve something.

You must have discipline and self-control in order to reach your goals. You must write down the goals you want to achieve in life. It is said that only 3% of adults write down their goals, and 97% of those reach their goals because they wrote them down. At the start of the year, 4% of people write down their goals, and of these, 44% achieve them. Writing down your goals doesn't guarantee they'll all

happen, but it increases their chances significantly. Begin writing your goals in ministry, goals for improving your life, and goals for advancing in various areas.

Here are things you should do to reach your goals:

Decide what you want,

Write it down on paper,

Set a date for when you will achieve it,

Write down the obstacles that might stop you, the skills you need to achieve it, and the people who can help you,

Prioritize your goals,

Every day, do something that brings you closer to your goals. Do anything that moves you toward your goal. Over time, your momentum will grow.

Among your written goals, you can write even twenty—then choose one that you can accomplish within 24 hours, the easiest one. Pick another goal and work hard to achieve it. Failure is not an option. Work on it every day until it is done. Whether it's getting training in reaching people or advancing in entrepreneurship, write down the goal and then write twenty ways to reach it—and start acting. A man named Napoleon Hill said, "Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve." I believe this is absolutely true, especially when we include God in the equation. We ask Him to help us spiritually, physically, mentally, economically, and socially to reach people.

See yourself as a leader in reaching people wherever you live. Always keep learning skills and knowledge for reaching people and improving in all areas. If you stop learning, you lose your edge in achieving your goals. The skills and knowledge you have today will lose value tomorrow. So always keep learning new ways that are not shortcuts but yield good fruit. If you are highly efficient in your work, realize that the skills that got you there won't take you forward tomorrow. Keep learning continuously, make decisions—you cannot just sit still. Your mind should be full of new ideas. Follow leaders who have succeeded in the area where you want success. What habits do these people have? How do they plan their day? How

do they dress? How do they walk? How do they speak? What books do they read? What do they do in their spare time? Who are their friends? What courses do they take for self-improvement? What do they listen to in their cars? Ask them and follow their advice. Set big goals.

1. To manage your finances, educate yourself well for 60 minutes a day by reading something helpful to you before you start working.
2. Attend seminars in the area you want to develop, whether it's becoming a better person, a better entrepreneur, or improving your relationships with your neighbors to reach them.
3. Listen to CDs and tapes in the area you want to develop.

Talent and high intelligence from school alone are not enough. Two hours a day will greatly help you achieve success in your goal.

Steps to progress: Wake up early and spend two hours reading the Bible and your studies before leaving your home. If you read for an hour, you will finish a book in a week, 50 in a year, and 500 in 10 years. This will greatly help you increase your success and income.

Write your goals down every day. This will help you think about them carefully.

Create a priority list.

Have the discipline to tackle these with all your effort.

Listen and learn as much as possible about this area.

Ask yourself, "What can I do differently to make things more successful?"

Maintain good relationships with people, as they will love you and help you be happy and achieve your goals.

Would you rather be right or be happy? If you want happiness in your marriage, at work, in your church, or in your community, focus on things that are not sinful. Care about relationships and the happiness of others.

You can become poor by watching TV all the time, comparing yourself to people on TV, and thinking you have no beauty or worth. Don't be someone who listens to

the radio, spends all day online, or chats. Go and make an effort in your work to improve your life. Things that will improve your life include waking up two hours before your activities, spending one hour on spiritual matters, such as reading the Bible and inspired books like the Spirit of Prophecy (SOP) written by Christians. Then spend the other hour on things that will help you grow.

This one hour a day used for self-development will add up to seven hours a week, which is the equivalent of one book. In a year, you will have read 50 books. You will not be the same person. Reading books on various subjects, such as gardening or farming, will develop you in incredible ways. Reading business books will give you the skills to advance in your business. After ten years, you will have read 350 books. This will increase your productivity, performance, and even income. You will need a large house to store your books, but books are an asset—you will have something valuable from them to build your own library! If you read for one hour a day in the field you desire, it will make you a national expert in that area after three years.

This can increase your income and help your profession. Every time, repeat your goals by writing down your 10 goals and connecting them to today's life (present tense). This will help your mind. If you write them every day, you will remember and think about them throughout the day and see opportunities to act on them. You will focus your mind and have more intention. This will help your goals be achieved more quickly than if they were just hopes or good desires floating in the air. Writing your goals down daily helps you achieve them by over 1000% compared to not writing them down. I didn't understand this at first, but I did it when I started with small tasks, like writing letters to evangelist friends and posting them.

In the 80s and 90s, we didn't have the internet or mobile phones. I wrote about 40 hand-written letters every month. I included them in my goals and reviewed them in the morning. This made me have communication with evangelists, pastors, and other people who have greatly helped my work, more than I would have if I hadn't written to them. I regret that I stopped doing this, but after reading books by successful evangelists or laypeople, I pray to God to start that practice again with His strength.

Plan your day every day by listing things to do and priorities before the day starts. This is the key to double success and making your life organized. Have the

discipline to focus on one thing a day. Once you finish it, move on to the next. In the end, it will become your daily routine, and you will increase your success by more than 100%. Keep listening to CDs or tapes related to your field. For those who spend a lot of time in heavy traffic, you can use 500 to 1000 hours in the car each year. No university offers 1000 seminar hours a year, whether in theology, evangelism, business, or other fields. Most universities offer about 5 hours of seminars a day, and many universities operate for 8 months a year (excluding vacations).

Many people have started with little and became wealthy through the discipline of setting goals and educating themselves in their dreams. A few successful evangelists I've spoken with practice this discipline regularly, which is why they are able to conduct seminars and write about their experiences, presenting them in a unique way that stands out from others. No one can give a seminar or write like you, as everyone has something special to offer, something that no one else possesses, regardless of their education. The Wapare people say that even the fire of a fool benefits everyone who sees it.

How much more someone who depends on God and works diligently day and night to spread the message of Christ, telling others that Jesus is coming soon, and advancing their life? They will be blessed a thousandfold! In everything you do—whether it's phone calls, visiting someone, planning your garden, helping your neighbor, taking your child to school, or attending church with your spouse—ask yourself, "What did I do right here?" Answer honestly. Then ask yourself, "What could I have done differently?" This will help you reflect on past encounters and improve your approach.

This habit of self-reflection will help you grow and position you as one of the top 20% of effective evangelists and entrepreneurs. Treat everyone you meet with kindness, as you would treat a client who brings you a million dollars. Whether it's at work, at home, or when someone does something kind for you, return that kindness. People will enjoy being around you, will buy from you, will listen to you, and will introduce you to their friends. Never think of treating anyone poorly. Even when they wrong you, know how to handle the situation without allowing it to hinder your work for the Lord or your ability to earn a living. Never forget your family—they are the most important people in your life. Always make sure your family feels valued and loved. Don't hesitate to tell them you love them. This will bring positivity and joy into your day. Don't wake up with a bad attitude or

MaarifaMtandaoni.Com RohoYaUnabii.Net pg. 117

complaints. Your family, who are the first to see you, shouldn't experience your negative moods. If you greet them with a bad attitude, they will start saying, "This person is always moody in the morning." 85% of your success depends on how others care for you, love you, and respect you—especially in your evangelism and business ventures. Never lose the chance to treat others well. If you make this a daily habit, you will see significant changes in your life, growth, work, income, and relationships. You'll have created a new habit that will help you succeed in all areas of your life.

Improving your life, both in your ministry and in earning a living, requires dedication, discipline, and strong decision-making. It also requires courage, which is crucial in all virtues, as many people fear various things. It's common for people to be afraid of knocking on doors, giving advice, preaching, starting a business, or being self-sufficient. The difference between the brave and the fearful is discipline. A coward allows fear to control them, while a brave person persists, handling the situation for a few more minutes, achieving good results where the coward gives up. "The difference between a hero and a coward is that the hero sticks in there five minutes longer." Fear is learned; we can't fear what we don't know, but fear is an enemy because it destroys hope for success.

People fear taking risks to help others, fearing rejection, and in doing so, they lose the opportunity to bring someone to salvation. Fear paralyzes us and takes away our joy. We fear losing a job, love, money, dignity, being criticized, or losing status. This fear holds us back from serving God effectively or making a living. Some of us have chosen not to be trustworthy with money or tasks entrusted to us, even though we are afraid to earn an honest income.

You need a high level of discipline. When fear causes the mind to stop, and a person retreats, their joy disappears. Say to yourself, "I can do all things through Him who gives me strength." Imagine yourself with confidence and competence in the areas where you feel afraid. Speak, walk, and carry yourself as though you have no fear. Stand firm, smile with confidence, greet others, and share the good news with them. If they don't listen, they will be missing out. Practice speaking in front of people. Read books and rehearse. Much of our fear is in the small details. For example, someone afraid of rejection may also fear preaching. Face your fear, asking God, who has never failed. For instance, if there's someone who frequently criticizes you, practice confronting them beforehand.

A woman once said that she practiced confronting her harsh boss, who had criticized her for 10 years, by telling him, “I would appreciate it if you didn’t speak to me that way anymore. It hurts my heart and makes it difficult for me to do my work as you expect.” Her boss, shocked, apologized and never criticized her again. This woman said that she wished she had done this earlier, as it would have added peace to her life, echoing Eleanor Roosevelt’s words, “No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.”

No one can disrespect you without your permission. Be brave in embracing new dreams and in believing in their fulfillment. Ask yourself where your fear or anxiety comes from. If it’s a real fear, what’s the worst that could happen? Then tell yourself, though it’s a tough situation, it won’t lead to death, and start right there to improve your life. Overcoming fear takes discipline and persistence. Don’t act like a victim. Instead, look for the lessons you will learn, as God has placed you there for a reason. Nothing will prevent you from achieving success in God’s work except for yourself.

You need discipline in your work. Set priorities for your evangelism and execute them swiftly and efficiently. Learn how to manage your time effectively. It’s not about visiting three houses for three hours unless there’s a specific reason. Let people know that you are a productive worker, not someone who lounges around telling stories and waiting for meals. When it’s time for work, work. You have a boss greater than anyone on earth or in heaven. Everyone in your ministry or workplace knows who is lazy and who works hard! Or perhaps you don’t know who in your church or village is diligent and who is lazy. You must work harder than average: start early, work hard, and if possible, stay a little later. You will never fail to succeed. Dress as though you are going to win. Learn how to dress for success, even on a budget.

Your work is closely related to leadership, whether you are a manager, head of a department, or involved in ministry, etc. Leadership and discipline, self-denial, and self-control go hand in hand, especially in the work of God. Today’s leadership comes with many responsibilities; you must be a person who takes on responsibility, and this can be learned. Leaders develop over time through hard work, experience, and learning. Born leaders are very few and do not make a significant impact in the world. You may start as someone being led and later become the leader, the one who decides what happens and how it happens. All leaders have a vision for the future; they can share that vision with those they

lead and make it a reality. A military commander has a vision of victory, a business leader has a vision of success, and a spiritual leader has a vision of many people coming to the Lord, smiling.

Your standards should be high, and you will inspire other evangelists. A leader must be transparent about who they are and what they stand for. They must be competent, not just going through the motions, but producing results (competence). Accountability is crucial for success and motivating others (commitment). A leader must understand what challenges exist in order to address them (constraints). A leader must be creative, coming up with ideas from various sources to do things easily, quickly, with quality, and at minimal cost (creativity). A leader is always a student, studying, listening, and improving their skills with knowledge and expertise, and encouraging others to develop as well (continual learning). A leader has reliable discipline, is calm, and can predict where things are heading (consistency).

A leader is ready in times of danger or sudden circumstances (crisis); this is where they demonstrate their excellence (competence). Heroic leaders have learned to hide their fears and not show them to every member or person they lead, as this could cause confusion and discourage others, just like the 10 spies whose names many of us do not remember, except for the two heroes, Caleb and Joshua. Deny yourself, avoid the desires of the flesh, the eyes, and the pride of life. Prepare things, plan carefully, and observe; don't take things lightly. Leaders work as if they own the company or the church. They do not offer excuses, complaints, or blame others for the problems that arise. They are action-oriented, just as cream rises to the top, so do leaders rise through knowledge, skill, and effectiveness.

Summary

Seven Steps to Becoming the Best Evangelist

These are seven steps in the 1,000% rule that will amaze you if you practice them.

Step 1:

Wake up two hours before your first appointment or before getting to work. Invest the first hour in reading spiritual books, educational material, and motivational

texts. “The first hour is the wheel that drives the day.” When you wake up, add intellectual knowledge to yourself to ensure you have a good day. You will have the right attitude, focus, creativity, and productivity at work throughout the day if you do this. If you invest just one hour per day in your field, this is equivalent to reading one book per week, or fifty books per year. A typical adult reads one non-fiction book per year. If you read one book per week, imagine being an expert in your field and advancing in wisdom above everyone else in your business. It’s guaranteed to work that way! That would be like reading 500 books a year, and you’ll need a big house to store them! This will make you an authority in your field in your country within three to five years.

Step 2:

Write your major goals again every day in a journal at the current time each morning before leaving, without looking at what you wrote yesterday. The act of writing and repeating creates a system for organizing your mind. When you repeat writing your ten goals every morning, you begin to see and think about opportunities to reach those goals eventually. You will be focused, determined, and unwavering, and you will succeed in your goals faster than if they were just floating thoughts in your mind.

Step 3:

Every day, plan ahead. Prepare a list and prioritize your tasks before leaving home. Your ability to recognize priorities and choose what is most important to do is the key to organizing your life and multiplying your results.

Step 4:

Develop the discipline of focusing all your attention on ONE thing. Choose the most important task you can do every day. Then, start with that and work on it until it is 100% complete. Your ability to focus and do the work, while building this habit, will enable you to increase your productivity, effectiveness, and positive outcomes in the following month.

Step 5:

Listen to educational programs in your car: the average businessperson spends 500 to 1000 hours per year behind the wheel. By turning your car into a mobile

university or classroom, you gain the equivalent of two semesters of college education while driving. Many people have gone from poverty to wealth by listening to various audio programs in their cars.

Step 6:

Ask yourself two reflection questions after making a phone call, attending a celebration, or meeting someone: The first question is, “What did I do well?” The second question is, “What could I do differently?” The first question forces you to reflect deeply and recall all the positive things you did the last time you met someone, in a meeting, during a presentation, or at an event, even if it wasn’t successful. The second question encourages you to think about different ways you could improve efficiency in the same situation. Write down these thoughts somewhere too. This method is the quickest and most important exercise for personal growth and continued development.

Step 7:

Treat everyone you meet as a pearl or a great treasure: both at home and in the office, when visiting others, and with everyone you meet. When you treat people as important and valuable, they will return the favor by considering you valuable too. They will want to associate with you, work with you, buy from you, and introduce you to their friends. Start with people at home as soon as you wake up, thank them, have a positive attitude, and you will find peace and happiness all day long. 85% of your success depends on your relationships with people, so don’t be a person who easily gets angry.

CHAPTER 9

MINISTRY FOR PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, BE INCLUSIVE)

Ministry is a unique gift that God has given to His end-time church. Serving people with special needs is one way to demonstrate God's love. It gives believers an opportunity to act like their Heavenly Father, who sacrificially served all of humanity when we were—and continue to be—in special need. The term "disability" carries a negative connotation, and so today, the term "special needs" is more commonly used. Some people believe that if a disability does not greatly affect daily life, then it doesn't need much consideration. In the West, this ministry is referred to by three names: Disabilities Ministries, Special Needs Ministries, or Inclusion Ministries. Regardless of the name, the mission remains the same and is very important. Those with special needs and those without should be close so that they can serve each other, the church, and the community.

Everyone has the right to access the opportunity to make Christ their personal Savior. Every church should be committed to training, challenging, and encouraging its members to engage in this ministry. We must change our mindset that people with special needs are somehow "less than" in God's eyes or our own. People with special needs are human beings first, and their disability does not define them or limit the potential of God's power in their lives or diminish their value. Many say, "We don't have anyone with special needs," or, "Our members are already overwhelmed with two or three ministries." Some say, "The budget can't support that," or, "Who wants to be involved in a ministry for the disabled?"

Many people with special needs do not want to be a burden, so they remain silent or hidden—perhaps due to the way society views people with special needs. Other members feel untrained and therefore incapable of offering proper ministry. We must understand the reality: today, there are one billion people in the world with special needs. That is one in every seven people. The mission of Jesus is to make people His disciples, to confess Him as their personal Savior, and to join His church, being nurtured and nurturing others as they await the return of Jesus Christ. This mission is accomplished through preaching, teaching, and healing. We have been given this mission to reach the entire world—including those with special needs. Governmental and religious organizations have been established to

support the blind, the deaf, the physically disabled, those with mental illnesses, and others with special needs.

Churches should have dedicated services for people with special needs, such as braille lessons for the blind, sign language interpreters for the deaf, and accessible pathways for those using mobility devices. Jesus commanded us to love one another, and love is not just words—it must be demonstrated in action, involving everyone, because we are one body in Christ: “A new command I give you: love one another.” It is important to encourage church leaders to be intentional and creative in reaching and involving those with special needs in all church activities.

An important aspect of the ministry for special needs is encouraging the inclusion of people with special needs in our plans and activities. This work is still in progress and has not yet been fully achieved. Our mission is to preach the everlasting gospel in all contexts. The Sabbath School and church ministries departments are planning to preach the gospel of Jesus to children, adults, and youth. People with special needs should be invited to be part of the planning and participate in this special needs ministry.

Promotional events for special needs awareness could be held every three months.

Special days should be scheduled as promotional opportunities to help others learn more about this ministry—many people are not opposed; they simply don’t know about it because they haven’t encountered such situations. Paul reminds us in Romans 12:3 that no one should think of themselves as more important than another, because God has given faith to each one. It is important that we bless those who need our help. These individuals should be included in programs—they also have talents that can bless others, and using those talents brings joy and renewal to their own hearts.

They need educational materials such as weekly or yearly lesson guides, hymn books, and other guides the church uses for planning, like cooking classes, Pathfinder programs, and Vacation Bible School. These individuals should also receive training and help in finding employment. Thus, ministry for people with special needs involves the whole church.

Jesus touched the lives of those with special needs, such as the young man who could not speak. He walked from village to village healing the sick, and wherever He went, people brought their sick to Him. Orphans, widows, the blind, the deaf,

the physically disabled, those with mental and emotional illnesses, and everyone in need—when we love Jesus, we feel compelled by His love, His compassion, and His desire to help the needy. This is our way of expressing gratitude for His great love, for we are sinners who have received His grace. When we cast aside selfishness and stop focusing only on ourselves, and instead look to those who have fewer blessings than we do, we act in the spirit of Jesus. He said, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Jesus never tired of ministering to people. In various settings, He had healing power that reached every situation, and when He healed people, they were made whole—physically, spiritually, and mentally. Jesus bore our weaknesses and carried our diseases. Every church should examine the needs it wants to address, and those that have been successful can share with others so that many can benefit. Some of the needs of these individuals are personal and must be kept confidential.

What are special needs? Special needs are physical or mental conditions that significantly or slightly limit a person from performing certain activities. It could be a condition that hinders breathing, feeling, communicating, hearing, learning, completing tasks, seeing, walking, or working. Members may learn about someone’s condition from their relatives or from the person themselves, but they should not act as though they know the full extent of the disability or talk about it improperly. The dignity of these individuals must be protected. Many value their independence and do not want someone to “boss them around” or treat them like a child or “their mother.”

Seven Key Groups of People with Special Needs:

Developing countries have a larger population of individuals with special needs. Globally, around 15% of people live with some form of special need. It’s important to recognize that people with special needs are human beings just like us. They have emotions and can feel hurt or sadness when they are mistreated or ridiculed. It is essential that our children learn this early, as many often make jokes without realizing the harm they may cause. Offering support services is not about taking away their joy, but about empowering and including them.

1. **Cognitive or Intellectual Disabilities:** This refers to difficulties in managing daily tasks, interacting socially, or caring for oneself. A person may struggle to understand what they see or interpret social cues. This could stem from a brain injury, an accident, or a condition present from birth.
2. **Hearing Impairments:** A person may be unable to hear or may only hear faintly. This could be a lifelong condition or acquired later in life. Limited hearing may also impact their ability to speak clearly or at all.
3. **Invisible Disabilities:** These conditions are not immediately noticeable but greatly affect someone's life. Examples include arthritis, epilepsy, high blood pressure, cancer, sickle cell anemia, chronic fatigue syndrome, autism, and learning difficulties.
4. **Mobility Challenges:** Individuals who require help to move around may use devices like wheelchairs, special bicycles, or walking canes. This can result from aging, paralysis, amputation, or other conditions that reduce mobility.
5. **Emotional and Psychological Conditions:** These include disorders that interfere with daily functioning, such as depression, schizophrenia, anxiety, phobias, or obsessive-compulsive disorder.
6. **Communication Barriers:** This involves difficulties in speaking clearly, understanding language, or expressing oneself. It can also include not knowing the spoken language or conditions such as stuttering.
7. **Visual Impairments:** This includes those who are blind or have partial vision loss, possibly due to conditions like glaucoma or cataracts.

Leaders should train church members to understand how to support and relate to people with these needs. Resources such as accessible reading materials, inclusive libraries, inviting individuals from other churches, and holding special events are all valuable. Families of those with special needs should also be included. Learning about their cultural backgrounds is essential—what may be hidden in one culture might be openly discussed in another.

Teach people not to use offensive or derogatory labels. For example, don't call someone with glasses "four eyes" or refer to someone with a mental condition as crazy or retarded. Instead, say "a person with visual challenges" or "a person with

cognitive special needs.” Someone with a physical disability can be described as “a person with mobility challenges.”

Start programs with prayer and include scripture reading and acts of service. Plan special ministries for these individuals. In some regions, people use canes, guide dogs, or adaptive bikes—every person should feel welcome and able to worship freely with their spiritual family.

Continue training or recruiting sign language interpreters in cities so that churches can serve the hearing-impaired. Camps and special outreach programs for people with special needs are beneficial. They can organize evangelistic efforts and build supportive communities among themselves to reach others with similar experiences. Such ministries are also needed in colleges. Give these individuals opportunities to serve in church roles suited to their abilities.

This is the work of God’s church. We must reject discrimination, recognizing that God created all people—we are united by creation and redemption. Jesus came to tear down walls of division and open the way for every soul to come to God. God’s love reaches everyone. Those who choose to serve in this loving ministry help many find their way to Christ. They welcome everyone—man, woman, child, or youth—with compassion. All who worship God will walk in His ways, echoing the words of the Psalmist: “I am fearfully and wonderfully made!”

CHAPTER 10

CLAIMING THE PROMISE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALING

“These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons, they will speak in new tongues, they will pick up snakes; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” — Mark 16:17-18

I would like to say that often, as laypeople, we diminish God's power and what He desires to do for us. We expect healing to come through medicine but don't truly believe in God's power or His healing—“maybe it happens to others but not me” or “perhaps it's for a certain denomination.” No, not at all! This is His promise when He sent His people. Today, Abraham, Noah, Job, Moses, Joseph, and Paul are not here; you are the one who has been handed the baton to run a strong race with patience and comfort. These words were not written for them—they didn't even have the opportunity to read them—but for us, a generation with abundant written material! He Himself said, “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt. Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.” “He heals all your diseases.” What is left out of the word “all”?

It seems that the ability to be filled depended on how widely they opened their mouths. Let us not see God's hand as too short, for He has all power, all healing, and all knowledge. Many of us marvel that Joshua made the sun stand still, a great miracle indeed—but Scripture says that Bartimaeus made the One who made the sun stand still to stop, listen, and heal his blindness. In His earthly ministry, Christ spent more time healing people than preaching. Every layperson should take time to learn about the healing ministry, prayer, basic health education, and the human body. My friend, Preacher Harry, says, “The fact that Jesus spent more time healing than preaching doesn't mean one ministry is less important than the other, but it reminds us not to push this ministry outside our circle of evangelism.”

We have seen that in HIS NAME, believers will cast out demons and lay hands on the sick and they will recover. Laypeople and all Christians should claim this promise.

We often recite and repeat the miracles of the Old and New Testaments—like the parting of the Red Sea, Elijah's miracles, or those of the apostles—yet forget that even today God is performing the same miracles, and perhaps even greater,

because we are at the edge of earth's history. The Scriptures say that these things were written not for them, but for us! Many of them had no written Scriptures, but we do! Jesus promised to be with us to the very end of the age. We see several instances in the Bible where signs and miracles accompany the preaching of the gospel. There is no place where the gospel was preached without miracles. We cannot disregard this important aspect in today's world that is full of doubt and shaken faith. The layperson today has an opportunity to do the same and even greater things through God's power. Jesus said that we would do what He did—and even more—if we believe in Him, obey Him, and depend on Him 100%.

A layperson who is loving and lovable has a good opportunity to minister to people's health. Jesus saw the crowds and had compassion on them. Compassion is a precious gift for those in need. Our Christ—the same One who performed miracles on earth—continues to perform miracles through His servants who are led by the Spirit of God. A layperson led by Christ and willing to be used by the Spirit will carry on that ministry. Limited and flawed knowledge of creation has made us unaware that the Creator God can also heal and even create new body parts within us. Hallelujah!

Healing comes from God alone—100%—just as creation comes from Him. Our role as laypeople is to intercede for the sick and those in various types of pain. The praise and glory belong to HIM when someone is healed—not to us.

And if someone is not healed, the layperson should not be blamed. Not everyone will be healed by a miracle, but some will be comforted through the prayer of faith and dependence on God. It is God, in His great wisdom, who decides what to do for each patient. If a patient is not healed, they may die with peace in their heart, the hope of salvation, and even perhaps a smile. One way to bring people to our gatherings or to know Jesus is to offer prayers for those facing various challenges—whether health-related or otherwise. Jesus Himself addressed the real-life problems people faced more than He preached. He looked at their needs, desired to do good for them, met their most urgent problems, and then said, "Follow Me." Many cannot come to Christ until they see His greatness through healing and prayer. You cannot ask them to follow Jesus until they have "tasted and seen that the Lord is good." Some may not be physically healed, but they will be transformed—they will not remain the same; they will be spiritually healed, and their hope will be reignited. We see that God continues to do mighty works

all over the world, especially in unreached places, such as nations that worship other gods. Many have been miraculously healed.

Illness and suffering exist in every class or community worldwide, making it a pathway to reach all people globally. A layperson must be cautious so that these events—miracles and healing—are not used merely to draw people to church, but not to Christ. Many churches have used this method as a draw that is not the one Christ used. Many people now attend gatherings not for spiritual healing, but due to emotional excitement, developing a “miracle-only” religion and neglecting the core pillars of faith. People love to crowd where they hear there are miracles, yet their hearts are not focused on the essential truth in the bigger picture of healing. However, Jesus did not wake up in the morning saying, “Today I’m going to perform miracles!” But when the need for healing arose, He healed.

Nowadays, many use advertisements that make miracles the top priority rather than the Gospel. Let us remember that even those who were healed eventually died. Therefore, we must care for both: healing of our earthly bodies and, more importantly, eternal life. A layperson must always remain in Christ, confessing and repenting of their sins so that their prayers are not hindered and their God-given ministry is not blocked.

A certain preacher was once called to cast out a demon, and while praying, the demon said, “You cannot cast me out—you yourself are guilty of...” and the demon listed the preacher's sinful behaviors. We must set everything right in Christ.

In recent times, many fake miracles have been reported. Even some preachers engage with people before they come forward for prayer—only for someone to suddenly throw away their crutch, claiming to be healed, when in reality they had no illness to begin with. This trend of false miracles has caused many to question the authenticity of true miracles. Some Christians are skeptical when people seek healing miracles during public sermons. Others feel that linking healing miracles to preaching confuses those who wish to turn to Christ. In response, some preachers have decided to stop praying for miracles altogether to avoid people coming to Christianity only for healing, rather than to accept Christ himself.

The English have a saying: after bathing the baby, they pour out the water along with the baby—or they discard the worm along with the stick it’s on. It’s important to remember that God’s power is limitless. Even scientists in the field of space

tell us about the trillions of stars and planets within our galaxy. Reaching these stars would take trillions of light-years, and light travels at 186,000 miles per second. Just think about how far light would travel in a year!

Given the abundance of fake miracles, and the fact that many people cannot distinguish between fake and genuine ones, we cannot claim that God has failed.

Modern society has introduced many factors that negatively affect our health. God created humans to eat natural foods and live according to specific lifestyles. Health is incredibly valuable. People have spent years chasing wealth, only to lose their health in the process. After losing their health, they often spend all their accumulated wealth trying to get it back. Without health, nothing else matters.

Some people say, "Let me eat and do whatever I want—why should anyone care about my health?" This mindset is incorrect. A healthy lifestyle helps reduce pain and prevents unnecessary spending. When we are unwell, our faces show sadness, and we end up spreading that sadness to others around us.

Remember, you'll be more helpful to those around you if you maintain good health. Whether it's family, friends, or community, you'll be able to carry out your responsibilities and provide support to others. One person once said, "Let me die enjoying myself, eating and drinking whatever I want—it's my body, right?" But our bodies are invaluable. God created us to glorify Him, and when we are sick, the Creator shares in that sorrow as well.

Furthermore, our society is impacted. For instance, someone with diabetes may eventually have to amputate a leg due to complications. Their family will then have to care for them—providing food, transporting them in a wheelchair, and reducing their overall productivity. Their family—children, spouse—will experience emotional hardship. If you have young children, you won't be able to play with them or escort them to school. Therefore, it's not true that your health is your concern alone—it impacts others. Governments also spend billions managing public health issues.

The first doctor is yourself. The doctor doesn't have the time to get to know you—he only spends a few minutes with you before writing a prescription. He doesn't understand how you feel, nor does he share the same concern for your body as you do. Some people have even undergone unnecessary surgeries just to line the

doctor's pockets. In many Western nations, nearly half of all children are born via cesarean sections.

You are the best person to understand how you feel and what's going on in your body. You should only seek medical attention for emergencies—if you break a leg, suffer a stroke, or experience sudden issues. Otherwise, you can maintain your health daily by practicing simple preventive measures.

I understand that there are things we cannot avoid as human beings—like accidents or acts of violence.

President Nyerere once said that the colonizer told us to throw away our spears, and they would give us guns to fight our enemies. The surprising part is that when we discarded our spears, the guns we were given came with conditions! This is also what happened with our hospitals. We discarded traditional knowledge of herbal remedies and simple treatments, and now we rush to hospitals even for minor problems—only to find that medicines are often unavailable. Many Western countries are now teaching natural, simple healing methods, such as the use of plants, water, and other resources (naturopathy).

Let's not simply imitate others. People from the East, particularly in Asia, aren't ashamed to eat their traditional foods or use their traditional medicine. A layperson should learn simple treatments to assist their community and those they spiritually support. They shouldn't be motivated by greed, exploiting those with no other options to purchase expensive products. Pastor Kisaka, our friend, once said that when someone is sick, they will do anything—even hold onto a banana tree all night long if they believe it will help. Don't take advantage of such people out of greed.

A layperson can be a tremendous asset wherever they live, offering help and support based on what they learned growing up and more!

We've included some health tips in this book, but there are many more in our book on Health.

These principles are part of the NEWSTART-GS approach. The ten key natural health practices for prevention are as follows:

1. Nutrition - N

2. Exercise - E
3. Water - W
4. Sunshine - S
5. Temperance - T
6. Fresh Air - A
7. Rest - R
8. Trust in God - T
9. Gratitude Attitude - G
10. Serving Others - S

CHAPTER 11

CHILD UPBRINGING

Since the upbringing of children is important, we will briefly touch on it so that they may not be a shame but a blessing to us as believers through the grace of Jesus. Raising children is a task because one sinner is raising another sinner. The success of raising children is when our children can live independently without us and conduct their lives in spiritual, physical, emotional, economic, intellectual, and social aspects. When a child has bad behavior, “it brings shame to the father and embarrasses the mother!” We do not advise having a nanny take care of your child all the time. We also do not advise sending children to full-time boarding schools, unless it is secondary school, and that too should be a necessity. The child should know God at home, and know how to relate to their peers, and even in marriage, at home. Parents are called aunt and uncle, and the aunts in the boarding schools are called mother! Stay with your children. Seek books on parenting and read them. We have written a book on child upbringing; write to us, and we will send it to you at a good price. There is no one who is an expert in parenting except that the great Word promises, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” This is a promise; let us do our part and claim it from God. The success of raising children is if you enable the child to live without you!

There is no better book for upbringing than the word of God. Other books by Christian authors such as Child Guidance by Ellen White and Parenting is Not for Cowards by Dr. Dobson have been leading in excellence for many years and have blessed many worldwide for upbringing both the children of the world and those who love God. The alphabet for quality parenting is the same. Look at what has been written by those who sincerely love God even online (How to raise behaved and Godly children). A person named Scott has written extensively about raisingtheremnant (raising children who will be the remnant of God's faithful believers in heaven). You can find much of his work on YouTube in the Belt of Truth Ministries service. You will find much there and from other believers! This is a small contribution to Africa, since we don't have a culture of writing, but let us pray that we may get such materials here in East Africa. I truly believe that the greatest parent is God, and thus there is no complete upbringing without teaching the child about the God of heaven, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

The education of our children is important because many curriculums are set to help those who have established them fulfill their own desires. In Prussia, the leaders of education said that the goal of education is to subdue children to do what will help them. So, when you are writing the goals of your child's education, what will they be beyond knowing how to read, write, and count? A child is a child whether the child is the child of a spiritual leader or an ordinary citizen, but many people want to point fingers at our children. For example, if someone comes and asks your child to do something, and the child refuses or says they are busy, they will be told, "You, child of the church elder, are so bold!" Many children of spiritual leaders 'feel the spirit of rebellion or hypocrisy,' as a child of a pastor in South Africa told me, who was hurt by the words of church members.

Remember that the calling to do the work of God is yours and your husband's, but your children in the future will make their own choice. Raise them as children of God whom you want to enter heaven, not as if they have something more important than others. Raise them to know God personally, for this cannot be inherited! Remember, God has no grandchildren, only sons and daughters. Remember to give them your time. A father who is never seen at home because he is preaching and the one who is never seen because he is drinking, can have the same impact, because a young child does not know whether the father is going to serve God or to drink alcohol, it is you who knows how to fill that gap; what the child sees is that the father is absent, and when you return home, the child notices whether you care or not. Children should be given love without measure, whether they are bad or good, because even God deals with us in our badness, He disciplines and corrects us because that is love. Do not punish your child in anger because it is an act of love.

In the past, we had mothers or grandmothers who helped with child behavior, but today, people live in cities or distant regions, so we lack that help. When a person gives birth, they do not know how to take care of the child. We watch TV and get advice that has no positive impact. Then, we allow children to watch anything and go with any neighbors without knowing where they are. Plastic diapers have come in, which make even simple teachings like 'toilet training' disappear. Where I live, there are children of six years walking around in these diapers because mothers do not have time to train them to go to the toilet. Children know computers, have even male/female friends or boyfriends and girlfriends, but are still in diapers. Do not let your child be raised by TV or the community. You must write a list of goals

for teaching your child, do not leave it to chance thinking that the child will know what they are supposed to learn.

Character is the only thing a child or an adult will take with them to heaven, not toys, cars, houses, food, or clothes; I think we will find those there, and even more or better than the ones on earth, “what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). The upbringing of children is more than just giving them food, clothes, and shelter. Our children need from us our love, our examples, our time, and our teachings.

The first lesson a child should learn is obedience. This is the most important lesson of all. Since a child cannot see God, by obeying parents, even when they are older and understand God, they will obey God. You are the example of God, if you want your children to have the character of God, you must have that character of God yourself; then they will imitate you and become like God - Christ-like or God-like. Do not say, “Follow what I say but not what I do.” No! Children have big ears, they are watching your behavior and your language, parent, beware! Watch how you treat your spouse, how you speak to your parents, watch how you speak to church members, watch how you speak to the poor, orphans, widows, and strangers! Watch, watch, watch! A woman once wrote a book called Fierce Women. She said she was so fierce that her husband was afraid of her. It wasn't that she had the right to be fierce, but it was her behavior wanting to take control and see that when she did something, it was done perfectly.

This is a behavior that many of us have, and we can only overcome it by the grace of God and the preparation of our hearts through reading the Word of God. In Psalm 119:110, it says how to cleanse your heart: "By obeying His commands, following the Word of the Lord, therefore I have hidden Your Word in my heart." You will be surprised, and your study will be complete.

As I have grown, even today, as I walk through Tanzania, I hear women speaking harsh words like stones weighing them down: "Dog, you are just like your father," "You fool," "Life will defeat you, you'll end up like Alexander of Macedonia, even though you are good in school, you will fall." Truly, if a child or their father is a dog, then you too will be a dog, because dogs give birth to dogs.

We have words that discourage us, and often, we are poor. We don't mean that, but it only takes a small thing to open the tap of words and curses to burst out. I have realized that curses are a form of intoxication that we should pray for God to remove, especially for children.

Lesson Two: A child must learn to deny themselves and control their soul. They will be able to resist temptations and take charge of many things. Lesson Three that is important for children is to know work and skills. This is even more important than school! Because we take children to school so that one day they can get jobs. Read McCullough's book if you don't know the age at which a child should understand work. We have written about it in our book, "Alphabets of Upbringing" as well; look for this book on the website '401 ways to get your children to work!' Many children fall into alcoholism, smoking, bad gangs, or bad behavior due to not understanding these three lessons. Choose children's entertainment carefully, and forbid things like taking children to children's discos or certain kinds of parties if you want them to love God and even people.

In the past, our grandparents didn't do these things, even though they knew little. Why destroy children with such evil? Read a little and find suitable entertainment for children. I remember those secondary school discos where people visited each other; they led to many things, like immorality and fornication. I speak from what I saw with my own eyes in schools like Ndanda and Rugambwa. Competitive games, I would like to say, should be avoided because they breed cruelty and allow the devil to lift his head. Games should be for exercise and fun, not competition. If a child fails, let them not develop hatred, but see it as a way to build relationships with others and to invigorate their body.

A gentle husband, due to his leadership responsibilities, may not have much time for children. The wife should plan the housework, cooking, and other things so that when the husband comes home, he will have time for the children. She can help with school matters or play with them during that time if the circumstances allow. Learn the methods to help children love God. Tetz and Hopkins have written a book to help children love God called "Yes We Can Keep Them in Church." Adventist Frontier Mission has written a book "Grow Word Changer," which is a great help to us as parents to learn from others; no one has all the knowledge.

There are many books to help our children continue to worship with us, for when they reach around 13 years old, they want to be free to choose whether to go or

not go to church. They say that 75% of children accept God and trust Him before they turn 10, and 23% before they turn 17. After that, it's like everything is over! After that, it is only God's great grace that covers us, as 1% of people believe in God and trust Him after they turn 53. I would like to say that even the devil believes that God exists, but his intention and actions are evil; that is, he does not want to worship God. So, teach children that believing in God, without knowing and trusting Him, is not enough. Many rebellious children, when followed up, have shown that their upbringing by their mothers was very harsh. For example, Hitler's mother, Idi Amin's, or Napoleon's. Let mothers pray to God so that we can have the love that comes from God for our children.

They say that when a child is 3 years old, their character is already formed, and by 6 years old, it is complete. Catholics say, "Give me the child until he is 7, then take him, and he will be a Catholic for life." A fish is bent when it's still young, and Samuel, for example, may have stayed with his mother until he was 5, but he was already ready to be a mighty leader for God. Moses also stayed with his mother until he was about 12, and he became a hero. A child is known by their works; do not despise small beginnings. Jeremiah 1:5 says, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born, I sanctified you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am a youth." But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you," says the Lord.

Sometimes a spiritual leader tries to solve people's problems and goes on missions, forgetting about his children. His wife may feel that her husband does not care, maybe he is tired of hearing problems all day, and when he comes home, he does not want to deal with more problems from the children and the household. When a wife reaches this point, she feels she needs a husband and father for the children, not a preacher or spiritual leader! A pastor might have promised his child that he would attend their football game, but when called by other members, he cancels that plan. He should learn to see if he is called for non-urgent matters, and the message should be passed to someone else and addressed later so he can spend time with his children. Just like Moses was told by his father-in-law Jethro to delegate responsibilities and not do everything himself, it is important to also serve his family. It's important for his family to rest, like sleeping at night instead

of hosting guests and talking all night until dawn. This causes chaos, especially for young children.

Balance is needed in family matters so that children do not grow up without any time for their father. I know that as children of a spiritual leader, they understand to some extent that certain things they must outgrow. Children must learn order (discipline); it is a law from heaven. There should be set times for meals, sleep, and prayer. Children love order from birth because it brings discipline. A newborn should have a set time for breastfeeding, for example, every 3 hours. This will help them organize their life and develop discipline as they grow. Not every time they cry for milk should they be given it immediately, as this will prevent them from learning self-denial and discipline. Some children love their father's work for certain reasons. For example, they meet many people and build contacts. Take your children with you when you go preaching, teach them work so they can inherit it and have great experience in upbringing. Don't isolate them; take them to the meetings with you when possible.

Teach your child to love your ministry, do not grumble or complain, so that your children do not end up hating the ministry and even God. If you have complaints, discuss them privately with your spouse. Many have cursed their children, and they have lost faith, saying, "I know the people of this church, I've heard about their behavior from my father; they are hypocrites, what's the use of staying in faith or in church?" My brother-in-law and his wife often criticized pastors, church members, and leaders in front of the children. This was poison, which I saw in the children, and I was afraid. Let's pray for wisdom, perhaps even your spouse does not need to know all your complaints about the members, but only some; wisely choose what to share with your family. Sometimes, you reconcile with members you had conflict with, but your community still holds grudges, and you don't tell them that you have already reconciled and forgiven each other.

Let's look at the example of Abraham when God instructed him to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham reflected on his wife's faith and love, but realized it wasn't as strong as his own. I believe he didn't share the news with his wife, but only with his son. If he had told his wife, she might have avoided the situation, but he had to reveal God's plan to his son. Isaac was spiritually mature and strong; he was not a child!

I read a report about 24 pastors in Australia from one extended family, including grandparents, cousins, uncles, etc. I was really surprised because we, by nature, often share the struggles of work and discourage our children. We give our families the impression that we are martyrs. However, God's work brings many joys. I even saw many preachers receiving gifts from the congregation. Have you ever received a gift from the congregation while caring for their spiritual well-being? A friend of mine in Kenya, married to a pastor, told me several times, "Many wives of workers complain so much about the church. I see it as a curse. We have our house paid for, 75% of our children's education is covered, and we even receive gifts from the congregation. We are treated almost for free, and the church pays for it. But people still complain."

Avoid the attitude of complaining. When you first decided to serve the Lord, you were eager, but over time you may feel as though you are being cheated, and others seem to benefit more. Pray for this spirit to leave you. I experienced this when I got my first paycheck at work, thinking I was taking advantage of others. After two years, I began to complain, feeling that I was being cheated! Without Jesus, it's easy to fall into the Israelites' trap of grumbling, with valid reasons. For example, John the Baptist thought, "Jesus is my cousin, I am doing good work, why isn't He helping me?"

His faith was shaken, but eventually he understood that "HE must increase, but I must decrease," and the Bible says, "Among those born of women, there is none greater than he!" I don't even fully understand that. Everyone is born of a woman except for Adam and Eve! A child should not be shielded from the reality, joy, or pain of ministry. They need to learn the struggles others face so they understand the burdens their father carries and the journey of life to some degree. They must understand that people are imperfect, and some make the lives of spiritual leaders difficult. Children can be involved in special prayers for these families and help with ministry in non-private ways. One pastor's wife said, "Servants of God who despise their father's work have not been taught about the pains, joys, and struggles of ministry."

There's a lot in ministry that children learn, such as "meeting people from different cultures, tribes, and backgrounds, learning from their testimonies, engaging with professionals, and receiving their services because they are led by their father, having a father whose morals are intact, not engaging in things like theft or drunkenness, knowing God intimately, and praying through all struggles."

Some think children shouldn't be involved in ministry, assuming they will only experience good things. However, it's all part of the battle between Satan and God's kingdom. If many children were involved in ministry, they could be a blessing to that work, though families still have choices.

Consider the missionary families, both abroad and at home, who have sacrificed everything, even young children, and have achieved great success. Remind your husband kindly that the children miss him and that they will soon grow up and leave. One thing I observed in Western countries, which is my opinion, that weakens ministry, is having a wife with more authority and say than the spiritual leader. This becomes especially difficult when you clearly feel called by God to do a certain ministry or visit someone, and she resists it. I have seen preachers being transferred to manage different locations, and the wife refuses, claiming she has her own important job, and that the preacher should follow her. If the husband had a regular job, it would be fine, but in God's work, priority should be given to the task if people genuinely want to serve, because we are in spiritual warfare, and if we treat it lightly, we will fail.

"Turmoil in the toybox" is something worth considering. For children's health, parents must think about the toys and cartoons they buy for their kids. Modern toys, like He-Man, Barbie, Cabbage Patch, Care Bears, Dungeons and Dragons, Thundercats, and many others, have strange designs and often promote violence or unrealistic ideas. How children play with these toys can either help their behavior and health or harm them. In the past, children or people would make their own toys. Today, factories produce these items with embedded cultures and philosophies. When children play with something, they often immerse themselves in it, making it seem real. Scientific research shows that children are like sponges, soaking up everything around them. Many modern toys are linked to witchcraft, homosexuality, illegal sex, idol worship, murder, immorality, and other harmful things that are detestable to God. Children imitate what they see in these toys. If they keep doing this, they'll fail to develop a real understanding of life. Fantasy, especially when filled with occult themes, is a problem. Toys often feature witchcraft symbols and the ideologies of Satan and violence. Some children have even committed suicide or killed others because of the toys they played with.

In some games, children begin to believe they are more powerful than God, thinking they have abilities and knowledge that surpass God's. Do you monitor the toys your children play with? Or when you receive second-hand toys or gifts, do

you simply accept them without questioning whether they are from stores selling dangerous toys for your kids? Let the seller know, investigate, and offer advice that could benefit the children in your community. Do your children, while playing their role-playing games, eat unhealthy foods? Is this because of the toys they are using? Parents can't know every game their children play, but it's important to have a strong sense of awareness. If a child continues with such toys, by the time they turn ten, they could be deep into witchcraft, violence, or even suicide. Play with your children sometimes to see what's going on. Television has also contributed to promoting these toys, and children think they are missing out or that they are out of fashion. Cartoons influence children in certain ways, and they fail to realize that the conversations are for adults, even though the characters are children. Many children have too much freedom without adult supervision, which leads them to engage in things that aren't beneficial to them.

Television reduces reading, promotes daydreaming, lowers creativity, self-worth, and trust, increases anger, encourages crimes like rape, theft, murder, or suicide. It trivializes piracy, fosters extreme anger in children, and promotes fights and sex outside of marriage. Television steals family time, hinders spiritual growth, reduces brainpower, leads to obesity, and makes people lack meaningful life plans. Don't do things just because others are doing them; use your mind and ask yourself, "Does this benefit me? Does it add unnecessary costs? Is it just a trend that will drain me without reason?" For example, a visitor came to us and saw people drinking almond milk, a pricey nut milk from the West. Although he didn't have a job, he said he liked this milk and used the little money he had to buy it, despite coming from a family with no electricity. He had planned an unrealistic life. Similarly, shopping malls have introduced overpriced ordinary clothes. I went there and was told a skirt costs \$80. I was shocked because I could make the same skirt for just \$10 by cutting cloth or buying second-hand. Some competitive sports like soccer and Canadian hockey have been linked to lying, cruelty, fights, tears, enemies, and friendships. Boxing has become a training ground for cruelty in many places, and entertainment is often sought to avoid work and responsibilities. Many would avoid such things if they valued work, good behavior, and kindness. Some sports fans have poor morals, such as breaking the law, arrogance, not liking school, and dominating others through force. I've seen athletes with talent but poor morals, using curses, committing crimes, or being unfaithful.

Avoid imitating others. God has given us the ability to choose, and He doesn't interfere with our freedom, but we must use it wisely to bring about good outcomes. Reading the Word of God is more beneficial for the brain than anything else. The way we view things is what we become. Let children be taught to work and do it every day, giving them time to read books that will help their lives. Guard their hearts, eyes, and ears to keep them pure.

The sin of Sodom was pride, indulgence, success, and a lack of compassion for the poor and needy. These behaviors have caused the downfall of many nations, including the Greeks, Romans, Babylonians, and Persians. The excess of material goods like dolls, clothes, and food has become a curse for many nations. Let us have regular family gatherings each week to support each other, share meals, and serve others. There are many things families can do together, such as learning songs, budgeting or managing money, cooking, sewing, visiting libraries, reading books from different countries, gardening, and using mealtime to teach children. We should sing and read the Word of God together and pray as a family. Go on camping trips, explore beautiful places.

Character is the only thing a person, whether child or adult, will take with them to heaven—not dolls, cars, houses, food, or clothing. I believe that we will find better things in heaven than we can imagine, as it says in 1 Corinthians 2:9, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human mind has conceived the things God has prepared for those who love Him.”

Raising children involves more than providing food, clothing, and shelter. Our children need our love, example, time, and teachings.

The first lesson a child should learn is obedience. This is the most important lesson of all. Since a child does not see God, their obedience to parents, even as they grow older and understand God, will lead them to obey God. You are an example of God's character—if you want your children to have godly behavior, you must display that same behavior yourself. Only then will they imitate you and be like God—Christ-like, not like you. Do not say, “Follow what I say, not what I do.” Children observe closely, so be careful with your actions. Pay attention to how you respond to your spouse, how you interact with your parents, how you speak to the poor, orphans, widows, and strangers. Watch your words and actions closely! This can only be achieved through God's grace and your own preparation by studying His Word, as Psalm 119:110 reminds us, “I have hidden Your word in

my heart that I might not sin against You.” When you do this, you will be amazed at how they will follow your example.

As I grew up and continue to walk through Tanzania, I often hear women saying harsh words, like “You dog, just like your father,” “You fool,” “Life will defeat you, you’ll be like Alexander of Macedonia.” If a father or child is treated badly, the child may end up with the same attitude. Negative words can quickly discourage, and often, the poor don’t mean harm, but they can unintentionally speak curses. I’ve come to realize that harsh words are like a form of intoxication, and we should pray for God to remove them, especially from our language with children.

The second lesson children need to learn is self-denial and self-control. If they master these, they will be able to resist temptations and manage themselves better.

The third essential lesson is understanding work and skills. This is more important than academic knowledge! We send children to school to learn work. If you’re unsure about when a child should learn specific skills, McCullough’s book can guide you. We also cover this in our “Alphabet of Parenting” book. Many children fall into bad behaviors like alcoholism, smoking, and bad company because they didn’t learn these key lessons. Choose children’s entertainment carefully. Take a stand against sending children to discos or certain parties if you want them to love God and people. In the past, our ancestors didn’t indulge in such practices, and they were fine. Why expose children to such evil? Children need proper forms of entertainment to help them grow. Competitive sports can sometimes breed cruelty, and we should avoid them; they give the devil a chance to rise up. Instead, games should be for fun and exercise. When children lose, they should view it as a chance to build relationships, not a source of bitterness.

If your husband is busy with his leadership duties and doesn’t have much time for the children, plan your household duties so that when he comes home, he can spend time with the children. He can help with schoolwork or play with them when time allows. Find strategies to help children love God. Tetz and Hopkins have written a book titled “Yes We Can Keep Them in Church.” There are many resources available to help our children continue worshiping with us, as by the time they turn 13, they often want more independence and may stop attending church. Studies show that 75% of children accept and believe in God before the age of 10,

and 23% by age 17. After that, it becomes much harder, and it is only by God's grace that anyone believes after age 53.

Even Satan believes that God exists, but his motives and actions are evil. Teach children that simply believing in God is not enough; they must know and trust Him. Many children who grew up to be cruel were raised in harsh conditions, especially by their mothers, like Hitler's mother, Idi Amin's mother, or Napoleon's mother. Let us mothers pray that God will give us His love to raise our children well. Experts say a child's character is shaped by age 3, and by age 6, it is solidified.

Catholics say, "Give me a child until he is 7, and he will remain a Catholic for life." This is a reminder that the early years of a child's life are crucial in shaping their future. Samuel's mother likely kept him until he was 5, but he was already prepared to be a great leader for God. Moses also stayed with his mother until he was about 12, and he became a mighty leader. Children are recognized by their deeds. Don't disregard the small beginnings. Jeremiah 1:5 says, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." This reminds us that God has plans for each child from the moment of conception.

Sometimes spiritual leaders try to address the needs of others but forget their own children. A wife may feel that her husband doesn't care enough, especially if he is worn out from dealing with others' problems all day. When he comes home, he may not want to engage with the children. When a wife reaches this point, she may feel she needs her husband to be a father and not just a spiritual leader. A pastor might have promised his child to attend their game, but when called by church members, he cancels the plan. He should learn to delegate non-urgent matters so he can prioritize time with his children, just as Moses was advised by his father-in-law, Jethro, to delegate responsibilities to avoid doing everything himself, ensuring he could also minister to his own family.

It's also important for his family to get rest, such as sleeping at night instead of always having guests and talking every evening. This causes disruption, especially for small children.

There needs to be a balance in family matters; children should not grow up lacking time with their father. I know that children of spiritual leaders understand to some extent that some things will have to be overlooked. Many children love their

father's work for specific reasons. For example, they know many people and have access to various contacts.

A child should not be overly shielded from the realities, joys, or sorrows of ministry. They need to understand the pain of others so they can know what kind of burden their father carries. They need to understand that people are not perfect and that some people make the lives of spiritual leaders difficult. Children can be included in special prayers for these families and can help in ministry in certain ways, with matters that are not private.

The wife of a preacher once said, "Ministers of God whose children hate their father's work have not been taught about the pains, blessings, and pressures of ministry. There is so much in ministry that a child can learn from, for example, meeting people and learning languages, tribes, and different families—and even learning how to interact with people from different professions and benefit from their services because they are led by their father." "Not having a father with broken morals like theft or drunkenness." "Knowing God personally and praying in all troubles."

However, it is because of the spiritual battle between Satan and the Kingdom of God that children have become opposed to ministry. Many children, if included in ministry, would be a blessing to the work, but they have their own choices. Kindly remind your husband that the children miss him, and that they will soon grow up and leave home.

What is the most important thing in our lives? It is very important that each of us asks ourselves this question. What is the most important thing in your life? Is it wealth, education, fashion (especially for women), spouse, children, status? The Bible tells us this in the book of Matthew 6:33: "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Seeking the Kingdom of God, beloved, is the most important thing, and everything else will be added unto us. Seeking the Kingdom of God means doing all we can to be ready to meet Him when He returns. It also means preparing others, including friends, relatives, and especially our children. In the book of Jeremiah 13:20 there is a question we will be asked: "...Where is the flock that was entrusted to you, your beautiful flock?" This question may be directed at pastors or any other leaders—even government leaders—but we as parents will also be asked about the

children we were given. How will we answer, beloved, if we let our children perish because of our poor parenting?

This book aims to answer that question, so that when we are asked, we can say, “Here we are, Lord, together with the little flock of children you gave us.” Children are a reward from God (Psalm 127:3). When we are given a gift by someone, we value and take care of it deeply. I once asked a friend of mine for something, and she refused, saying, “I was given it as a gift—I can’t give it away.”

Another friend of mine known as Mama Mwangi (Rachel Mutero) taught me a very important lesson about how she valued a very small gift I had given her. We had a secret friendship game at our church in Karura. In this game, you pick a paper with someone’s name and pray for that person until the day of revelation. On that day, people bring their friends gifts according to their ability.

I had picked Mama Mwangi, and I gave her a cheap headscarf. When I gave it to her, she was very happy and used to wear it on special occasions, such as to church, even though she had other beautiful and expensive scarves. One day while she was traveling, her luggage was stolen, including the bag that had this scarf. She was very upset and told me that the scarf I had given her as a gift had been stolen!

This woman had lost her expensive clothes, but she grieved over the cheap scarf because it was a gift and she valued it greatly. So how much more should we value and take care of the gift of children that we have been given by God?

In these last days, Satan has especially targeted children. He knows that if he captures children, he has destroyed the church and the nation of tomorrow. Our children have become a burden instead of a blessing to us. We who read the Word of God know that prophecy is being fulfilled in our lives. Will we allow Satan to destroy our children through indulgence, drugs, and the ways of this world? What can we do to save our children? Is there any hope?

In the Bible, we read that when Moses and his brother Aaron went to Pharaoh in Egypt and asked him to allow them to go to the wilderness to worship their God, Pharaoh asked, “Who will be going with you?” Moses replied, “We will go with our young and our old, with our sons and our daughters...” (Exodus 10:8-9).

Likewise, we must also determine to go to heaven with our children, because God has promised to save our children in the book of Isaiah 49:25: "...I will contend with those who contend with you, and your children I will save."

"Carrying a pregnancy is not the hard part, the hard part is raising the child"—this is a saying many of us know. But as I grow older, I realize this saying is not entirely true, because even pregnancy gives many people trouble. Those who struggled to conceive and sought medical help will tell you this isn't true.

It's like those who say, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me"—people have come to realize that words can hurt deeply and cause wounds even more lasting than sticks or stones.

Those who miscarried and stared death in the face, like I did, know that this saying holds some truth—but only to an extent. In short, matters relating to children are tough. After having children, many of us are full of questions about what to do and seek advice.

For example, when I gave birth, I found that the people where I lived didn't sleep in the same room with a newborn, but instead used a monitor to know what was happening in the child's room—the baby would sleep alone.

When I asked an African mother, she said, "We Africans sleep with our children because it's cold here and the baby is a human being too, needing warmth and closeness to others. But Westerners often want to stay far from the child. Even when they turn 18, they are free to be independent. But in our families, we maintain close relationships with our children, even when they are grown."

When they say that sleeping next to a baby can lead to smothering them to death, it's not true. Still, how will you know if your child is sick or has a fever?

I did some research and found that cases of parents smothering babies in their sleep are rare, usually involving someone drunk or mentally ill. Even so, parents must be careful about their child's hygiene and breathing. Are the windows closed? Can the child get sick from sleeping with adults? Can the child have a bed near the parents, or must they sleep in the same bed? Another thing I read from a reliable child expert said, "I never let my children sleep with other children. Even when visiting people, they sleep on the floor, but don't let them sleep with other

children.”In general, what I want to say is: whether new or experienced, parents have a lot to learn at every stage, and there’s a lot we don’t understand.

It’s often said that you truly get to know a person’s character once they become a parent—and that’s very true. Even people who are usually calm can end up yelling or acting harshly. Many parents have disciplined their children out of anger, only to realize afterward how easy it is to hurt someone when you’re in control. There have been cases where parents have burned their children’s hands, beaten them with sticks or household objects, denied them food for days, and in extreme cases, even caused their deaths.

Some parents live comfortably, enjoying good meals and a better lifestyle, while their children live in much poorer conditions. I’ve personally noticed that I often fall short in parenting, and sometimes I feel someone else could do a better job. We are the image of God to our children. Ultimately, we are all God’s children. In heaven, our children will be our brothers and sisters—not our own anymore. We are simply caretakers appointed by God. We should always keep this in mind as we raise them.

However, some children mistreat their parents. They are proud, self-centered, and lack humility. Parents should be careful not to overly praise their children, especially in front of them. Saying things like, “You’re so smart,” or “You’re beautiful,” might boost their pride too much. Let children be children. Let them enjoy their childhood without forcing them to grow up too fast, like performers on stage.

In church, I’ve seen children disrespect others—even ignoring greetings. But when asked if they want to be missionaries, they say yes! They think serving God is just about living however they want. They don’t understand that the Christian life is about showing the fruit of the Spirit, like in Galatians chapter 5. These children have become proud and forgotten their humble roots. If they grow up and get jobs or marry, they will struggle to live genuine lives.

So, what kind of parenting helps raise a well-behaved child? Of course, we don’t want a child who’s abused or who grows up full of pride. Here are some suggestions:

Have a schedule, keep things organized, show care, teach self-control, practice moderation, assign chores, promote cleanliness, show love, provide discipline, and

gradually give children responsibility as they grow. These are the core things every child needs from their parents. Love means giving time and being patient.

Our goal should always be to keep what matters most at the center. What matters most in parenting is teaching good character and obedience to God. I know many Africans have deep respect for God—this is clear in our national anthems, customs, and traditions. Only God can help us raise children with good character. We can't do it on our own. God is the true and perfect Parent.

As parents, we need to slow down and make time to raise our children properly. We need to be role models through our actions, guide them, and turn them into learners and followers of Christ. Attending parenting seminars and reading parenting books should be a priority. Hearing other people's parenting stories can make us feel like we're failing—but don't be fooled—every family has its hidden struggles! We won't take our homes, cars, money, or food with us on the journey to heaven. What we will take are our character and the souls we helped lead to Christ.

The first seven years of a child's life are the foundation of their character. Someone once said, "Everything I needed to know in life, I learned in kindergarten." God is full of mercy—if we've made mistakes, we should sincerely confess and change. There's still time to help our children, our grandchildren, or even children in our communities. Many parents have spent sleepless nights and made sacrifices for their children. A parent usually loves their child more than the child loves them. May God reward your efforts.

A child becomes strong by learning self-discipline and how to put others first. Every parent has a "garden"—that garden is your child. Every day you plant something in that garden. Let's ask God to help us remove the bad seeds and weeds. In our prayers, let's not only focus on the negative. Challenges can lead to solutions. Don't dwell on what's wrong—focus on raising children with love and hope. Children are God's gift, and He loves them even more than we do.

Sometimes, our patience in parenting wears thin. A tragic example happened recently when a mother in Texas told her child not to drink water because he wet the bed. It was very hot where they lived. The child later died from dehydration. Doctors compared him to his twin and confirmed it. As parents, we get so busy—it makes you wonder why we even had children if we leave them in others' care

all the time. Teaching children self-control, self-denial, service, obedience, and work—these are five essential lessons. In the book of Deuteronomy, it says if a son is stubborn and gluttonous, he should be brought before the elders and stoned. Clearly, to God, disobedience and lack of self-restraint are serious matters.

The child is often a blessing not that parents have been told! But often the grace of God and the work they have done. "I love those who love me, and those who seek me early will see me" Mith 8:17. Begin good care early, the child arrives 3 years character has been built and six is complete! But if you are wrong as we, ask God for mercy to make you miraculously changing bad behavior. As the apostle Paul says "For the mind of the flesh is enmity against God, because it does not obey the law of God, and cannot obey" Romans 8: 7. It's a fight all day to have a good character of heaven!. Read the seven Romans and meditation, we will really rejoice in heaven this means in our heart as human beings will cease. The things of the world yalivyojiset is to marry the formation of the child. Every day ask God and continue the war. There is no school of this school to be China, Tanzania or Mexico! Even Cain killed his brother Abel before television. Look at the life of Nadab, Abihu, Absalom, and others whose parents were elders of faith. The new baby who is in hand is an angel but a sinner as all human beings. It is you, to bring to God and raise him in the fear of God. Do not have a spirit of complaints and trails, that made the Muslims to die in the wilderness all, two defects. God does not answer flies, but answers prayer!. Try to avoid staying in the cities, it is bad to raise children. It found Lot, although he was a righteous man, to stay in the city he lost children and wife. Perhaps Noah stayed in the countryside, he saved his family. Cities have many trials, although it has schools, shops and services, has a lot more bad. Socialist villages had this problem to bring many young people together without a shub and give you the evil of evil from many encountered screenings. We see Isaac and his obedience, though he was a strong young man to defeat the Father, he obeyed the sacrifice and the father of Abraham. Many children, have destroyed the work of serving the God of their parents. Many children have destroyed their parents' marriages and those who have good behavior have built their family marriage. Look at Jacob's life and Esau separated their parents. Even parents made a mistake of children and it became a big poison. Rebekah destroyed things here. Mothers, "the influence of the mother and prayer has a lot of power". See the prayer and work of Moses, and how Moses was a commander and spiritual leader. Samuel stayed with mom shortly, but he became the commander of Israel (President and High Priest). Mothers should not leave,

there is no more important job than this to help the child be in heaven one day. Mother must have much, dominate the soul and self-denial. They say a great battle is to compete with the soul (Battle of Self). The soul, that is, the old personality. The Nazarite's mother was told to do some important things; These are like not drinking alcohol n.k. We see the mother of Samuel wanted to care for the child to serve God. Many laymen we want to raise the child to serve us! God is interested in the non-greed or selfish prayer. Start praying this today. The marriage of Hannah and Elikana and other shows travers are very bad for marriage and child care! Not God's plan. Daniel, Mishaël, Ananias and Azariah were young people in the book of Daniel but they were able to overcome the great temptations. Where did they learn this? Not slavery! But at home they were taught to deny themselves, and avoid disappointment. Their mother taught them not to eat. Christ his first teacher who was human was his mother. He did not go to the rabbinical school to learn! Parent is the first teacher. He learned to live a difficult life, to work, denying the soul. And that's why it's important to stay at home and taught until you get eight to ten years old. However many schools have many children one class, even the third class children do not read. The parent will teach his child to know about having a book for just a few months! He will defeat the teacher with 100 children in the classroom, since he has one! Even if the parent has read the first class he can make this activity for the same quality has one. We see Mariam and Yusuf by not looking for one day when they were married to the baby Christ, and it took three days to find him. Even with us parents to ignore, beat the home and the people, or pray we can lose our children and lose God in our lives. Do not be afraid of the hard work of nurturing even to abandon the child, it is better to have one child and take care of than sending your children to others who do not appreciate certain things you value. This week a female doctor from Bostwana committed suicide, my friend went to the funeral, he said that this doctor got a child and took him to be cared for by a sister to do her medical work. When he took the child at 10 years he had a jazba that was abandoned by the mother and the father who was also a dentist. He studied well until taking a doctoral degree of chemistry, but every day he grieved the mother until, mother committed suicide. These days are the final end of history, not to invest children for a certain uncle or aunt. One parent complained the rope put the child to uncle and uncle and taught alcohol. Grandparents and grandmothers also help you, do not give your leadership to them, because they are the children or are not careful not to deal with children. Whether emergency only invest your child for people here and

there. There are others do not want to take care of children and they were pregnant unexpectedly. For Eve I advise you to find a way to give parents who will keep this child well. Don't think of killing the baby in any way. He is a perfect creature, even abortion to be taboo. The child is not worm we give in the stomach. This character has been built in pets. Countries like the US four million women are pregnant every year. Parents we will be asked for our children. People help you are bonus, not part of your formation program! However as an elder if you left your children and others all the time will be difficult to help you have as a passer. Those who have been careful, as we have heard a lot. Example driver who has entered the relationship with the child who was running him to school. Yaya who put the baby on the oven and killed him for the fight against his rich man. Yaya who used a child toothbrush and gave the baby AIDS and so forth. We also know there are many parents who persecute Maya and workers also and that are another topic to talk about. The parent is important to say and understand some questions, yes and not not (ambiguity). Lessons, sex, sleep to teach his child from age, not hear others (false visas). The house must have the principles of compliance, and family meetings and children per month or week. A parent should not be afraid to follow some rules seeing the child. Eli the priest knew his children; but did not give the work of the temple, they continued to do it. He saw he would miss or frighten them.

CHAPTER 12

CHILD UPBRINGING

Since the upbringing of lay people's children is important, we shall briefly discuss it so that they may not be a disgrace, but rather a blessing to us as laypeople by the grace of Jesus. Raising children is a responsibility because one sinner is raising another sinner. Successful parenting is when our children are able to live independently of us and manage their lives in spiritual, physical, emotional, economic, intellectual, and social aspects. A child with bad behavior “brings praise to his father and shame to his mother!” We do not advise that a nanny be the primary caregiver of your child all the time. We do not recommend sending children to boarding school entirely! Maybe in secondary school, and only if it's absolutely necessary. A child learns about God at home and learns how to relate with others and within marriage at home. Parents have been replaced by “aunts and uncles” while boarding school staff have been called “mom.” Stay with your children. Find books on child-rearing and read them. We have written a book on child upbringing—write to us and we'll send it to you at a fair price.

No one is an expert in parenting, but the Word gives us a promise: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” This is a promise—let us do our part and claim it before God. Success in parenting is when you enable your child to live without you! There is no better parenting book than the Word of God. Other Christian authors' books can supplement it, such as *Child Guidance* by Ellen White and *Parenting is Not for Cowards* by Dr. Dobson. These books have been highly rated for years and have blessed many globally in raising children, whether for worldly people or those who love God. The standards of good parenting are the same. Look at how they were written by those who genuinely love God—even online (search “How to raise behaved and Godly children”).

A man named Scott has written much on *Raising the Remnant* (raising children who will be part of God's faithful remnant). You can find a lot from him on YouTube under *Belt of Truth Ministries*. You'll find much there and from other believers! These resources are rare in Africa since we lack a writing culture, but let's pray we can access such material in East Africa. I firmly believe that the greatest parent is God, and so no parenting is complete without teaching a child about the God of heaven—the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

Our children's education is important because many curriculums are designed to fulfill the desires of their creators. In Prussia, educational leaders declared that the goal of education was to condition children to do what would serve those in power. Now, if you were to write down the goals of your child's education, what would they be—beyond just learning to read, write, and do arithmetic? A child is still a child, whether they are the child of a church leader or an ordinary citizen. Yet, many people enjoy pointing fingers at our children. For example, if someone sends your child to do something and they refuse or say they're busy, they'll be told, "You, the child of a church elder, and you're this arrogant?" Many children of church leaders "feel rebellious or hypocritical," a pastor's child in South Africa once told me, who had been deeply hurt by

members' comments.

Remember, the calling to serve God is yours and your husband's. But your children will make their own choices in the future. Raise them as God's children whom you hope will enter heaven—not as if they are inherently more special than others. Raise them to know God personally because this knowledge is not inherited! Remember, God has no grandchildren—only sons and daughters. Remember to give them your time. A father who is absent at home because of preaching and one who is absent because he is out drinking may have the same effect—because a small child doesn't know if the father is serving God or drinking. Only you know how to fill that chart. What the child sees is that "Dad is not there." When you return home, the child perceives whether you care or not. Children should be given unconditional love, whether they are good or bad—because even God deals with us in our wickedness and disciplines and corrects us with love. Do not punish a child when angry, because discipline is an act of love.

In the past, we had mothers or grandmothers to help with children's behavior. Today, people live in cities or distant towns, so we lack such support. A mother gives birth and doesn't know how to care for the child. We watch TV and receive misleading advice. Then we allow children to watch anything and go anywhere with any neighbor without knowing where they are. Disposable diapers have contributed to the loss of simple training, such as potty training. Where I live, children as old as six still wear diapers because mothers don't have time to train them. Children know how to use computers and have boyfriends or girlfriends, yet they're still in diapers. Do not let your child be raised by the TV or the community.

You must write down a list of goals for what you want to teach your child. Don't leave it to chance, thinking the child will somehow know what to learn.

Character is the only thing a child or adult will carry into heaven—not toys, cars, houses, food, or clothes. I believe those things will be there—and better than those on earth—for “no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). Raising children involves more than food, clothes, and shelter. Our children need our love, our example, our time, and our teachings.

The first lesson a child must learn is obedience. This is the most important lesson. Because a child doesn't see God, by obeying their parents even as they grow older and understand God, they will obey Him. You are a representation of God. If you want your children to have Godly character, you must have Godly character. Then they will imitate you and become Christ-like or God-like. Don't say “Do as I say, not as I do.” No! Children have big ears and watch your conduct and language. Parents, be cautious! Guard yourself! If you are rude, you'll see it in them too. If you insist they read the Bible and you don't, they know! In your marriage, be mindful of how you respond to your husband. Be cautious of how you talk to and treat your parents. Be careful how you speak to church members, the poor, orphans, widows, and strangers! Be careful, be careful, be careful!

One mother wrote a book called *Fierce Women*. She said she was so fierce that even her husband feared her. Not because she had the right to be fierce, but it was her habit to want to be in control and to think only what she did was perfect. Many of us have this trait, but we can overcome it only by God's grace and preparing our hearts through reading the Word of God. Psalm 119:110 says, how can a young person cleanse their way? “By obeying Your word; I have hidden Your word in my heart.” You'll be amazed—they'll praise you and your teaching will have come to fruition.

Even as I walk in Tanzania today, I still hear mothers speaking cruel words like heavy stones: “You dog, just like your father,” “You lizard!” “Life will defeat you; you'll end up like Alexander of Macedonia. Even though you are smart in class, you will fail.” Truly, if the father or child is a dog, then you must be one too—dogs give birth to dogs. We speak such discouraging words often, especially the poor—not because we mean harm, but it takes so little to open the floodgates of abusive

words. I've seen that insults are a form of drunkenness we must ask God to deliver us from—especially when directed at children.

The second lesson a child should learn is self-denial and self-control. This will help them overcome temptation and take responsibility in many areas. The third vital lesson is to learn work and skill. This is even more important than schooling! Because we send children to school so they can one day get jobs. Read McCullough's book if you don't know what kind of tasks a child should learn at what age. We have also written in our book *The Alphabet of Parenting*. Look for it or find the book "401 Ways to Get Your Children to Work." Many children fall into alcoholism, smoking, bad gangs, or immoral behavior because they lack understanding of these three lessons. Choose children's entertainment carefully. Things like taking children to kids' discos or certain types of parties should be forbidden if you want them to love God and people.

In the past, our grandparents didn't engage in such things, even with their limited knowledge. Why destroy your children with this evil? Read up a little and find good entertainment for children. I remember how school dances and visits between schools led to promiscuity and fornication—I say this because I saw it firsthand in schools I attended like Ndanda and Rugambwa. Competitive sports, I must say, should be avoided—they breed cruelty and give Satan a chance to raise his head. Let games be for exercise and fun, not competition. A child who loses should not hold a grudge, but see it as a way to build relationships and refresh the body.

A lay husband, because of his leadership responsibilities, may not have much time for the children. The mother should plan the household chores, cooking, and so on in a way that allows the father time to be with the children. He can help with schoolwork or play with them if the situation permits. Learn ways to help children love God. Tetz and Hopkins wrote a book *Yes, We Can Keep Them in Church*. Adventist Frontier Missions published *Grow Word Changer*, which also helps us as parents to learn from others—no one has all the knowledge.

There are many books to help us keep our children in worship. By the time they are about 13, they want freedom—whether to go to church or not, and so on. They say 75% of all children accept God and trust in Him before they turn 10, and 23% before age 17. After that, it's mostly the great grace of God that covers us, because only 1% believe in and trust God after age 53. I'd like to say even the devil believes God exists, but his intent and actions are evil—he refuses to worship

God. Teach your children that believing in God alone, without knowing and trusting Him, is not enough. Many cruel children, when investigated, were found to have been raised by extremely cruel mothers—for example, the mothers of Hitler, Idi Amin, or Napoleon. Mothers, let us pray that God gives us divine love for our children.

They say by age 3, a child's character is formed, and by 6, it is complete. Catholics say, "Give me a child until he is 7, and I'll return him to you a Catholic for life." Bend a fish while it's still fresh. Samuel possibly stayed with his mother until age 5, yet he was ready to be a great leader of God.

Moses also stayed with his mother until about the age of 12, and he became a hero. Even a child is known by his deeds. Do not despise small beginnings. Jeremiah 1 says: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." Then I said, "Ah, Sovereign Lord! I do not know how to speak; I am only a child." But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the Lord.

Sometimes a spiritual leader tries to solve people's problems and respond to ministry calls, and ends up neglecting his own children. His wife may feel that her husband doesn't care—perhaps he is tired of listening to problems all day, and when he gets home, he doesn't want to hear more from the children or from her. When a wife reaches this point, she feels that she needs a husband and a father for her children—not a preacher or a spiritual leader!

A pastor may have promised his child to attend their soccer game, but when members call him, he cancels those plans. He should learn to discern whether the calls are emergencies or not, and delegate messages to be delivered later, so he can make time to raise his children. Just as Moses was advised by his father-in-law Jethro to delegate responsibilities instead of doing everything himself, it is important that a leader also serves his own family.

Even the family needs rest—like sleeping at night instead of staying up hosting guests and talking until dawn. This causes chaos, especially for young children.

There must be balance in family matters. Children should not grow up completely missing out on time with their father. I know that children of spiritual leaders to

some extent understand that they must sacrifice some things. Children should learn that order is a law of heaven—there should be time for meals, sleep, prayer, etc. Children love order from birth—it brings discipline.

A newborn should have scheduled feeding times, for example every 3 hours. This helps them structure their lives and grow up with discipline. If they are fed every time they cry, they may grow up lacking self-control and discipline. Some children admire their father's work for certain reasons—for example, knowing many people and having a wide network of contacts. Take your children with you when you preach, teach them your work, so they can inherit it and gain experience in lay ministry. Don't isolate them—take them to lay meetings when you get the chance.

Teach your child to love your lay ministry. Don't be full of complaints and grumbling to the point that your children hate the ministry and resent God. If you have complaints, speak about them privately with your spouse.

Many parents have cursed their children through this—children leave the faith and say, “I know what church people are like; I've heard it from my father. They are hypocrites. Why should I stay in church or in faith?” My in-law and his wife often gossiped about pastors, church members, and leaders in front of their children. This was poison, and I could see its effects on the children—it scared me.

We need to pray for wisdom. Sometimes even your spouse doesn't need to know every single issue with your church members or all your fears—just some. Use wisdom to choose what to share with your family. Sometimes you reconcile with church members you previously fought with, but your family still dislikes them, not knowing you've already made peace.

Let's consider the example of Abraham when he was told to sacrifice his son Isaac. He assessed the faith and love of his wife and saw that it wasn't as strong as his own. I believe he didn't tell his wife, only his son! But he told his son because if he hadn't, the son might have resisted and escaped from the old man! He had to share God's plan. And the son was spiritually mature—he had grown up well in the faith, no joke!

I once read a magazine about 24 pastors in Australia from the same extended family—grandfather, cousins, uncles, etc.—and I was amazed. In our culture, we tend to talk negatively about ministry and discourage our children. We make them and our wives feel like we are martyrs. But God's work has many joys. I've even

seen many preachers receiving generous gifts from members. Have you ever received a gift from church members while nurturing their spiritual lives?

A friend of mine in Kenya, married to a pastor, told me several times, “Many ministry wives complain a lot about the church, but to me, that’s a curse. The church pays our rent, covers 75% of the children’s school fees, gives us gifts, and pays for our medical bills. Yet people still complain.” Avoid a complaining attitude. Before you began ministry, you longed to serve God. But as time goes on, you start feeling like others are benefiting more than you. Pray that this spirit leaves. I experienced this when I received my first salary in ministry—I felt like I was robbing the people! Two years later, I began complaining that they were now robbing me!

It is easy without Jesus to fall into Israel’s temptation of grumbling—and you can even justify it with seemingly good reasons. For example, John the Baptist may have thought, “Jesus is my cousin and I’m doing good work—why isn’t He helping me?” His faith was shaken, but eventually, he understood that “He must increase, I must decrease.” The Word says, “Among those born of women, there is none greater than he.” I’m not even sure what that means—since everyone is born of a woman except Adam and Eve!

A child should not be shielded from the realities, joys, or sorrows of ministry. They need to understand the struggles and the people involved—so they grasp what burdens their father carries and what the life journey looks like. They need to know people are not perfect and that some make spiritual leaders’ lives difficult. Children can be included in special prayers for families and can help the ministry in some ways—those which are not private.

One pastor’s wife said, “Children of God’s servants who hate their father’s work have not been taught about the pain, joy, and pressures of ministry.” There’s a lot a child can learn from ministry, such as meeting people of different languages, tribes, and families and learning from their testimonies; connecting with professionals and receiving their services because they follow their father’s guidance; not having a father who’s morally corrupt through theft or drunkenness; knowing God closely, and praying through every difficulty.

Some believe that children shouldn’t be involved in ministry to avoid them having negative experiences—but that’s only because of the battle between Satan and

God's kingdom. If more children were included in ministry, they would be a blessing to the work. But families have the choice.

Look at the families of missionaries, both foreign and local, and how their sacrificial lives—including their children—brought great results. Kindly remind your husband that the children miss him, and that soon they'll be grown and gone. One thing I observed in Western countries—which, in my opinion, weakens ministry—is having a spouse who holds more say and authority than the spiritual leader himself. This is challenging, especially when God has clearly directed a man to preach or visit a certain place, and the wife outright opposes it.

I've even seen preachers reassigned to lead elsewhere, and the wife refuses completely, saying she has an important job and that the preacher must follow her if she is transferred. If the man had a regular job, that might be acceptable. But in the work of serving God, the priority should be the ministry—if people truly want to do this work. We are at war with the devil, and if we take it lightly, we will fall in battle. "Turmoil in the Toybox" or "Confusion in the Toy Box" is something worth examining. For the wellbeing of children, parents must be cautious about the toys and cartoons they buy for them. Modern toys like He-Man, Barbie, Cabbage Patch, Care Bears, Dungeons and Dragons, ThunderCats, and many others feature strange appearances and promote violence or unrealistic thinking in children. The way children play with toys can either support their behavior and health—or pose a danger in other ways.

In the past, children or adults would make their own toys. Nowadays, toy factories have embedded cultural ideas and philosophies into their products. When a child plays with something, their mind becomes absorbed in it, and it begins to feel real to them. Scientific studies show that a child is like a sponge—absorbing everything that happens around them. Many toys today contain elements related to witchcraft, homosexuality, sexual immorality, idol worship, murder, fornication, and other behaviors that are not only harmful to humanity but also detestable to God. Children begin to rehearse what they see through their play. If they continue acting out such behaviors, they may lose touch with reality in those areas.

Fantasy—especially when it includes the occult—is a serious concern. Many toys carry occult symbols and philosophies rooted in satanic and violent worldviews. Some children have even committed suicide or harmed others due to the influence of the toys they play with.

In some toy-related games, children have grown up believing they possess powers, abilities, and wisdom beyond even that of God. Do you examine your children's toys? Or when you receive second-hand toys or gifts, do you simply accept them without question? If there is a store that sells toys that are harmful to children, speak up. Investigate and advise sellers on how to provide toys that help develop your community's children positively.

Do your children, in their pretend games, eat unhealthy foods? Could this be influenced by the toys they play with? A parent may not know every detail of their child's games, but it's important to be highly aware. If a child keeps engaging with such toys, by the time they are ten, they may already be deeply involved in witchcraft, violence, or even suicidal thoughts. Spend time playing with your children sometimes to see what is really going on.

Television has also played a role through toy advertisements, making children feel they're missing out if they don't have the latest trend. Cartoons are now raising children in some places, yet kids don't realize that the dialogue is for adults—only the characters are drawn as children. When children have too much unmonitored freedom, they end up engaging in things that are not beneficial. TV reduces reading habits, increases daydreaming, decreases creativity, weakens self-control, diminishes self-worth, lowers trust, increases anger, and raises crime levels like rape, theft, murder, and suicide.

TV makes piracy seem trivial, incites children to rage, escalates conflict and sexual immorality outside marriage. It steals family time and hinders spiritual growth, reduces brainpower, causes obesity, and leads to aimless lifestyles

Don't do things just because others do—use your brain and ask: What value does this bring me? Does it add unnecessary costs? Is it just fashion that will waste my resources for no good reason? For instance, someone once visited us and saw people drinking almond milk—a luxury product from Western countries. Though jobless, he said he loved that milk, and with the little money he was given, he bought it, despite coming from a home without even electricity. He had built a life detached from reality.

Similarly, many “mall” stores now sell ordinary clothes at outrageous prices. I once visited a place and was told a skirt costs \$80. I was shocked—if I bought fabric or second-hand clothes, the skirt would only cost \$10. Some competitive sports like

soccer and hockey have been found to promote cheating, violence, quarrels, enemies, and fake friendships. Boxing has become a school of cruelty, encouraging entertainment without responsibility. If people avoided this, they would develop a love for work, good character, and kindness.

Many fans of certain celebrities or athletes mimic people whose morals are terrible—lawbreakers, arrogant, anti-education, and bullies. Where I live, I've seen talented athletes with very poor character—full of profanity, crime, or dishonesty. Avoid imitation. God gave us freedom of choice, but we must use it wisely so it benefits us. Reading the Word of God grows the brain more than anything else. "What we behold, we become." Teach children to work daily, give them time to read books that will help them in life.

Guard the gates of the heart—eyes and ears—so they stay clean. The sin of Sodom was pride, fullness of food, prosperity, and lack of compassion for the poor and needy. These very things destroyed the Greeks, Romans, Babylonians, and Persians.

An excess of toys, clothing, and food has become a curse to many nations.

Have family meetings weekly to help each other. Eat together and serve others.

There are many things families can do together—learn songs, budgeting, cooking, sewing, visiting libraries, reading books from other cultures, gardening. Use mealtimes to educate children, sing and read the Bible together. Pray together. Go camping or visit beautiful places.

Character is the only thing a child or adult will take to heaven—not toys, cars, houses, food, or clothes. I believe we'll find far better things in heaven than those on earth. "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Corinthians 2:9) Raising children is more than providing food, clothes, and shelter. Our children need our love, our example, our time, and our teaching. The first lesson a child must learn is obedience. This is the most important lesson. Since a child cannot see God, if he learns to obey his parents, he will later obey God. You are God's example—if you want your children to reflect God's character, you must have it yourself. Then they will imitate you and become God-like or Christ-like, not merely "me-like." Don't say, "Do what I say, not what I do." No! Children have sharp ears and watch your behavior and your language. Parent, be careful!

Watch your marriage—how you respond to your husband, be careful! Watch how you speak to and support your parents, how you interact with church members, the poor, orphans, widows, and strangers. Be watchful! And you can only do this by the grace of God and preparing your heart by reading His Word. Psalm 119:110 says, “How can a young person keep their way pure? By living according to Your Word.” Hide God’s Word in your heart. You will be amazed, and your teaching will bear fruit. As I grew up and even today when I walk around Tanzania, I hear mothers saying harsh words like heavy burdens—“You dog, just like your father,” “You lizard,” “Life will defeat you, you’ll end up like Alexander of Macedonia.” Truly, if a child or their father is a dog, then surely the child will be a dog too. A dog gives birth to a dog. We use a lot of discouraging words, and often as the poor, we don’t mean it. It takes very little to trigger our insults.

I have realized that cursing is like drunkenness—we must pray for God to remove it from us, especially in how we speak to children. The second lesson a child should learn is self-denial and self-control. This helps them overcome temptation and lead in many areas of life. The third important lesson for children is to learn work and skill. This is even more important than schooling, because we send children to school so they can learn how to work. Read McCullough’s book if you’re not sure what tasks a child should learn at what age. We have also written about this in our Alphabet of Parenting book.

Many children have ended up in alcoholism, smoking, bad gangs, or immoral behavior due to lacking these three foundational lessons. Choose your children’s entertainment carefully. Taking them to kids’ discos and certain parties should be forbidden if you want them to love God and people. Our grandparents never engaged in such things, even though they knew very little. Why destroy your children with such evil? Read up and discover which kinds of entertainment are appropriate for children, because it is important they have it.

I would advise avoiding competitive sports—they promote cruelty and elevate Satan. Let games be for exercise and fun—not for competition. If a child loses, they should not be bitter, but see it as a chance to build friendships. Your husband, due to his leadership work, may not have much time with the children. However, it is because of the battle between Satan and the kingdom of God that children have become a target against the ministry. Many children, if they were included in ministry, would be a blessing to that work, but they have their own choices. Gently

remind your husband that the children miss him, and that they are growing up and will soon be on their way.

What is the most important thing in our lives? This is a very important question that each of us must ask ourselves. What is it that is most important in your life? Is it wealth, education, fashion (especially for women), a husband/wife, children, status? The Bible tells us in the book of Matthew 6:33, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Seeking first the kingdom of God, beloved, is the most important thing, and all other things will be added to us.

Seeking the kingdom of God means doing everything we can to be ready to meet Him when He returns. It also means preparing others, including friends, relatives, family, and especially our children. In the book of Jeremiah 13:20 there is a question that we will be asked: "...Where is the flock that was given you, your beautiful flock?" This question could be asked of pastors or any other leaders, even government officials, but we also will be asked as parents about the children we were given. How will we answer, beloved, if we let our children perish because of our poor parenting? This book aims to answer that question, so that when asked, we may say, "Here we are, Lord, with the little flock of children You entrusted to us."

Children are a reward from God (Psalm 127:3). When we are given a gift by someone, we cherish and take great care of it. I once asked my friend for something, and she refused, saying, "I was given this as a gift; I can't give it away." Another friend of mine known as Mama Mwangi (Rachel Mutero) taught me a very valuable lesson by how much she treasured a very small gift I had given her. We had a secret friend game at our church in Karura. In this game, you pick a paper with a name on it and pray for that person until the day of revealing. On that day, people bring their friends gifts, according to their means. I had chosen Mama Mwangi and gave her a very cheap headscarf. When I gave it to her, she was so happy and wore it to special occasions like church, even though she had other beautiful and expensive scarves. One day while she was traveling, her luggage was stolen, including the bag that had this scarf. She was very sad and told me that the scarf I gave her was stolen!!! This woman had lost expensive clothes but mourned the loss of that little scarf because it was a gift, and she truly valued it. So how much more should we value and care for the gift of children that God has given us?

In these last days, Satan has especially targeted children. He knows that if he captures the children, he will have destroyed the church/nation of tomorrow. Our children have become a curse instead of a blessing to us. Those of us who read the Word of God understand that prophecy is being fulfilled in our lives. Shall we allow Satan to destroy our children through pleasures, drugs, and the ways of this world? What can we do to save our children? Is there any hope? In the Bible, we read that when Moses and his brother Aaron went to Pharaoh in Egypt asking to go into the wilderness to worship their God, Pharaoh asked, “Who will be going with you?” Moses answered, “We will go with our young and our old, with our sons and daughters...” (Exodus 10:8-9). Likewise, we too, like Moses, must be determined to go to heaven with our children, because God has promised to save our children in the book of Isaiah 49:25, “...for I will contend with those who contend with you, and I will save your children.”

Carrying a pregnancy is not the hard part, the hard part is raising the child—a saying many of us know. But as I grow older, I see this saying is not entirely true. Even pregnancy itself is a struggle for many, and those who have struggled to conceive and sought medical help will tell you this saying is not quite accurate. It's like those who say, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” People have come to learn that our words hurt and leave deeper wounds on children and adults than sticks or stones ever could. Those whose pregnancies ended in miscarriage and who peered into the grave like I did, know that this saying is partly true. In short, anything concerning children is difficult. Many of us, after having children, find ourselves full of questions and searching for advice. For example, when I gave birth, I discovered that where I lived, people did not sleep in the same room with infants but instead used machines to monitor what was happening in the baby's room; the child slept alone. When I asked an African mother, she said, “We Africans sleep with our children because it's cold here, and the child is human too, they need warmth and closeness to others.” But Westerners often want to be away from their children, and by age 18, the child is expected to be fully independent. In our families, we want to maintain close relationships even when they are adults. They say a child can die if you sleep next to them, but how else will you know if the child is sick or has a fever?

I did some research and found that cases of children dying from being slept on are very rare, perhaps only if the parent was drunk or had mental illness. Still, parents should ensure proper hygiene and check that the child is breathing well: are the

windows closed? Could the child get sick sleeping with adults? Could the child have a bed close by rather than in the same bed? Another thing I read from a trusted child expert said, “I don’t let my children sleep with other children, even when we visit people; they sleep on the floor, but never with other kids.” In general, what I want to say is that new and experienced parents alike have much to learn at every stage, and there’s a lot we don’t understand.

They say, you know a person’s character when they have a child—this is true. Even those who are usually quiet have found themselves shouting or being harsh. Many times, as parents, we’ve punished our children in anger and hurt them, only to later be surprised at how easily one can harm someone when given power. Parents have burned their children’s hands, beaten them with sticks or ceramic objects, denied them food for days, and even killed their own children. Many parents have enjoyed good meals in restaurants and lived in relative comfort, while their children’s needs are ignored. Often, I’ve realized my shortcomings in parenting, and someone else might have done a better job. We are the image of God to our children. We are all God’s children. In heaven, our children will be our brothers and sisters, not ours anymore—we are just stewards of God. Let us remember this as we live with them.

On the other hand, there are children who abuse their parents, who are selfish, proud, and arrogant. A parent should avoid excessively praising a child, especially in their presence—for being smart because they said something clever, or for their looks or figure, or anything that might feed pride. A child should live a child’s life and enjoy it; do not make a child skip their childhood, as is often the case with children involved in performances. Where I live, I’ve seen many children in churches disrespecting others, even refusing to respond to greetings! These same children, when asked if they want to be missionaries, say yes! They think being a servant of God is just about existing—they have no idea that Christian life means bearing the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians chapter five! These children feel superior and forget they are just human. If they get a job or enter marriage, it will be a huge challenge for them to live real life.

What kind of parenting produces good character in a child? We do not want a child to be abused, become self-centered, or arrogant. The following are pieces of advice: Routine, structure, care, self-control, moderation, work, cleanliness, love, discipline, and gradually giving the child authority and responsibilities as they grow—these are the essential needs a child has from a parent. Love gives

time and is patient. Our plea is to make the main thing the main thing—to keep what is truly important as a priority. What matters most in parenting is good character and obedience to God. I say this because I know that Africans deeply value God. This is reflected in our national songs, customs, and traditions. He alone is the true helper for good upbringing and character—we cannot do it by ourselves. God Almighty is the ultimate Parent.

As laypeople (parents), we must reduce our activities and set aside time for parenting, lead by example, correct our children, and disciple them. Attending seminars and reading books on parenting should be a priority. When many people tell us their parenting experiences, we may think we've been left behind. Don't be deceived—every family has its skeletons! We will not ascend to heaven carrying our boxes, houses, cars, food, and possessions on that seven-and-a-half-day journey! We will go with our character and the children or converts we brought to Christ. By the age of seven, a child's character is already formed. One person wrote a book titled "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten."

God is merciful—if we've made mistakes, let us genuinely repent. There's still a chance for our children, grandchildren, or children in the community—we can still help them. Many fathers and mothers have stayed awake, toiling in various ways for their children. Naturally, a parent loves a child more than the child loves the parent—may God reward your efforts. A child becomes victorious by learning self-denial and self-control. Every parent or guardian has a garden—the child is your garden. Each day, you plant seeds in that garden. Let us pray that God will help us uproot the weeds. In our prayers, we must not dwell on the negatives. While raising children, let's not remain stuck on what's bad, but move forward, knowing that children are a heritage from the Lord, and He loves them more than we do.

Our patience in parenting is waning. Recently, a mother killed her child by denying him water. They lived in the heat of Texas. She told him not to drink water because he wet the bed. This child died of dehydration according to medical reports. They compared him to his twin, and it was confirmed. Parents are so busy—it's hard to understand why we even have children if we're this unavailable, leaving others to raise them. Teaching a child self-control, self-denial, service, obedience, and work are five critical matters. In the book of Deuteronomy, it says that if a child is gluttonous and disobedient, they should be taken to the elders and stoned to death. This shows how serious lack of self-control and disobedience are before God.

Often when a child turns out to be a blessing, it's not mere luck. It's usually due to the grace of God and the effort of the parents. "I love those who love me, and those who seek me early shall find me." (Proverbs 8:17) Begin good parenting early. By age three, habits are formed; by six, they are set! If you've made mistakes like we have, pray to God—He is merciful and can perform miracles to change bad behavior. As Paul says, "The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." (Romans 8:7). This is an ongoing battle to live with heavenly character! Read and reflect on Romans 7—it brings joy to know we'll find peace in heaven, for the inner struggle of our human nature will end.

The world is set up to ruin your child's upbringing. Every day, pray and continue the fight. There is no hero in this school—whether in China, Tanzania, or Mexico! Even Cain killed his brother Abel long before the invention of television. Look at the lives of Nadab, Abihu, Absalom, and others whose parents were great men of faith.

The young child you hold in your arms is not an angel, but a sinner like all of us. It's up to you to bring them to God and raise them in the fear of the Lord. Avoid a spirit of grumbling—it caused all the Israelites (except two) to die in the wilderness. God does not answer complaints—He answers prayers! Try to avoid raising children in cities. It was disastrous for Lot, who, though a righteous man, lost his children and wife due to urban life. Perhaps Noah lived in the countryside and thus saved his family. Cities are full of temptations—though they offer schools, shops, and services, they present even more dangers. The socialist villages had the problem of bringing idle youth together, which led to sharing evil schemes due to many brains gathering.

We see Isaac's obedience—even though he was strong enough to resist, he allowed his father Abraham to offer him as a sacrifice. Many unruly children have ruined their parents' ministry. Many difficult children have destroyed their parents' marriages, while children with good character have built up their families. Look at how the lives of Jacob and Esau caused division in their parents' marriage. Even the parents made the mistake of favoritism, which became toxic. Rebekah really messed things up. Mothers—"A mother's influence and prayers have great power." Consider the prayers and actions of Moses' mother and how Moses became a mighty spiritual leader. Samuel spent little time with his mother, but he became

a great leader in Israel (both president and high priest). Mothers, do not give up—there is no greater work than helping a child to one day be in heaven.

A mother must practice moderation, self-control, and self-denial. The greatest battle is the battle of self—the old self must die. The mother of a Nazirite was instructed to follow certain important guidelines, such as abstaining from alcohol. We see how Hannah, Samuel's mother, dedicated herself to raising a child for God's service. Many laypeople raise children to serve themselves! But God is pleased with unselfish, pure prayers. Begin praying such prayers today. The marriage of Hannah and Elkanah and others shows that polygamy is extremely harmful to marriage and child upbringing—it's not God's plan.

Daniel, Mishaël, Hananiah, and Azariah were young boys in the book of Daniel, yet they were able to resist great temptations in captivity. Where did they learn this? Not in slavery—but at home! They were taught self-denial and to avoid indulgence. Their mothers taught them not to eat recklessly. Christ's first human teacher was His mother. He didn't go to the rabbis' schools! A parent is the first teacher. He learned through living a hard life, doing manual labor, and practicing self-denial. That's why it is important for a child to stay at home and be taught until around eight to ten years old. Many schools have overcrowded classrooms—children in third grade still can't read. A parent can teach their child to read within a few months with one book and excel beyond a teacher with 100 students, because the parent only has one child! Even a parent with only first-grade education can do this excellently because they focus on just one.

We see Mary and Joseph lost Jesus for just one day and it took three days to find Him. Similarly, we parents can lose our children and lose God in our lives through negligence, gossiping, or failing to pray. Don't fear the hard work of raising children—even if it means turning down help from relatives. It's better to have one child and raise them well than to send your children to others who don't value what you do. This week, a female doctor from Botswana took her own life. My friend attended the funeral and said that she had left her child with her family to pursue her medical career. When she got the child back at age ten, the child was angry, feeling abandoned by both mother and father (who was a dentist). The child went on to earn a chemistry doctorate but deeply hurt the mother daily until she committed suicide. These are the last difficult days in earth's history—it is not the time to entrust children to uncles and aunts. One parent lamented that they had left their child with an uncle, who introduced the child to alcohol. Even

though grandparents may help, do not relinquish your parental role to them—they may spoil or fail to discipline the child adequately. Only in emergencies should you leave your child with others. Some people don't want to raise children—they had them by accident. For them, I advise finding trustworthy parents to adopt the child. Do not even consider abortion—it should be taboo. A child is not a worm to be removed from the womb. This mindset has become widespread. In the U.S., for instance, four million women get abortions every year.

As parents, we will be held accountable before God for how we raised our children. Help from others is a bonus, but it should not be the foundation of your parenting plan! If you're old and always relied on others to raise your children, it'll be difficult to intervene effectively—you'll seem like a stranger. Those with house helpers must be vigilant—we've heard many stories. A driver began a romantic relationship with the school-going child he drove. A nanny placed a baby in an oven and killed the child to spite her employer. Another nanny used the child's toothbrush and gave the child HIV, among many others. Of course, we also know there are many parents who abuse domestic workers, and that's another topic altogether.

A parent must speak clearly and be understood—don't leave ambiguous gaps. Say yes or no decisively. Regarding maturing topics like sexuality, a layperson must teach their child according to their age—they should not learn these things on the street through false stories. The home must have rules and regular family meetings with the children, perhaps weekly or monthly. A parent should not fear enforcing rules, thinking it might upset the child. The priest Eli knew how evil his sons were, yet he didn't remove them from temple service. He may have loved them too much or feared the people's complaints.

From a young age, children must be taught to respect their parents' word. Many parents think a child is too young to understand instructions—but once time is lost, influence is lost too. A newborn begins learning immediately, for example, learning not to eat randomly but every three hours. Many parents who grew up in poverty or hardship think their children should not suffer the same—but that mindset may do more harm than good. They let their children squander resources, be raised only by a house help, or do as they please. Sadly, these children who have never faced hardship often struggle to relate with others or end up in bad peer groups involving drug use or other sinful behaviors. Parents must understand that their wealth was gained through discipline and hard work. Children who found

everything ready for them—such as houses and wealth—have often not seen these as blessings. Frequently, they fall into Satan’s temptations in one way or another. You may not see it clearly, but when you examine the principles of heaven, you will notice certain holes.

Look into the lives of those who have become a blessing to others and champions in certain areas—you’ll find their lives were marked by principles, self-denial, and hard work like milking cows at 4 a.m. or tilling the land at 5 a.m. Many children have also been raised without fathers; it is said that around 50% are. This greatly affects their behavior and upbringing. It is a sorrowful thing, just as Charles Spurgeon once said: many God-fearing parents rejoice simply because their child is intelligent in school—even if the child doesn’t know God. It is the Word of God that has the power to transform behavior. I emphasize again—ONLY THE WORD OF GOD helps with behavior. Human philosophies are ineffective.

Many parents make sure their children leave for school early with big school bags full of books, yet they do not care whether the children have the Word of God, whether they read it, or whether it is transforming their lives. When our children go to church, let them carry pencils or pens and the Word of God. What about school? What happens if they are late or go without books? We insist on them wearing nice clothes to church—but without the Word of God, what good is that? Have they studied their lesson readings? If you have money for phone credit and spend the day saying “hello, hello,” then you have money to buy the Word of God for your children. We order many things from our relatives in the city—why not also ask them to send us the Greatest Book and hymn books too? Order worship songbooks for the children to sing from and to memorize Bible verses daily. That is the best inheritance you can give them—not houses and land.

Deal with them now, because one day they will listen to their friends more than they listen to you—and it will be too late. You’ll be seen as old-fashioned. If the TV is a problem, throw it out. I had trouble with my children when they watched TV—they became completely disrespectful! When you call them, they don’t respond; when you ask them questions, they don’t answer. Their minds are completely captured—they just stare at the screen in a hypnotic state. The TV has become their god.

One child in Nairobi brought pornographic DVDs to school and shared them with other children. When it was discovered, the mother denied it—“You’re falsely

accusing my son. He would never do that. He's a good boy." Parents, don't defend children in wrongdoing—character is shaped anytime and anywhere. Many mothers have become their children's first enemy by defending sin.

Work hard day and night. Make your children your closest friends so that if anything goes wrong, they will tell you. The parent is the leader—not the child. Observe what your child is doing and guide them. Freedom should be given gradually, according to how well the child handles responsibilities. A child should not sit around idle with nothing to do. Praying with your children in the morning and evening is essential. This is our duty as believers in God. Failing to fulfill this responsibility is sin like any other. There must be principles to build character (regularity): sleeping time, mealtime, prayer, playtime—all require patience and consistency. Moderation and self-denial come from a well-ordered life. Don't let your child's schedule be chaotic. A calm environment helps a child's mind develop well spiritually.

There was a mother and father with children in primary and secondary school who visited friends and relatives daily after work, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. They came to our place nearly every day, exercising and visiting people during meal times. Their children were left to raise themselves. A woman who had never married or had children saw them and asked me, "This woman walks around with her husband all the time—who is watching their children?" Do not let your children raise themselves. Solomon said (in another translation), "A child is full of foolishness." Don't leave a child alone every day while you go somewhere. The life of John the Baptist shows that even though his parents had him in their old age, they did not spoil him. He lived in the countryside and worked in an environment with fewer temptations.

Often, we parents focus on external behaviors instead of transforming the heart. This is a big mistake—they will do what pleases us only to avoid punishment, but their hearts remain unchanged. Try to change their heart and mind; then their outward behavior will follow naturally. Joseph was taught to avoid sexual immorality when he was still young. He was not a giant. Yet, even when he was alone in Egypt, he ran away from a woman who grabbed him while he was wrapped in a towel, saying, "How can I do such wickedness against God?" But Samson, though a giant and a national leader, failed in that same temptation and fell into sexual sin.

Every day you are sowing seeds in the garden of your child. They don't pay much attention to what you say—because words are just words. They look at how you live. Do you know this? You speak what you think, but you live what you believe. As a layperson, help the children in your community too. If they go astray, it also affects you. They may come to rob you or harm you. Be ready, as much as you can, to extend a helping hand to others. “He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will reward them for what they have done.” Have you ever lent to a wealthy man like Bill Gates or your country's President? But here, you are lending to the ALMIGHTY GOD Himself! When I read this verse, I tremble. I, a wretched person, lending to the LORD OF HOSTS OF HEAVEN? God the Creator—whom scientists now say made more than a trillion planets? I am the one lending to Him? Every time I read this verse, I am deeply moved.

At places of worship, there should be spiritual mothers and fathers to help children who have no one to guide them well. Many children are born in difficult circumstances—like to very young mothers who themselves lack knowledge, etc. Sometimes, it's even hard to be patient in teaching them. Don't rejoice in your heart when someone else's child goes astray. It's like celebrating when someone is critically ill in the ICU. I know it's jealousy—especially when you see a successful person and think, “It would be better if they also failed in some way so we can be equal.” Usually, when a friend is sick, we feel sorry, visit, and even bring food. But have you ever gone to visit someone in ICU and started laughing at them in the hospital? I think you'd seem insane. I heard one woman angrily tell another, when she was informed about her child's problem, “You talk about my child? Yours will end up worse than mine.” Such bitter words are of the devil. If everyone speaks like that, who will help the other? Because a child behaves differently at home and when with others! Ask Christ for forgiveness and help to remove such a spirit—then you and your child will be healed.

It is said that 70% of those in houses of worship are women. Lay women should help here too. I've seen many fathers who want their wives and children to go to church, but they themselves delay going. Father, do your best to help your son grow up in a good environment, gain skills to meet his family's needs, and above all, become the priest of his home so that one day he may enter Paradise. This is a very great matter.

Our life on earth only has meaning if we are preparing for eternal life in heaven. Beyond that, we are wasting time. I don't think anyone is planning to burn in the

lake of fire, screaming and gnashing their teeth. Though God's Word speaks of His love, there is also a day of judgment. It's important to understand that He is merciful—but also just. It would be terrible if evil people went to heaven. Would you want to live next to a thief who hasn't changed that behavior in heaven? But Nahum 1:9 says, "He will make an utter end; trouble will not rise up a second time." That's why the wicked will not be there—they would cause trouble.

Let's begin to emphasize, as laypeople, how to help our boys. They face many temptations outside the home, like Samson the Nazirite. Even though his parents asked, "How shall we raise this child?" and were given instructions, Samson was overwhelmed by peer pressure. Many fathers with calm and educated daughters say they are afraid that decent men to marry their daughters have become rare. One told me, "My daughter keeps meeting men who lack life skills and are just looking for a girl with a good life so they can live off her like parasites." Be open with your son about his responsibilities and gain knowledge about this calling. No child came into the world with a parenting manual. Let us bring our children to God through prayer and introduce them to Him. Teach them how to solve problems—we cannot solve every issue for them; they must learn tools for resolution.

In general, fathers in the U.S. speak to their children for about nine minutes a day, and mothers for around twenty-four minutes. I think that since there are no house helps like in Africa, most fathers in America spend more time with their children than in Africa.

Even though a child observes your example in work and life, it is also necessary to teach them, check their work, and encourage them. Check out the website 401 Ways to Get Your Child Working. Many parents do not use encouragement as one of their key parenting tools. A child is often scolded or insulted without the parent acknowledging what they did right. This leaves emotional scars. Some parents even mock their children, and mocking a child as an adult shows immaturity. A child is just a child—do not be a source of discouragement all the time.

In Western countries, believers who love God often read and learn parenting strategies from the Word of God and other writers. See doorposts.com. I know reading is not part of our strong culture back home—we seem to be "allergic" to it! But we must push ourselves and seek parenting knowledge—it's not just about

giving food, clothes, and shelter. There's more to it. Character and independence are crucial.

In the past, many children left home early, became self-reliant, and even supported their parents. Nowadays, adult children stay with their parents along with their own children, or even grandchildren. Some return home after small marital conflicts—either because of difficult personalities or because they were not taught perseverance. You must have a plan or schedule with your children. Don't leave them to raise themselves. Set goals you want them to achieve. We are the ones who bring change to our children's lives. If you see a child who is compassionate, selfish, hardworking, wise, or honest, know that these qualities usually develop at home. The fruit does not fall far from the tree. Solomon said, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child," but he must be corrected. When a child is assigned a task, don't just leave it unchecked—evaluate and correct it. Also, let them experience the consequences of poor performance or bad behavior. Don't waste your time working or studying while your child is growing up.

Parents, the enemy of our souls is working overtime to mislead our children. He hates them. He is like a roaring lion seeking whom to devour, knowing his time is short. Our eyes have been blinded from seeing these fallen angels. But take heart—God has His angels too, ready to help if we choose the Creator's side. We are in a spiritual war. Let us not love our children blindly—this misguided love will prevent us from disciplining them properly.

The weapons of our warfare are the Word of God, righteousness, faith, self-control, vigilance, and perseverance. Don't let your children learn evil thinking they'll choose good later! Evil increases faster than good. The time for raising them is short. Don't plant weeds intentionally so they can experience both evil and good—protect carefully the gates of the eyes, ears, emotions, feelings, and even smell!

I won't dwell much on the battle of music, but scientifically, certain types of music foster bad behavior—it's not worship music. Children should not listen to genres like rap and rock music, which have been linked to harmful behavioral influences like violence and substance abuse. Look up terms like "rap and children's behavior" online. Even non-believers recognize these effects.

When music overwhelms, the brain's frontal lobe stops functioning, and only feelings remain. This weakens judgment. Avoid repetitive songs, even if they mention God—like repeating “I praise You, I praise You, I praise You.” After a while, the worshiper forgets who they're praising. Even in songwriting, finish the thought—e.g., “I praise You, God, for giving me life.” Repetition bypasses the critical-thinking part of the brain and appeals only to emotion. It is said that 80% of Christians worldwide are emotional believers. We sing, dance, and repeat words without understanding what we are singing, to whom, or whether it's biblical. Some sing to relieve stress without meditating on the words of life. Our God desires that we worship in spirit and truth, not just in emotion. We must be ready to explain what we believe and why.

Even TV operates this way. After a while, a child watching television stops thinking critically and becomes susceptible to anything shown. Today, the television has a sister called the computer. Many of us buy these with good intentions—to watch news or educational content—but control often diminishes. Even when parents go to bed, children keep watching whatever they want.

I've seen advertisements with half-naked people making outrageous claims. A child can't distinguish between reality and fiction. A four-year-old once ran to his father shouting, “Daddy! That man wants to kill the woman in the shop!” We've heard of children who killed someone thinking the person would wake up and appear in the next episode. TV shows people living together without marriage—this is against both our cultural and biblical values. Why should the television be the teacher of our children and the source of foreign morals? Children raised on TV have poor attention spans, become romantically curious early, and enjoy conflict, noise, and chaos. With TV as their teacher, losing spiritual values doesn't seem like a big deal. Even adults who repeatedly watch evil scenes begin to lose their moral compass. House helps watch TV all day while parents are at work—and our children receive the same content.

It's important to choose good schools for our children—ones that nurture them spiritually, physically, and socially. Don't send them where temptations abound or where morals and spirituality are lacking. Check the books and magazines they read. Children should not read books by authors who disregard godly character—many of these books plant seeds of evil, reduce the value of the Word of God, and erode moral standards. Children's books promoting witchcraft—like Harry Potter—are increasing.

Computers also pose a risk. I've heard of young children being lured by adults into sexual contact through online communication and fantasies. A child is more easily influenced by evil than good. Do not let your child go anywhere at any time without supervision. Girls and boys are different. Although we talk about equality, the risks for girls walking alone at night are much higher than for boys. Many people have written books to help our children grow spiritually and stay in church. Youth ministry is very important for laypeople and leaders—it should be a priority. Though it's said that half of church youth end up in the world, youth are the ones who will support and advance the ministry. Involve them in all aspects of preaching and service.

Many shy away from teaching children in church unless heavily persuaded. Parents and workers who show unconditional love are one reason why youth remain strong in faith in a world where many are spiritually absent. Involve youth in church planning and show them love. When they fail, support them with love—who doesn't fail? Let them accompany adults in witnessing and welcome them into our homes. The Reformation of the Christian church was carried out by youth (under age 34). Children and youth have great potential—not just for entertainment. Why do they accomplish so much in school? Youth mentored by adults are highly successful. They don't join gangs, indulge in drunkenness or immorality. They gain self-worth, leadership skills, confidence, and a sense of service. They carry out responsibilities easily and will do great things.

Many parents blame churches for lacking exciting youth programs—but the real problem is them. Their children don't see them enjoying spiritual programs! Many youths who appear fine still carry waves of inner struggles. Take time to show you care. Not all youth are bad—on the contrary, many are precious gems. In their lives, they will become warriors of God.

Let them edit church magazines or do creative tasks. Know their names and call them personally. If a school allows churches to present religious education, don't miss that opportunity! Arrange for the church to teach the Bible and engage youth in community programs.

Don't chase a youth from church because of how they dress—embrace them with love and help them understand. The key thing is to lift up Jesus. It's true that in caring for the youth, we must not ignore sin, but rather teach them the better way. I've observed that many churches are very eager to attract young people, and

even when these youths make serious mistakes, the church often feels embarrassed to correct them. Divorce is also a major challenge for children. Children from broken families often face serious discipline issues, becoming involved in alcohol abuse, smoking, gangs, theft, poor academic performance, promiscuity, and other vices. Therefore, training in marriage life for laypeople or parents is very important.

The enemy, Satan, begins working against a child even from birth! A parent is supposed to be the child's warrior. It is cruel to let the claws of the devil tear your child away. Don't become the enemy of your own child by allowing evil to start or continue. A child's safety depends heavily on a watchful and prayerful parent. Remain steadfast in loving God and constantly asking for His help! Sister Stormie Omartian has written a powerful book called *The Power of a Praying Parent*. I recommend that all parents read it. Let God's principle of love be your guide. Read 1 Corinthians 13 and Psalm 91; they remind us that God protects us and our children. I believe we are all waiting for that voice on the last day, saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful with a few things; enter into the joy of your Lord." A U.S. study showed that 82% of people believe they are going to heaven. Rarely will someone say they plan to go to hell or the lake of fire—no one chooses destruction! The challenge is walking the narrow, rugged path instead of the broad, paved road filled with flowers and decorations.

We are helpless on our own. Being a parent is a huge responsibility and can sometimes feel discouraging. As Scripture says, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51). It reminds us that we are born into sin, and all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But a broken and contrite heart, the Lord will not despise.

May the Lord support and help us in this heavy responsibility that often brings me to tears and drives me to my knees in search of His face. Let's join together in seeking God's face, for the Lord knows our children even from the womb and sets them apart: "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you," God told Jeremiah. Paul also reminds Timothy that he had known the Holy Scriptures from childhood, through his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Our children are a blessing from God, meant to do His will—in our homes and in the community. Let's keep praying for them earnestly.

Many parents, upon receiving a child, have silently asked themselves, “How will I raise this child?” This was also the question of Manoah and his wife in the book of Judges. We spend time learning many things but lack knowledge and education in parenting. This wasn’t the case in the past. For example, in the 1970s, a mother had friends, aunties, neighbors, sisters, and her own mother or grandmother to offer advice. They didn’t need books because they had customs and traditions that gave them direction. They had answers to every question! Even if some of the advice wasn’t perfect, they were willing to share and help one another. Back then, a new mother had mature women around to guide her in raising children. That warmth and love are now fading. People move around so often that neighbors are strangers. Mothers and their sisters now live in cities like Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Bujumbura, Goma, Jinja, or Kigali. And even if they were nearby, they might no longer offer helpful advice. This scattering and isolation have left many parents feeling unprepared, unsure of how to raise their children. It’s true that millions of parents today lack support, traditions, a clear philosophy, or a guiding framework for parenting.

Challenges and questions come faster than we can find answers. We’ve ignored the ancient parenting principles given by God and instead adopted modern revolutions in parenting methods. As anxiety and fear among parents rise, psychologists, teachers, and pediatricians have emerged to try and answer these questions. Many Western children are now raised according to these philosophies.

Have these Western experts succeeded in raising children well? Certainly not! Only God’s way brings true success. You might think that these Western children’s intellect and behavior are admirable. While there are a few good things, the bad far outweighs the good. The number of children in jail has increased. Drug and alcohol use, teenage pregnancies, mental illness, and suicide are on the rise. Parenting today is harder than it was in the days when grandmothers and aunties gave advice. We can’t blame all Western experts, but many of them have excluded the Creator from their advice. They’ve ignored the 6,000 years of historical wisdom on parenting success. Every psychologist has marketed their idea as the ultimate truth. These philosophies claim that disciplining a child out of love is wrong, using authority over a child is harmful, and teaching a child about the Creator is inappropriate. Things have gone so far that schools now teach that homosexuality is acceptable and that there is such a thing as “safe sex” outside holy marriage.

Character standards that lack values, respect, and cultural significance only serve self-interest, not God, and have brought great harm. We may not have all the answers, but what we share has been affirmed through many generations by the One who is the greatest Parent and Guardian.

We believe that good parenting begins with a holy marriage. That marriage should have fidelity, mutual respect, protection, the wife submitting to her husband, and the husband loving his wife. Children are a heritage from the Lord. They should grow up with integrity, a sense of responsibility, purity of heart, diligence, self-denial, humility, and faith.

The devil fights us as parents because if he captures our children while they are still young, they will serve him and not God. In the Bible, Pharaoh Rameses and King Herod ordered the killing of children, driven by Satan. That same spirit still operates today. He uses different strategies depending on the historical time and place. In our time, here in Africa, that spirit continues to work. Writer Mbennah said that during a seminar in one Tanzanian district, he visited a health facility where nurses and staff were idle, not serving patients promptly. Children were dying at an alarming and unexpected rate—up to five a week. If they had received proper care, their lives could have been saved. The devil targets children through us because they have more energy and more years to serve him than the elderly.

Let us be people of prayer. These days, our children are learning selfishness from us. In the past, parents would ask a child to share just to test them. Today we are so busy that we barely follow up to see if our children are understanding life lessons. My two children once received two guavas each. The younger one, age 6, had a friend over but didn't want to share. The older one also refused to share, saying the friend wasn't his. They kept playing while eating, and the friend just watched. When I saw this, I told them I'd take all the guavas and give them to the visitor. Each child gave up one guava, and the guest ended up with two. They both needed that lesson in generosity. Since that day, when they have something, they say, "Mama, take this," or "Let's share." Teach children how to give. If they offer you something, accept it joyfully so they learn the habit of giving. Don't let your child think you're selfish—they'll copy you! Whether your child is needy or privileged, build in them a generous heart. Ensure they are willing to share with their playmates. I know our various cultural backgrounds differ—some are more

generous than others—but every culture has something to teach. We all have shortcomings, and the Word of God is our ultimate standard.

If you have something, walk with your children to a neighbor or beggar on the street and give. Even in church, don't go empty-handed if you have money. Give offerings. Your children won't learn to give tithes and offerings if you don't! Our pastor friend Mtenzi from Congo, who grew up among many poor children, visited us in the U.S. in 2010. My 9-year-old son had bought several "silly bands" (bracelets), around 30 in total. I asked him to give some to Pastor Mtenzi to take to the children in Congo—they would be thrilled! He refused and cried bitterly. The next morning, he asked, "Mom, how much did those silly bands cost?" I said, "Just one dollar." He replied, "Only that? Why didn't I give yesterday? I'll give him all of them."

Our hearts constantly battle with selfishness. Help children understand that generosity is a heavenly virtue and must begin here. "Give, and it will be given to you—good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over." I would like to say that we parents raise our children more by our example than by our words. I once heard my ten-year-old child tell me, "Mom, you're a hypocrite. You told us not to cut across the grass because it kills it, but you're always doing it. You have double standards!" My father drank alcohol and even let us drink it too. When I was six years old, he told me to have a taste. When I did, I thought to myself, "Alcohol is so bitter—why do adults trouble themselves with drinking things that aren't even sweet?" I asked my father, "Why don't you just drink soda instead?" He replied, "Soda fills up your stomach and makes you go to the toilet all the time." At that time, both my parents drank. My younger sibling was also given a taste. When he was just three, we found him singing and spinning around—we discovered he was drunk! And even now, at the age of 43, he still drinks and cannot support himself; he relies on others for his needs. My father was a responsible man who was depended on by both us and his relatives, and he fulfilled his responsibilities even though he drank. But for the child, it ruined him. The weight of sin falls more heavily on a child. If a child learns something bad outside the home, that's one thing, but if they learn it from you, it brings sorrow. The worst thing a parent can do is teach their child something wrong, because the child will end up perfecting it even better than you did. I've seen parents who drink traditional brews like banana beer or millet beer—"mbege"—give it to their children so they can sleep and not disturb them while they work. That alcohol

enters the bloodstream, and the child can't quit it later. Two lay Christians from the Chaga community told me that they were introduced to alcohol in childhood and couldn't stop until God intervened. Today, they are powerful evangelists. I must emphasize this: parents, bad behavior has a stronger influence on children than good behavior ever will!

We are in the midst of a great battle between God and Satan—never forget that you are in a war every minute! Humanly speaking, it may seem like Satan is winning, but we know that he doesn't know our thoughts—only our actions. And so, if we stay on our knees in prayer, we will win through God's grace. But don't think that you can commit a sin as a parent and expect your child not to follow suit. Children are much more susceptible to temptation than we are—and you know why that is! Even so, when a teacher teaches a student who then surpasses the teacher, isn't that success? Many fathers today have stopped going to places of worship, but I hear them telling their children, "Musa, why aren't you going to church?"—yet they themselves stay home every week. These are things a layperson should know to better support their family.

Parents must follow up on responsibilities. Don't assign a task to a child if you're not going to monitor it—it will be done carelessly and the child will form the habit of poor work. A child should be given chores daily, and they should be checked. Even a two-year-old can do simple tasks like shelling beans or wiping spoons. There are many tasks; you just have to think and give them to your child. That's why a stay-at-home mom is a blessing (see list of chores on the page).

Follow up on the skills your child is developing. What nanny or aunt is really going to pay close attention to these things? If there is one, it's rare. Many times, when I was busy with work and had someone looking after my children, I thought to myself, "Why do we women even have children if we're not ready to stay home with them?"

I've seen Indian women stay home with their children, even those with heavy university degrees. And I've noticed that in New Jersey, when we live among Indians and Arabs, their children are well-mannered, speak their mother tongue fluently, eat traditional food, and perform extremely well in school—often topping American children. Nearly all of them get scholarships to top universities like Harvard, MIT, Yale, and others. Ironically, many of them don't worship the God of Heaven; they follow Buddha and other gods, yet they are more disciplined than

most Christian children. Why? Because their mothers stay with them, and their fathers have structured programs with their kids.

We Africans, on the other hand, have children with all sorts of issues. They won't eat African food like ugali but want American junk food. They don't know any language well besides English. When they visit home, they can't talk to their grandparents or eat their aunt's cooking—and we call this “progress”?

Let's not raise our children to be little monarchs or mini-chiefs—where we work and they don't. We used to help our parents, but now we pity our kids. When they get married, it becomes a struggle because both want to be the boss while the other becomes the servant. Is that really possible? I saw some modern young couples fight in marriage: “You washed one spoon, so I'll wash one too—we must be exactly equal.” Respect will be difficult in that home.

A girl should be taught that a man must be respected—it's a command from God's Word. And a boy should be taught to love his wife. These things are learned at home. No woman wants her son to marry a disrespectful woman!

Another point is helping one another. If you see someone else's child doing something wrong—maybe a neighbor's or a student—try to help that child. If you can't, tell their parent so they can address it. It doesn't help to say, “This is the whole village's child,” and yet you never told the parent. Maybe the child doesn't even know it's wrong, and the parent is unaware of what's going on. But if you tell the parent lovingly and they still get offended and make you the villain, then you've done your part.

A responsible adult who loves children, people, and God will not keep quiet when things are going wrong. If we don't help raise other people's children, it comes back to us—because if they become thieves or destructive, they'll affect us too. That's why I see great value in those who support other people's children to go to school. It's a major blessing for community development.

Today is not like the old days, when if you misbehaved, any neighbor could discipline you—and if you reported it to your parents, you'd get another beating. It was better to just keep quiet.

A child should know who they are, why they are here on earth, and where they are going. So many waves of philosophy and science, like evolution, pass through. Tell your child who they really are. Our African traditions didn't teach our children such nonsense like "you came from a monkey." Even monkeys don't want us to be part of their family! Pastor Bulengela made us laugh when he said he once heard a monkey telling another, "These humans are difficult! They pollute the environment, put smoke in their mouths, and are always fighting—we monkeys don't do any of that. Let them stay away—we don't want to be their relatives!"

Even if you're not a rocket scientist, you can figure out where you came from and value yourself. When I teach my children, I ask: "Who are you?" They respond with their name. "Why are you here?" They reply, "I was created by God, and after the fall of man in Eden, I'm now in a restoration process to tell others and prepare myself." "Where are you going?" They answer, "I'm going to live with God forever." Remember, you didn't give birth to a monkey, and you're not going to evolve into something else. You were created in the image of God for a specific glorious purpose—learn that in depth because God has space to explain it to you. In prayer, the line to Him never gives you a message like: "Dear customer... the number you've dialed is unavailable!"

Never allow your child to sleep over at someone's house for things like a "pajama party." Even if you know the hosts, someone else could be visiting and mess up your child's upbringing.

A child is not like lice or worms to be removed—they are meant to be raised. This ties into the issue of abortion. A report at our church this week revealed that between January and April 2013, twelve million abortions were performed globally—300,000 of them in the U.S. alone.

As a layperson, get involved in this issue—advise people. If possible, help find someone to adopt the child. Sometimes people are overwhelmed and think death is smaller than continuing, but rather than killing and bringing a curse from God, it's better to give the child to someone who can raise them.

It's true that God forgives when we come to Him, but we should help others avoid falling into this sin—or support them in overcoming it. This also involves men,

because it takes two to make a baby. Many girls today lack self-worth. They say things like, “I don’t know who I am. I’m going to find myself.”

Any parent or adult in the community is a blessing when they help raise other people’s children too. When they come to your home, show them good morals, how to work, and respect. Children should be allowed to play. Play to a child is like work to an adult. Children need repetition and structure in order to learn. For example, a newborn should have a feeding schedule every three hours. If the baby cries before that, you can give them water. After just one week, they will adjust. This helps build discipline and prevents greediness, and it will also help you get better sleep. It is cruel to let a child do whatever they want. Their behavior, health, and relationships will be better when they have a routine.

We parents have abandoned our children in many ways. Parents have disappeared. One mother said, “My son came home with a friend who is in boarding school, in form one, and his parents didn’t even care. When I called them, they said, ‘It’s okay, let him stay there.’” That boy, with the help of that family, finished school and became a well-mannered young man with a good job. He simply lacked support. There are many children who, if given a nurturing environment, can thrive and become good children who support their families, communities, and the nation. A parent who is a good example at home is like a lighthouse that keeps ships from getting lost or sinking.

I urge those who are able not to support only their own children with education and knowledge, but to also help other children, even if it requires some sacrifice. Even encouraging a neighbor’s child is a great act. I’ve observed in the West that parents know how to encourage children and take risks more than we do, and that helps children a lot. A child should be given some freedom to learn certain things—it shouldn’t always be, “You’re ruining my bicycle by trying to learn!” I know resources are scarce, but when will the child learn and what will they learn?

For those who were not blessed with children, there are many who need guidance and care. Ask God to show you if your calling is to help orphans or homeless children. True religion, regardless of denomination, is helping orphans and widows and keeping oneself pure. Remember, even evil people help their own, so you’ve done nothing extraordinary by helping only your relatives. Helping your family is your duty, but helping the poor whom you don’t know is the work of God Himself and a source of blessing. For He said, “Whoever helps the poor lends to the Lord,

and He will repay them for their good deed.” Have you ever lent to a millionaire or your country’s president? I haven’t! So now, the Almighty God is the one you are lending to—just thinking about it makes me tremble! Someone as insignificant as me lending to the Almighty God!?

It is my prayer that these lessons give you the foundation for raising children and encourage you to keep seeking God’s guidance and revelation. Feel free to write to us with the insights you’ve gained so we may also be blessed.

To Christian teachers, you are second only to parents in the responsibility of preparing children for heaven. Being a Christian teacher is a holy calling, just like pastoring, lay ministry, or preaching. Do not despise your work—many children have seen Christ and will go to heaven because of their teachers. Since there isn’t space to say much, take time to read books written for Christian teachers and what is expected of them. Such books include *Christian Education and Counsels to Teachers and Parents*. These days with the internet, just search “How to be an excellent Christian teacher” on Google, and you’ll find plenty of resources.

Don’t work as a teacher without reading these books if you are a layperson. You are not just any teacher or an ordinary teacher—absolutely not—you are representing Christ. True education is that which prepares a child to handle life in this world and prepares them to enter heaven. What use is it for a child to get an A or excel academically and still end up in hell?

Don’t be ashamed to share your testimony with children. When I was teaching, I shared my testimony with students even in public schools, because Africans care deeply about God, as Pastor Mbithi once said. Even in hospital work, I still share my testimony, and I’ve met many people living with guilt, fear, and uncertainty, waiting for comfort from God. I’m not saying you should only teach spiritual matters and abandon your lesson—no! But make room for those conversations, and if a child wants to know the Word or doesn’t have it, help them access it.

One child from Ukambani told me his Christian science teacher loved explaining the Bible, and the students found science difficult. They asked the teacher tough Bible questions like, “What was Jacob’s trouble? Tell us about Daniel chapters two and seven. What kingdoms will rule the world in the last days?” That teacher used the whole class period, and the students failed his subject. Make an effort not to set a bad example for children. I once passed by a school and saw lazy teachers

skipping classes while children and parents complained. A Christian teacher must not dishonor the name of their Creator through such disgraceful behavior.

Matthew 21:16 says, “Yes, have you never read, ‘From the mouths of infants and nursing babies You have prepared praise’?” Raise your children to serve God, like the boy in John 6 who had five loaves and two fish. Involve children in ministry. Don’t serve children just because others are doing it, or because there is gain or pity—pity fades. God’s heart for children is deep.

Look at the example of Ishmael, son of Hagar. He had lost hope and was in pain, dying. “God heard the voice of the boy,” and said, “I will make you a great nation.” To be a great nation means being confident, creative, respected, and recognized globally. Hagar represents many women in the world who are impregnated and abandoned, struggling alone with children. Laypeople should encourage them. Others are widows whose property has been taken by relatives, losing hope and lacking food to rescue their children. Hagar is deeply sorrowful.

Ishmael represents many children who are abandoned in pain, even dying, without assurance of proper food or medical care. Many are left in front of televisions and misleading ideas. They lack comfort or access to school. Many children have been abandoned by families, schools, politics, governments, and churches. Many are on the streets facing countless dangers. But God hears their cries in their tough circumstances.

Read Psalm 139:13-16 and Psalm 22:9-11. Let us have great expectations—they will help a child reach great goals.

CHILD ABUSE

A layperson or any believer should be an advocate for the oppressed—such as the poor, foreigners, widows, and orphans. Children’s ministry is one of the essential areas of our ministry through which we strive to reach children. Therefore, we have written a few points to help laypeople or spiritual leaders support children who face various challenges. Children are our key targets for bringing to Christ, starting with our own and those in our communities.

Millions of children around the world are abused in different ways. Some work in factories and on farms until their hands develop calluses and their backs bend. Others are forced into prostitution in major cities, contract HIV, and even die.

They die every day from treatable diseases. Those who love and defend children often ask: Why do societies and even governments neglect children?

A child's environment becomes unsafe due to abuse and violence. Children must be protected from environments where they might get hurt, be oppressed, abused, or denied their rights. No church should assign someone to teach children without conducting some form of background check. It is also wise for them to work alongside those with a good reputation before being left alone with children. This issue is important because many studies have shown it's a real problem. Between 20-65% of students in schools are mistreated by peers without intervention. Harsh corporal punishment and anger-driven discipline are prevalent in schools. Worldwide, 126 million children are subjected to hard and dangerous labor, accompanied by beatings, rape, exclusion, and torture—even in institutions like orphanages.

Each year, 150 million girls and 73 million boys globally are raped or sexually abused, usually by people they know—relatives or neighbors. Every year, 50,000 children commit suicide due to abuse, and 2 million are hospitalized due to injuries from physical abuse. Around 5.7 million children are exploited as laborers in prostitution and drug trafficking. These figures are difficult to verify because much of the abuse happens in secret. Family violence is strongly linked to child abuse. Abuse is any intentional act that causes physical or emotional harm or hinders a child's growth or development. Perpetrators include parents, guardians, teachers, employers, students, and close acquaintances. Abuse leads to long-term health issues such as depression, violence, crime, prostitution, drug abuse, heart and liver diseases, poor academic performance, and toxic relationships marked by conflict and disrespect.

Abuse involves the intentional use of physical force or authority to cause death, psychological harm, violation of rights, or developmental issues. It includes all forms of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, neglect, or exploitation—causing actual or potential harm. Abuse hinders efforts to support a child's growth and success in life.

There are four types of abuse:

1. Emotional abuse: Repeated verbal or behavioral acts that cause emotional injury.

For example, a stepmother insulted and belittled a child over small mistakes, calling them "useless" and "a corpse." This made the child feel voiceless and unsupported. Such a child may become destructive, withdrawn, angry, self-deprecating, ashamed, fearful, aggressive, or defiant.

2. Neglect: When a parent or guardian fails—intentionally or unintentionally—to provide basic needs. A child lacking food will suffer from poor health and weakness. Clothing is essential for dignity and protection. A child unable to cover their body or shield from the cold or heat may lose their sense of self-worth.

Other needs include healthcare. If neglected, a child may suffer pain, disability, or death. Children also need love and nurturing. Education is another basic need. A child must be enrolled and attend school. They must also be monitored to ensure safety. Neglect leads to injury or risk.

Another form of neglect is denying children the chance to be born or to live. Millions of pregnancies are terminated every year. In the U.S. alone, four million. Expectant parents must create a safe environment for the unborn child, including proper nutrition, rest, peace, and avoiding harmful substances like alcohol and cigarettes—not throwing babies in toilets or garbage.

3. Physical abuse: Any physical harm or actions that injure a child's body or impair development.

This includes beating, overburdening children with excessive religious or community obligations that exhaust them, or denying them rest. Corporal punishment often stems from a caregiver trying to assert authority. While some traditions support it, and the Bible gives room for discipline, many parents beat children in anger and without restraint.

Spanking should be rare and given with love, not fury.

Parents often forget they once longed for children and that these kids are still learning. We sometimes have unrealistic expectations.

Many governments are now banning corporal punishment because children have died or been harmed by discipline delivered without love or care.

Often, adults vent their anger, not genuinely correcting the child.

In classrooms, I've seen children beaten daily for low grades—even those with limited intellectual capacity or difficult circumstances.

Parents expect teachers to perform miracles and make their children top students—even when they themselves never achieved that.

Sometimes, the intellectual legacy passed on to children is simply limited.

Child Protection and Advocacy

Occasionally, disciplining a child with physical punishment may have its place, but it's difficult to determine the threshold beyond which it becomes physical abuse. Moreover, not every child requires caning; for some, a stern look is enough for them to adjust their behavior. Excessive use of the cane can turn a child into a violent and uncaring person. Our calling is to love God with all our mind, soul, and strength, and to love others as we love ourselves. We should pray that God grants us that kind of love—so that when we see children being abused, whether ours or someone else's, we are moved to tears and take action to help them. We should also counsel these children, encouraging them to be born again if they show signs of problematic behavior. Besides corporal punishment, some children are abused by being burned, beaten excessively, stabbed with sharp objects, slapped, kicked, shoved, twisted at the joints, pinched, tied up, or cut. Giving a child physically demanding tasks beyond their capacity—like carrying heavy water containers—is also physical abuse. Children are beaten and humiliated; their clothes and skin are torn because they lack school uniforms, are academically weak, are late to school, or can't pay school fees—issues often beyond their control.

Other forms of abuse include exposing small children to long and stressful ceremonies like weddings, which can leave them hungry and sad because they don't enjoy such events. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is another harmful practice that can lead to complications during childbirth. Signs of physical abuse in children include bruises and marks from beatings, pooled blood under the skin, unconvincing explanations for injuries, bruises on the back, buttocks, forehead, or thighs, wounds in different stages of healing, burn marks, scars from being burned with cigarettes or other objects, burns from hot water or electricity, broken bones, or unexplained scratches. Such a child may be afraid of adults, display anger, withdraw from others, dislike being touched, fear parents or guardians, be timid or anxious, arrive too early or too late at school, walk with

difficulty, complain of pain, prefer clothes that cover injuries or scars, or even run away from home to escape mistreatment.

Sexual abuse involves any sexual act directed at a child, regardless of whether the child consents. It includes arousing a child's sexual feelings, showing them pornographic images, rape, engaging in sexual acts with a child, playing sexual games, making sexual promises, giving inappropriate sexual education, undressing or exposing a child inappropriately, fondling private parts or other areas typically covered by clothing, and marrying off a child before the age of 18.

Each year, about one million children globally are forced into prostitution or pornography through coercion, deception, manipulation, or gifts.

Signs of sexual abuse include difficulty walking or sitting, bloodstains on clothing, itching or bleeding in genital or anal areas, contracting STIs before puberty, teenage pregnancies, reluctance to change clothes, withdrawal from peers, deep sadness, unusual sexual knowledge or behavior, inappropriate jokes, refusal to be touched, suicide attempts, strained relationships with parents, peers, or teachers, unexplained gifts or money, strange flirtatious behavior, and extreme secrecy. Consequences of sexual abuse include injuries, pregnancy, tearing of genital parts, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, death, and long-lasting psychological trauma even into adulthood.

Contributing Factors to Abuse

Harmful cultural practices often contribute to child abuse, such as marrying off young girls under the guise of preserving family honor. Lack of parenting knowledge and inability to bond with children results in harsh parenting styles characterized by rebukes, punishment, and cruelty.

Alcohol abuse diminishes the capacity of caregivers to care for and protect children, leading to frequent conflict.

Poverty forces children to shoulder the burdens of their families, such as paying debts or providing food.

A history of abuse in the family perpetuates the cycle—children who were abused often grow up to repeat the same behaviors.

Children naturally ask many questions, but when parents lack the knowledge to answer them constructively, they discourage curiosity. This doesn't end the child's search for answers; they may continue to seek information in secret, sometimes exposing themselves to abusive situations. Children ask questions in all areas—including those related to puberty. Many parents leave this responsibility to aunts, grandparents, or uncles, but this is a major mistake. Children as young as three should begin to receive age-appropriate sexual education. For example, they can be taught which parts of the body are private and should not be touched by others.

In African culture, these topics were traditionally taboo. However, the HIV/AIDS epidemic forced society to confront these issues, with public awareness campaigns reducing the stigma. Sexuality and reproductive education are not sinful or shameful. It is a serious failure for a Christian parent to raise a child without providing such essential knowledge.

We have written a children's book with simple lessons on sexuality, aimed at teaching children about purity in a way that is suitable for their age and mental capacity.

Urban slums and unsafe living conditions often force parents and children to share a single room, increasing the risk of rape and sexual abuse.

Lack of quality time with children deprives them of parental protection and guidance. Children must be encouraged to report any signs of abuse or suspicious behavior

It is important to establish clear, mutually understood standards to ensure children's safety. Policies and guidelines should promote loving and protective environments for children. Parents and children should be educated about child protection rules, signs of abuse, and the guidelines for creating safe spaces. Refer to the United Nations child protection framework—it provides helpful standards.

Parents, communities, institutions, and faith-based organizations often lack sufficient understanding of their responsibilities regarding children's safety and needs. Child advocacy is a responsibility of every adult and every nation. All individuals working with children should undergo background checks, and communities should be fully informed of existing child protection protocols.

Children and parents should receive comprehensive education on abuse and its prevention.

A child advocate should be someone who loves God, lives a morally upright life, shows compassion, rejects poverty, believes in change, is firmly against child abuse, and is fully committed to the cause. They should be prayerful, fast, and study Scripture, interceding for children by name and lifting up their needs before God. They must speak up on behalf of children, live a peaceful life, and act as their protector against all forms of danger. Advocates should seek to deepen their understanding of child issues through books, articles, and training, including how to care for children with special needs or gifted children.

They must value children as beings made in the image of God, ensuring they are not placed in risky environments.

The essence of child advocacy is seeking justice for the child—rescuing them from suffering, danger, or war; offering them hope, meeting their basic needs, and showing them love. “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice.” — Proverbs 31:8-9.

Community leaders, government officials, parents, and special interest groups all have a duty to be the voice of the child. Children should also be involved in some decision-making processes that directly affect their well-being. A child advocate recognizes that every child is valuable and that this responsibility comes directly from God Himself.

CHAPTER 13

CAUTION

Things that a servant of God must know include: the will of God, the Bible, self-awareness and understanding of one's temperament, leadership style, and calling. They should also understand their relationship with their pastor and fellow members, the vision and mission of their church, and its boundaries. They must recognize when they need help and how to train someone to take over their responsibilities. They should know where to find resources and books, how to surrender completely, and the importance of watchfulness and prayer.

It is said that three things often cause the downfall of a servant of God: money, power, and women. It's crucial for a layperson to be cautious with the women or men (members) they lead. They interact with people of various personalities, and must relate to all of them with reverence for God. The English say, "WWJD - What Would Jesus Do?" How would Jesus respond in these situations? We cannot touch Divinity without also touching humanity. We are to love the Lord with all our hearts, all our strength, all our minds, and all our souls - and to love our neighbor as ourselves. This fulfills the entire law.

All human beings are created by God in His image and are deeply loved by Him with an everlasting love. Avoid evil and even the appearance of evil, especially in matters of money, power, or cross-cultural interactions. In this section, we focus on discussions related to relationships.

It is a good thing to love your wife as you love yourself, and for a wife to respect her husband - these are commands, not suggestions. They are non-negotiable. There are various views regarding friendships for laypeople. Some think a layperson should be friendly with everyone, laughing and building friendships with all members. Others believe a layperson should draw a line and remain distant. Both extremes are dangerous - the balance lies in the middle. Relationships can be delicate; to succeed, they require a certain warmth, care, wisdom, and practical sense. It's best not to be selfish but to genuinely care for others, using the "wisdom of serpents and the gentleness of doves."

It's hard to draw clear boundaries because some members have friendly spirits or easily show affection, and both you and your spouse need friends in this new place.

It becomes easy for the layperson to accept this affection and form friendships with those who like and accept him or her.

Some people are hesitant to make friends quickly with the layperson for fear of seeming over-eager. In such cases, the layperson can encourage them to come closer and form friendships. Others are curious to know what goes on in the lay preacher's household! This is common even during introductions, as many people want to know more about the family: "Where are they from? How many children do they have? What is their age? Do they have any skills or professions?" etc. Often, the people who are easiest to befriend are those who share similar interests. However, the layperson should not lower their Christian standards - such as engaging in gossip - even if they feel a strong affection for someone. It's wise to set boundaries when visiting, no matter how fond you are of someone. "Let your foot be seldom in your neighbor's house, lest he become weary of you and hate you" (Proverbs 25:17). You might earn labels such as "freeloader" which you don't deserve.

Meeting with others is essential for spiritual encouragement, especially with those who share a heart for prayer or studying God's Word with mutual edification. Without clear purpose, conversations may drift into sin and offense. As long as Satan is active, there will be trouble until the day he is finally destroyed. The layperson should try to build inclusive fellowship, not just a club for their close friends, but something that benefits everyone - socially, spiritually, and physically. Lay preachers often find themselves in meetings with women who are cheerful, attractive, and compassionate. Many of them genuinely love God - but not all are safe for him. Some will begin to develop feelings for him, and he may also be attracted to them. Caution is necessary - a clear boundary must be drawn.

The lay preacher's wife should not always be invisible or hidden. This strengthens and builds the bond with her husband. Your husband doesn't need a wife who constantly makes excuses not to accompany him. Always be dressed in a way that allows you to easily accompany him to visit church members. A layperson who is always alone sends a certain message to others. People observe how you relate as a couple. This is a time to be intentional and study more about how to improve your relationship as well.

Take care of your health and appearance. This doesn't mean you should have expensive clothes or flaunt yourself. Not at all! Wisdom is also needed in how you

interact with your spouse. Don't appear overly jealous, but also don't neglect them. This gives a bad impression both to them and to the community you lead. Sometimes your spouse may see a trap being set - women often see these things more clearly than men. Discuss with your partner what you observe and protect each other. For example, if a woman comes to visit late at night and needs transport to a bus station, and you have a car, go together to take her or your wife can offer to accompany her instead. This applies vice versa as well.

When counseling others, it's wise to have someone else present. Many pastors or religious leaders believe they are strong enough to counsel alone, but no one is a stone - everyone is vulnerable. The counseling room should not be isolated, and another person must be nearby. This is a caution for everyone, not just laypeople - even professional counselors and psychologists follow this guideline. "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." Maybe you like the attention people give you - this is a mistake and invites trouble.

A lay evangelist from Zambia once told me while we were studying together, "Sister, women love me so much. When I'm preaching, they stare at me, and after the sermon, they come asking me to marry them! Some even bring their parents to say, 'Marry our daughter.'" He said this proudly, thinking he had many options. I tried to warn him that no one is above temptation and that we've all fallen short of the glory of God - but he ignored it.

About three months later, he told me he had suddenly married a woman who didn't like evangelism. They lived in a market area, and within weeks of finishing a three-week evangelistic campaign, they began fighting publicly. He had baptized many during that campaign, but soon his influence waned. He continued chasing after women, and they eventually separated.

We met again later in the U.S. at a seminar, where he was again pursuing women. He found an African-American woman in hopes of getting work papers and citizenship. But this time, he met his match. She had a 17-year-old son and would often beat him. One day I found him outside our college, crying on the grass. There were few Africans, and I had known him for years, like a brother. When he saw me, he said, "Sister, for an African man to cry, it must be serious. I'm stuck in this marriage just for the papers. My 'paper wife' told me to buy her \$3,000 couches or she'll ruin our immigration interview. Her son kicked me today, saying,

‘You don’t bring us food, so you’re our servant!’ Sister, I’m in a deep hole - what should I do?”

One day he called me, saying he had received his citizenship papers. “I’m thinking of running away from this woman. I’m on a bus headed to Nebraska - about 2,000 km away. She says she’ll be good now and wants us to stay together, but I don’t trust her.” I don’t know what happened after that because I moved to another state. But from what I later heard, he never went back into ministry. His life became one of hopping from one relationship to another. Maybe that was the sin that easily entangled him. But beware - you are not a rock. The wisest man, Solomon, fell. If he fell, how will we - mere mortals - stand unless we take heed?

And what of King David, a man after God’s own heart? And Samson, a national leader with incredible strength? Always remember the physical, social, and spiritual needs of your spouse must be met - this includes sexual intimacy. Experts say that a person’s emotional tank must be full to avoid temptation. During times of conflict at home or in ministry, a man becomes especially vulnerable to temptation. He will easily seek comfort or counsel outside the home during such times.

Pray and talk with your spouse. Laypeople desire their families to thrive, but they cannot achieve this alone. Yes, they need knowledge, experience, and good intentions - but even these are not enough. They must fully rely on God.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil."

With God as your help, join hands with your husband to uphold your marriage and ministry.

A layperson must also be cautious about the spouses of those he or she leads. Be wise and discern that some women or men may have hidden agendas such as sexual immorality. Plan in advance how to overcome such battles before they arise. Watch out for those who shake your hand for too long, or have eyes that send flirtatious messages. There is no need to hug every man or woman in the fellowship. Avoid being too close or frequently spending time with someone else's spouse. Do not invite such people to your home when their spouse is not present! Avoid conversations that revolve around loneliness, financial problems, marriage

struggles, or self-pity. Talking about such issues can lead to the temptation of sexual sin. Do not share your marital problems with a church member. Instead, find a spiritual counselor outside your church who loves God and confide in them. Do not accept personal gifts from women or girls in such cases—any gifts should be for your family as a whole.

Understand that not all men or women are threats. The family of a spiritual leader needs all the help and counsel it can get, because they care and serve in many ways. In emergencies, your wife might receive help from them while you're away. We thank God for the many men and women in church who love God. The church is proud of them, and they are many. However, what is written here is for laypeople and their spouses because many spiritual leaders only realize, too late, that a certain person did not have good intentions.

Take time to build love and a relationship with your wife or husband. Take time to communicate. Don't be deceived into thinking you're standing strong—realize it is God who is holding you up. Take time to pray and build your family. If it falls apart, even your lay ministry will be weak. "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11). Read the Bible and build up your family before going "to the whole world—start in Jerusalem." If you cannot live happily with your family, how will you counsel others? Your home is a pulpit where everyone hears a sermon. The enemy wants you to neglect your home by making you too busy. It's no secret—you cannot be a true Christian unless you're a good husband, a good father, and a good citizen. A good home doesn't happen by chance or accident; it's built through planning and determined effort.

Don't think that because you are doing the work of God, you can neglect your family—doing so is backsliding, and the enemy will strike. No success in God's work will ever cover up the void left by a neglected home (1 Timothy 3:15). The good you do outside doesn't erase the debts you owe in raising your children properly. Read the story of Eli carefully. He was both the president and the high priest of the nation, yet he still needed to make time for his family.

Nevertheless, the work of preaching can be lonely. That's why your wife and children bring comfort when you give them priority. Your wife and children are often criticized more than other women and children because of your ministry. Give them comfort and be a good example in the fellowship.

There was a woman whose husband—a spiritual leader—died. She shocked everyone when, a few months later, she said, “You didn’t really know my husband. He was good to people, a great preacher, a provider, a great leader and father—but he wasn’t a loving husband. He left a gap that is easy for me to fill. During our 28 years of marriage, I was saturated with blame and criticism all day. At least ten times a day, he made me feel drained and diminished—whether it was about the food I cooked or the clothes I wore. These days, I wake up with peace in my heart and go to bed with joy in my soul!” Set boundaries to support your family—it is your first church. Make time for your children, even simple outings to the library or historical places. Look into your wife’s needs and each child’s. Be there as they grow through joy and sorrow. There was a pastor’s child who had to schedule appointments to see his dad because he was always busy! Take your wife out for walks. She has a tough job being married to a spiritual leader. Keep the warmth in your marriage. If you don’t have time for it, don’t marry and then claim you’ll provide through thick and thin. Time stress, money issues, and love challenges are common in many marriages. These even lead to divorce for many laypeople and end their ministries. The best families in the world are those that choose to stay together no matter what (commitment), have a spirit of appreciation for one another, communicate well, spend time together (eating, traveling, talking, vacations, etc.), don’t give up easily, and pray together in the morning and evening (Acts 2:38-39, Deuteronomy 11:18-21). It’s also good for the wife to join the evangelism team so they are on the same page and reduce passive resistance to gospel work.

Don’t take risks or assume you’re safe. In the past, it was mostly men who fell into sexual sin, but today, since women also work and have careers, immorality affects both genders. I was shocked one day when we went shopping and young girls around 8 years old started following us, trying to talk to my sons. They kept following us. My 9-year-old son said, “I feel embarrassed—what should I say? They’re following us and asking questions. They’ve even left their mothers.” These young girls chase boys because they lack understanding. They watch too much television and live in a fantasy world of “a princess and a prince living happily ever after.”

An older laywoman once told me she saw nothing wrong in marrying a younger man. This 60-year-old woman was pursuing a 30-year-old man to marry her and kept asking around in churches if any man was available because she was looking.

She lowered her value. Even though she knew a lot—more than our whole family combined when it came to Scripture and Spirit-led books—young people didn't listen to her. She let her desires lead rather than the Lord's work. She could have found someone if she had trusted God and walked the right path, but everyone in church saw her as very quarrelsome. She had spent 40 years searching for marriage but was never lucky, nor did she give up. Many men avoided her. Maybe she was like Euodia and Syntyche, whom Paul spoke about in Philippians. We must transfer this energy for unimportant things to areas where the wheel meets the road or where the hammer hits the nail. But in the West, it's hard to find people who tell you the truth—they gossip and beat around the bush, hiding behind “human rights” and forgetting “Jesus' rights.”

These days, a few girls have started aggressively chasing men like Potiphar's wife. As a laywoman who wants to marry, be cautious—don't appear too desperate or people will suspect you have no good character and that's why “you market yourself.” Remember the saying, “What is good sells itself; what is bad advertises itself.”

Also be careful with the way you respond to people who come to you seeking courtship or marriage. When I was a young girl, my mother told me, “Men will come wanting to marry you, even those who clearly don't suit you in behavior or appearance. Know how to respond wisely.” For example, say, “Let me think about it and I'll get back to you,” or “Right now I'm planning to finish a tailoring course,” or “Currently I'm helping my younger siblings through school, and then I'll consider marriage—you just continue with your plans.” Don't lie to someone and ask them to wait for 10 years. Only Christ is worth waiting for that long!

Philippians 4 says, “Do not be anxious about anything, 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 your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Satan has noticed that whoever is ready—whether it's you or your spouse—he will go after them. No one is strong on their own. I've noticed that in my area, some with strong marriages still fall in other areas. I believe the devil works to ensure that people with strong marriages and deep love often are not willing to receive the gospel if their spouse is not equally committed, or they're not ready to serve God wholeheartedly. Studies show that those who pour out their hearts sincerely

to God are often those with marriage troubles, struggling with children, or are divorced! It's strange, because God wants His people to have strong marriages, but when they do, some become proud and feel they don't need Him.

Many laypeople caught in sexual sin gave various excuses—loneliness, stress, a busy spouse who ignores them, being deceived, boredom, anger at ministry, or lack of love. None of them ever dreamed it would happen. They were once good, kind, committed lay preachers serving God with their spouses. But Satan used every opportunity he could—and he defeated them.

Also avoid ruining other people's marriages. I've seen some lay evangelists who have a habit of causing division or speaking to one spouse behind the other's back. They ask the husband for help, and when he refuses, they go to the wife. Or they ask the wife to support or buy their materials, and then secretly approach the husband too—even though they share one wallet. The spirit of Gehazi must be avoided. Don't think greed is only for the rich! All people—rich and poor—have greed; only some haven't had the opportunity to show it.

Some people, when they realize that their spouse has discovered their deceit, will wait until the other is away to call someone else, or they call someone secretly when the spouse is not present. This kind of trickery may seem helpful for a while, but in the end, it will ruin your work. A layperson supports and builds people's marriages, not destroy them. Even if you are called to help restore a marriage, do not be the one who adds fuel to the fire causing them to separate—especially while you yourself are living well with your own spouse.

I once met a certain laywoman who boasted about her marriage, how she was loved, helped in housework, and had a "faithful husband." She went on to speak negatively about other men, ridiculing them. Those who heard her thought their time had passed and that she had truly gotten lucky.

Choose your words wisely; don't speak recklessly without analyzing your audience.

Some laypeople have faced the temptation of leaving their wife because she could not bear children. This is a real challenge; pray for strength and God's help. Where I live, about 15% of people don't have children due to the woman's issues, and 10% due to the man's. You can see the difference isn't that big. I know that in our culture, adopting another person's child and raising them as your own is not easy.

But when all else fails, it's a good option. Many who have adopted children have ended up conceiving their own later.

My children's teacher once said that adoption is one way of unlocking fertility! This is a broad topic, and it doesn't have answers from human beings—"why didn't God give me a child?" But we see in the Bible that some people went through this challenge either by God's will (like Hannah the widow and prophetess), or as a punishment (like Michal in Deuteronomy 28); who really knows? Some may face it due to unfortunate circumstances, some through their own choices, while for others, perhaps God saw it best for them.

Still, you cannot tell someone that directly; it will hurt them and may not even be true. One layperson I knew married a woman but didn't have children, so he left her and married another. The first woman remarried and had a child. The layman then left his second wife and married a third woman. The second wife also remarried and had a child.

Wise people approached him and told him not to embarrass himself because clearly, he was the one with the problem. He was a good layperson and a church elder. Eventually, he married a woman who already had children, and he raised them well. Truly, we are not told to leave our spouses because we don't have children; it is a sin, and even so, it is God who gives children. Who knows if you will one day have children, and even then—who knows what kind of people those children will become? Trust in God alone. Proverbs 3:3-5—He is the one to cry to for help.

In short, use these strategies: Do not be overconfident. Do not say, "This can never happen to me." "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12)

Be a person of integrity who keeps secrets. Stand firmly on your values. Don't allow sin to sway you. Do not start entertaining such thoughts—they put you in danger. If you do think them, ask for forgiveness and cast them out. Eventually, they will flee. Martin Luther, the German reformer, said, "We cannot stop birds from flying over our heads, but we can prevent them from building nests."

Avoid small misbehaviors like chewing or eating during worship—they reduce your influence.

Be a close friend to your spouse. Many affairs started with “we’re just friends.” Let your spouse be your best friend.

Set boundaries. Remember whose child you are—you are a child of the King of Heaven. He has laws in His Kingdom. It is not essential to be famous, but you must have Godly character.

Build your marriage. A good marriage takes effort. Entrust your marriage to God and do your part to sustain it.

You have the choice in how you conduct yourself as an adult. You know God’s standards and Christian values well. Do not blame others or your environment for your behavior.

Focus your thoughts on helpful things: “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report—if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.” (Philippians 4:8-9)

Pray, pray, pray! “Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17) This is the secret to victory and your motto.

Flee if you must! It’s not just cowards who run. Wise and brave people also run when necessary to flee sin. Joseph, a lowly servant boy, stripped of his clothes, ran away and overcame! “How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:1-12). He overcame the temptation!

But Samson, who was strong enough to strike down a man, fell to a seductive woman—her clothes, her charms, and her position of power.

Layperson, do not give up. God still gives strength today. The environment may be full of stress, but count your blessings and claim the promises in Jude 24-25, Philippians 2:1-5, and especially Ephesians 3:20: “To Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory.”

CHAPTER 14

BEING A GOOD HOST

How can you become a good host who builds strong relationships with their guests? Titus 2 encourages all believers to be hospitable and welcoming to strangers. So, the kindness shown by fellow believers in welcoming you is a wonderful thing. We see the example of the widow of Zarephath who welcomed Elijah even when she only had a little flour and oil—yet she was greatly blessed. Hebrews 13:2 tells us not to forget to entertain strangers, for by doing so, some have entertained angels without knowing it. Matthew 25:19 says, “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me”—like clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, and so on. These are very important matters.

Do not be stingy in your work as a layperson, willing to eat at other people’s homes but being selfish when it’s your turn to host. Don’t just say “you’re welcome” while in your heart you’re afraid of going broke or secretly relieved when guests don’t come! At the same time, don’t be wasteful—don’t set an extravagant table just to show off, especially when that money could be used to advance the gospel.

Let your belongings not just accumulate in your home while you give nothing to others. And this isn’t just about food—what about clothes, cooking pots, cabinets, and other items? Do you share them, or are they simply turning your house into a storage unit? This is a question I’ve asked myself often. Our house has become like a storehouse, and we are now trying to find ways to give things away. If only we lived near the Mexico border, it would be easier to donate things to people without high shipping costs!

You don’t have to offer expensive meals or banquets. Christ fed people with just bread and fish. He didn’t put on a flashy display, but people saw His caring heart and compassion. New believers especially need to be welcomed into the homes of other believers. It is said that a new member needs at least seven friends to remain in the faith. They face the challenge of discouragement, adapting to new people, adopting new lifestyles (food, clothing, etc.), and accepting new leadership in their lives. They may feel lonely, and even their families might have abandoned them due to their new faith.

Observe if they come late and leave quickly after services to avoid interaction. They believe in the teachings, yes, but they also crave new friendships because they've left old ones behind. Invite them into your home where you can talk face-to-face and they can observe Christian living firsthand and learn much. Make it a point to genuinely welcome them, not to show off what you have. Invite new members and have conversations with them. Plan your visits so you have time to talk. Don't be like Martha, distracted with serving. Don't hesitate to ask for help.

Keep a mental list of simple meals you can make quickly and affordably. Sometimes, be bold enough to try new dishes, even if they're not part of your culture, especially if they're in season or easy to find. New ideas started with people willing to take risks. In other countries, almost anything can be food, but for us, it must be ugali and beans—even when we have sweet potatoes and beans, we fear being seen as lowering the standard. If that's what you have—like the widow of Zarephath—be at peace and prepare it. I remember and smile at a time we visited Pastor Dea in Kiterere, Mara. I used to call him Grandpa, as he came from the same region as my grandfather, and I was free to talk to him as I would to my own granddad. At his home, there were many short mango trees full of ripe fruit. Since where I live mangoes and sugarcane are rare, I get so happy to eat them. So even before knocking, I started eating the mangoes. A kind woman appeared and said, “Are you our guests? Why are you embarrassing us by eating mangoes—these lowly things? Come in, let me send the child for some Fanta.”

She immediately sent the child for soda. But I usually don't drink soda and hadn't for years. So out of politeness I said, “Mama, thank you for your kindness, but these mangoes are precious to me.” She replied, “Really? Do you mean that from your heart? Because I don't like it when a special guest gets something that isn't special.” I was served many mangoes, several buckets full, and I even traveled with some.

Don't forget to invite youth or widows. Some have gone through divorce and fear even coming to church. Start by inviting or visiting them. They may have friends outside church, but that doesn't make them feel like staying. Sometimes they're afraid of judgment from church members. When you're at church, greet others. Don't wait for them to greet you. Go over and say hello. Some people have a lot going on in their lives and avoid others. Many of us have homes and talents that could be used to welcome guests and witness to them—many could be converted this way. Hospitality opens the door to friendship and the gospel. Talk to people—

don't be too quiet—but also remember that the gift of listening is powerful. People feel loved when they're heard.

When inviting more than one person, be careful not to focus conversations on topics only long-time members enjoy, leaving out newer ones. Make an effort to include newcomers, not just your old friends. The Holy Spirit knows your heart's intention to witness—He will use your words to inspire those you're trying to reach. They will feel peace, joy, and see your friendly heart.

Be patient. Don't overwhelm someone on the first visit with too much preaching. But also don't miss your chance—if God opens the door that day, speak. Invite someone over in a quiet setting to talk more. Sometimes, all our friends and relatives are already Christians, and we have no one left to reach—this is a mistake. Prepare healthy food—this is also a kind of preaching. People may ask about it. For example, avoid refined grains, too much oil, etc. (See the health chapter). They'll see Christians are joyful without alcohol or junk food. If your hospitality goes wrong, forgive yourself and learn from it. You're doing it for Christ—He will give you strength and ability. If the food burns, it's just an accident! Many people in our communities need friendship, comfort, and a smile. They won't mind a little burnt rice—who hasn't had that happen? People don't care how much you know; they care how much you care. Do you listen with love? They'll feel you understand their pain.

I've often struggled with offering advice—sometimes people just need you to listen. And in talking, they may figure out their own solutions. The site www.jenniferjill.org and many Christian counselors have helped others find guidance from the Bible. Biblical people didn't have formal counseling training, but God gave them wisdom. I've often asked God for wise words—that when I open my mouth, I speak healing and comforting words, not foolishness. People seek advice, but don't be harsh or unhelpful. Balance is divine wisdom from Christ.

Everything needs thought and planning. Maybe rotate your guests—one day invite widows, another day youth. Food opens doors to friendship during a shared meal and conversation. If able, use colorful fruits and vegetables and teach something about healthy living when appropriate. Learn a few simple recipes—like kachumbari or a fruit plate with a nice arrangement. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” My friend Bettie Muasya, married to a pastor in Nairobi,

has a mango farm and welcomes many people, using hospitality to reach others. During fruit season, she makes smoothies (mango and avocado blend). They grow things like taro and bananas—and God uses all this to reach people.

I've seen many believers with this gift. We once stayed in Arusha with Jemina and Damas Kivunge. They welcomed many, even unbelievers, using their banana and vegetable farm—this is evangelism. Don't underestimate the impact of inviting someone—even if all you have is porridge! One day I was very hungry and hadn't eaten since the day before. I passed by a brother's house and he was cooking corn porridge. He invited me, and it felt like a great feast!

Don't fear hosting someone thinking, "How will they see me?" "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6). Ask God to give you gracious words during your hosting so you can do what He wants. Avoid boasting. Help guests feel calm and welcomed. Watch out for guests who derail your goals with arguments or cause disruptions. Aim for a pleasant environment. If possible, play soft gospel music in the background—not too loud so people can still talk. But don't waste time on TV—you'll lose attention and purpose.

Learn your guests' names. Introduce them. Shake their hands. Let your smile show them their importance and that you're happy to be with them. If someone looks lonely, bring them closer to others. Don't forget the children—get some paper, pencils, or crayons for them to draw or play with. Sadly, in some countries, new believers or guests are not invited to people's homes because they have children! But children need to be reached too. One mother said, "I have eight children and people are afraid to invite me. When I arrive with my children, it feels like I'm invading their home." Don't be afraid. To conclude the wedding story, we weren't able to attend a close friend's wedding—my husband's old roommate for 8 years—because they said not to come with children, and we had no one to watch them. It was strange that children were excluded. If children feel unwelcome at weddings, will they want to have weddings of their own? Children are your gospel audience too. Who knows—90% of people accept Christ before age 15, and only 3% after age 50!

There's much to talk about with your guests—depending on the “weather” of the moment: gardens, family, health, school, food, government (but avoid politics and blaming). It's well known that people outside the church are more socially inclined, accepting others easily without judging culture or beliefs. They welcome strangers outside their “circles” more easily than we do, and their conversations flow naturally.

However, do not forget to pray with your guests or to have morning and evening devotions even in the midst of the busyness of welcoming them.

If your church invites guests for worship and prepares meals twice a year, it will be a good thing. Often, guests arrive around 9:30 AM and attend two sessions, and after the meal, there's one more session. For people who are busy, you can use these hours to preach the gospel, and it can be a great beginning. Be careful in choosing the meals for such events. At Mwenge Church in Dar es Salaam, they have a passion for evangelism—they even invited ambassadors from various countries depending on the members' ability, and it turned out to be a good outreach to testify about Jesus. All people of every tribe, language, class, family, and profession must be reached. Remember, even your children as they eat are your guests too! Don't use that time to correct, scold, or dominate them. Let them eat and enjoy the food—if there's an issue, bring it up at another time. This will help the food digest well! (Unless it's a very urgent matter.)

Check if the toilet is clean before guests arrive; sometimes children will have used it and left it messy. Be cautious—not everyone who passes through your home is well-meaning. Some come with deceit or bad intentions. They may seem kind and speak in a Christian manner, but something is off. Guests are like “angels” whom God uses to test our kindness, but some still have their old nature and temptations like theft or criminal behavior. Someone once came to our home needing a place to stay. We allowed them, and they used our phone without our knowledge. After some time, our phone service was cut off because we were charged \$1,750! This person claimed he didn't know he was using our line—it “just happened.” That was a blatant lie. He pretended to be sorry, even cried, and said he'd look for a job to pay us back—but he left and disappeared, perhaps expecting us to follow up. We tried contacting the phone company, but it was very difficult.

He told others that he didn't know the phone would act that way, even though he was speaking for up to 200 minutes! Where in the world can you talk

internationally for 200 minutes without paying? He even acted like he was the one wronged when we confronted him. True repentance when we wrong people is about making things right, not just feeling bad or shedding fake tears and walking away. Everyone has sinned and fallen short of God's glory, but we must make amends. This guest was not charged anything to stay with us, yet he left us in a tough situation, continuing his life without care or shame. Perhaps he thought that since we were better off, hurting us was no big deal. But it was a blow—we needed that phone service for school and other needs.

This layperson spoke badly about the homes he had previously stayed in and claimed that if he had his own home, he'd treat others better. He blamed his relatives and everyone else who had helped him. In every place he stayed, others had issues—but not him. I think if he truly cared for people, he would have seen that this experience was a lesson to show him he's not perfect either, and that he too hurts people with theft and lies. Those people who hosted him did so out of kindness, yet he went around defaming them.

I won't speak much about guests who trouble people—you'll encounter your own examples, and some guests will bless your soul too. You'll have your own stories. If you have wronged people during your visit, make it right and ask God for forgiveness. We don't go into people's homes to cause harm but to build bridges so we can serve the Great King better.

If you have guests staying over, how can you be the best host possible? Based on your available resources, prepare a place for them to sleep; give from what you have. Pay attention to small details like: are the windows well-ventilated, is there enough light (e.g., a flashlight), bathroom slippers, towels (ask if they brought their own—many do), can you wake them up at a certain time if they need to catch a bus, drinking water, any food preferences or restrictions, a book to read, soap, a place to store clothes or valuables if there's a security concern, and a place to hang clothes, etc.

Be careful not to lead your guest into temptation. For example, a lay friend of mine from the U.S. was hosted in Nairobi and faced temptation on Sabbath morning. The host, who was a preacher, bought a newspaper and started reading it in the hotel. They were late to church that Sabbath. When asked, the guest was told, "My wife went to the salon with the car, when she returns we'll take you to church."

Another layperson might be godly and a good preacher, but lives with people who make them chronically late to church. They arrive around 11 a.m. and go home during the afternoon sessions to nap. So if you were hoping your children would attend church early and participate in the full program, this makes your work harder. Being late to church without reason is a sin. You know what would happen if you were late to work. Stewardship of time is the most important form of stewardship. Life and time are the same in Scripture. If you had 24 hours to live, how would you use them? Most people say they'd pray, read the Word, and go to church. But while healthy, they delay going to church or go only when they feel like it, staying home saying they worship at home. The more they stay, the more the habit grows, and eventually they stop going altogether.

One layperson stayed home and later complained that people didn't visit her. People did visit, but she said she now listens to good sermons online. After a while, her faith started to weaken. Just as one stick cannot burn alone, but three can sustain each other, so our faith is built through fellowship. A layperson should plan to reach those who stay at home. Some have special needs (the disabled, deaf, blind). Learn how to reach these. Nowadays there's texting and WhatsApp—use them. Another laywoman, 20 years old from Migori, went to visit a pastor and his wife, an elderly couple in their 60s. They were like parents and were respected. But at around 2 a.m., someone knocked and the pastor entered trying to make sexual advances toward the guest. She screamed. The old man fled and disappeared.

Plan your time with guests well. We once visited a layperson whose entire focus was on cooking-related activities. We never prayed or read the Word together. We will talk about this Martha-like life and compare it with Mary's. It's not open sin, but we must learn to use our time well with guests. The devil doesn't have to use sin—he can even use good things to distract us from the gospel's purpose. I remember a time I was watching Christian TV for 6 hours a day while living with Pastor Mhando and his wife, my friends. He gave me advice I'll never forget. He said even church TV can distract you. He asked, "Have you read God's Word today?" I hadn't, though I had been on the TV all day.

Even our children—let's watch out for distractions. I noticed my child was getting jumpy, and when I asked the pastor's wife, she told me the content on TV was affecting the child.

Don't be a host or guest who gossips about your guests or hosts. When I got to America, I was surprised to hear that many people—even church members—had a culture of talking about how much their guests ate. “So-and-so came to our house and ate a lot,” or “We fed so-and-so,” even in sermons! They say it like it's something to brag about. I even heard in the news that their president, Obama, and his wife love food (foodies), and that he eats everything except beetroot. It's normal to hear a member tell others that they “fed” someone—“Come to my house, I'll feed you. I feed many people!” As if the person is coming every day. I was shocked and thought—is feeding someone one meal really “feeding” them? I figured maybe if it were months or years, that would make more sense. I said to myself, if they invite me, I'll find an excuse! I believe it's a blessing to host guests. Some people have the food and invite people, and no one comes! They sit and eat alone. It's a joy when your guest eats well.

Hosts and guests, avoid gossiping about what you saw in people's homes—leave it there. Things like “their kids are rude,” “the wife hit the husband,” etc. This is a lack of love. If it's a real problem, talk with them about how to help. You volunteered or invited them; I believe you weren't forced. So why start complaining and judging? Pray that God helps you stop those stories. Some homes struggle with tempting, juicy gossip—leave it there!

Don't invite someone then begin grumbling or resenting their presence. Those who've gone through this know what I'm talking about. Some gossip comes disguised as prayer—someone shares a problem, and soon everyone knows about it. A story goes that a group of women gathered to pray. They prayed to overcome their sins. The first one said, “I struggle with stealing, please pray for me.” Another said, “I have a hard time loving people, please pray for me.” Yet another confessed, “I use God's name in vain, pray for me.” One more said, “I struggle with breaking the Sabbath, pray for me.” The last one said, “I have a bigger problem than all of you. Everything you've said—I will tell others. I can't hold it in, I just love gossiping. Everything you said, I will spread!”

Know what you believe—the biblical teachings of your faith. A man was once asked, “What do you believe in?” He answered, “I believe in what my church believes.” People asked, “What does your church believe?” He replied, “Me and my church believe the same thing!” Then they asked, “What is it that you and your church believe?” He answered, “Our faith is the same!”

Try to match your words with your actions. Our pastor and his wife, the Jagtsitich family, are uniquely generous and hospitable people. They welcome guests warmly and minister through prayer, also supporting schoolchildren. The first time they invited us over, we thought it was just talk—but it was real! He insisted so much. I saw this same kind of hospitality with Esta Mhando and her husband. They welcomed all the friends we students brought with us, cooked for them, and led Bible studies. I was amazed—our friends, even from Zambia, Tanzania, the U.S., the Philippines, and elsewhere, loved visiting their home often.

Make sure your invitations are genuine—not just lip service like “Come to my house,” yet you don’t mean it. Sometimes when someone shows up, you wish the earth would swallow you up! I know many of us have said such things, and at times we even say “I’ve prayed for you,” when in reality, we haven’t. If you can’t remember someone specifically, just say, “Lord, I pray for all those I’ve forgotten.”

One way to build friendships is learning to smile. Some people think laughing is sinful. I remember laughing a lot as a child, especially when reading storybooks. My mother would ask, “What are you laughing about all the time?” I see my son has inherited that habit. One day, something funny happened in class, and I couldn’t stop laughing, to the point I was asked to kneel in front of the class at Forodhani Secondary School in Dar es Salaam. But I couldn’t stop, so I was sent out of class.

A sister in Christ, Ana from Sudan, and I were assigned to teach together in a rural area. One day she rushed over when she heard me laughing with another teacher, Elizabeth Thoya. She said, “You laugh too much, this laughter is not Christian, my sister.” I had never thought laughter could have a denomination! But in order to avoid conflict and to allow the Spirit to correct us, I told her, “I’m sorry, Sister Ana. I won’t laugh like that in your presence anymore. I see I’ve offended you.” Later we discovered she was ill—she had begun hearing voices and imagining people were speaking ill of her.

I want to say, you’ll encounter people who might discourage you—but don’t let that stop you from being friendly or welcoming guests. Everyone has met someone they later thought, “Had I known, I would have avoided them.” In short, don’t always wear a long face. Learn to smile! Even during singing or any other activity. Some laypeople have the gift of singing—especially men in quartets, their voices

blend beautifully. But they should also learn to smile; it shouldn't look like they're singing sad songs when it's actually Good News. Solomon said in Scripture that there is a time to laugh and a time to weep. Laughter is a gift from God. A smile breaks down language and cultural barriers. Even if you sit beside a Russian who doesn't speak your language, a smile will connect you.

It's not good to laugh at someone's pain or misfortune, but to laugh and smile when breaking down walls is a good thing. I know some people are naturally cheerful, funny, and gifted at making others laugh, but others must work on it. I once did colporteur ministry in Sweden. There was a sister who was a good lay Christian, but often wore a gloomy or angry expression—I don't think she realized it. One day, the pastor and his wife where we stayed asked me, "Has your friend lost someone or is she not doing well in book sales?" Her sales were very good, though she often compared herself to the top sellers and wore a sour face. One day the pastor said, "I fear she might take her own life." I was shocked—her expression had scared many people. Don't drive people away—unless in specific moments of sorrow like in the book of Nehemiah.

The world already has plenty of sorrow. If you want to reach people and all you bring is sadness—even without any real tragedy—will they really respond? Everyone wants to see a ray of sunshine on your face. They say 58% of communication is on your face—not in what you say! Cheerfulness is a good seasoning—use it generously. Cheerfulness is also good for your health, especially when life gets tough and stress increases. Many people have healed just by laughing. Today, there are even laughter therapy sessions. Truly, Solomon said a cheerful heart is better than medicine. A laugh a day keeps the doctor away.

You might ask, "What is there to laugh about in this sorrowful world?" It's true—yet pray to the Lord for help. And if you find yourself crying for no explainable reason, it's good to see a counselor to check for possible depression.

Cheerfulness is also a choice—choose to be joyful. God wants you to have joy. Think of all His blessings. Has He redeemed you? Praise Him and say "Hallelujah!" Remind yourself in your heart: "Today, I will choose joy. I will greet this new day with laughter. When I wake up, I will laugh for seven seconds. Today, I will choose cheerfulness and joy." We are told, "Blessed are those who weep, for they will laugh." Claim that promise: "He will fill your mouth with laughter and your lips

with shouts of joy” (Job 8:21). They say it takes only 7 facial muscles to smile and 73 to frown—why not save the energy? Even in hard times, Jesus can help.

One layman married a woman who used to beat him—she wasn’t a converted person. Truly, the world is full of challenges. A wife beating her husband—many said they would have run away.

Another practical tip—don’t spend too much time cleaning the house before visitors arrive. Better to clean afterward, since you’ll have to clean again anyway. Declutter your living room—give some things away. I say this because I struggle with it too.

Above all, love and pray for those you meet—you never know who might bless you. I once met a woman about 10 years ago who seemed cold and unfriendly when I told her about our lay ministry. In my heart I thought, “Forget her—she’s not worth following up.” So we parted ways.

Last year, when we met again, she lit up with joy upon seeing me. She came over, hugged me, kissed me, and said, “Sister, I’ve been praying for you ever since we met. Not a day has passed that your name has not been on my lips in prayer.” She went on to repeat, in detail, everything we had discussed the day we met! My jaw dropped. I had thought she didn’t wish me well. Then I wondered—have I prayed for anyone every single day for ten years? Not even for my own children. I humbled myself before God and asked for forgiveness.

CHAPTER 15

HOW TO BE A GOOD GUEST

A layperson travels to many places to preach and may sometimes need to sleep over at members' homes or relatives' houses. It is a blessing and an honor to be invited into someone's home. Often, they have taken time to cook and prepare to receive a guest, and even if you have come unexpectedly, opening their doors to welcome you is a sign of closeness. As a guest, you should have a grateful heart. If you cannot come on the scheduled day and need to change it, it is good to inform them—we live in a world of mobile phones, so just say, "I'll come tomorrow, don't wait for me today." Even for events like weddings or other special invitations, if you know these people well but do not plan to attend, it is best to inform them. You might be their leader, and they value you. Don't say, "We Africans just show up and people know we've arrived"—not at all. Be courteous and respectful. Some may have planned to slaughter an animal for you, or others may have skipped farm work or casual labor waiting for you.

A pastor from Zimbabwe once said, "The widow of Zarephath might have questioned Elijah in her heart, thinking, 'These prophets just come to eat our food and then tell me to feed him first before myself and my child!' But this was a command of faith, not an ordinary circumstance." When you arrive as a guest, be thankful for what you're given, unless it's something that would harm you or contradict your faith. For example, the wife of a pastor friend once said she was served coffee at someone's home. She couldn't bring herself to say no, so she left it in the cup. The host kept checking, and she kept saying, "Don't worry, I'll drink it." Eventually, seeing everyone else—even those who normally don't drink coffee—had taken theirs, she thought, "I'll be the only one leaving mine—it'll disappoint the host." So she drank it, and immediately the hostess came out saying, "So, even people of your faith drink alcohol!" She had been testing her. Don't please people by compromising what is wrong. But also, don't impose many rules on others. If you don't eat or drink something, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

One evangelist went to a rural place and told the members, "I don't eat vegetables like a goat, you must cook meat for me." The members were saddened—they were poor villagers. They struggled to contribute and decided not to invite that

preacher again the following year because he was too demanding and inconsiderate.

Depending on the situation, when visiting somewhere, you may bring a gift. Some towns have cheaper goods—on the way, you might get fruits, grains from your farm, or even gifts for the children. This is good if you can, but it's not a must. However, if you often visit, make an effort. If you're given a room and a child's bed, be sure to thank the children. Parents should sleep with their small children—it's not proper to leave a guest sleeping with children. Even if the children are from that house, it's good to keep yours separated—perhaps have them sleep on the floor, etc.

If others have also been invited, avoid being the dominant speaker and monopolizing the conversation, preventing the host from talking to other guests. Don't rush to eat at the table—practice moderation. This doesn't mean you should leave hungry, but courtesy is a good thing. Don't talk with your mouth full. Words like “please,” “sorry,” and “excuse me” are good when, for example, you need to pass or get to your seat. If you burp or sneeze, it's good to say “sorry.” Be polite and don't snoop into people's private matters.

Try to be generous—for example, if you brought your own food, share with your hosts. Don't eat your food while children stare at you. Receiving help with transport while visiting is part of being welcomed. Be cheerful and friendly. There was a layperson we often gave rides to, and when he rode in our car on long trips, he would eat our food. If we delayed eating, he would even ask for food without hesitation. But when it was his turn, he ate his own food alone—even if children were watching. Some members complained, saying he's quick to eat others' food but never shares his own. A few weeks ago, I picked him up, and when he started this behavior, I told him, “You're a layperson, and you also teach cooking classes—set a good example. This time, share your food with everyone in this car.” He was shocked but I was determined he would stop being stingy and setting a bad example. He got upset and said, “I don't want to.” Eventually, he began sharing his food, and we thanked him and said, “It's okay, give to the children—don't worry about us.” But remember, food builds bridges—so if you're stingy because your food is fancy, just buy rice and beans instead so you don't feel bad about sharing.

Use your host's items with respect. If allowed, help with small tasks. Especially for women, there are many things you can help with during food preparation to build relationships, rather than behaving like some kind of sultan. If there are many guests, don't leave early while conversations are ongoing unless it's an emergency; otherwise, stay a while as a formal guest. If you've come from far away, once you return home, call or write to thank them. It's also good to emphasize something specific like, "Thank you for hosting me, I really enjoyed it. My children made new friends. Thank you for the delicious food, and the city tour was very enjoyable." Also thank other family members you stayed with, even children or workers. You can compliment their house décor or other things, but don't exaggerate—it may seem fake.

Try to pack your belongings well so you don't borrow too many items upon arrival. It's good to have a bag, or even an evangelism bag with your Bible, hymnbook, etc. If you or your family has a contagious illness, do not travel until you've recovered. If your children are with you, monitor their behavior regularly. Do not attempt to discipline your host's children! Once you get familiar with the home, help wash dishes and prepare food if allowed. Pay attention to the host's daily schedule and join where appropriate. Don't be late for meals—especially if there are ongoing meetings, it's hard to keep cooking at different times. If you break or damage something, don't hide it or ignore it—inform the host and replace it.

Don't use your host's prepaid phone without permission. Even if it's not prepaid, don't stay on the phone all day. I was once visited by an evangelist who used the phone and the bill came to over Ksh 20,000 (USD 150). I had given him airtime vouchers, but he still used our landline. He hid it until the bill arrived, and since my husband is the one who pays the bills, he came home from work saying, "These evangelists of yours used our phone, which we don't even use unless with vouchers? You'll pay for it because you invited them!" I had to pay. I was deeply disappointed. As a host, you're already busy and covering many costs, like fuel to take guests around. You expect some consideration—but they forgot themselves. They didn't even try to understand how the family survives. That issue caused a dispute with my husband. I've encountered many laypeople who ruin homes—knowingly or unknowingly. This is not the role of lay ministry! Some may even be relatives who feel entitled to snoop in others' homes.

Learn to smile, have pleasant and constructive conversations, be clean and neat, and stay calm as a guest or host to make your time together enjoyable. If left

alone at home, don't go through their things or snoop around. I know we all make many mistakes—"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"—but as lay preachers, let's be especially careful not to offend people by using them. And if we do wrong—as we are human—when we are corrected, we should make amends and move forward. Try to align your schedule with your host's—it's not your place to be the boss there, wanting to eat whenever or do whatever you want. Some families eat together when the food is ready. Saying "I'll do this, I'll come later" means they have to reheat your food, which is a burden—especially if you're not busy and are being hosted. Try not to cause conflict for those who introduced you to the hosts by behaving well.

Sometimes you may grow closer to your host than the person who introduced you. But be cautious—your introducer may not want you to become close friends with their own close friends. They may be their confidant, and now if you step in, you'll learn many of their secrets. Many people prefer their friends and advisors to stay low-profile so they can confide freely. Be careful not to ruin relationships or pull friendships away from your introducer and toward the person you're staying with. Women may struggle with this more than men.

Avoid overstaying your visit beyond what you had agreed on—unless an emergency arises. That way, it'll be easier to be invited again or you won't ruin it for other laypeople. Many people have been discouraged from hosting guests due to the bad behavior of others. Thank your hosts, and if possible, continue your relationship. Don't just disappear without a word of thanks. Just because you also host guests at your home doesn't mean you shouldn't show gratitude when you're the one being hosted!

If there's no guest room and you're sleeping in the living room, try to sleep after everyone else has gone to bed. Be aware of breakfast or bathroom times—wake up early, and if someone needs to go to work, let them use the bathroom first. Fold your bedding neatly in the morning. Keep your belongings in your bag, don't scatter them everywhere. Each morning, leave your things tidy. We see that even at the tomb, Jesus folded his linen cloths when he resurrected! If you use the bathroom or toilet, leave it clean; mop the floor if necessary.

Try to be punctual for prayers or sermons. Don't delay, and learn the daily schedule. If you need to ask someone to do something, inform them early—perhaps even a day before.

If you or your family have a contagious disease, do not go where you were planning until you recover.

If your children are with you, keep an eye on their behavior regularly. Do not try to discipline your host's children! Once you get used to the place, help with washing dishes and preparing food if you're allowed to. Be mindful of your host's daily plans and join only those you're welcome to.

Do not be late for meals, especially if there are ongoing meetings—it's difficult to cook at different times repeatedly.

If you break or damage something, do not hide or ignore it—inform your host and offer to pay for it. Do not use your host's payphone without permission. Even if it's not on a paid plan, do not spend the whole day on the phone.

I was once visited by an evangelist who used the phone and the bill came to over 20,000 KSh (about \$150). I had already given him prepaid phone credit, but he chose to use the house phone as well. He hid it until the bill arrived. Since my husband pays the bills, he came from work and asked, "Are these evangelists you brought the ones who used the phone that even we only use with prepaid credit? You will pay for this because you're the one who brought them!" I had to pay.

I was deeply disappointed. As a host, you are already handling various needs—food, transportation costs—and you expect that your guests would be considerate. But some forget themselves. They have no idea how the household operates, and in this case, they caused arguments with my husband.

I've met many laypeople who visit and end up wrecking households, knowingly or unknowingly. This is not the duty of a lay minister! Some may even be family members, and they are the worst—they act entitled to meddle in other people's homes.

Learn to smile, engage in positive and uplifting conversations, be clean and tidy, and remain calm whether you are a guest or a host so your time together is enjoyable.

If they leave you alone in the house, do not snoop through their belongings or search through private areas.

I know we are human and we make many mistakes—"all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God"—but as lay ministers, let's be extra careful not to offend others through our guests. If we make mistakes—and we will because we are human—when the issue is brought up, let's own our part, make things right, and move forward. Try to align your schedule with that of your host. Don't act like the boss, demanding to eat when you wish or do whatever pleases you. Some families prefer everyone to eat together. Saying "let me do this, I'll come later" might cause someone to reheat your food unnecessarily, which can be a burden—especially if you're not doing anything important and are being hosted for free.

Try not to create tension between the person who introduced you and the new people you're staying with. Sometimes people begin to see those new acquaintances as closer friends than the one who introduced them. But often, the introducer doesn't want you becoming close to their friends because they are their confidant and advisor. When you get too close, you start learning many of their private matters.

Most people prefer to have their friends and advisors remain unknown to others so they can speak freely. Be careful not to destroy relationships or shift loyalty from the one who introduced you to the new person you're now staying with. Women tend to fall into this trap more than men.

Avoid overstaying beyond the period you agreed upon, unless an emergency occurs. That way, it will be easier to be invited again, and you won't spoil it for future guests. Many people have stopped hosting due to the bad behavior of previous guests.

Thank your host. If possible, keep in touch afterward. Disappearing without even saying thank you—just because you also host people at your place—is no excuse not to show appreciation when you've been helped!

If there's no guest room and you're sleeping in the living room, try to go to bed once everyone else has gone to bed. Be mindful of breakfast and shower times—make sure you're up in time. If someone needs to leave for work, let them use the bathroom first. In the morning, fold your bedding neatly, keep your belongings in your bag, and don't scatter things everywhere. Every morning, leave your space tidy.

We see that even at the tomb, Jesus folded His linens after rising! If you use the bathroom or toilet, leave it clean; mop the bathroom if it has a tiled floor. Try to be on time for prayers or sermons. Don't be the one who is always late. Learn the daily schedule, and if you need to ask someone to do something, inform them early—maybe a day before.

Use your natural fragrance or appropriate work-related scents. No matter how hard things are for you, do not take your host's belongings. If you accidentally leave with a bed sheet or anything else, return it as soon as possible. It leaves a bad impression. Be willing to ask or apologize—many people are generous and might willingly give you what you need.

Sometimes hosts will notice your need and give you something. But other times it might come across awkwardly. On several occasions, I praised something like a decoration at my host's place, and the host gave it to me! If I actually needed it, it was okay. But I'm often traveling, and it's hard to carry such things. For instance, we were once given clay pottery birds to take to the U.S.—they were heavy, so I left them with my parent to use as decoration.

Sometimes I didn't even need the item—I just admired it out of politeness—and then felt stuck on how to say I didn't want it! Even at meals, don't praise something too much if you don't like it, otherwise you might be served more than you can handle and find it hard to refuse!

Regardless of the situation, be grateful for what you're given. Even if you pass on the gift to someone else later, that's okay. However, with some things—like clothes—if you meet again and are asked if it fits, be ready to be honest!

Different tribes have unusual customs.

In some cultures, when a male guest arrives—whether a government official or a minister—they provide a woman who is sent directly to his room. That woman acts as a kind of mistress. They think they're doing the man a favor.

This happened to a missionary friend of mine in a neighboring country. The church had to fire many workers due to this kind of issue. This is exactly what Balaam used to trap the Israelites, leading to 23,000 deaths in a single day. It's a serious danger!

If you enter your room and find someone like that, leave immediately and do not return. Tell your host clearly, “This is a sin to me, and I want no part of it.”

Be firm. I know it’s tough, especially if that’s an area of personal weakness, but pray and ask God to help you overcome it.

CHAPTER 16

TEACHING SEX EDUCATION TO YOUTH AND ADULTS

Proper sex education is very important for both children and adults. I would like to emphasize that all adults must gain the right understanding in order to teach this subject according to God's plan. If we do this, we will help many, because many have felt ashamed to teach what God wants us to explain appropriately. Sex is a gift from God meant only for married couples. Poor and false teachings about sex exist in every tribe and community in the world. Do you know the sexual teachings that are considered good traditions in your community? What are they?

Some teachings are extremely frightening and we've heard them—like the belief that sleeping with a virgin cures HIV, among many others we will not mention openly here. But when you study ancient and modern cultures, sex has been associated with many things that God did not intend. Many of these are false, though some are true—for example, having sex during menstruation is not healthy. Consider whether these teachings align with science, hygiene, health, human dignity, and Scripture. Sex is closely related to health in many ways—faithfulness in marriage protects health in many aspects. Sexual matters have led to deaths, conflicts, emotional diseases, suicide, and even murder. Some cultures have introduced sexual acts into dark worship rituals. I've seen many horrifying things in newspapers and books, and I believe you, dear reader, have seen them too. Even in the Holy Scriptures, we see how people died when they got involved in sexual worship. One day, 23,000 people perished because of their involvement with the false prophet Balaam. People engaged in these acts on mountains and under trees—men and women alike. These things have brought down great leaders, and we cannot ignore them. They must be taught and addressed in their proper context—not just invented by anyone.

God gave us pleasure—for in His right hand there are pleasures forevermore. But the enemy distorts things, and his versions bring short-lived joy followed by sorrow. God created sex, and He intended it to be a joyful act between husband and wife. King Solomon wrote the Song of Songs to talk about this love, a book which Jews considered suitable only for adult readers due to its detailed nature. Other ancient books, like 1 Corinthians, state that because of the widespread immorality, every man should have his own wife (or husband). And once married, your body is not your own but belongs to your spouse. You have a responsibility to

please them—except during short times of fasting and prayer so as not to bring temptation upon yourselves. These teachings show that marriage and sex are responsibilities, not just personal rights. It's not about a debt your spouse owes you, but a debt you owe to them. Sex should not be used as a weapon or punishment. Caring for each other increases marital joy. Those who honor their Creator and value each other deepen their satisfaction in their marriage and sex life.

This is not a place to force someone to fulfill your desires, but to be considerate. Each should care for the other. Physical hygiene is also very important—whether it's bathing, washing clothes, or brushing teeth. Some men have engaged in extreme sexual practices that are even dangerous (exotic sexual practices). Don't force your partner into things that make them uncomfortable. Coercion has no place in marital love. Marital satisfaction is also a choice. Refuse to compare your spouse with magazines, other people, or movies. Be creative. Make your partner shine and feel special. Give them nicknames that make them smile and feel proud to have you. King Solomon said, "Be satisfied with the wife of your youth. Let her breasts satisfy you at all times, and be ravished always with her love." A woman should also make her husband want to be with her.

Some people have come up with strange sexual philosophies. For example, a man named Kellogg and his wife taught that sex is only for reproduction—and once the desired number of children is reached, the couple should stop being intimate. Philosophies like this should be discussed before marriage to avoid problems, as your spouse may end up fleeing. Marriage helps to prevent immoral behavior.

Some women have brought with them the belief that sex is something to endure, not enjoy. Others endure sex because of past sexual abuse, rape, cruelty, or incest. Some were subjected to harmful practices in childhood. Over 100 million women have undergone genital mutilation, and I met some from Ethiopia whose genitals were sewn closed. The claim is that this prevents them from engaging in sex before marriage or from enjoying it so they won't be tempted to be promiscuous. This is abuse, for God's commandments on sexual immorality apply to both men and women. If there is to be restriction, it should apply to both genders equally. Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat one day, and our God—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—will judge each of us according to our deeds. We are saved by grace, but judged by our actions.

These false teachings can lead to sexual dysfunction. Such people need more than just prayer—they need professional help. Usually, healing does not come without external support, whether from spiritual leaders or godly counselors. Some counselors introduce harmful theories or deepen the wounds. But those who care and have sound knowledge can help these wounded people enjoy sex as God intended. If you are married, be faithful to your spouse. If you have made mistakes in your marital life, ask God for forgiveness and start anew.

I believe Mahatma Gandhi also held this belief. New couples should not introduce unhealthy theories—like the idea that only the man decides what happens. Sex belongs in marriage, and outside of it, it is unclean. Outside the garden, there may be beautiful flowers—but if you dig them up with their soil and bring them into your living room and place them on your carpet, the mud will ruin everything. Don't separate the pleasure of sex from the commitment of marriage. It's like seeking the taste of food without chewing, swallowing, or digesting it—just to taste and then spit it out. Sex outside marriage is merely performance that leaves one lonely, empty, and cold over time.

Breaking this rule is like ignoring the doctor's instructions that could save your life. To resist gravity is to fall—it is not gravity that suffers, but you. Governments don't ban counterfeit currency because it's ugly, but because it's fake and not usable for its intended purpose. Being made in God's image means both man and woman reflect His likeness. If God could take on human form and be born as a man, it means we need not be ashamed of our bodies, but use them as He instructed. The same God who made hands and feet also made male and female genitalia. Sexual desire (libido) was created by Him—even before Adam sinned—and as with all He made, it was good. God didn't create only the spirit but also the body. We are both spiritual and physical beings. However, corrupt sex is the source of physical, emotional, and spiritual diseases that harm and destroy. So you have a choice between corrupt sex and the kind God intended for us.

Many people—even believers—think they are “weird” if they abstain from sex. Society, peers, and the media mock those who choose to keep their bodies holy and undefiled. They believe sexual desire (libido) should be expressed anytime by anyone, like animals. This is a modern culture we must reject.

Today, more people suffer from sexual dysfunction than in the past. This is because of defilement and immoral sex. Research shows that sex within marriage,

apart from being safe, is more satisfying. Some youth claim that sex is like a vitamin—if you don't get it, you won't grow properly—and in some cities, 70% reported engaging in sex outside marriage before age 18.

Children who come home alone from school in the afternoon have invited friends over and engaged in this act. Many have developed negative ideas. A man named Josh McDowell, after conducting research, found that 28% get their information from friends, 26% from movies, 23% from school lessons, and 22% from television. Do you know what television teaches about the holiness of marriage and sex? People called soap opera stars teach that sex outside of marriage is enjoyable and without consequences. This is not true because every day young girls give birth out of wedlock (teen pregnancy). They suffer and end up living in poverty, with sexually transmitted diseases like HIV and gonorrhea. Young people are not given the full picture about sex on TV. Many have lost peace in their hearts and the hope of a successful life. They have received crumbs and had their hearts broken.

Sex should not be the basis of romantic relationships until one is married because anger, impatience, selfishness, and jealousy often enter and destroy the relationship. When relationships are based on sex, people get bored and break up. The story of Amnon, the son of David, who desired a very beautiful girl named Tamar, shows us that after he had her, his hatred was greater than the love he claimed to have, and he even wanted to kill her. Failing to control yourself will lead to self-loathing, guilt, and self-hate. People have tried “free sex” and have realized there is no such thing. If you say no, you will be respected—and this has been evident in older generations' marriages. Waiting until one can say “Yes, I take this woman as my wife / or this man as my husband” is very important. So girls, if you want a man to value you, do not sleep with him before the wedding. Don't open the gift God gave you too early; it will make you enjoy it even more.

For those who have fallen, ask for forgiveness and abstain from sex until your wedding day. It will bring joy and good health. People curse or swear on two things—God and sex. Both are sacred. There are few sacred things, and these are among them. Can you list others? (God's commandments, the Sabbath, God's Word, and marriage). That's why the joy in marriage continues to decline as people misuse sex outside marriage. Instead of joy increasing, it has brought sorrow. True freedom is sex within God's plan, for many have brought themselves great pain through the “freedom” they thought they were getting. If you want good music, you can't just bang randomly on a keyboard in the name of freedom.

It will be noise, not music. No society that is ruled by lust is truly free. That society will be in chains.

In God's constitution, those who don't practice self-control can never be truly free until they learn to govern themselves. A person who continues in corruption begins to feel used, unloved, forgotten, abandoned, and old. Some girls have had men interested in them but refused commitment—they only wanted to have children with them. They claim they will be freer. These are the false teachings they pass on to their children. They come up with all kinds of labels like “this is my co-parent” rather than admitting they are fornicating with the person.

Some people have ruined other people's marriages. You must be possessive of your own spouse and never interfere in another's marriage. Tomorrow you'll become leftovers too, and jealousy will consume you when you see them with someone else. Even if a person seems to have many lovers, they lack true love. There is emptiness, and their lives are in turmoil. Only God gives true joy—not sex itself. He gives us purpose and meaning in life, which no one can take away.

There is no comparison between sex within God's plan and the devil's so-called “free sex.” God's way is the best way. There is no safe sex outside marriage because it is something that touches the deepest emotional parts of a person. Outside of marriage, it's about being used and life being destroyed. Using condoms isn't as safe as people think. If a pregnancy can happen, then there's a risk of HIV infection, since the virus is 450 times smaller than sperm. The effectiveness of condoms in preventing pregnancy is only 64-86%. Just because everyone is doing it doesn't mean it's safe. Some people feel ashamed to buy such items because their conscience tells them it's a sin. Let these people say goodbye to a life of impurity and embrace a life of holiness.

In 1989, a school called Adam City High in Colorado ran a program to give condoms to students. That year, 58 out of every 1000 students got pregnant. The result was that students engaged in even more reckless sexual activity, and 100 out of 1000 got pregnant. Every year, four million girls get abortions. Abortion is not a form of birth control—it is murder. Can you kill your two-year-old child? Or a twenty-year-old? Why then kill this one? David's words in Psalm 139 show us that a person is a person from conception.

Programs that aim to protect girls from pregnancy have lost moral values. Abstaining from sex outside marriage is the only 100% effective method. Let everyone avoid rebellion by avoiding sex outside marriage. Some say they've promised each other and will eventually get married, but most of them end up breaking up and hurting each other badly.

When people know their relationship is temporary, they don't take responsibility. Trust and respect are essential. A man or woman who cannot control or respect themselves will not be of help to you. Friendship without sex is the true test of who will be faithful to you and who has sexual discipline. Unmarried people are not accountable and can leave at any time. You don't need them—it's better to live alone. Some say they are not ready, they don't have a job, they are in school, or they are too young—yet they engage in acts that are meant to be blessed and permitted only for married adults. These people should stay in school or get jobs if they don't want to take responsibility.

Why then do people engage in this kind of sex? Is it ignorance? Is it lust? Is it deceptive love?

Others have gotten into it due to porn and masturbation. These two have caused people to have multiple sexual partners. Avoid being alone with someone, in hiding, in the dark, or talking about things that stir sexual feelings. Many marriage counselors face sexual temptations when they are told of people's issues. They begin to imagine themselves as better partners or comfort others with affection. If you are counseling someone, make sure your spouse or someone else is with you to protect you. Let's speak and act like those who will be judged by the law. Even if your tribe's laws allow taking another person's spouse, it is wrong. A single man or woman is also someone's future spouse. When Henry Ford, the car manufacturer, was asked the secret to his 50-year marriage, he said: "Stick to one model."

Television and videos portray bizarre forms of sex—rape of both girls and boys—and pornography. Never watch such videos, whether you are married or not. You are supporting an evil and illegal trade, and you are inviting demons into your mind that will be hard to get rid of—and you will regret it. Sexual promiscuity stems from such continuing evil. Some people claim that these evils don't affect society and that sex is natural, and those who avoid it are living in the stone age. But over time, people involved in porn developed callousness and didn't realize

they were hurting others. It is now known that this is poison that destroys society, increasing many forms of criminality.

Pornography is an attack on humanity—cruelty and evil against women and human beings. The curse of incest and mental illness has been increased by this demon. Those who tried to quit have turned to alcohol, and when they relapse, they bring great pain to their wives. Watching these things on TV even once can lead to a sexual addiction passed down through generations without someone even knowing it. Many children have been introduced to these things, fulfilling the words: “Whoever causes these little ones to sin, it would be better for them to be drowned with a millstone around their neck than to live and destroy many in hell.” People have gone to prison for molesting children and raping others, because they got involved with these things in childhood or through filthy videos. Their families have suffered greatly. Many women couldn’t continue with these husbands because of seeing such unclean behavior. These women should see counselors to help restore their relationships.

Are you and your wife or husband watching these “adult” videos once the kids go to bed? Stop it immediately—you are planting a curse that will be hard to remove from your home. One of you may continue watching these things while traveling, meeting others, and continuing this evil.

We must learn the truth as it should be. A brother of mine from the Lake Region, even though a believer, told me several times: “A woman, once she reaches menopause, should not have sex anymore. That’s just lust—let her allow the man to find young girls.” He and his friends believed this, and his husband started cheating with younger women. She later began complaining about his behavior. I want to say, there is no such thing. Menopause is simply God’s plan to reduce child-rearing responsibilities as a woman ages. God saw that as a mother gets older, her efficiency in raising children decreases, so He put that limit. It has nothing to do with sexual activity. In fact, many women at that age no longer worry about getting pregnant or rescheduling travel due to monthly cycles. We must educate ourselves with the truth—the whole truth. Certainly!

Indeed, I have seen that this is not something derived from human traditions or what the majority say, but rather it comes from learning through the Scriptures. For example, Elizabeth had a child at an old age, as did Sarah. What does this show us?

There are fundamental matters that many of you who are studying already know, but I will repeat them for the sake of the youth, because this generation has missed out on many traditional teachings of society. Often, people get their information from social media or friends, instead of the reliable and truthful source they should turn to. What I want to talk about on this page is all truth—the real truth, the whole truth (absolute truth).

Every human being needs to know this, not just to understand how our bodies work (anatomy and physiology), but also because we were created. It is good to keep these thoughts in your mind, research them, and also put them into practice. Matters relating to sex are a part of our daily lives and are not shameful. They only become shameful when we break the laws and principles surrounding them.

What is important is that we, as human beings, are creatures—we were created, and that includes our reproductive or sexual organs, also referred to as private parts. These parts were not placed on our faces or hands for a reason. We can walk on the street and show someone a vaccine mark on our arms, our hairstyle, or even blisters on our hands from farming. But we cannot show someone our private parts (vagina, penis, anus, or even breasts). These are only occasionally shown to health workers in cases of a problem such as a change in color, size, lumps, pain, or something abnormal like itching, heat, or discharge. A child's private parts may be visible here and there while being cared for, but by age six or seven, they should be taught to cover themselves. The habit of exposing oneself in public is not good behavior (inappropriate).

For more details, the One who created these organs has written in the Law of Moses, in the books of Leviticus 18 and 20, how to conduct ourselves with these parts. Sex is meant for married adults only. The Law states that you should not uncover the nakedness of any relative in the family—be it your sister, aunt, mother, uncle, or stepchild (incest). In the beginning, Adam and Eve's children married each other when humanity was still strong, but today, due to weaknesses, many have suffered the consequences of inbreeding such as giving birth to children with disabilities or deformities. The Creator gave these laws for a reason.

Indeed, God has given us free will, but that doesn't mean that choosing abominations changes His laws and principles. We are free to choose destruction. These things also happened in ancient times—Reuben, the son of Jacob, slept with his father's concubine. Abraham and Jacob had many wives and it brought trouble,

but Isaac and Joseph avoided such downfalls. God created Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden—not to sit and drink coconut juice, but to work and engage their minds. He didn't put them in high-rise buildings with nothing to do that would make it easy for them to go astray. God did not create Adam and Harun, nor Adam, Eve, and Rehema. He didn't create Adam and then give him an animal as a companion but gave him another human. We have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory in various commands, but once we realize this, we must leave that path and return to the original way.

Last year, it was said that 2.2 million people died from animal-related diseases. We human beings are created in God's image and must follow the principles of our bodies. Matters of sex are not a game or for showing off wealth or attraction—they concern health, whether physical, mental, or spiritual. Many have suffered deep pain and illnesses because they failed to follow the guidance of the One who created these reproductive organs and gave us this gift.

We have misinformed our children in this matter, much like those who sacrificed their children to the god Molech. As parents, we cannot tell our children not to engage in sexual impurity while we ourselves are doing so. Our example teaches more than our words. Even if our children perform well academically and become successful in life, if they do not learn how to manage this matter and engage in the act with people, objects, animals, the internet, or themselves, their lives will become hard and joyless.

There are many theories about these organs, and in some tribes, when you hear their sayings, your ears itch because nearly everything is passed through that lens. What matters most is how to use these organs according to the manufacturer (user manual). These organs were not created for fornication or adultery. They were a gift for married couples.

No one should sleep with someone of the same sex or with an animal. These two are grouped together, and when they are committed, they are abominations. Abominations are detestable things. Everyone should read about these in the Torah. One should only uncover the nakedness of their husband or wife—this is the key point.

When a child is born, the first thing people want to know is the gender: male or female. In the past, boys were more valued (in certain communities) than girls.

However, in some tribes, girls were more valued because of the dowry their parents would receive when they got married. So, many people want to have both girls and boys, although only God has the power to determine that.

In today's world, we do not advise letting children sleep together without first teaching them about these matters. Many children have touched each other inappropriately out of curiosity and misinformation from peers. As parents, it is good to be close to our children so that they will tell us things. But when they do, let's not freak out so much that they become silent. Fathers who are close to their daughters help them live clean lives, and mothers who are close to their sons help them live clean lives too. Both boys and girls should live pure lives. Purity is not just for girls—God's standards are equal, and even women can be leaders or priests. A leader must not lower the standard.

Children aged five to six often wonder where they came from. They ask many questions about gender differences. They notice they are different. A four-year-old girl once asked her mother, "Why does Jonny have a long thing to pee with and I don't?" They also ask where they came from. When they see a male animal mounting another, they ask, "What are they doing? Why is he hurting the other one?" This is a good time to begin teaching basic social education, answering only the questions asked, and briefly.

When young, many children believe they came from the hospital because they see their baby pictures taken there or hear people say they were seen at the hospital when born. A mother once explained the whole reproductive system to her five-year-old son who had asked where he came from. The boy was left puzzled and responded, "I only asked because my friend David comes from Musoma. Where do we come from?"

By the time a child reaches age seven, they are aware of the differences between male and female anatomy. You may see them touching their own private parts or others', sometimes while giggling. This is a good time for a parent to explain matters of relationships, bodies, and proper behavior. Some children may ask, "Why do you and Dad sleep in the same room?" Answer them gently, according to their age. But what is important is the purity of heart and body.

Ages nine to thirteen are the years of preparation for adolescence. Even though reproductive organs have not fully matured, girls may begin menstruating. They

also begin to talk with friends about what they know regarding sex. Many have already learned about reproduction in school and are eager to know more.

From ages eleven to fourteen, many have a complete understanding of reproduction and sex. They experience strong feelings and do not know how to handle them. They end up joking about them to manage their emotions. Some teenagers feel left behind when they haven't experienced physical changes like voice deepening, shoulders broadening, breasts developing, or body shape changing. Normally, the reproductive system doesn't fail; even if delayed, it eventually functions as it should.

A highly risky age is between fifteen and eighteen. Teenagers at this age feel intense attraction to the opposite sex. Parents and teachers are essential in providing social education (sex education) and guiding them on how to manage their powerful emotions. Girls are attracted to boys and vice versa, even if they don't want to show it publicly. When alone, they may cross boundaries to satisfy curiosity or desire.

Children should be told that this is a normal part of growing up. God gave us the ability to control ourselves and wait until we are ready to choose one partner in marriage. Today's pornography on phones and the internet is real. In one questionnaire, 54% of evangelical pastors admitted involvement in this. Children are exposed to these things, and their parents are often unaware and start blaming teachers. How you think your child is may not always be the truth. This modern evil of pornography, masturbation, and shocking sexual acts is real. That's why we must pray. How else can a human face all of this?

But God will show you what to do—just don't freak out when you discover these things. Instead, help correct them. If you panic, more will be hidden from you. Be a friend more than a police officer, unless things escalate to serious levels, because sometimes others are involved and it may become a legal matter. Let us pray for one another.

Sex can lead to death, suicide, coercion, and other things that we, as humans, were not created for. And even then, we are told not to neglect visiting those in prison—it is a ministry everyone should have the courage to do. It is important to teach young people the dangers of engaging in sexual activity at an early age. The most serious consequence is that it is a sin before God. We must say this boldly,

like Joseph did. Even though we are human and make mistakes often, that does not mean sinning is acceptable—absolutely not! We ask God for forgiveness because He has established laws and commandments. Why did He do this? To protect us, our children, and our society from the pain that comes with such behavior—emotional pain, unplanned pregnancies without responsibility, or having a child when you're not ready to care for them.

A 28-year-old woman once told me that in her religion, they were never taught not to sleep with a man before marriage, so she lived with a man and had a child. She said she now hopes that the man who marries her will accept both her and her child. That's how it should be. But I was surprised because she was from a Christian denomination. The truth is, even pagans clearly understand that having sex outside of marriage is wrong. Every society on earth has norms about this; it's not common or acceptable for boys and girls to just sleep together regularly. More than that, it seems like an inborn instinct that we shouldn't undress in front of others or sleep with someone just because we want to.

By God's grace, He didn't place our reproductive organs on our faces or hands, and people even labeled them "private parts," meaning they're not to be shown to others.

Thirdly, you risk contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, which still has no cure. Mothers, do not give your daughters contraceptives or teach them to use condoms just to avoid pregnancy or disease. Some parents, especially mothers, even encourage their young daughters to get boyfriends! That is a great shame, and such evil may come back to haunt you. Some who did this were forgiven by God but couldn't forgive themselves. When they later failed to conceive by pure misfortune, they believed God was punishing them or had not forgiven them—often, that was not the case.

One girl told me through tears that she got pregnant at 18. When she told the man, he replied, "That's your personal problem, it has nothing to do with me." She sought counseling and someone was legally found to adopt her child. She said she feared telling her family because her cousins and sisters who had babies out of wedlock were treated harshly. Their mothers, who had helped raise the children, constantly mocked them. When they went out, they were told, "Come back early and take care of your children, don't waste time in prostitution." She cried recounting this story. Her child was named after her when she turned 22 and

came to find her biological mother to ask why she had abandoned her for adoption. The mother still showed sadness even after many years.

That mother said she had tried to abort the child three times. The first time, the doctor wasn't available. The second time, protests blocked the clinic. The third time, she was told it was too late by state law—the baby had grown too much.

Also, you lose your dignity and become a slave to your body's desires and pleasures. In this era of "sexual freedom," people say sex is just a need like hunger or thirst. In this age of push-button convenience—getting money, tea, or coffee instantly—we've come to believe that physical desire must be satisfied immediately. That's why rape has become so rampant.

We must teach our children how to dress. Before sin, Adam and Eve were clothed in God's glory. After sin, they had to be clothed physically. Why do we wear clothes? God commanded it to cover our nakedness and protect us from the elements. We must dress in a way that doesn't send sexual signals to others. Girls need to understand this because they face more consequences and temptations than boys. Teach your daughters how to dress properly from a young age. We read more on this in the Law of Moses in Exodus 20:26. Walking around without proper clothing is sinful and shameful. Nakedness is condemned in Revelation 3:17. But God gives us the ability to buy clothes. If we intentionally expose our bodies to draw attention, we put our health at risk.

When a young person reaches a proper age to look for a life partner—often during university years—they should court in a God-fearing way, abstaining from sex until marriage. The book "I Kissed Dating Goodbye" explains well how courtship differs from casual dating. A young person should pray earnestly when seeking a spouse, and at the right time, God will provide.

In one youth program, a young man argued there's no need to wait for marriage if both partners are sure they'll marry and have already introduced each other to their families. The pastor responded by reading a verse, saying, "Let me read a passage. Tell me which book and chapter it's from: 'Do not commit adultery, unless it's with your fiancé whom you're sure you'll marry, and have already introduced to both sets of parents...'" Some youths started searching their Bibles excitedly. But many realized there is no such verse. They laughed at the pastor's creativity and agreed to follow God's guidance in the Bible. Being engaged is like

marking a tree to be cut but not cutting it yet. Only on the wedding day is the tree officially cut. We've even heard of people being rejected at the altar!

Let God's Word be upheld: sex outside of marriage is sin—even for young people who love each other deeply. That is reason enough to abstain until marriage. Satan has distorted the meaning of marriage, especially the act of sex, reducing it to the level of eating—just satisfying an appetite. Once full, you walk away. If you get hungry again, you eat anywhere, not necessarily where you ate yesterday. This is what we see in media today: physical relationships are shown as temporary pleasures, not lasting bonds. People are even praised for having many partners.

Girls must be careful about their health, walking at night, and associating with evil people, because there's a risk of being raped. Our communication should be pure—we shouldn't send the wrong message through words, clothing, gestures, or winks. Life is changing—even men are being raped these days. I once met a mother and her 10-year-old son at a police station; he had been raped. These are terrible things that we don't want to happen to us. We live in a sinful world; let's be as cautious as possible and ask God to help us.

There was a show that portrayed a father sleeping with his son's wife. Both the father and son had children with her—and everyone knew! Worse, the show portrayed this as perfectly okay. If you like it, fine. It also promoted the idea that people in love must sleep together. One preschool child cried to the teacher, complaining that another child had called her his girlfriend. I asked, "What's wrong with being someone's friend?" She replied, "I don't sleep with him!" Goodness! Who told these little children that being friends means sleeping together? These are Satan's ideas.

At a youth camp I once attended, a preacher taught on purity. He asked, "Is it possible for young people today to stay pure until marriage?" Then he added a very challenging question: "If Jesus were to be born in our time, and the angel Gabriel came looking for a virgin girl, would he find one?" Most of the boys shouted, "NOOOO!" A few girls shyly said, "Yes, we're here." The preacher was surprised at the boys and asked how they were so sure that most girls today aren't virgins—and who is responsible for that? They just giggled.

Fellow parents, let us condemn the sin of sexual immorality. It is sin, no matter how nicely we try to sugarcoat it. Scripture says all adulterers will not inherit the

Kingdom of God. Let us encourage our youth that it is possible to live a holy life, like Joseph. It wasn't easy for him to flee from Potiphar's wife and say, "How can I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" I ask young people who claim it's impossible to wait until marriage, "Back then, there were no phones or internet. People had to write letters that would take a week to be delivered. Today, it's just a text and you've already met within minutes." I point to Joseph—he had emotions like theirs, and he was young like them. He wasn't a coward; he was a slave who managed to run away, while Samson—a mighty man and ruler—was brought down by Delilah. Tell young people not to think they're strong enough to resist sexual sin if they put themselves in tempting situations. If they believe so, then they must be wiser than Solomon, love God more than David, and be stronger than Samson.

Other things to teach children as they grow are issues like touching their private parts or masturbation and pornography. All of these affect the health of a child or adult, because they're not part of God's natural design and bring guilt and mental harm. In God's plan, these are sins and are also medically harmful, potentially leading to mental disorders. Many lives have been destroyed by this secret behavior, yet society has approved it as normal—even for children.

It is not that the emotions of people in the past were less intense or fewer than those of modern people. They were the same. The difference lies in self-control or self-denial. Self-control is necessary in many areas of life, such as clothing, food, anger, etc. Daniel resolved in his heart that "he would not defile himself with the king's food." So the key lies in decision-making. Unfortunately, many of us live like flags, just following the wind—we have no resolutions in life.

God created us to glorify Him with our bodies, and in everything we do, by God's strength it is possible, beloved. Satan has made us feel ashamed to teach our children about sex education. This causes them to get false information—lies that destroy their lives. A poor sexual life not only affects one's morals and reverence for spiritual matters, but it affects the entire life of a person.

When I worked at a mental hospital in Hagerdon, New Jersey, our supervisor said, "70% of those here are involved in perverted sexual behavior," meaning they were abused in some way as children or youth. When a child reaches 10-12 years, they must receive more in-depth teaching, because children at that age today are already heavily exposed. Unless you homeschool your child and live in a modest

community where every person lives separately and independently, and also avoid having a television, computer, or rarely use phones—or closely monitor these things—and avoid having a job that keeps you too busy...

Tell the child God's plan for all His creatures, small and great. For example, to a three-year-old: "Listen, Haruni, God has a plan written in His book to teach all of us, young and old. God is the Creator who made everything, gave us eyes to see, and wants us to do what is right. He gave us ears, hands, feet, and food to strengthen our bodies. One day you will grow up, and what you do now will help you grow into good character before God. There are many good children and people, but others look good on the outside yet are bad inside. You will recognize them by what they ask you to do."

"When no one is watching or listening, they may ask you to show them your private parts or where you pee from. If you hear such a request, know it's a bad thing, even if it's your friend. Will you take it as a joke because it's your friend or will you run away? Make sure you tell me or another trusted adult. Sometimes they will flatter you, and others will come like sheep but are really wolves. Someone may ask you to sit on their lap and say bad things. If they tell you to keep it a secret and say no one will believe you, know it's an evil thing. They may promise you gifts in exchange for touching your private parts or even forcefully touch you. They might say they'll give you something if you keep it a secret. Will you run away and tell me or another adult you trust?"

If the enemy is a book or images of naked people or bad pictures, will you look at them? The devil is evil and wants to destroy your soul—that's his goal. But you will become a pillar of your family as you grow up. The way you lead your family will depend on what you see and flee from if it's evil. Do not let anyone remove your clothes. Scream and speak out about what is happening—don't stay silent.

"Tell the child to scream if someone tries to touch their private parts. What should you do when bad thoughts come? Pray, so that bad thoughts, actions, and words don't come to you."

Those who molest children are often experienced (professionals) in this act. If your child knows you are there to protect them and believe what they say, they will tell you. Your children must know they are free to come to you at any time. They won't understand this unless you tell them—you must have open

communication with them. Such people may make your child feel fear, shame, or not know what to do. They appear perfect and innocent and even appear trustworthy. Many of them are talented at entertaining children and love it when you entrust them with your children. They love to please you and earn your trust. You may really want the chance to go do something and leave your kids with them, but they will ruin your children's childhood and start a journey of emotional and social damage.

They know how to make children feel guilty and believe they are the ones responsible for the abuse. Parents, learn to observe and listen. Keep communication with your child open.

A friend of mine said her 10-year-old daughter told her that a 6-year-old boy came and touched her private parts, and when she asked why he was doing that, he just laughed. Her mother told her, "There are gates of protection for you. The first is your God, the second is yourself—it's good that you told me. I am the third protector. If you see such a thing, tell me so we can talk to that child's parent."

Those who harm children look for those within their reach (vulnerable). Many parents fear discussing this topic of sex, thinking the problems will disappear on their own and that the child will learn by themselves. Others hide the identity of the person who harmed their child. These evil people like secrecy and go on to abuse other children or people. Let's dress our girls modestly and carefully, so that such people with twisted and sick thoughts don't get further corrupted. Child prostitution is increasing in the world because of such individuals. When your kids are playing, ensure they are dressed well—girls should wear shorts under their dresses.

Many of us are surprised by incidents of child rape, not knowing that the perpetrators are normal people we meet every day—our relatives, and many live in the same house or neighborhood as us.

God has promised wisdom to all who ask. These evil people live successful and peaceful lives because no one reports them. They feel safe because years go by, and they continue, with people hiding their crimes. Some are our close relatives, and we're afraid they'll go to jail even though they've destroyed our children's lives forever. Unless by God's grace, the lives of these children become filled with

sorrow and experiences of low self-worth, suicidal thoughts, hatred toward the opposite gender, or even aversion to sex after marriage.

Yes, there is judgment on the last day, but even now, if you hear of someone committing such crimes, report them. When someone who defiles children is exposed, their power is broken. Remember to tell your child that you love them and want them to be safe and that they can always tell you anything at any time—and you’ll always be ready to listen. 90% of perpetrators of this kind are those close to the child—family or friends. The best way to help is to explain clearly about these dangerous people and what to say when told, “Don’t tell anyone.” The child should be taught purity of thoughts, actions, and words.

Many children have asked, “At what age can we have romantic relationships?” Honestly, we don’t advise close relationships with the opposite sex, only general friendship, until one reaches 18. Even at 18, it is better to use the courtship method rather than romantic dating. This kind of friendship should not be secretive. Time should be taken to pray for these youths, and the youths should pray for themselves, because in marriage, one either destroys a good life or builds it.

Africans traditionally had courtship guided by parents and elders and the paying of bride price—this made marriages strong. Even an eight-year-old should be taught how to respect the opposite gender—boys should respect girls as their sisters and help them stay pure for their future spouses.

Relationships with the opposite gender aren’t just for casual friendship—they are for marriage. If you’re not planning to marry, don’t enter romantic dating. Hugging and kissing have both spiritual and physical consequences. There must be boundaries with the opposite sex. That person is not your husband or wife. Let young people wait until marriage to be intimate. This is not our command, but from the Creator—and even scientific researchers have found that those who begin such things early and even live together to “test compatibility” are over 300% more likely to divorce than those who remained pure.

Many think that since they’re going to marry, they have the right to do what married people do, but later they regret it with pain and scars. If you want, dig deeper in the book “I Kissed Dating Goodbye” or Courtship vs. Dating by Dr. Davis.

Being engaged is like marking a tree to cut it down later, but a hundred years pass and you never return. Haven't we seen that? People's thoughts change daily—one may be left behind, carrying the guilt of sin or even a new life. When lifestyle and faith are defined together, people gain peace and satisfaction in their hearts.

Today, we no longer have initiation programs like before—let the youth be taught, so it doesn't seem like they are being denied pleasure for no reason. Scripture says there is a time for everything.

Now there is also “pornography prostitution” on computers, and bizarre digital sexual acts. All these are evil. In some countries, more than 50% of people engage in this and destroy their marriages. It has become like an addiction—for adults and even some children under 18. All of this is evil—whether virtual (pictures) or physical (3D). Avoid ads on your computer—when they appear, skip them. Place computers in a public space like the living room where everyone can see, to reduce this evil. It has captured many, and even child kidnappings have occurred due to it.

The world is dull compared to what God has prepared or given us as a gift. Discipline yourself to distinguish between what is good, given to us as a gift, and what is evil, so that you may protect your health. Do not partner with those who do evil. Let us separate ourselves from such things and “Guard the paths that lead into your heart, focus on things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy—think about such things.”

A nation cannot make laws to stop people from sexual immorality. No! But believers must wake up and stop watching immoral movies, TV, reading books, and anything similar. Many people claim to be believers yet there's no difference between them and what they feed into their minds. If believers of all religions refused to buy such movies, books, or immoral content, it would lose its market. These things can only die if you stop feeding them. Don't add fuel to this fire.

Job said, “He made a covenant with his eyes not to look lustfully at a woman.” Our eyes and ears must be guarded for purity. Today's television is full of nonsense, with evil people portrayed as heroes. If you're addicted to it, just throw it out. Find something else to take that place. Learn to sew, play piano, do carpentry, or take up a hobby.

Some people think they must watch such things to be informed and then decide for themselves. Instead, spend time filling your mind with God's Word to avoid these sins. If you are a leader struggling with these issues, tell someone who can help keep you accountable so that you don't go back to Egypt. If you don't know anyone, write to us and we'll connect you with people who can help.

Do everything you can so your family, friends, and you yourself can be free from this bondage. The angels and Almighty God will also rejoice. Love is not sex; love is a principle from God. It comes with love only when it's in its rightful place.

If you've read this and feel hopeless, please do not despair. God is in the business of helping people out of bondage so they can rule their bodies, have discipline, self-respect, and respect for others. Doing what the Almighty wants requires sacrifice, not complacency. True love or affection is not perversion, adultery, or impurity. Don't live selfishly, making mistakes and blaming how you were raised or what was done to you in childhood. Don't say you're retaliating or can't escape. Adultery does not increase happiness—it reduces it. If your marriage has issues, don't go wandering elsewhere; repair it and seek help. If you go elsewhere, the problem will still be there.

God has made an investment in you, creating you in a fearful and wonderful way. Invest in your marriage too. Love your spouse until death separates you, even if they don't deserve it. God also loves you though you don't deserve it. One day you'll reap the fruits and experience true love with your spouse. Love often brings service and caring for others. Marital love leads to children being born and includes caring for and raising those children.

True love is not selfish—that you must be satisfied or that it's all about you. Whatever God forbids is always for our benefit so that we may live joyful lives. When we make God's love our principle, we are set free. We're freed from sexual indulgence and brought into the richness of relationships that bring fulfillment and a true love that surpasses human understanding.

Pollution of the body is worse than environmental pollution. If you've lost the flame of love in your marriage, start tending to it again. We change our feelings by changing our actions or behaviors.

God can take us out of immoral lives and turn us into vessels of great value—if we let Him. The English say, "He can save from the uttermost and the guttermost"—

meaning He can rescue us from the deepest pit of sexual perversion. God has a good ending for you, even if you've faced divorce, sexual abuse, deception, alcoholism, incest. He will lift you out of the trash heap, restore what the locust or cankerworm has eaten—if you allow Him today. Don't wait for tomorrow.

Gold, charcoal, and a pencil all come from the element carbon—the difference is in arrangement. Today, God can rearrange your life if you let Him, turning you from coal to gold.

If you've lost your virginity through deception or wrong knowledge, Almighty God is your help. If you're seeking true love and have never been loved—by parents or a partner—do not be sad or afraid. God will straighten your paths in ways you don't know but which will bring you joy.

CHAPTER 17

BEING MARY MAGDALENE IN A MARTHA'S WORLD

God is the center of everything, not our busyness. St. Augustine once said:

“What if God said: I’ll give you everything you want—the whole world, nothing will be impossible for you...nothing will be forbidden, nothing you do will be a sin. You will not die, you will have no pain, nothing unwanted, and you will always have what you desire—except for one thing: You will never see my face.” Then he asked: “Did fear strike you when you heard you would never see my face? That fear is from God—to show that even if a person has everything but lacks God’s face, there will be a void in the heart, and that punishment is unbearable.” Today we may have everything—houses, food, clothes, cars, planes—but without a relationship with God, we are truly lacking. We often want to do everything—being human makes us busy. Even wealthy men and women aren’t idle or served all day. No! Picture a hardworking businesswoman in Nakuru. She has a farm outside town, goes weekly to harvest. She picks vegetables to eat.

She wakes up at 5 AM to prepare for work or business, has little children to care for. She kneads dough for mandazi, makes breakfast, prays with the children, sees them off to school, ensures their clothes are clean, cleans the house, cuts a child’s hair, welcomes guests, goes to the market, attends prayer meetings, etc. The list is endless. If you’re in leadership ministry and you’re truly committed, then your list is even longer. We all want to worship God like Mary did—sitting at the feet of Jesus, Savior of the world. But Martha’s heart keeps interfering. See the story in Luke 10:38-42. It seems the house belonged to Martha, the elder sister. They lived as three, with their brother Lazarus. They appear three times in the gospels.

Martha wanted everything to go perfectly. In your life, you’ve probably praised Mary a lot. But tell the truth—who is the Proverbs 31 woman: Mary or Martha? “There’s too much to do and too little time!” My 10-year-old exclaimed. Guests had arrived. Is there food? Water for washing? Mary was told she had chosen the better part. Martha passed through the living room, gave Mary a harsh look to get up and help—she ignored it. Eventually, Martha gathered courage and told the Lord of love,

“Don’t you care that my sister has left me to do all the work alone?” She expected Jesus to support her. But Jesus said, “Mary has chosen the better portion, and it will not be taken away from her.”

So, the Lord doesn’t always want us to be endlessly busy. He wants us to choose the “better part”—a relationship with Him. I believe these two sisters had different personalities. It doesn’t mean one was more sinful than the other. Think about it—what kind of woman sits still when 12 or more men, including Jesus, visit your home? Is that pleasing? Hungry, tired men with no home, who’ve walked all day—and you just sit?

We are being guided to choose worship first, then other activities. This is well expressed in Matthew 6:33: “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Satan will distort the goal so that we miss the target—even with things we don’t consider sinful, as long as he can distract us. He did this with our mother Eve, inviting her to discuss God’s command—and she lost focus.

Mary delighted in the Lord. Martha was eager to serve Christ but almost missed the chance to know Him. She had a good intention to offer Christ the very best. In ministry, avoid taking too much time to perfect things outwardly while neglecting time to study God’s Word.

We call Him “Lord, Lord,” yet maybe He won’t recognize us on the last day.

Is it that He won’t recognize us, or we won’t recognize Him, because we never sat at His feet?

God wants us to be with Him, to dwell with Him, to be still and know that He is the Lord.

He isn’t looking for workers as much as He’s looking for close relationship. Let’s not put our work first and worship last. A woman who was married to a preacher was a very busy person—she cooked, hosted church members, and raised small children. By the time she went to bed at midnight after all her activities, she was completely exhausted. One night, as she was going to bed, tears started streaming down her face. She felt an overwhelming sadness. Her husband asked her, “What’s

wrong, dear?” She responded, “Tell me the Good News, I’ve completely lost touch with it in all my exhaustion. What is the Good News? Is this really it?”

She had been busy doing things for the Lord, but she realized that she had grown distant from the Good News—that is, the Gospel, which is the Good News of the redemption of mankind through Jesus Christ. Her body was filled with exhaustion and burdens. It reached a point where a layperson could forget that the Gospel is good news.

Maybe you also feel that the more service you give, the more God will be pleased with you. You volunteer for everything—choir, Bible teaching, hospital visits, and more. But when night comes, you ask yourself, “Is this all the Gospel is about? Why does this lifestyle feel so tasteless?” You forget the Good News: that Jesus died for us.

Maybe you’ve stopped volunteering when called upon, and now no one even asks you to help anymore. You’re out of alignment. Maybe in your heart, there’s bitterness, and when you lie down to sleep, you ask yourself, “Where is the Good News? I wish someone would tell me again—I’ve forgotten it.” Remember, salvation is not about the things you do; it’s about what Jesus has already done.

As you read this now, ask yourself: “What is the Good News? What does it really mean?” Martha once asked, “Lord, don’t you care?” Or, “Why aren’t you being fair to me? I’m doing all the work while others get praised!” Don’t allow yourself to be overwhelmed. Learn to say no sometimes—it’s okay to say, “I won’t be able to help with that.” Don’t think you’re the only one who can get things done. “Everything I do must be perfect,” or “I can change my sister Mary to be like me.” Losing focus, self-pity, discouragement, and doubt are big challenges that derail us in our journey of service.

When your heart is weary, take time to rest, mix with others to get fresh perspectives, and be patient. God has a good plan for us. Let’s not be doubtful like Martha who said, “The Lord doesn’t care.” Maybe she just wanted everything to go her way. The good thing is that Martha brought her fears and doubts to Jesus. It’s important that we do the same—He cares about our concerns. Job did this as well. Jesus loves us and invites us to come close to Him. Many of us are full of fears and anxieties. Studies show that 40% of what we worry about never happens, 30% are about past events we can’t change, 12% are unfounded criticisms, 10% are

health-related (and worrying worsens health), and only 8% are actual, legitimate problems. Let's not keep regurgitating our problems. Fear doesn't remove bad things—it robs us of living the full life God wants for us. The more we dwell on something, the more it grows, and our joy is poisoned.

Read John 15—Satan wants us to feel like “you're on your own, baby.” But God is still in control and ready to help us. We're not alone! Jehovah Jireh (Our Provider), Jehovah Rapha (Our Healer), and El Shaddai (God Almighty) are with us.

Indeed, John 16:33 says, “In this world you will have trouble, but take heart; I have overcome the world.” Philippians 4:6–7 tells us how to overcome fear: First, do not be anxious about anything. Second, in every situation, pray and make your requests known to God. Third, give thanks. Fear grows like yeast in dough, but prayer magnifies God, not the problem. Gratitude shifts our focus to Him instead of the problem. Then God's peace, which surpasses understanding, will guard our hearts and minds. God answers prayers, not complaints.

The battle is in the mind. “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” May the Lord help us to meditate on these things so that fear, doubt, and worry flee. In love, there is no fear.

When Jesus said, “Martha, Martha, Martha...” that day in Bethany, He was also speaking to you and me. Hallelujah, let HIM be praised! You'll realize that the problem wasn't just Mary's lack of help—it was Martha's deeper fears. Jesus wants us not to be troubled by passing things but to trust Him and spend time with Him. This is especially important for us as wives of spiritual leaders.

If you are a person prone to anxiety and worry, know that it doesn't add anything to your life. Sometimes it's helpful to talk to a friend or counselor privately about your concerns—you'll be surprised how light the burden becomes. Reduce the need for things to be perfect or overly tidy. This will help ease your anxiety. When we were in college in Kenya, we visited a missionary teacher's home. She opened the door and asked, “How can I help you?” We said we had just come to visit. As soon as we stepped inside, she gasped loudly. We didn't know her carpet was white and it was raining outside. She was upset we were dirtying her pure wool rug. We were saddened and left. What I learned from that is—so that I don't get heart

disease, I should use a different carpet color; and if my belongings are so precious that guests “ruin” them, maybe I shouldn’t have them at all (just my opinion). There are many needs in the world, but God never said we are the ones to meet all of them. That’s what overwhelmed Moses until he became angry. He said, “Did I give birth to all these people that they should trouble me? If I’ve found favor in your eyes, please kill me now, so I can escape this burden and frustration.”

I read those words with pain and amazement. Ministry is not easy. I know many women who, after reading Proverbs 31, measure themselves and feel like they fall short. They want to meet the needs of their homes, businesses, guests, themselves—everything. One preacher said he reads Proverbs monthly, but skips Proverbs 31 in shorter months—it makes him sweat or get dizzy! “One thing is necessary,” Martha was told—and so are we today! Every year when it starts, we set resolutions to become better. But we all fall short—we’re human.

The 20/80 rule says that in churches, 20% of members do all the work, while 80% rest like Mary. So there is a real problem in many churches: too many people not wanting to help. Yes, Ecclesiastes 9:10 says, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might!” And, “Faith without works is dead.”

The Galatians also struggled with this. They were told they began in the Spirit but now wanted to be perfected in the flesh or by works. What Jesus wanted Martha to realize was not to stop cooking! No, not at all. But first, she needed to take time to know Him, so that her many tasks wouldn’t cloud her relationship with Him. Food doesn’t need to involve burdensome and elaborate preparations—it just needs to satisfy hunger and create time to be together.

Our lives are crowded with so many things—family, friends, books, events—until our relationship with Christ becomes small. Recipes have many steps and we cover the table with effort. Some of us fear being alone, so we stay on the phone all the time, watch TV, or listen to music. As long as there’s noise and chaos, we feel safe. But the Lord is calling us to relationship with Him. Let us rest in Jesus. He wants us to abide in Him, and He in us.

People will know we are Jesus’ followers by our love, not by our busyness. Jesus gave us an example when He lived among us in everything He did. Dwight Moody said that out of 100 people, one will read the Bible, but ninety-nine will read the Christian.

Mahatma Gandhi of India once said, “If Christians lived according to their faith, there would be no Hindus left in India.” Let us serve people with love, not just thinking about ourselves and our programs. If we abide in Him, we will bear fruit—30, 60, and 100-fold. Let us not allow service to make us bitter or fight with others! There is a time to work and a time to worship. That is the better portion.

When we wake up in the morning, prayer and reading the Word are essential. I’ve learned that if I begin my day with activities and say I’ll come back to the Word later—it never happens! One moment I’m boiling beans, feeding the cat, checking email, lighting the stove outside—and in the end, I reduce my relationship with Jesus and increase my busyness.

Sometimes, “we don’t feel like praying.” But when we don’t feel like praying, that’s exactly when we need to pray the most. We come up with excuses for being late to church—“I was hosting guests/kids.” Let’s not be people who are close to God today but busy tomorrow—like a fever that rises and falls. The Lord wants to fill us with His Spirit and give us contentment in life. Let’s be ready. Jesus is knocking on the doors of our hearts, wanting to speak with us. Let us persist in talking with Him. Let us not be afraid to sing, either, to lift our hearts before reading. We should not strive to fix everything ourselves or try too hard in our own strength to set everything right. It appears that Martha was someone who was ready to learn. She didn’t walk away saying, “Let them cook for themselves, I’m helping but they don’t want to support me.” She realized that wounds from a friend are better than kisses from an enemy. Because later, she believed in Jesus and said, “If you had been here, my brother would not have died.” And the Lord told her, “I am the resurrection and the life!” Wouldn’t you rather hear words like that than wear yourself out trying to do things your own way? Obeying and depending on Him are the key ingredients of our relationship with Him. That I do as He says, and that He is also able to resolve all my problems. Loving God means listening to what He says so that I may follow—this is very important! (Ezekiel 33:31-32). Hearing warnings without responding is to forget as a layperson. Jesus does not say we shouldn’t serve—No! But we need balance, to balance service time with time sitting at Jesus’ feet, so we can recharge our batteries; otherwise, we’ll be empty and have nothing left to offer others.

In our community, we’ve often heard about the antichrist—even in movies! Some say the antichrist was Idi Amin, or Hitler, or Stalin, or the Roman Empire. But the author Norris said, “Each of us has things we do that make us act like the

MaarifaMtandaoni.Com RohoYaUnabii.Net pg. 250

antichrist!” I have examined my own and asked the Lord to forgive me and give me a new beginning. When we are warned and we argue or stiffen our necks, we are opposing Christ! That is true, but we see Martha being corrected and changing.

David also said after correction, “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word. You are good and do what is good; teach me your decrees.” (Psalm 119). Blessed is the one who is rebuked by the Lord and listens. The reason for Jesus’ death was to give us a stronghold, so our lives could be transformed—to leave the old and become new people. Let our thoughts be changed to become like Him, “your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” Jesus didn’t come to make bad people good—certainly not! He came to make us new.

Mary, on the other hand, had lived a dark life, but when she came to know Christ, she loved Him deeply. We are told Jesus cast out seven demons from her. He who is forgiven much, loves much. We see her offering perfume while others watched—some thought she was giving too much! Maybe they thought she should give it to them. Sometimes when someone gives an offering or something to Jesus, and it's our close relative, we think, “That should’ve gone to us.”

One parent told their child, “You gave me only 1000 shillings but gave 3000 as an offering! I’m your parent—have you seen God? I am your god here on earth.” Have you ever found it easier to give offerings, but when someone close to you gives, you feel jealous or think they should have given to you because you're the one in need? Maybe you live with them and think, “They should’ve bought new chairs with that money instead of giving an offering here.” Jesus gave everything; heaven was emptied for us at Calvary.

Worship and service, prayer and responsibilities should all be arranged in order. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. When our lives are busy with activities and appointments, it's easy to have spiritual hunger. That’s why God set apart the seventh day for us to rest (read Genesis 2), so we can have a relationship with Him. Hospitality is also a good thing. Christians do not have the option to refuse hospitality, especially to those who cannot invite us back—many have welcomed angels without knowing it. But Paul and Peter tell us to be hospitable, and to do so without complaining. The secret to balancing worship, work, prayer, love for others, and service is to be in JESUS. Let’s ask God to search our hearts. Even to keep commandments or endure suffering—it is only possible through Him. The Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

The Lord loves us; “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?... For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor rulers, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The Lord loves us and wants us to spend time with Him and build a relationship with Him—to know Him. This is the better portion.

Our prayer is that God gives us the heart of Mary in the world of Martha. Without Him, we can do nothing. Let us abide in Him. As we received Him, let us walk with Him, grow, and take root. The enemy will try to keep you busy, make you feel guilty, make you despair, become hypocritical, and more. But you—choose the better portion.

The song says, “What a Friend we have in Jesus...” But we often miss out, we burden ourselves, forgetting that if we had prayed, God would have heard our cries. Let us watch and pray, intercede for others, and we will receive strength. Victory comes from surrendering to Jesus and humbling ourselves before Him. Trusting God is living by faith and not by sight. And this is a journey—most of us aren’t there yet! But JESUS IS ABLE to help us choose the better portion every day as we dedicate ourselves to Him.

CHAPTER 18

STEWARDS OF GOD

We are all stewards of God in five or six areas! Stewardship is how we use our lives—our time, talents, resources, influence, health/body, and environment. Perhaps time is the greatest aspect of stewardship because the Bible links time with life. Both the rich and the poor have the same 24 hours. If you had only 24 hours left to live, what would you do differently? Do you like saying, “Tomorrow, tomorrow”?

A certain pastor named Kisaka, when he reached the Maasai people near his village in Chome with the message of Salvation in Christ (Tanzania, 1964), feared they might reject it. Surprisingly, the Maasai chief asked two questions: “Where have you been all these years?” and “What will happen to the Maasai who died without hearing this message?” Time is a treasure God has deposited in our account—but we don’t know our balance. The Bible has many passages on all types of stewardship. It instructs us to live wisely and redeem the time, and that there is a time for everything. Our years are seventy; let us pray to live wisely.

I believe the important things to do include attending fellowship, reading your Bible, learning new things, building relationships with family and friends, serving others, sharing the good news of salvation, caring for your body and health, working, and meditating on God’s Word. Also, take time to rest—not just being on your phone or watching TV/computer all the time.

Life and time are one thing—whatever you do is how you use your stewardship. I want to begin by discussing the stewardship of our thoughts. A person is his mind. What one thinks, so he is. Our thoughts affect what we say, and what we say affects what we think—it’s a cycle.

So our prayer is to be born again so that we may be faithful stewards of our thoughts. What kind of thoughts come to your mind when you walk, cut grass, or cook? If someone provokes you, do you get angry and dwell on it, replaying their words again and again? When our thoughts are clean, our actions and stewardship will also be clean. If our thoughts are evil, our emotions will be bad, and then our actions. Our thoughts and emotions are greatly influenced by what we say. If we

speaking words of hope and faith, our faith will grow. If we speak unbelief, our thoughts will settle in that. 2 Corinthians 10:5 is a very important verse, which says "..."

Let us remember, Eve had the perfect husband, but when her thoughts started wandering, she ruined things—until today we're still affected. If she had focused her mind elsewhere in the garden instead of the tree where Satan was, she could have avoided a lot of sorrow.

Experts say most women's thoughts run at a higher speed, thinking many things, and thus they speak around 60,000 words per day, compared to men who speak 30,000 words and can easily think about "nothing." This is a blessing in some ways. If we win the battle of our thoughts, we'll win the battle of our actions and character. Thoughts create habits. It's a blessing that Satan is not allowed to know our inner thoughts. He can only guess them through what we say and do.

Many of us are very careful with what we eat; we don't eat pork or random meats, but rather vegetables, fruits, grains, nuts, and legumes. Yet our minds are fed with so many corpses (cannibals). Perhaps you're wondering, how then can you be a good steward of your thoughts? That's a good question we should ask ourselves today, before the day of judgment. We must stop watching things that corrupt our thoughts, whether it's certain sports, television, computers, songs, indecent books, and the like. We read that the Messiah went to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane—not the market of Gethsemane—and this helped His mind to be still.

There's no one mentioned in the Bible who didn't experience temptation or impure thoughts. Bad thoughts or temptations are not sin. No one can truthfully say they've never had bad thoughts or temptations! But these impure thoughts must be cast down by God's power so they don't rule over us. Sometimes we must make deliberate efforts so they don't keep returning to our minds. Letting them return repeatedly and dwelling on them until we act on them—that is sin.

The great principle of stewardship is found in Philippians 4:6-8. Whatever is true (are all the things we watch on TV true? Just?...)—those are the things we should think about. Sometimes we wonder why we can't control our thoughts, but it's because we're not engaging with things that revive the heart. A weak sinner on their knees has more power than all demons and evil spirits combined. We should pray and ask God to search our hearts and help clean the rooms of our hearts that

are in trouble. Many times we say we would never eat pork or rotten meat, but in our minds, we allow rotten and filthy thoughts by watching things that defile our thoughts. If we are careful about what we eat, shouldn't we be even more careful about what we feed our minds?

Caring for our environment is also very important. Do we throw trash around carelessly? Do we destroy plants recklessly? Are we cruel to animals? If you see a cat and throw stones at it, then say you're going to heaven—where animals will play with people? Avoid polluting the environment. Creation has suffered because of our sins. We shouldn't value animals more than people, but animals are also God's creatures.

Do we use our talents for God's glory or just for our own gain? Where we can learn something to be of help to others, we must be diligent. We've already spoken a lot about our health—those ten health principles. We cannot love without giving. Look at your friends and the nature of your friendship—many times you are happy with them and willing to give even without being asked. You laugh freely, even loudly. But what about the Father of love, who loves us and provides all good things—how do we treat Him? The widow with two mites was commended not because of the small amount she gave, but because of what she had left at home! Many times we give our leftovers to God, or what we don't need, while to those we love we give things they may not even need—and “scrape the pot” for them.

I read that the 10/40 window countries (Hindu, Muslim, Confucian, and Buddhist regions) still lack Bibles. These countries include China, India, Japan, Algeria, Korea. More than half the world's population lives there. A message was sent to Americans saying that each year they exchange Christmas gifts with friends and family, many of whom don't need them—often just exchanging gifts for formality. Some gifts end up being thrown away because they clutter the house like too many doll decorations. People give because they were given. The message from forgottenchristmas.org said that the average American spends \$400 on Christmas gifts—enough to give every person in the 10/40 window a Bible, and still have some left over.

Everything we've been given is a trust—we are stewards of God's generosity. Giving is for our own safety, so we don't become greedy or envious. The tenth commandment is the hardest to obey because it's invisible! It is better to give than to receive—a great command.

Rockefeller, the American oil billionaire, was once stingy and greedy, full of anger and misery. At 50, he became seriously ill. A friend advised him to start giving generously to regain health and peace. He tried it and lived to be 90. Giving changed him. There's even a Rockefeller Foundation today that supports schools, scholarships, and people with disabilities. Others like Warren Buffet or Bill Gates also give. Don't think they give just because they're rich—that's only half the story. Many times, I've been stingy and remembered a story I read in first grade. A very stingy woman had stepchildren who came to visit. Her husband had set up a trap for antelope. When she heard the trap snap, she assumed it caught one, and worried the children would want to share the meat. So she sent them away. But when she went to check the trap—it had caught a leopard, which killed her because no one was around to help. Many times, I've wanted to eat alone instead of inviting others to share—and ended up with nothing. I've met people who refuse to share their belongings, even inheritance—and in the end, it rots or causes sorrow. Joy doesn't come from what we have, but from knowing God, serving Him, and helping others.

We cannot be loving without being generous. Some people find it hard to give money, others to share their possessions or food. Among the 946 billionaires in the world, only one gives more than 1.5% of their wealth.

Earthly things lose value daily. Today you buy a new pen, and tomorrow you wonder why you wasted your money on such a useless item. Some people say their money will be misused at church. But if I gave someone money to feed my parent and they misused it, would I stop sending money to my parent because of their theft? If people are misusing church funds, report them so they are held accountable. Don't rob God and miss out on blessings because of people who are passing like smoke. Even with your offerings, great things can be done for God when you work with your church and keep watch over the dishonest. If you think you've given a lot to God, be at peace—He is not unjust. He will reward you for what you think was too much!

Remember, not everything needs money. We can use our influence, talents, and time—and these give us things money can't buy: good relationships, satisfaction in our work, meaningful lives—these are great blessings. A layperson can smile, comfort, offer kind words or encouragement, listen, show kindness, respect, compassion, be a true friend, or show approval.

In childhood and youth, many say that when they grow up, they won't behave like certain adults in how they manage their resources—be it influence, health, wealth, talents, or time. But as they grow, it becomes difficult to keep those promises. We've helped about 400 students go to school—not through a formal program, but when they couldn't pay fees, they would call or write and say, “Mama and Baba, someone promised to help with my school fees—they had the means but disappeared.” Others speak of wealthy relatives who have deliberately refused to help them. We always ask them to learn from this and decide to do better when they are in those positions of influence or wealth.

It's been observed that in black communities, even in America, there's a tendency to help only blood relatives and not others. Some give food or worn-out clothes and feel they've done a big service for God. Others, because they serve in church—maybe as a deacon or clerk—think that's enough and they don't need to give from their own pocket. But to whom much is given, much will be required. Many of us think we don't have much, yet compared to our past, we are wealthy. We love people to admire us for our riches or great work, yet we don't help them with money or practical support. Even in human folly, I ask—is there any reason to admire someone just because they're rich but stingy? That's like how Hollywood celebrities are worshipped. Money has great power to do good for the hungry, the sick, the oppressed. But if hoarded, it's useless and becomes a curse. So how do we know whether we control our money or it controls us?

According to prophet Ezekiel, the sin that caused Sodom to be destroyed was an abundance of food, idleness (pleasure, laziness), neglecting the poor and needy, pride, and detestable worship practices including homosexuality.

They say, “Show me your daily schedule and your budget, and I'll tell you your passion.” Also, a checkbook is a theological document—it shows your love for God. Money has only three purposes: our needs, the needs of others, and the needs of God's work. Set aside part of your wealth for God's work. Read stewardship books like *The Blessed Life*. Use your time to pray for that work too. You'll be amazed at the love and joy you will experience.

I was shocked to learn that a billionaire from a poor country like India owns the most expensive house in the world—worth 2 billion dollars. Meanwhile, Warren Buffet, the second richest man in America, still lives in the same three-bedroom house he bought 50 years ago. He drives a regular car and lives simply. Many have

interviewed him—you can read about his life online. He is now 80 years old and is known for giving away most of his wealth to help the needy. I believe Bill Gates followed in his footsteps. In June, Gates reportedly visited him for advice. Gates had planned to stay for an hour because he had many responsibilities. But Buffet seemed relaxed, and eventually Gates also relaxed—and they spent the whole day having delightful, meaningful conversations. Let's do the same with the Lord—spend quality time with Him in sweet conversation. Let's build a relationship with Him, not with wealth.

When Rockefeller died, his accountant was asked by a newspaper, “How much did he leave behind?” He replied, “He left it all.” We came into this world with nothing, and we will leave with nothing. But we can send things ahead to heaven in advance by doing good works. There, moth and rust cannot destroy our treasures. “I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was naked and you clothed me; I was in prison and you visited me,” says Christ in Matthew 25. Let's pray for this so we can be faithful stewards—and not hear the words, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” The Bible says the Kingdom of God is like a precious pearl that a man discovered in Matthew 13. He sold everything to buy it. When we were young, we sang a song to the tune of “Yankee Doodle” that went:

A farmer had a farm, he planted potatoes,
He dug and dug and found a diamond,
Oh, oh, what luck for the farmer,
He threw his hoe aside and went to town,
He bought a car and now he's rich,
Oh, oh, what luck, oh, oh, what luck for the farmer.

The Kingdom of God is a treasure, and for you as a layperson, it is wise to sell all and buy it. Don't focus too much on storing up wealth on earth or be filled with greed for money, because many have pierced themselves with grief for it. Many have done unthinkable things for money, which is why Paul wrote to Timothy, “The love of money is the root of all evil.” Money can change your character—be careful. Many people can point out others' greed when they are poor, but once

they have money, they forget they have the same problem. Often, we desire things in our hearts, but it's not seen simply because we are poor.

Many of us tend to help only those who love us, not anyone else in need. Even wicked people do the same for their friends and family. Our African culture often emphasizes helping only relatives—if they are orphans, we care for those in our family; if someone needs help, we help a relative. In contrast, I really admire how Westerners can give to complete strangers, to organizations or causes such as orphanages or cancer research.

In your generosity, I'm not saying forget your family—certainly not! But if you're helping three orphaned nieces or nephews, consider also helping one stranger in need. I once read in the Quran that believers were allowed to marry up to four wives with the sole purpose of caring for orphans. But how many actually do it for that reason? It's rare. Most polygamy is driven by lust, not compassion.

Tithing is clearly taught in the Bible; all Christians know this. I once heard Baptists criticize U.S. President Obama for declaring a 5% tithe on his taxes instead of the 10% the Bible commands. Tithe belongs to the Lord; you're not giving it but returning what's His. If you keep it, you're robbing (robbing is different from stealing—robbery is forceful and visible, while theft is sneaky). A layperson who doesn't return tithe is a robber, plain and simple.

I met a lay preacher who told me his income was too little to tithe. I asked, "What do you eat and wear? Do you have a farm? Then tithe from your produce." Many spouses forbid each other from tithing—don't fall into that sin. Tithing is for our benefit, not God's. He owns everything. Whether you give Him two or three coins or nothing at all, He is never impoverished. It's like a parent teaching their child not to be selfish by asking them to share from what they were just given. And if you think you gave God more than you should have, He isn't like a merchant who keeps your change. He is faithful—if you gave more than required, He'll return it. No one gives to God and goes bankrupt. Hallelujah!

It's said that ancient Israel thrived so well they gave up to 33%—a third—of their income. There was no hunger. Their community had systems in place to ensure everyone had food, shelter, and basic needs. God's order always brings blessing and prosperity.

I've seen that in South Korea, when people convert from traditional religions to Christianity, 99% of them tithe. Even today, countries like Rwanda lead the world in tithing, with 86% of believers faithfully returning tithe. I spoke with one of their church accountants who visited Ohio for a lay conference—he said, “People take loans and mortgage their homes to build churches.” I was shocked. You cannot outgive God. Rwandans suffered genocide, and many learned from that grief and now serve God passionately. Give Jesus the glory!

Your influence is very important. Let me give an example. There was a pastor at a church I attended for nine years, Dwight Nelson in Michigan. He pastored a large university church of about 4,000 members. One week he told a story—he had driven from Michigan to California (around 4,000 km) in his old car, and it broke down about seven times. After he shared that, around ten people came forward to buy him a new car! He had influence. As a layperson, use your influence for God. If you preach well, are attractive, have a good personality, or write well—use all of it to win souls, not for pride. Be humble. You know a humble person isn't even aware they're humble?

They say one man was so humble that his village awarded him a medal for humility. The next day, when he wore it, they took it away—he had lost his humility! The English often pray saying, “This is our humble prayer.” But is there any need to say it? God sees the heart and doesn't need us to announce it.

Sometimes we also need to dress more modestly. When we wear expensive or flashy clothes, we can easily start thinking about ourselves during worship, or feel the need to be noticed. Something happens when you overdress or wear new clothes—you think everyone is watching you, and it distracts you from why you came to church. Especially if you're prone to this weakness. To counter it, select just three outfits for worship and stick to them. Don't flaunt your wardrobe or cause others to feel ashamed. If you have many clothes, remember the message of John the Baptist: “Whoever has two coats should give one to someone who has none.” If your size hasn't changed, why keep buying more? As a pilgrim heading to heaven, use your money to win souls, not to buy more things. The Holy Spirit is not the “Holy Stuff Spirit,” as our friend Evangelist Amon jokes.

Plan your budget well so you don't drown in debt. I've been there—especially with a mortgage—and I now pray night and day to be delivered. Fear debt like leprosy. It robs God when you have to use His share to pay debts. Many fear jail more than

robbing God; even if you don't give tithe or offering, you'll still pay your debts—that's dangerous. Learn budgeting; it's cost me dearly. Pray with me that we break free from debt. I'm still struggling with it. Back when I was debt-free, I gave to God's work gladly. Now I'm always crying about debts and give nothing. Let's help each other pray to overcome this habit and for God to increase our income.

You return 10% to God as tithe, but offerings are what you give from your heart. If you don't give an offering, then you've actually given nothing—tithe isn't yours to give. Some people are so blessed they give more than 10%. For instance, a pharmacist in Switzerland once gave 90% of his income because all his needs were already met.

Remember to include God's work in your will. The founder of Colgate toothpaste included only his children in his will, and when he died, they did not honor God, and everything went away from God's work. Colgate himself gave over 25% to God. When you die, make sure a portion—say 25%—goes to God's work. Pray about how to allocate it: building churches, sponsoring workers or members for school, evangelistic meetings, Christian schools, hospitals, widows, orphans, or other soul-winning ministries.

Don't forget to care for your family. "Anyone who doesn't provide for their relatives is worse than an unbeliever." Some told their parents "Korban" (meaning their property was devoted to God) and so refused to help. A layperson with resources who neglects their parents or relatives is like a pagan. I understand that some relatives are greedy and jealous of your ministry. One relative told me, "You love God more than me, yet have you ever seen Him?" Another said, "If you gave \$1,000 to God, how much did you keep for yourself for you to give that much?" One even compared my giving to my family versus what I gave in tithe.

Even your relatives or spouse might hinder your service to God. Some people, seeing your peaceful marriage and ministry, will say, "His wife controls him." Apparently, unless a wife is beaten, it's not a proper marriage! Or they'll say, "They think they're white people." Were whites the first in Eden? Are they more loving than Christians? They divorce and murder more than us! Or you'll hear, "They just pretend—we'll see them break up soon." So you pray for their downfall?

I've met laypeople who rejoice when someone else's child strays, saying, "They're just like us now!" or "Their kids will be worse than mine." Maybe someone prayed

for your children and you don't even know. I once opened a car door for my wife and someone said, "That's strange—must be a new wife or a new car."

Layperson, reduce your bitterness. Don't wish failure on others—pray for them. God still changes people. Didn't Saul become Paul without even asking for it?

A friend in Michigan and his wife once showed me a letter from a brother who had helped them through high school. It read: "Dear brother, we helped you through school and told you to buy us a lorry and tractor. You went to the U.S. and forgot us. We'll pray that God cuts off your legs so you'll remember us."

They wept. They had supported themselves in the U.S. through small jobs and rent help. As a layperson, you'll face relatives like this, but don't let that stop you from helping genuine needs.

Every morning, surrender your plans to God and ask Him to guide you. Another inspiring story came from a laywoman, around 55 years old, married to a beloved village doctor. She shared at a lay conference that her husband had died that year. He was loved by his patients. Though grieving, she pulled herself together and bought hundreds of books and Bibles—300 of each—to give every person at the funeral a copy. When given a chance to speak, she said, "Before he died, my husband said, 'I love my patients so much, I wish they could receive these books.'" And she gave them out. Who would refuse such a gift? Maybe some even read them.

Carry books and share the gospel with people you influence. Don't just smile without sharing Jesus. Influence isn't for your glory but for Christ. Don't say, "I'm not important." You may not have influence over some, but others may value you deeply. Just your presence may bring peace to someone—and they're waiting for you to share Jesus.

Even if you have a nice home, invite people in and share Christ. If you can't do it alone, join with someone else and invite one person—team up even for cooking. Be like the Shunammite woman who added a room to host Elisha—not to show off. And when famine came and she left, upon return, Elisha's servant testified for her and the king restored her house. Help people so they can help themselves, not so they become dependent on you. In the book *Christians in the World of Hunger* by Ron Sider, he shares astonishing insights. He explains that research has shown that God has been amazingly faithful to His word—"I will make you the head and not

the tail." He says that 80% of all the world's wealth is in the hands of Christians! Sometimes we think of oil wells in Arab countries, but we might be surprised to find that ownership and machinery are from other countries. He goes on to say that these Christians are astonishingly stingy. God has blessed them with trillions, yet when they give to the poor, they give only small change. Instead of creating programs that empower people—like giving them a pair of cows, goats, or certain projects—they give flour or food that will be eaten and not multiply, so that the recipients have to beg again tomorrow. This is a form of cruelty.

It is far better to educate these people and provide small capital so they can lift themselves up. The Chinese say, if you want to make a difference for a day, eat in a good hotel; for a month, get married (a poor example); for a year, plant a garden; but if you want to make a lifelong impact, help someone gain an education or help children go to school. You will have truly changed a life. Let them stop begging and depending on you. Many Christians and laypeople are very stingy. We wear expensive clothes and luxury items. One layperson from Tanzania told me his suit cost \$5,000! But when we hear about people in need, we only give a few coins, and we think we are helping, when in fact we are insulting the poor. Don't buy clothes constantly just so you can give the old ones to the poor when you're tired of them. If your heart is truly in the right place, give new ones! I've done this many times and I ask God every day to help me, because you can't touch the Creator without touching His creation. Otherwise, you're just a clanging cymbal or a noisy gong.

Read 1 Corinthians 13 every day, especially verses 4-8. No matter how much you have, you can't wear two pairs of shoes at once, drive three cars at once, or sleep in two beds at the same time. Even if I visit your house, you can't say today we're eating gold and diamonds! No—it's going to be regular food like ugali and vegetables. If not, your stomach will get upset! Give until it hurts, not just spare change that you wouldn't even miss if it fell out of your pocket. "The widow with two small coins" was praised not for what she gave, but for what she had left.

Check your house—do you have clutter lying around? Give it away. One layperson realized he had around 200 cassettes and DVDs he had already watched and no longer used. He decided to sell them and use the money for God's work. Don't be a hoarder thinking you might need things in the future—give them away and God will not fail you tomorrow. A friend of mine in Mara had her wardrobes filled with clothes, even in extra rooms. Old children's clothes—she just kept them,

remembering how her children wore them when they were small! I used to do this too, until my friend Grace Zuzo from South Africa told me, “20 to 30 clothes are enough for work, and any piece you haven’t worn in a year is not yours—give it away.” Try to bless others with anything you don’t use. Don’t be stingy. I’m trying to overcome this habit—it’s hard, and I ask God to help me. Don’t have a storeroom full of things you don’t need, which could bless others.

In 2004, twenty laypeople from America went to Kenya to preach in public evangelistic meetings. Each person was assigned a town. Some were just teenagers like Michael, a 12-year-old from Chicago. One of them said, “I’ve realized that giving away my clothes isn’t true sacrifice. Usually, I give them away when they go out of fashion or I’m tired of them. So the poor benefit, yes—but my giving is flawed. I buy expensive clothes but I’m not willing to give that same amount of money to God’s work. I’m only willing to give away what I no longer want.” I’ve reflected on this a lot. Wealthy laypeople, maybe you can also reflect on this: that you buy something to be fashionable, then later give it away. Sometimes, if you worship in the same church, you humiliate others—everyone knows the clothes are your hand-me-downs.

Yes, raising children takes time and resources. That’s why I advise most laypeople not to have more than six children. This isn’t the world of having 10 children like in the past. One layperson said, “Until all my eggs are gone—God created us to have children, so I’ll keep having them.” But God also created the human body with safe days where you can’t conceive. Use those! Even if you have the means, how will you preach Jesus when you have small children for 30 years straight? But look for family planning methods that do not involve terminating a pregnancy. A 23-year-old evangelist said when he realized his calling, he planned to have only two children so he could preach anywhere in the world. His wife wanted many kids, but they discussed and agreed. They ended up traveling the world, which wouldn’t have been possible if she had been nursing a baby every two years. She might’ve been stuck raising them alone while the husband went on mission trips—and eventually grown resentful. I know the idea of family planning came in the 1960s, but it focused on women and not men. Some laymen have confided to me that their wives wanted more children, but they didn’t—so they took the initiative to use birth control. In general, laypeople, pray for wisdom. Tell God clearly: “I want only four children, so I can serve You better—enable me.” He won’t reject that prayer!

Some people also build houses in every town, which don't bring income but instead cost money to maintain. A layman from Korogwe made me laugh—he said his house sat empty for so long that lizards moved in and lived there for years! Buying things you haven't evaluated properly is a problem. But if it's an asset, that's okay.

Our words toward others are part of our stewardship—toward our spouses, children, fellow members. It's easy to be kind to strangers, yet our words wound those closest to us. We must be humble always. I've been writing a parenting book after realizing many parents—especially us mothers—speak words that crush their children's spirits. We don't believe in them, but we still say them, for example: "You'll never amount to anything in life." That's a brutal blow—you'd be better off spanking the child. Or: "You dog, just like your father." Really—is that something a Christian layperson should say? Think about it: a dog gives birth to a dog—if you married a 'dog,' what does that say about your choice? Let's completely avoid insulting language.

Pastor Doug Batchelor from Amazing Facts encouraged me. He said after he converted, he still struggled with swearing for years. He was a powerful lay evangelist, preaching everywhere. But he kept losing control of his tongue. Eventually, he knelt and prayed, "Lord, my mouth is filthy. I try not to curse, but when I get angry, I explode. Please help me." He said from that day, the swearing left him. That's my prayer too—may God take it away.

Involve your wife in the budget. Many men receive money and make spending plans on their own. I won't say much about this, but a wife has needs too—especially if she's not working. Imagine yourself in her shoes—if she were earning and didn't consult you, only giving you occasional updates when necessary. How would you feel?

When teaching stewardship, give real-life examples. For instance, when I went to study in the U.S., I had no permit to work and only half the tuition. I met missionaries Trickett and his wife, who had served in Kenya at Baraton University. They said, "Come stay with us for free while you try to raise your tuition." They sent me the school forms, and I went to Michigan, to a school called Andrews. There I met a professor who had taught me in Kenya. He spoke to the head of the biology department and said, "We loved this student in Kenya—give him a scholarship." The head asked me to write a letter and review my transcripts. He gave me a half scholarship for one year. This helped a lot, because I already had

the other half from selling books in Sweden. The missionaries I stayed with were very generous—they had helped hundreds of students and did a lot of ministry work.

I studied while staying with them for two years. The minimum wage was four dollars, but since I didn't have documents, one woman hired me at a dollar per hour. I couldn't complain—at least I was earning something. I kept praying for God to open a way. After my first year, I got a job at a hospital for people with brain injuries and began earning six dollars per hour. The school arranged work permits for us for two years.

I fell in love with lay ministry because of the revival at my church in Magomeni, Dar es Salaam. The laypeople there were passionate about evangelism and still are, starting groups far and wide. They sacrifice financially and physically to do God's work in rural and remote areas. I believe all the churches in Dar es Salaam came from that original group. In other words, the members in Dar es are full of this lay spirit. Many encourage me when we meet, sharing what they're doing in their churches. We call each other, laugh, rejoice, and comfort one another in this work. Some have moved to other regions and found others with the same passion and joined them. Every time we meet and share what the Lord has done since we last saw each other, we can't help but smile. They've become more than family—true companions and comforters. Often when I face challenges, I call them instead of my blood relatives.

May the Lord bless and multiply them, until there's not enough room to contain it! We once believed our calling was to build small churches. But after counsel from pastors and elders, we started training evangelists, holding public meetings, sending clothes and books back home, and doing small missionary efforts. Before we began this work, we wondered: where will we get the money? A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. We made a vow to God: if You help us finish school, we will return 25% of everything to You in tithes, offerings, and helping the needy.

After graduating and earning \$2,000 per month, I moved out of the missionary home to make room for others. Then I began giving 25% to 50% to tithe, offerings, and needs. God blessed, and we worked with pastors and laypeople to build around 80 bush churches and sent about 350 laypeople to various training programs. We

also partnered in about 65 public evangelistic meetings. It has been a journey of faith.

We realized that a Christian has no limit—whatever pastors or laypeople do, join in and you'll be blessed. We never sat down to plan things in detail—we're not the planning type! But many have blessed us by including us in their plans. Truly, we may not do big things, but we can do small things with great love. Even if our work is just a drop in the ocean, remember: it's the drops that make the ocean.

We used to think that one day, when we had enough money or time, we would do this or that for God's vineyard. But we found out there was never a time when we had extra money—we just scraped by, cutting from each paycheck or sacrificing our time and resources. The most important thing is to rely on God and stay consistent day by day.

One of my in-laws once saw the small churches we were building and laughed. He said, "These foundations are weak—they'll collapse. I'm waiting to build a \$50,000 church with a youth center on the top floor." Ten years later, he came to me and said, "I've realized that time never comes. Money just comes and goes. Better to build these small churches like you do!"

Look at the blessings you already have—not those you lack—count them, and then praise God. You'll see your frowning face fill with joy, and your children will see that your life preaches louder than your words. Don't say worldly things are temporary but drool over them more than eternal ones.

Many blessings go unnoticed:

If you woke up healthy today and you're alive, you are more blessed than over 100,000 people who will die today.

If you live in peace without war or hunger, you're more fortunate than over 500 million people living in conflict and suffering.

If you live in a place where you can worship freely without danger, you are more blessed than 3 billion people—half the world—who lack that freedom.

If you have clothes to wear, food, shelter, and a bed, you are more blessed than 75% of the world.

If you have money in the bank, some coins in a dish, or anywhere at home, you are among the top 8% of the world.

If both your parents are alive, you are more blessed than many who are orphans or have only one parent.

If your parents have college degrees, you are more blessed than 99% of the world's population.

And finally, if you've been able to read what we've written here, you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world who cannot read. Let our children see our example of contentment—not just in words, but in our daily lives. If we constantly show a desire for things or envy others, they will pick up on that. Contentment can be learned too—"for I have learned to be content, whether I have much or little." What we truly need is deep inner peace, the kind that surpasses all understanding. Father Augustine once said, "You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You."

Don't live your life saying: "If only I had finished school, I would be happy; if only I got married, I would be happy; if only I found a job, I would be happy; if only I had children, I would find joy in my heart; if only my children would grow up and move out, I'd have peace; if only I could retire, I'd be content... if only, if only, if only..." The goalpost keeps moving, and we'll never reach it! Let's make our plans based on the blessings we have, not on what we lack. The hunger of the soul or heart will only be satisfied by making God the central part of your life. Learn to find joy in small things like flowers, creatures, mountains, or music.

There was a man who constantly complained about his house and finally decided to sell it. He placed an advertisement in the newspaper, describing it: "2,500 square feet, two stories, three bathrooms, three toilets, two garages, two living rooms, a fireplace, an upstairs balcony, 20 acres of land, a river running through the property, a swimming pool, a fish pond, solar energy, and a variety of fruit orchards..." That same week, he bought the newspaper to look for a new house to buy after selling his "terrible" one. He saw an advertisement that truly impressed him—it described exactly the kind of house he wanted. He decided to call the seller and arrange a meeting. When he looked at the name, he saw it was his own! The beautiful, ideal house so many would desire was the very one he

lived in! Truly, godliness with contentment is great gain. It's said that the greatest spiritual and mental poverty is discontentment.

A pastor from Kigoma named Butoke once called us to help build a small church in Kigoma. We didn't have much, but he asked, "Don't you even have \$100 so we can pay women to fetch water, mix mud, and bring poles to build a simple mud-and-thatch church?" We sent it, and they built that humble church. Before we think of stars in the sky, let's start with the small things God enables us to do day by day. Who knows? Maybe one day He'll entrust us with greater things! Our greatest need is prayer—please join us in praying that the Lord uses us in His vineyard.

Because "a picture speaks a thousand words," take photos of everything you have—both tangible and intangible—so that when you're tempted to think you have nothing, you can look back and see how much you've been given. In this chapter, I want to emphasize the reality of earthly life by giving you the task of reading the entire book of Ecclesiastes. In a person's life, the pursuit of fleeting things is a recurring theme! Solomon mentioned "chasing after the wind" or "vanity" 38 times, and referred to "things done under the sun" 27 times! He sought happiness through building orchards, raising various animals, planting gardens, assembling his own choir, constructing pools, marrying many women, and engaging in diverse business ventures. He invested time building up his army, choir, orchards, springs, horses, monkeys, and many other things under the sun, thinking these would bring him joy. But he discovered that true happiness comes only from God.

People may see us smiling and think we're happy, yet inside, our hearts may be full of sorrow. So even in our ministries, let's remember that all is vanity—even after Solomon read and wrote many books, he ended up disillusioned! He did his research without limit because he was a billionaire. His life is a lesson to us all: things we consider valuable—be it a pen, dress, or computer—soon fade, and we wonder why we wasted our money. Godliness with contentment is great gain.

In today's world, people give big gifts, so when someone receives a small one, they complain. But let's remember that small gifts are blessings leading to the greater, eternal gifts of the heart. Ecclesiastes says, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!" People are born, and then they die; they're born again, and then die

again. Morning, noon, and night—it's a cycle like a knife-sharpening bicycle. There's nothing new under the sun; we keep circling back to the same place.

Let us be like Solomon, who had great wealth, wisdom, and education, and thus could explore life without running out of money or knowledge! He tells us that in the end, what remains is to fear God—for everything, even the hidden things known only to you, will be brought to judgment. What is your purpose or reason for living on this earth? Do you know it, and do you remind yourself of it often? Let our prayer be: “Lord, help us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, so that one day we may be above the sun in heaven, not under the sun!”

He who began a good work in your heart will finish it—this is an encouragement in our stewardship. Let our response be, “Here I am, Lord, send me!”

CHAPTER 19

LIVING AN ORDINARY LIFE

We live in a world full of busyness. Often, we work late into the night and try to be everything to everyone. “As long as Satan is still alive, problems will keep coming,” said Pastor Serrano of Cuba. It is important to take care of your health, because you cannot be everything to everyone. It’s not good to be lazy or to neglect God’s work, but how do you know when your cup is full and it’s okay to decline another invitation to preach or do ministry? Sometimes, we travel at night just to squeeze in other tasks during the day, which affects our health—perhaps we should travel during the day instead.

To avoid conflict or confusion and to keep fellowship warm with others, ask the Holy Spirit to help you set boundaries. Otherwise, do what Moses was advised by his father-in-law Jethro: “delegate authority.” Often, overwork leads to emotional burnout, causing us to snap easily, lose self-control, become harsh, impatient, and unkind to others. We may unknowingly develop a competitive spirit. The Lord wants your health to be well and your relationships with others to flourish. When you overwork, you risk becoming irritable, vengeful, losing your sense of humor and patience. This has happened to us often—it’s normal—but it’s important to recognize and correct it.

Know how to say, “Sorry, I can’t teach the youth this week,” etc. People don’t know how busy your life is—you need to let them know your schedule, and they will understand. Remember, some people will always criticize you, but don’t let that negativity ruin your work and your joy as a lay minister. Some will love you, and others won’t care—it’s important to learn how to deal with that. Even if we were perfect like Christ, there would still be those who disapprove of us. But let’s not ruin God’s work through our weaknesses without reason. When criticized, also learn to ask yourself, “Am I the one in the wrong here?” “Is there truth in this?” “What can I do to stop doing this bad habit?” Sometimes criticism is actually a blessing in disguise, protecting us from danger or deflating our pride. Let’s not let criticism make us bitter or bring out a bad spirit.

Ministry life is hard—Paul experienced it while sewing tents. He had to hustle to make time for the gospel. You can’t carry everything. Ministry includes losing privacy, constant availability, unrealistic expectations, lack of income, a spouse leaving you, or being ostracized by the community. Sometimes we must seek

counsel—don't hesitate. If we broke a leg, we'd seek medical advice, so let's treat our everyday life with that same seriousness. Don't carry your burdens alone—Jesus wants you to cast them on Him. And even so, “in the multitude of counselors there is safety.”

Take time to exercise, check on your health, so that you can improve your wellbeing and outlook on life. True beauty includes kindness and gentleness. But when we are stressed, we tend to anger quickly. You may see someone well-dressed and respectable, but when provoked, they explode like a missile and their face changes.

As evangelists, we take care of others through the Word and by helping with social needs—but when it comes to our own health, we fail to recognize that the body has no spare parts.

Even clothes—buy a few nice and attractive outfits; don't be stingy when doing the Lord's work. The Lord wants you to look presentable. If you have about five good clothes and your size doesn't change, it's not bad to look decent. In Africa, we're fortunate to have tailors. In other countries, only movie stars (celebrities) and the rich can afford custom-made clothing—it can cost up to \$1,000, which is over a million shillings! Most of us wear secondhand clothes. Make an effort not to have too many children—the work of shaping their character is harder than you think. Many of us leave our children to raise themselves while we go do God's work, and this is a mistake. Educating children is also a tough job. Often, when people visit you, you won't even have time to pray with them—it turns into a hectic family affair, full of commotion, especially if you haven't taught your children well.

Don't misuse money—be a faithful steward. Don't be late to church. It's said that one day the devil was sitting outside a church, and an angel of God came and asked, “What are you doing here?” He replied, “I brought my people to church.” The angel asked, “Your people?” and he said, “Yes, look at them: some are gossiping, others are sleeping, and others' thoughts are far away. Would you say they are worshiping?” So, layman, sleep well the night before worship. Don't bring your bed to church as though you paid for a guest house. I often face the temptation of chatting in church—and of being late. I pray that God helps me overcome that. “Be silent before the Lord, for this is holy ground. My house shall be called a house of prayer”—not a marketplace.

It is a sin for a child of God to come to church to chat; it also sets a bad example for children. Avoid being late to church. If you were late at your job, you'd be fired. Here, you're dealing with the King of the Universe, not just the manager of a building—don't be careless. Many of us say we're late because of our children, but those same children make it to school by 7 a.m.

These days, preaching comes in many forms: radio, TV, public preaching, home Bible studies, community service, sending youth to evangelism schools—and even when we are silent, our lives are books being read by others, becoming a powerful sermon. What matters is that it is God's will for everyone to be saved, to know Him, to trust Him, and to accept salvation so that one day they may live with Him forever.

When you begin preparing a sermon, pray and claim the promises of God: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you...” (Matt. 7:7-8). Ask God for His Holy Spirit. Tell Him to give you a message that will win souls. “I am the Lord your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it” (Ps. 81:10).

“When the will of man cooperates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent.” God is ready to do great things for us. It is a great blessing to drink from His fountain of immeasurable love. We ask too little, though He is eager to hear the prayers of His children. Heavenly angels are amazed that though we are in need and God wants to feed us abundantly, we don't open our mouths to receive the good things. God will give you a Vision, a Mission, Passion, and Provision. Prepare sermons that first speak to you, and then they will speak to others.

Many skilled performers have preached and others were converted, but they themselves remained unbelievers. For those who humble themselves, God's hand is not too short (Isa. 50:4-5). It says to rise early, open your ear, and He will feed you. Each day when you wake up, don't skip reading the Word. Read carefully—take at least one hour, because you are feeding others. Some people prefer evenings, and that's fine, although many say the mind is clearer in the morning. Ideally, read both morning and evening. Jesus, in Mark 1:35, rose early to hear from His Father and to be freshly filled with the Holy Spirit every day. It is rare to find a preacher who listens to God's voice daily and relies on Him consistently without wavering. Take quiet time alone to hear God's voice. Use your time to

encourage others to also spend time with the Creator and receive a word to share with others when the opportunity comes.

Ask God to provide work tools too—books to read, microphones, pens, even a computer and projector if possible. Ten years ago, projectors were expensive—around \$2,000. We bought one, and even though it was stolen by a layman who was a fraud, we are praying that God opens doors again. These days, good projectors go for \$250 and laptops for \$200. Instead of asking relatives abroad for clothes and other items, save and order ministry tools. Pray, believe, and see what God will do. I never knew I'd have tools for preaching, but God helped me. Many of us started from humble beginnings—even having shoes in school was a blessing.

Airtime has drained our money—some laypeople are constantly on their phones. I know phones are tools for ministry today, but avoid spending too much on phone credit. I've noticed that even calling Western countries is cheaper than calling within Tanzania. The system seems designed to keep us from talking to close relatives and instead talk to distant people! There are many websites to help you prepare sermons on a computer; I'll try to ask people to share them. Please, don't waste time on technology (gadgets)—invest it in the Word.

Read the book of Deuteronomy—it says, “I will make you the head and not the tail” in your preaching. I've noticed there are those who don't prepare sermons and end up boring people. Don't let the name of God be mocked because of your laziness. That's one thing people in the West have moved away from—poor preaching! No one will listen to you. When I was in Michigan, I saw how, when preachers from home began to preach without preparation, people left one by one. But when they prepared well—which takes hours—people listened!

Thank God that this is not the case back home in Africa. But some have now moved to another level—turning preaching into entertainment, not a call to Christ. Others have turned the pulpit into a place for comedy. Years ago in Tanzania, I once heard a preacher give the same sermon. Unfortunately, I traveled to Masasi, Dar es Salaam, Morogoro, and other places—and met the same preacher repeating the same message. Sit at the feet of Jesus to get fresh material. It's not a sin to preach the same message if it's a different church and you adapt it to the local setting—but if it's the same message over and over, people will tire of you.

Be careful with the illustrations you use—ask permission or give a warning if the story involves someone close to you. For instance, if your story embarrasses your teenage child or your wife, ask for permission. Maybe if you're preaching far away and don't mention names (name withheld), it's fine.

Avoid being told what to preach. One woman insisted that her husband, who was a bit boastful, praise her beauty. The day he failed to praise her, he got into trouble.

Avoid long, boastful introductions. Where I live, introductions have become more about praising people. One day they introduced my teacher at a church in Grenada: "He has a PhD in history, was once Grenada's ambassador to the U.S., has one wife—very beautiful—she has a PhD in education and teaches at Andrews University. He has nine honors (they listed them all). His first child is a lawyer, the second an engineer, and he is the cousin of my wife," etc. The introduction took five minutes!

The mayor of the city was also invited as the guest of honor, and he only had one degree. When he stood to speak, he said, "After all those titles, mine seem few, but I must say them. I'm the first black mayor here in Jersey City!" Ordinary members like me, with no titles or beauty, felt completely left out. Is it even necessary to say someone has one wife? If he has many wives, why bring him to preach? Others, when introduced, complained, "Why did you make me look bad? You didn't mention my degree or other achievements!" Introductions are important, but keep them short and avoid fueling pride or diminishing Jesus while exalting yourself.

I already have enough temptation and pride—I don't need more. What matters is Christ crucified. Just say your name, where you're from, a few simple things, and mention if you love God. If there's anything significant, people will notice along the way. One day, someone introduced me with such a loud and long list of praises that I started feeling stomach pain. As it went on, my stomach burned. I thought, "If there's a hole I can escape through, I'll take it," because after all those grand titles, I wasn't even that great of a preacher—people would be bored! But I shouldn't have thought that—even if I were the best preacher, the point is for JESUS to be glorified, not me, the layman.

Laypeople, don't bring tired, lifeless sermons or comedy routines. That's one thing I admire about the West—they may not focus much on soul-winning, but they are great orators because they prepare so much! I saw this at the seminary in Michigan. When Africans preached, the congregation would quietly leave, maybe due to accent or style. But preachers from South Africa, Zimbabwe, and a few others were listened to! I don't support this behavior, because any preacher, no matter their style—if you seek God—you'll get something. Don't just sit there criticizing their accent, etc.

Many preachers don't attend Bible school or Sabbath school, even though they preach. Try to stop this. Make time during the week to prepare, unless you're told to preach urgently. You should be ready in and out of season. If laypeople don't attend Bible classes, they set a bad example for others. Some have even decided not to listen to others teach Sabbath school—they only show up for the sermon to preach! They want others to listen to them, but they won't listen to others—maybe it's pride, thinking they know everything.

This is wrong—it's despising others. What if others did the same? Who would listen to you? You're not even teaching your own children. You'll discourage youth from preaching altogether. When we traveled in Tanzania, the kids said, "Mom, we don't understand Swahili sermons, we won't stay!" I told them, "Just sit and listen, you'll learn the language from the sermons." If you allow children to skip sermons or Bible study, eventually they'll quit altogether. Christ went to the temple and listened, even though He knew everything and wrote the Word Himself. What about us?

Our church has many Christian parents who say they don't come to church—they worship at home. This is a big mistake. Children observe our example in powerful ways. I try, but I struggle with my own example. Iron Sharpens Iron: Empowering Laypeople and Sharing God's Deeds

Iron sharpens iron—so give even the young people opportunities to preach the Word; that's how they learn. Even if their message lacks polish. I remember when we were learning how to cook, our father complained, "It's like we're in prison eating this food while doing hard labor! When will this learning end?" But one cannot gain experience without trying.

Some laypeople involved in music ministry have gone so far as to say, “Such and such choir will entertain us,” instead of, “Such and such choir will praise God.” Praise is for God, not for entertainment. Set goals for what you want the listener to take away. Don’t lose direction. Write your plans on paper.

If it’s a public evangelistic campaign, look at who you’re working with: the planning committee, strategies for fundraising, materials and study resources. These are essential matters—pray about them, even if they feel like mountains. “With God, nothing is impossible”—that’s why He’s called the Almighty.

Printing invitations is good, but as our friend Herry Mhando says, most preachers in the Bible, like Noah and Jonah, didn’t use flyers, yet everyone heard their message. Today, people are overwhelmed with printed material and don’t read them—they suffer from sensory overload. Build close friendships with church members; they become your “handbills” to invite others.

If you have funds, print flyers. If you can use TV, billboards, newspapers, or the internet, do so. We live in a tech-savvy world. But the majority who’ll come are those personally invited face-to-face.

You are the forerunner. When you preach, don’t forget to give testimonies of God’s mighty acts. Remember, even singing is a form of preaching. Don’t sit silently in church while others sing. Many songs are prayers too. Real-life, personal testimonies are very impactful.

Many times, God has done great things for me, and I’ve vowed, “If You deliver me from this, I’ll testify before others.” But then I shrink back in fear—worried it may look like boasting. Sometimes I’ve gone to faraway churches where people don’t know me, just to give a testimony. As Jesus said, “A prophet is not honored in his hometown.”

Psalm 116:12—David asked, “What shall I return to the Lord for all His goodness to me?” He realized God lacks nothing. But he said he would tell others about the Lord’s deeds and fulfill his vows.

Don’t forget to fulfill your vows to God. I remember one time when we crossed the Namanga border into Kenya. A cousin followed me. Her mother was Kenyan, father Tanzanian, and she lived in Tanzania. She just wanted to visit Kenya, but had no passport. The border police discovered this and gave us trouble. I wasn’t

worried at first since I was on my way to college. But when they took us into their office, I panicked and prayed, “God, these officers could jail us just like that. And women face many hardships in jail.” It wasn’t even my idea—her mother told her to come with me. I prayed, “If You get me out of this trouble, I’ll testify before others.” But later, I hesitated.

Testimonies are good and important. The Bible didn’t record stories so we’d just marvel—they’re there so we’ll continue telling of God’s deeds. I remember the U.S. Internal Revenue Service once audited us. They checked how much we gave to ministry and claimed we owed \$4,000! I was shocked. I thought, “If people hear this, they’ll mock us, saying, ‘These evangelists are tax cheats!’” And what if we went to jail—would our church’s prison ministry visit us?

A miracle happened. My husband rechecked the numbers and discovered they actually owed us \$4,000. Their lawyer confirmed it and dropped everything. We had no debt at all. I breathed a deep sigh of relief and thanked God. Let’s tell of His great works without deceit or pride. Why do we only share bad news—“aunt passed away,” “no rain,” “kids have no school fees”—as though God is a liar or cruel? Would you be happy if your children said such things about you in public?

Sometimes we fear that if we say good things, something bad will happen. My mother once said, “My cow gave so much milk today,” and the neighbor hushed her, saying, “She’ll stop giving milk now.” We always speak of bad things and hide the good, giving the world the idea that God only gives His children pain. Ouch!

When visiting people, pray with them in their homes. Everyone has needs and appreciates prayer support. If you visit me, I’d be so happy for your prayers—I have many issues troubling me. More prayers, more power. There’s a song that says, “I need the prayers of those I love.” Whenever we sing it in our church, everyone joins in. Who doesn’t need prayer?

When I sold books in Sweden, I asked people to pray, and none refused. Since they didn’t know me, they shared personal things openly for prayer. Even in the U.S., people ask me to pray, and I ask others too. Many people wear pins saying, “May I pray for you?” or “Will you pray for me?” Laypeople in Tanzania, Congo, the U.S., and Kenya have prayed together whenever we meet. Some of us even climbed mountains to fast and pray together.

In any layperson's conference, find a prayer partner and pray together daily. By the end, you'll be more empowered than ever. It's good for men to pray with men and women with women for privacy.

When those you invite arrive, be sure to greet them where they are, or your spouse should do so. Get to know them and build friendship. Never underestimate the power of visitation (Ezekiel 34:2, 4-6). Even without transport, security, or budget, visiting people is vital. Phone calls and letters are not enough. Let's remove excuses and go to where people are. One member once said, "I've been here for ten years and no preacher has visited me. You're the first." Visiting is pure religion (James 1:27). It also helps you tailor your sermons to meet real needs. Your relationships deepen, and the church grows. Follow up again if you get the chance, alone or with your team.

Start with visiting church members, then outsiders. You can't preach effectively if you don't know their needs. Keep your visits brief and avoid overeating, so you can visit more homes. Say, "We're coming for half an hour today; we have several homes to visit, don't prepare much." Other members may introduce you to unsaved relatives in their homes. Sometimes, an outsider may be more effective than a local preacher—"a prophet is not honored at home."

All humans are members—past, present, or future. Encourage and compliment people on the little good you see at home or in their lives.

Before visiting, examine your relationship with God. Pray for your spiritual life and those you'll visit. Ask for love, good listening skills, wisdom, courage, grace, and the Holy Spirit. Make a plan: visit all members in a year, neighbors, go in pairs, keep it short, build relationships. If you don't find someone, try calling or returning later.

Don't show favoritism—visit the sick, elderly, new members, visitors, givers and non-givers, families, church leaders, backsliders, etc. Read Scripture with them, give time for them to talk and be heard. Don't forget songs—they bring joy and reduce stress. Jesus and the apostles used songs (Matt. 26:30; 1 Cor. 14:26). Then pray together. Ask for their needs, pray in a circle holding hands, pray from your heart. Keep notes: Do they pray together as a family? Are they baptized? Witnessing? Do they own Bibles or spiritual books? Do they tithe? Attend church?

Want lay training? Need Bible studies? Have gifts or suggestions for preaching topics?

Ask if they'd like to learn witnessing—you'll have more hands to push the gospel wheel. You won't do it alone. Challenge and teach them. You'll be amazed—they'll bring more souls to Christ. That's also preaching.

The book of Jeremiah emphasizes the work of nurturing church members—read Jeremiah 23:1-2. “And the things you heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will also be qualified to teach others”—the 2:2:2 principle from 2 Timothy 2:2.

As laypeople, let's not live in a utopia, thinking we won't grow old and therefore don't train others. Train the youth and others too. Keep praying the command Jesus gave: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Pray that the Lord of the harvest will send laborers.” This is a daily prayer. Make friends with people of all faiths to reach them. There's a hymn that was mistranslated to say, “Seek holiness always—only befriend Christians!” But the original message was different. Tell people of other religions about heaven and its blessings. Ask them: “Do you want to be a new creation?”

These days, many global experts study missiology and have learned methods for reaching people. Ask them for advice—I've asked many for Scripture and counsel. Check out joshuaproject.org and the “10/40 Window” to discover unreached areas. In Bhutan, for example, over 99% are Hindu. The 10/40 Window holds half the world's population, and 90% have never seen a Christian in person. Pray daily for the Holy Spirit and laborers for these fields.

Countries like North Korea face severe persecution. We met people from there who said four million have died in five years from hunger and suffering. Everyone was given about ten grains of corn a day—maybe because the country refused foreign aid. You will preach—but with 60 million dying and 90 million being born each year, how will you reach them without praying for the Holy Spirit? Even Africa had reached a billion people by 2012.

Create spiritual thirst in those you visit—like Jesus did with the Samaritan woman at the well. Stay focused; don't overwhelm or judge them. Get to the heart of the matter. What's important is to make the important thing the important thing—exalting God.

Learn how to make appeals. Ask for help if you struggle. I've had a hard time making appeals, especially after living in countries that emphasize "don't bother people." I've often asked preachers to help me make appeals. Remember, you're not doing anyone a favor by letting them go to hell—this is life and death work.

Talk to people about their Family, Occupation, Religion, and give your Testimony (FORT). Share how "Jesus changed my life."

A layperson from Katesh once shared an amazing testimony. He didn't know how to read or write, and though he asked church members and leaders for help, none had time. One day while herding goats, he took a book—The Mount of Blessings (Matthew 5-7)—and when he opened it, he could read it easily. From that day, he read every book.

His testimony deeply comforted me. God doesn't seek people with great talent, but those who are willing to say, "Here I am, send me," as Isaiah did. Be humble and recognize your nothingness. A humble servant of the Lord can touch people's hearts like a violin, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, the sound will echo for eternity. The harvest of souls for Christ will be abundant when we humble ourselves.

"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways....."

Take time to walk through cities and pray over them. There was a day when my husband and I were called to pray for the city of Newark, New Jersey (PrayforNewArk.org). We were thousands, from all denominations. As Dwight Moody once said, "Give me England or I die" — people of faith prayed for the city of Newark. Out of ten children, only three completed high school because of indulgences like drunkenness, smoking, immorality, and others, even though the government paid for their education. Every day, several people were shot in the streets. You can check the statistics on their website. Each one of us was assigned a street to pray over for a whole year — ours was Ridge Rd, Newark. We walked the streets and prayed over them. Amazing miracles happened, and now as I write this, Newark's statistics have greatly improved.

There is nothing impossible with God, dear layperson. Don't think your work is small. Don't be negligent. Enroll people in Voice of Prophecy studies — they will

help them be sure of their salvation and understand the Word better, shielding them from trials.

People suffer from sickness, loneliness, marital problems, poverty, and family deaths – bring them hope, pray with them. As we pray, the Holy Spirit prepares the soil of the heart, and great and good results come. Keep doing so, and be a light through your actions as well. Avoid the spirit of jealousy, anger, doubt, criticism, complaints, arguments, and murmuring – in JESUS' name.

We see in Scripture that when people were advised, like in the book of Acts, they needed to be baptized both with water and the Spirit and then join fellowship. Don't let someone say, "I'll be baptized but I don't need to attend church." Hebrews 10:25 and Luke 4:16 show us the importance of fellowship. Even though Jesus knew the hearts of the priests inside and out, He still attended synagogue. Don't let anyone deceive you into thinking you can grow just by staying at home! Absolutely not. Acts 2:42 – both new and old members should attend fellowship at least once a week and study the Bible together.

Layperson, when was the last time you taught the Bible or prayed with someone? Jesus has done so much for us; what will we do in return?

I repeat again, avoid stammering or repeating words without preparation, following Jamaican style or some trend! Prepare thoroughly so your material flows, not just loud shouting. People will notice whether you prepared or are guessing and fumbling – even little children are sharp-minded and will report what they heard at home. They will start watching you – it will become a drama.

A certain preacher kept shouting over 20 times, "Jesus was an African" – "because when He was called to raise Lazarus, He arrived four days later – a true African, He didn't keep time!" I got nothing from that sermon. But when he saw me later (we were friends), he asked, "What did you think of the sermon?" I replied, "Jesus delayed for two reasons: first, some people were hired to wail and there was chaos; second, He waited four days because of their belief that by the fourth day, one is truly dead, not just fainted." The preacher said, "Take your politics away," we laughed, and I left. But I think you've gotten some insight about such preaching.

Don't boast, "I baptized 100 people" or "Last week we baptized..." This work is led by the Spirit, not you. If you brag too much, it will look like it's your personal work.

Avoid repetitive songs or those meant to stir emotion — your songs must have complete sentences. For example: "I praise You Jesus for delivering me from family conflicts" and not just "I praise You, I praise You." Or "in the midst, midst, midst..." — finish the line: "in the midst of sinners, I am chief, but Jesus came, died for sin, shed His blood that I may have life." Let no one be left wondering who you're praising or what it's about. I believe our Swahili songs don't suffer much from this. We include verses and explain things deeply. Maybe that's why teacher Cleveland from Fountain View Academy in Canada — who lived in Zambia for many years — is such a great choir teacher. He learned the singing and performance style of African choirs. Watch them on their TV or YouTube channel.

Those lay evangelists who compose songs — we'll talk about song issues. Think deeply when composing; not just meaningless words. Watch your dressing — you don't need people focusing too much on your glittery clothes, exposed arms, chest, or cleavage. You will lose the goal of exalting Christ.

I don't have much experience in raising funds for evangelism, but look for laypersons and pastors who have done this and ask for help. Public meetings or ministries need money. As a self-supporting evangelist, you can give your contribution, but the church members should also be informed to contribute. Sometimes there are a few people gifted with giving and whom God has blessed — it's good to approach them and talk. Have a committee to manage these funds faithfully. If there's something that has ruined the reputation of many evangelists, it's money. Be prayerful, for the Lord will provide — He is able. He works miracles every day and wants you to preach.

When you get a chance to preach, even if you're not asking for money, speak about stewardship. One preacher went to Congo and held a campaign. The tithe in one region of the church was half a dollar. After six weeks, the tithe had reached \$3,000. The evangelist didn't need the money — tithe is meant to pay the workers — but he realized that often we don't teach people to give when we are not asking them to give.

Preaching is about being a servant of God, not a platform to show off skill or pride. Return glory to God. Set goals — don't go aimlessly. You're not a tourist but an ambassador of God! (1 Corinthians 5:18-20). We don't all give equally, but we all sacrifice equally (not equal giving, but equal sacrifice). I'm happy that in Africa, young people are given a chance to preach or become church elders when they show love for God and are Spirit-led. Youth preach with power. The time is past for saying, "Young people are hooligans" or "young people are crazy."

Jesus is the answer to bring the Spirit, not our preaching strength — so let's pray for Him to inspire us. There are many preachers helping us with preaching teachings — you can find them on YouTube or their websites. They include:

Walter Veith

Doug Batchelor

Kenneth Cox

Stephen Bohr

Ivor Myers

Mark Finley

And many more websites. Nowadays there are enough resources, but make sure they align with Bible teachings.

CHAPTER 20

CREATION

We know very little about creation – yet even this little is enough to leave us amazed and speechless. It's incomprehensible! With our limited minds, most of us who follow news from astronauts are stunned by the discoveries. There are billions of planets in just our Milky Way galaxy. And billions of galaxies in the universe (multiverse). I'll stop there – it's endless. Try looking more into NASA's website and space science.

The topic of creation is the foundation – even before the topic of salvation. If you don't believe in the six-day creation, then you don't believe in the entire Word, and I doubt you truly believe in God. Even those who use 10% of their brains (which is the highest known human potential) cannot understand even a drop of all creation. It's a bit easier if led by the Spirit of God – at least then, you can fumble with some insight!

The Bible says, “Now we see through a glass darkly, but then we shall see face to face.” Numbers and human language can't describe it. One writer once said, “If the oceans were ink, the skies were parchment, trees were pens, and everyone a writer – we still wouldn't be able to describe the love, knowledge, and greatness of ALMIGHTY GOD.” Elisha once prayed that God would open his servant Gehazi's eyes to see the angels around them – and Gehazi was shocked!

Let's remember: The first things given to man after creation were marriage, the Sabbath, and work. It's shocking that in these modern and final days of Earth's history, many people are now rejecting the six-day creation – saying six days are too few! That God couldn't have done all that in six days!

Yes, He could have done it in one second or less. Nothing is impossible with Him – Hallelujah! It's not like He's building a brick house like us humans, one piece at a time. If six days are too few, then even a trillion years are few for Him!

I once spoke with a Baptist pastor in Pennsylvania. We were studying the Bible from Genesis to Revelation as a group. When we reached creation, he said many churches or believers now claim not to believe in creation. I think many Africans haven't been affected by that. The idea that we came from monkeys – we don't

believe such nonsense. In fact, we see it as an insult, because when they say that, we may wonder if it's because we resemble them!

A comedian from Spain once said, "I asked monkeys where they came from, and they said they descended from trees." Some people, due to the suffering and hardships in the world, have stopped talking about God's creation. One photographer in Ethiopia committed suicide, having lost hope in God. He took a photo of a child who was so thin that ribs were visible, with a vulture waiting nearby for him to die. Another photo showed a mother who had died, with her 3-month-old baby still breastfeeding. Such stories of hunger and pain have made some deny God's existence.

To you, Christian – natural things like lions eating antelopes shouldn't shake your faith. These are matters of faith – we believe God exists, He created us, and He brought us this far. We have many testimonies from our lives, His Word, prophecy, history, and our transformed lives.

Read more of Job and Revelation 12 to understand the enemy's schemes.

In the past, people like Galileo or Newton – great scientists who invented telescopes and studied the Earth – studied the Word of God and sought to discover more of His greatness to PRAISE and GLORIFY Him. But today, people seek education to mock the Creator. And He watches from above like how we watch an ant trying to slap us – can it succeed?

I wish to emphasize that Creation is a very important belief for a Christian. And that God created in six days and rested on the seventh. People know that 365 days are because of the Earth's orbit around the sun. And 28 days or a month are due to the moon orbiting the Earth. But the seven-day week has no scientific basis – only that God created the heavens and the earth in six days and rested on the seventh.

Many people globally now understand that because of our body's circadian rhythm, we need to work for six days and rest on the seventh. The body gets tired. I've discovered this myself when working every single day – look into health studies.

The theory that God didn't create from nothing (ex nihilo) has no foundation. When God created, He didn't use anything – unlike us humans, who need wood and nails to build a cabinet. Humans are artists, not creators. Everything came by

His word and breath — heavens, earth, and all within. How did God do all this? He didn't give us detailed explanations. The Bible is a summary. Even so, the clay cannot say to the potter, "You didn't form me this way."

Our science is small—like a drop of water in the ocean. It cannot even begin to probe the tiniest grain of God's secrets. Mark this well: it is GOD who explains science, not science that explains God. Let us understand—His creative power compared to our thinking is too small and too limited to describe. Even in heaven, we will learn forever and ever without reaching the end of knowledge. Truly, how great is the majesty of God!

Many people like Darwin, the father of evolution, first studied theology and obtained a single degree in it, and then thought they now knew many things. Evolution is not science at all—it is a religion of limited knowledge. These fake scientists or those with shallow knowledge (evolutionists) have misled many. Some later regretted and returned to ask God for forgiveness, but by then they had already misled countless people—just like King Manasseh, who ruled for 55 years and led many astray. Though he repented and will be in heaven, many will not be there because of him. So I say carefully: do not assume you will be as lucky as the thief on the cross who repented at the last minute. He gives us great hope—we who have gone astray—but such a chance is rare. For when we repeatedly reject the voice of the Holy Spirit, His voice diminishes in guiding us until we find ourselves sunk deep in the mire of sin.

I want to emphasize that evolution is a religion, not science. Science has five important principles. It deals with truths that, when repeated and observed, remain consistent. The person who came up with these ideas and wrote the book *The Origin of Species* in 1859 was not a scientist. He had earned a single theology degree. When he boarded a ship from England, intending to become a pastor, he carried the Bible and a book by someone named Lyell, who was loosely involved in evolutionary ideas.

Many books claim evolution is real. This is a lie and, in fact, school textbooks that teach this falsehood should be taken to court. Why? Because no one witnessed these so-called events. Strangely, when they say the earth is 70 billion years old, they never explain what happened in the year 7,000,000,002 or 6,000,000,096. All their historical records, such as the origin of writing and counting in Mesopotamia, point to about 5000 B.C.—which matches well with creation. If you add the years

from Adam to Jesus, you find that the earth is about 6,000 years old. That is why history books say nothing about what was happening one billion or even three million years ago.

If someone finds an old, discarded cabinet outside, would they really believe it appeared by itself? Now, between an old cabinet and a human body, which is more marvelous and complex? The human brain surpasses even the most powerful computers, the size of a skyscraper.

I once read a true story about a man whose car broke down. While waiting for help—this was before the age of cellphones—a well-dressed gentleman stopped to assist. They greeted each other, and the man opened the hood and fixed something. After about two minutes, the car started and worked perfectly. Surprised, the car owner asked the man who he was. The man replied that he was Ford, the founder of the car company in Detroit—the one who helped revolutionize the use of the assembly line for mass car production. Surely, a person knows the thing they created. And what about God? He created our bodies, hearts, feelings, thoughts—everything. Let us give Him praise, glory, love, and our obedience. He alone is worthy of all honor and glory.

Even when someone is sick, it is wise to pray to God because He knows best what He created—more than any person. Then go to the health workers, whom God has given knowledge to help others.

It has only been 200 or 300 years that science has discovered certain things. Even the atom and cell have been discovered just recently. Many people died at the hands of doctors who didn't know better—not because they were evil, but because they simply lacked knowledge. The first president of the United States was killed by doctors who believed that when someone had a fever caused by bacteria, the best treatment was to drain their blood ("blood letting"). Even now, despite scientific progress, doctors will often say, "I don't know when you'll die—only God knows," or "Prepare yourself—your disease has no cure." Why do they fail?

The book of Job reveals many secrets, such as how Satan brings evil and also about creation. Read chapter 38 carefully—it's extremely important. I will quote a little:

"Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: 'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now gird up your loins like a man, for I will ask you, and you shall answer Me. Where were you when I laid the

foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the measuring line upon it?"

Truly, what rock can claim to know exactly how the world came to be—step by step? Some say there was a “Big Bang.” But even a small child taken into a thick forest—if they see a Mercedes-Benz and a motorcycle—if you tell them these appeared there by a random explosion, will they believe you? And now, which is easier to make—a Benz or a human body? Which has more value?

If you show a child a beautifully painted picture and say that the paint spilled itself and landed in perfect places, will the child believe you? I doubt it.

We need childlike faith, because children have wisdom that surpasses us in many things. Even a traditional healer will tell you he was created by God. God has spoken—and I believe it—and that is enough for me. People who pretend to know more than their Creator are in great danger. I’m not saying you shouldn’t get an education—no, far from it! If you get the chance, get an education so that God’s name is not mocked by saying, “this layperson knows nothing.” It’s not that being uneducated or poor makes you close to God. Even though God says He is the God of the poor, widows, foreigners, orphans, and those without worldly wisdom, it doesn’t mean you should avoid learning. Get educated—but pray for deep humility.

Because although we think we’re very smart, all human beings—even the geniuses—use less than 10% of their brains! Adam used a much larger percentage. People used to remember things; nowadays we need notes to remind us. And still, we forget. I remember once I searched for my phone for a long time, only to find I had placed it in the fridge! Adam had God’s Word in his heart, meditating on it. We have to read it. Our intelligence has decreased—even those considered geniuses use a small portion of their brains. That’s why some may say, “He struggles with people even though he’s brilliant in class.”

The Bible says clearly from the very beginning: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” It wastes no time explaining nonsense. It’s clearly known—no questions—God created. In the past, everyone believed this and were satisfied. These days, people like the Russians in 1961, like Yuri Gagarin, go to the moon and mock, “I didn’t see God,” even though he never left his spacecraft!

But Christians like Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin in 1969 acknowledged the wonders of God when they stepped on the moon. The moon is very close—only about 280,000 miles away. A rocket traveling at 17,000 mph takes three days to get there. Do you really think we could reach heaven and see God, even if He allowed it?

Light travels at 186,000 miles per second. Websites like hubbletelescope.com say they see billions of galaxies—but “seeing” doesn’t mean they’re reachable. Even just seeing some of those galaxies in 2013 would take 3 billion light years to reach! Light can circle the entire earth (25,000 miles) six times in one minute. From the sun, 93 million miles away, it takes light 8 minutes to reach us. So, reaching those galaxies would take 3 billion years of light-speed travel. I don’t want to confuse you, because even I am confused and overwhelmed when I think about it!

Can we truly explain where God is now—HE who is the Alpha and Omega, without beginning or end, who simply IS? Just thinking about it makes my body tremble and my knees grow weak—it is too great! Can a wretched creature like me understand it, just because I have a few coins to go to the moon, or a tie, a suit, a degree, a skyscraper, and a telescope?

Let us be silent before the Lord, for HE is exalted and honored—“the heavens and the earth are full of His glory.” Even angels, far more powerful and sinless than us, worship Him continually at His throne saying, “Holy, Holy, Holy” 24/7. Their greatest joy is to sit at His feet and be still in Jesus’ presence. Let us also abandon such foolishness and take our place in the plan of salvation. Scientists used to say the world was a flat bowl, until they recently discovered the truth. They believed that if you reached the edge near Spain, you would fall off the earth! Yet the prophet Isaiah said thousands of years ago, “He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,” and “He hangs the earth on nothing.”

Humans have always had the problem of investigating things that bring us trouble—just like our mother Eve! They were two people given the whole world—from Asia, Australia, Africa, Europe, America—and still, they weren’t satisfied! Today, it’s hard even to have one acre—and we put up fences. They had everything but were not content. The heart truly has deadly diseases. Let us continually remind ourselves that we are dust, and humble ourselves. I’ve noticed that, as a human being, I tend to forget and lift up my head in pride. May the Son of David have mercy on me.

God has revealed to us what is for us and our children. And what He has not yet revealed, we accept by faith, and one day God will reveal it to us. Scientists' carbon dating based on plutonium with a half-life of three minutes has disproved experts who claim billions of years! However, if the earth were billions of years old, there would be countless people, not just seven billion. With such a large number, the earth would not be able to sustain them, just as the way the city of Tokyo grows is a challenge. So let us be humble and patient. May the devil not lead us into his deceptions to enter into his unbelief without a brain (frontal lobe).

Do you know that if you don't believe God created, then you don't believe Him at all? Believing in creation, the plan of salvation, and eternal life are very important pillars. For faith comes by hearing, and hearing the word of God. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. We believe many things, for example, if I sit on this chair, I will not fall even if it is not mine, although it is the first time I have seen it. Should I put my faith in that chair or in the God of heaven? God's wisdom and knowledge are unsearchable. If they were searchable, He would not be God; He would be a brother or sister. What God has revealed to us, even if it is one verse, you can take years to study it (research). And we do not live long enough to know many things because our minds are very limited. When we see something big and people praise us, it is He who has lifted us up. A strange thing I saw is that in times of trouble there is no atheist; everyone in trouble says "My God," but in success, pride builds up.

Scientists of limited or twisted knowledge did not emerge just today! Even He himself became a scientist wanting to gain knowledge and be like God. Why did things go wrong, and he found himself even under his wife, like an animal slave who could be torn apart! Those scientists continued with Plato, Socrates, those of the Big Bang, and today continue debating those issues, so avoid them. Even Jesus himself and those who wrote His Word spoke about creation, for example, Matthew 19. So don't be a scientist of shallow knowledge (mediocre). Instead, like David in Psalm 139, let us all say, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made" or amazed. Let us read Psalms 19 and 8: "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?" Or "The heavens declare the glory of the Lord; the skies proclaim the work of His hands." Look at much of the heavens and earth on NASA's website (National Aeronautics

and Space Administration), those about going to the moon or the Hubble telescope.

Another thing to consider about creation is that we are all children of one Father, so there should be no discrimination. I know many think that only white people have discrimination because of the slave trade and colonialism, but after living in the West, I met many black people with a lot of discrimination. Some when they meet a white person start talking about how they were tortured and enslaved, even though those were the ancestors' deeds. I want to say that the sorrows of the Hutu and Tutsi are enough testimony that every color, class, tribe, and family has discrimination; no human is free from discrimination, big or small—it is discrimination. Discover your own discrimination and ask God to remove it. My husband surprised me once when we went to Brazil on a mission; he said, "These Brazilians love themselves too much; they don't care about others at all, they always speak only their language." He seemed saddened and repeated this when we were in that country. One day I reminded him when he was with his own tribe members, he spoke only his language, and he and his people did not care about those around, even though we live in the U.S. at their home. He was surprised because he didn't remember that at all; he was saddened that others excluded him, but he and his tribe excluded people even in other countries. Some few tribes, when I am on a bus, speak only their language without caring about others, for example, on a Nairobi bus, if I board, they like to speak Kikuyu, even if I pass by, they talk about it even though Nairobi is a Maasai town. I think you have understood what I am trying to say, and it is not with bad intentions, because both you and I have much discrimination. When I cared for the elderly in hospitals, it was taboo to speak any language other than English. I worked with Filipinos who made up 80% of the staff; when there are many people, evil increases, but I was alone, I looked kind until people who spoke Swahili came and I became fierce and mean.

I found it easier to make friends with African American people than whites. They liked to argue and quarrel so much that I became afraid of many, but I also have friends by grace. Everyone has their bad and good sides. Many Africans like to help their own relatives and only a little those of faith. This is a problem; help all children of God to the best of your ability. Other things to talk about in creation include how to manage the earth well, pollution of air and land. Many of us walk around throwing trash everywhere. Everywhere is a toilet for self-relief even when

there are toilets. (I understand Africa has many restaurants but not toilets; in other countries, when you add restaurants, you must add toilets because they are connected—how do you give someone food without toilets?) My headmaster at Forodhani Secondary, Mr. Kusenha in the 1980s said he went to France, and gave us a candy wrapper on the floor. He saw a 4-year-old running from a floor to pick it up and put it in a bin. He saw it as a great shame. We have been given the responsibility to take good care of the earth. Do not kill animals without reason; it is said that the Native Americans (red Indians) are the original inhabitants of America. They hunted only animals needed for food; they did not destroy trees or things. When the European colonists came with Columbus, they started hunting thousands of animals and cutting trees unnecessarily and destructively. They tested their guns and skills to fell trees. This caused almost all animals to disappear. Even today people go to certain countries just to see animals. In some places, we have cut down trees and become deserts. Western countries no longer cut their trees but go to poor countries to cut theirs. Some cruelly beat cats, cows, or donkeys. The behavior of destroying creatures is not heavenly, although humans have a higher status than animals in creation, they are still God's creatures.

Faith is relying on strength from God. He said, "I will give you strength to live and care for my creatures if you glorify me." Remember what happened to Balaam; he would have been killed by an angel but for the donkey! The preacher gets confused and even starts arguing with the donkey without being shocked! Here the donkey had value to God more than the foolish preacher and prophet who did not represent Him well. Your animals know whether you are truly a Christian or not; look at how those who love their animals care for and feed them. I am not saying it is now permissible to sleep with dogs or care for them more than humans. Many should help orphans rather than keep many dogs, even though they fear and say dogs love more than people. Christ did not die for dogs; let your religion have balance. Many people I meet, when asked if they have children, count their dogs among their children. This crosses the line a little! The important thing to remember is that birds and animals sing to their Creator early, even before we start praising Him! And when you kill a whale or bird without reason, you have silenced their hymns to their Maker.

Let us give God His glory for creation; evolutionary things have only come about in the last 150 years and pollute our minds. Today, when you see a beautiful house, do you think about how it came to be? Or how the engineer built it?

There are certain prayers God cannot answer! Those prayers include true forgiveness for our sins, asking God to reveal His will about our lives, prayers to enable us to reach others with the gospel and help them in their pain, and others you have discovered yourself. Ask God to show you if He truly exists and if He is the Creator of the world; He will reveal Himself clearly. When you pray that His will be done and not yours, He will not remain silent. For if He answers a prayer to fulfill your will, it will be a very dangerous answer because human will is not 100% perfect; many of our wills are self-harming or harmful to others. So let us thank God when His will is done, because He loves us more than we love ourselves, and His will includes that we know He is the Creator, He exists for us, and He loves us more than we can know, think, or describe! This God may also have other creatures on other planets. Experts say there are trillions of other planets, some reachable by spacecraft traveling for billions of years! But when we come and fly to heaven for just seven days, we will see many things face to face, with our own eyes, and be amazed. It is not just our earth He created but trillions more, whose number humans cannot count, and they are even more beautiful than this fallen world. These are not strange things, my friends! (Read more about these things in "Sapphire Throne" by Eric, "Creation or Evolution" by Bill Nye, and many others). For more teaching about creation and the fall of man, read Revelation 12 and the Book of Job.

I know humans cannot live by the law alone; we see that we have a problem of being in the middle, where the gospel is. To the left is legalism or hypocrisy, and to the right is worldliness and its pleasures. We should aim to be in the middle. Many have the problem of leaning too much to the left or right. Left or right is sin. Let us tell Jesus to carry us, to be in Him so that we stay in the middle. The commandments are a good promise from God to us. My prayer, and let me say it, is to surrender completely, 100% to all His commands (total surrender). Let us give Him our intentions, choices, goals, love, passion, and even our feelings. When we do this, His commandments will be easy, and we will be filled with love when we keep them. We walked along the roads, seeing them and knowing they were lost, and we mourned in silent prayer in our hearts. Otherwise, it would just be a story.

We know that some of them, even when we try to advise them, will still be stubborn—but at least we will have done our part. For example, a layperson friend of mine was warned that the woman he wanted to marry was trouble. He replied

even to his pastor, “I’m an adult and I’m the one who will live with her. Why should a pepper you won’t eat burn your mouth?”

After they got married, the wife beat him and even threw him out of the house to sleep outside the door—even when his relatives were present. It was a very sad situation.

It’s a known fact that introducing people to each other is risky, but as human beings, I don’t know how we can avoid it. I remember my father once worked with a very good girl, and he introduced her to a relative from my mother’s side who was a drunkard and later brought HIV into their home. I heard my father regretfully say that the girl was a good person, and he regretted introducing them. We are not angels—many times, we don’t know someone’s character, but if we do know, laypeople, please don’t stay silent when you see someone heading toward sorrow.

It’s best if you are advising someone on marriage matters to do so face-to-face. This is because 58% of communication comes from facial expressions, tone, and other non-verbal cues. The actual words have little weight—perhaps less than 10%.

I recommend that everyone planning to marry go through pre-marital counseling and read books on marriage, especially nowadays when community support systems are weak due to distance or broken relationships.

That command to love your neighbor as yourself is more serious than we often realize. There are several things that affect your marriage or communication within marriage. These include: the person’s gender, faith, age, tribe or nationality, level of education, religion, job and position, working hours, annual income, birth order among siblings, how many children they want, when they want children after getting married, whether they live in urban or rural areas, if they live alone or with others, how long you’ve known them, how long the courtship has lasted, how soon the marriage is planned after courtship, what their friends think about your relationship, whether they already have a child, whether they are pregnant or have another romantic partner, whether they have been married before, whether their parents are still married, and who raised them.

Let me discuss a few examples from this list:

Age is important because nowadays, people don't grow up in close-knit communities that help shape the mindset for married life. It's better for a woman to be over 20 and a man over 23 when getting married.

Birth order is said to influence personality traits. For example, firstborns tend to be rule followers, natural leaders, and mature. In fact, when analyzing U.S. presidents, it was found that all of them were firstborns—except Nixon, who functioned like a firstborn because his older brother was mentally impaired and couldn't walk, feed himself, or carry out normal activities.

The second-born tends to be social and relational, but not good at saving money. The third-born often leans toward business, diplomacy, humor, and relying on others, especially if they are the last born.

I must say these patterns are not absolute, but they hold about 75% of the time, which is significant evidence. Sometimes large age gaps between siblings result in the last-born behaving like the firstborn, and so on.

Gender also matters. For example, women use about 40,000 words a day, while men use around 20,000. Communication is crucial. Before marriage, you might enjoy listening to your partner express their emotions and thoughts—but will you continue doing so in marriage?

For instance, if you visit a mother who has just given birth, together with your pastor, your wife may ask you when you return: “How much did the baby weigh? Is it a boy or a girl? How long is the baby? What time was the baby born? How long did the labor last?”

You might realize you didn't ask any of those questions—even the gender! You may not consider such details important, but to women, they are. Each partner must learn to delight the other in what matters to them, as much as possible.

Let me also say—not everyone is meant to marry. Some people have the gift of celibacy, and this should be understood. If they are not involved in sexual immorality, and have dedicated themselves to serving people and God, or were simply born that way, they should not feel pressured to marry. Otherwise, they may bring unnecessary suffering to their spouses.

Some people are afraid of independence or are not mature—let them not make the mistake of entering holy matrimony. Look at those in the Bible who remained single, such as Daniel and Paul. Wait patiently and maintain self-respect, because sometimes it's easy to fall into desperate situations. I once saw a woman about sixty years old looking for a man to marry, pursuing young men in their twenties and thirties. Her own daughter was in her forties. When I cautioned her, she got very angry and felt that the men who rejected her had done wrong by choosing women their own age.

A spiritual leader has a big role in counseling couples or those planning to marry. Let them pray and be very careful. It is sinful to be dishonest when giving counsel. Take time to offer proper advice, and study to gain knowledge that will help people build strong marriages.

I've attached a list in English of topics for engaged or newly married couples to discuss. Parents and relatives may seek counsel, but as a spiritual leader, you often know the individuals better than those who have never seen them face-to-face.

Sometimes close relatives are not God-fearing, and you as the spiritual leader may be the only one who can truly help. When talking to them, try to do it in person—because on the phone, you can't see their face, and it's hard to understand much if you're not looking at someone. Almost all communication is found in facial expressions, voice, and in-person feedback.

CHAPTER 21

HOLY MATRIMONY

Often, our actions show that a fiancé or girlfriend/boyfriend is more important than a spouse! This is a mistake. One day, my parent saw people sitting at a table in the Kilimanjaro Hotel in Dar es Salaam, enjoying themselves and laughing. Then he looked at another table where people were silent, as if upset with each other. He asked my father, “Between those two tables, who are the ones who are married, and who are dating?” Can you answer that?

Marriage is extremely important in the life of a layperson or a preacher. Marriage was instituted in the Garden of Eden by God Himself. A life of love, purity, decency, responsibility, and cooperation between husband and wife is essential. It is best for a marriage to be between people of the same faith, and if possible, the same culture. This fosters peace and stability. For example, it was found that people who stay married the longest in the world are the Chinese, with a divorce rate of 1%, due to shared culture and beliefs. Even though their beliefs do not place God first, their similarities in things like food, education, and outlook reduce conflict. People have fought over petty things—for example, my Indian friend added too much chili, and his Chinese wife didn’t like it.

Do not play with your marriage—whether you are a man or a woman! God gave marriage to mankind to help grow the relationship between Him and us. God did not institute marriage to end in divorce, but because of sin, that became a reality. According to Scripture, divorce was allowed only for sexual immorality. But even then, it is not mandatory; there is still a wide door of forgiveness open to the one who has sinned. Forgive one another even seventy times seven. Marriage was established to bring joy, not sorrow. “Rejoice with the wife of your youth. Live happily with the woman you love.” God created the woman from the man to be his companion and helper—not to dominate or be dominated—but to have love and mutual submission. Rejoice together, encourage one another, comfort and value each other, and love one another. Even if you don’t see the value of marriage now, when you live alone you will understand.

One laywoman used to sing often before her husband died, “I’m just a widow; this man does nothing in the house—it’s just me.” But after her husband died, she testified to people, “I didn’t know how important a man is. The workers now disrespect me and ignore me when I give instructions. Other women avoid me,

thinking I will take their husbands, and my husband's friends flee when they see me, assuming I'll ask for help!" Remember—if marriage isn't important, then why do those who divorce often remarry?

God did not start marriage to place the man and woman in different ranks. He said the two shall become one: "For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. What God has joined together, let no one separate." The value of Adam and Eve before God was the same. Whatever Adam had, Eve had as well. Terrible traditions have emerged that degrade women—even some tribes or nations in Africa consider the birth of a girl a misfortune. In China and India, female fetuses were aborted, which has caused millions of Chinese men to be without women to marry! A child is a child.

Some tribes have buried women alive when their husbands died! The Bible says, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing." Often, men value their mothers and sisters but not their wives. All of them belong to God! A wife is her husband's companion—his closest friend and neighbor. "Love your neighbor as yourself." A good woman is the crown of her husband. "Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land." (Proverbs 31:23). Your spouse is a gift from the Lord and the one who will take care of you when you're sick or in trouble. Normally, you will live with them longer than with your parents.

A wife or husband is a confidant and partner. If there's any form of contempt or humiliation—stop it! You are one team, in a partnership. When your partner wins, you win too. I've heard some women say, "A man is not your relative!" Truly, in God's design, a husband was meant to be closer to his wife than anyone else. Many women forget their husbands after they have children. But those who understand say, "Make your husband your first child." If you love and cherish him and he does the same, you'll live a little heaven on earth. It's pride and selfishness that raise their heads, causing everyone to become defensive. Showing love to your spouse is not a sign of weakness or self-degradation, but fulfilling Scripture and increasing your joy.

The marriage God instituted is between one man and one woman. Even a non-Christian feels bad if their spouse marries another person. I've heard of tribes where a wife is abused and beaten until she finds another woman and tells her

husband, “I’ve found you another wife so we can share the beatings!” A close lay friend of mine left the church out of lust and said, “I’m tired of having one eye—being with only one wife. When she’s sick, I suffer. Others with many wives don’t worry; life goes on.” I was saddened to hear that, because he only thought of his own benefit. But what if he gets sick—should the woman suffer alone? Truly, Satan has introduced much confusion with his wine (false teachings).

Layperson, when advising others, you need to understand these customs. In some countries, polyandry exists—a woman has more than one husband at the same time. Even in the West, they practice a kind of polygamy: one wife at a time. They divorce without biblical reasons and remarry. According to God’s just law, the one they left is still their rightful spouse. No woman or man enjoys polygamy—never! It’s just that many women end up staying in polygamous relationships here in our world. And in some countries like those in West Africa, some traditions allow a woman to have two husbands.

Many people in Africa gave the following reasons for practicing polygamy:

There are fewer men than women—by 44%.

To appear prestigious or due to tribal pressure, for example: “Having one wife is like having one eye!” Some used it as a means of seasonal reproduction—especially those who lacked self-control and didn’t follow the natural menstrual cycle God ordained for women.

To produce more wealth through many children.

Infertility or having children of only one gender.

Being married to a woman who was not the man’s choice.

Major differences after marriage, especially if the woman did not develop herself in education or appearance.

And most importantly, the root cause—sin and the decline of love; people stop valuing each other and no longer serve one another properly. They start seeing colleagues and acquaintances as more important or more attractive.

For some men, wealth entices them—they think being rich and having many wives is an enjoyable way to spend their resources. Polygamy has many problems.

Especially in the upbringing of children, we see this in Abraham, who entered into polygamy by following his wife's advice. First, the women become jealous of one another, and their children take sides with their mothers, resulting in other evils. Although Hagar began by being humble and submissive, the children eventually mocked each other. God remained silent at first, but when the conflicts escalated, He intervened and told Abraham, "Listen to your wife, for it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham had to let Hagar go.

Still, it is not true that a man can love all his wives equally, because God created one man and one woman to become one flesh. Adding another person is not the marriage God intended but a result of our human weakness and sin. Such marriages cause the husband to be anxious, fearing he might be poisoned, while the wives might give him love potions to win his favor. Sometimes the emotional, sexual, and financial needs of the wives are not met, so they seek other men, spreading many sexually transmitted diseases among them all.

Often in these marriages, the husband fails to meet the economic needs of his wives and children. The wives become like widows and the children like orphans. The husband becomes like some kind of sultan, being served or abusing the women. Children grow up in hardship, harboring resentment toward their fathers, and are sometimes raised and educated by their maternal relatives or the government. The children also miss out on the love of a father, as he is often busy rotating between different homes. A child needs the love of both a father and a mother, and so the father's absence creates many deficiencies. He becomes a stranger when he visits on his rounds. The children end up behaving badly—take King David's house for example: one son killed another, and another raped his sister.

The Word of God says this happened because their father was preoccupied with women and did not take time to instruct his children as a father should. Children lack discipline. For instance, Jacob had many problems with his children from different mothers fighting each other; even his wives—who were sisters—fought. His firstborn son Reuben slept with Bilhah, his stepmother—something shocking.

Let me say this: the best marriage is one that puts God first. "Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain." (Psalm 127:1)

Marriage is like a continuous school journey—no one can say they have graduated. Spouses must take time to learn and read helpful books, especially those guided by the Word of God. The Bible must be the foundation; it has deep and great truths. I advise that a layperson should not marry someone who cannot summarize their salvation testimony in about three minutes. They should know what the gospel is, what faith is, what the wages of sin are, what sin is, and what the robe of Christ's righteousness is. Why have all fallen short of the glory of God? What does it mean to repent, regret, and change one's ways? What does it mean to begin a new life in Christ and be baptized? They should know what they believe, who they believe in, and where what they believe is written.

I encourage people to keep their weddings simple to avoid unnecessary pain. Many of us are greedy without realizing it. The tenth commandment is hard for people to recognize whether they break it. Sometimes laypeople desire extravagant and costly weddings, hoping many people will contribute, or they bend over backward to gain that prestige. One layman, when he wanted to marry, seemed overwhelmed because he wanted a wedding in church like a godly person. Then he wanted a Western-style wedding—expensive clothes, cars or horses. Then he wanted to follow his traditional pastoralist customs by paying a large bride price in livestock. He desired to do all of this, though he claimed to want a simple life. He wanted a lavish wedding with money he didn't have, since he had no steady job and had only completed primary school.

Even if you are fortunate to have a lot of money, be careful not to cause yourself pain. Spend time in prayer to live a good married life—that is the real challenge, not just the one-day wedding. A church wedding is important for blessings, but the rest is decoration, which you can plan for if you are financially capable—yet your stewardship before God remains unchanged.

Books like Child Guidance, Adventist Home, and other Christian resources like those by Dr. James Dobson have helped many English-speaking people improve their marriages. To get a driving license, you must study a manual and practice for months, but before marrying, very few people read books about marriage and parenting. They assume their marriage will just succeed, or that it won't cause problems in their ministry. Don't deceive yourself. Begin reading the Word of God daily—it contains many teachings about marriage and serving God. Start with the book of Proverbs. There are many God-fearing authors—take time to read, learn, and apply what you learn to benefit your marriage and ultimately your ministry.

There are many philosophies about how to build a good marriage, but many don't work well. I've met professionals with advanced counseling degrees who lead in that field without grounding in God's Word, and they've divorced multiple times. Sometimes I ask myself—how do they counsel others when they didn't succeed themselves? Yet many of these professionals tell me that divorced people often give better advice because of the mistakes they've made! Now, dear reader, you must assess for yourself when seeking a counselor for your marriage. I don't mean that the advice of leaders or professionals should be ignored—no! But make sure they are also spiritually wise. And even if they are church leaders, avoid disclosing your household secrets without good reason—be careful when seeking counsel.

All marriages are long journeys with mountains and valleys, storms, and other challenges. Let God be the chief guide on this journey. He will help with endurance, cooperation, peace, love, and problem-solving. The key attitude in our hearts should be: “Whatever happens, the Lord is our pilot, and He will help us solve our problems.” You must stand firm together as a team to face whatever comes.

The journey of marriage begins with a phase called adjustment. During the honeymoon, husband and wife take time to show each other love and affection, make adjustments, plan how their family will look, and get to know each other deeply. This concept is also affirmed in the Word of God: “When a man is newly married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. He shall be free to stay at home for one year and bring happiness to the wife he has married.” (Deuteronomy 24:5)

This is the time to build a new system of love and do things together—eating, sleeping, relaxing, and laughing with your spouse. It is also a time to gain experience in resolving differences and misunderstandings. During this time, couples discover what pleases and displeases each other. They should also establish household principles and put them into practice, such as prayer and Bible reading times, meal times, how to relate with in-laws, how many children to have, and more.

This private period is the right time to understand each other well and uncover your hidden selves. You will discover what pleases your spouse, their strengths and weaknesses. Overall, you'll discover many small differences, and knowing them will help your marriage and life. Some people feel discouraged when they

learn the reality of their partner—this is wrong. It's a time to seek solutions. Every human enters marriage with certain expectations of their partner. These include: to be genuinely loved and shown that love, to be trusted in all matters, to have their opinions respected, to be appreciated when deserved, to be understood and supported in their passions, to be helped in times of trouble, assisted in decision-making, have their abilities and gifts celebrated, to feel important, to escape loneliness, and more.

Although many strive to meet these expectations, human nature and selfishness can interfere. Couples should be patient, cooperative, wise, and knowledgeable in seeking solutions. All marriages go through these stages. Like a garden, it must be regularly weeded for its flowers to blossom and give off sweet fragrance. When you see marriages that are admirable and desirable, know they went through this and, through cooperation, found a new life balance. Each person accepted their partner as they are and let go of their single-life habits. **Work on Your Differences: Character, External Relationships, Intimacy, Communication, and Finances**

The most important thing in all this is to understand that “for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two shall become one.” It is your responsibility to find a way to live together. Every person is different—even your own sibling or parents. Living together and sharing many intimate aspects as husband and wife requires adjusting yourselves to avoid conflict. As the saying goes, “Mother, grant me grace to live with people—it's a task.”

Conflicts indicate that something needs to be corrected for the relationship to strengthen. The way you resolve conflicts with your spouse determines how strong your relationship will become. Disagreements arise from differing opinions and, if not handled well, can escalate into quarrels, separation, or misuse of authority—for example, “whether you like it or not, we will live with my mother.” To avoid the destruction of your relationship, you need wisdom, patience, and mutual respect, especially when facing the valleys and mountains of life. Be cautious of advice from old friends. Let God be your number one counselor. Introduce your friends to your spouse and be transparent so that your partner does not misinterpret or become suspicious.

If you had a child with someone else before marriage, disclose this openly. Do not value others more than your spouse, and set boundaries in your relationships. For

example, if it was common for others to enter your bedroom, ban that practice. Be honest and open—if your spouse asks about certain people, letters, or messages, do not give deceptive answers. If they find out, they won't trust your actions anymore.

Matters related to your past—such as pictures, letters, or anything that stirs up old passions—should be destroyed before entering a new marriage. Plan your financial spending together. It's important to have a family budget that includes input from both of you. Neither the husband nor the wife should be swayed by misguided ideas from others.

If mistakes happen, be quick to apologize and reflect. Words that attract love and peace include the five: “please, thank you, sorry, forgive me, I love you.” These words are foundational to joy, peace, and love in marriage and supported by Scripture. Be willing to confess your mistakes to one another—this won't degrade you but will build trust. Don't point fingers like Adam, who when asked by God if he ate the fruit, replied, “It was the woman You gave me!” Blame doesn't build a good marriage and is a poor example to your children or others under your care.

God forgives when we confess, repent, and forsake our sins. Learn to confess to your spouse when you wrong them. Avoid pride if you want to build a strong marriage and be a good parent. Those under your care will also learn to admit their wrongs and resolve issues peacefully.

Learn to speak kindly. Do not use insults or utter curses. People are drawn to one another through words. A man seeks a woman and tells her he loves her. If she feels the same, she responds with sweet, endearing words—the so-called “sweet little nothings.” Words like “I miss you, sweetheart” or “sorry, my love” flow freely. Let such sweet words continue—they bring happiness and help build unity.

Don't mock or ridicule each other when the romance wanes; cultivate it again. No one is perfect! The person you are with is the best for you—build them up in every way. You've probably heard that first marriages have a 50% divorce rate, second marriages 70%, and third marriages around 90%! You might think you're escaping problems by remarrying, only to encounter new issues. I've heard friends say, “My first husband was a drunkard but kind-hearted; this one is stingy and a gossip—I'd rather have lived with the drunkard!”

Strive to live a joyful marriage. It's said only 20% of people have happy marriages. As a servant of God, be a good example. When Billy Graham visited Korea, he was told, "Here, we don't divorce. But we do kill our spouses!" (Divorce—No! Murder—Yes!). Sometimes, Eastern cultures seem to value marriage more than Christians do. But every society has its problems when God's commandments are ignored.

A preacher once visited India and found that mothers-in-law tortured and even killed their daughters-in-law over dowries. Divorce was rare, but abuse and murder weren't. Isn't that like jumping over urine only to step into feces?

Don't insult your spouse with words like "you have teeth like a monitor lizard"—this also reflects poorly on your own choice to marry them. Such words fuel hate and anger. Some parents even use harsh words through their children during conflicts: "You dog, like your father!" This shows mental corruption, because dogs beget dogs, and you're also saying your husband is one. Guard your speech, for the two of you are one. The tongue sets the river ablaze. Proverbs 9:13 says, "A foolish woman is noisy; she is simple and knows nothing." Let's learn to rid ourselves of anger—it lacks peace and gentleness. Anger has ruined many homes. Pray for deliverance from anger—don't let the sun go down while you're angry.

Continue courting your spouse daily. Live in love, and they will help you serve the Lord—you'll jump many fences together. If your spouse responds with harshness, respond gently instead. "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." (Proverbs 15:1)

Avoid negative assumptions that your spouse has bad intentions—be transparent and give them confidence by not doing things that raise suspicion. For instance, don't sit with members of the opposite sex and express affection meant only for your spouse.

Money and communication issues account for 75% of marital problems globally. Let the wife also have a voice in financial decisions. Money belongs to both of you—you've become one body. Hiding income from each other makes you not husband and wife but roommates. Have shared plans and goals. Don't be ruled by money—rule over it. Don't spend money without a plan. Sit with your spouse, consult one another. Avoid chronic borrowing—fear debt like leprosy. Let people owe you love, not loans. And if you must borrow, repay it on time. Don't lie: "My brother needs school fees" when it's not true.

Remember to give tithes and offerings to your God. Find time as a couple to do spiritual things together—pray, read the Word, go to church, teach the Bible, sleep together, and share ideas. Don't pretend to be too busy. Some couples sleep in separate rooms—be cautious. It may start for a genuine reason and become a bad habit. Some men plan with their parents that the wife will stay in the village with the kids while the man works in the city. This is not marriage! Your wife is not your mother—she is part of your body. Even if it increases farm productivity or livestock efficiency, abandon such ideas. If separation is necessary due to health or education, let it be temporary. Don't be people who stay apart year after year due to school or other reasons. Walk in unity. If the wife goes to church while the husband goes fishing, what will the children do?

Use your freedom wisely. Marriages suffer when there is secrecy, even if you're free individuals. Say where you're going when you leave the house. Allow each other to express opinions. Don't say, "I'm the man here—why are you asking where I'm going? What do you know about men's travels, woman?"

Learn to speak pleasant and kind words. It's not weakness—it's strength. Try to please each other. Often, we dress up for strangers who offer us nothing, while ignoring those close to us who end up sad. Love includes a lot of sweet effort and flattery—if you haven't noticed. That's why you can't have pride and love together. You must humble yourself and let go of your rigid ways to please your partner. If you are arrogant, expecting your spouse to worship and serve you, love will diminish. It's not wrong to receive your husband's bag when he returns from work or for the wife to be helped when back from the market. And what about giving each other gifts? Didn't you do that while dating? Why should gifts be taboo now? They bring joy. Be generous, compassionate, and celebrate one another.

All these actions stir the emotions of your spouse and draw them to love. Understand each other physically and psychologically. Each partner should be willing to give up their "rights."

No one should fail to fulfill the emotional needs of their spouse, which have been placed in them by God Himself, thereby putting their marriage to the test.

Don't be a person who always criticizes and fails to give thanks when kindness is shown to you. The exercise of love begins with you, then extends to those around you. "They will know you by your love!" Even your animals know the one who loves

them—you'll see them following the one who feeds and cares for them daily! Is that a mystery?

The Word of God says that adultery is for someone who lacks sense — Proverbs 9:13-17. To save your home from the disaster of adultery, pray for God to reveal things to you. For example: spiritual sickness, a lack of faith in one's Christian walk — these are often the root causes. Others include physical weakness, illness, failure to satisfy your partner, exhaustion from work and responsibilities, a wife appearing worn out or neglecting herself, a wife being rude and not cheerful, the use of certain medications that change one's behavior, prolonged separation due to studies or work, gossip, and instigation from relatives and friends. Let us remember, God commanded, "Do not commit adultery." Try to seal the small cracks in your home. If you notice small errors and your partner says, "I'm not happy about this," try to resolve the issue as quickly as possible. For instance, if a wife gets into the habit of picking fights with her husband's relatives without reason and mistreating them, it's better to sit down and discuss the matter together, rather than reach the point where the husband feels forced to leave.

Disagreements over family planning and forcing a spouse to have many children—or a wife being pressured to bear many children by her husband or his family—are some of the things that affect a marriage. Sharing private matters with relatives, friends, or anyone else is very dangerous. In-laws who are not kind are also a threat; they may issue orders like "Send that wife away, she's not good for you" or "That man is too poor, leave him!" Cleanliness at home is important, and women should learn to cook well to please their families and also protect their health.

Be hospitable, welcoming, and helpful to others. It is better to give than to receive. Many people are hospitable in terms of offering food when guests arrive, but they can't do more than that. This is a mistake — food alone doesn't make much of a difference. You cooked and were going to eat anyway, guest or not! Don't offer sacrifices that cost you nothing, especially to the very poor. Don't just feed a poor person with what's on your table and think you've done something great. Package some food for them to take to their family too, and consider helping them with small projects or entrepreneurial ventures — that's true generosity.

Let us remember: “Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain.” To strengthen your home, you must do the following: Do not live with your parents or siblings after getting married – they often become a stumbling block in your marriage. Many relatives have destroyed people’s marriages, especially in today’s world of rampant divorce. This also spreads your weaknesses to others and weakens the bond that should make you one. “Love covers a multitude of sins.” Show the same signs of affection to your partner that you did during courtship – this will make your home joyful and lasting. Don’t become content now that you’ve “captured” your spouse and forget about them! Remind yourself of what made you fall in love in the first place. I once saw a woman complain that her husband doesn’t even greet her when he comes home; he just continues with whatever he was doing! Does this apply to you?

Do not start conversations with shouting and accusations. Consult one another and love spending time together just like you did when you were dating. Respect your partner’s role and pray to God to increase your love for them. A wife should recognize her husband as the leader, regardless of how educated she is – “The husband is the head of the wife.” And a man should not overburden his helper while he sits lazily enjoying life. It’s said that in Africa, 90% of farming is done by women. Now, with women comprising 70-80% of believers worldwide and many men neglecting the priestly role and leaving it to their wives – and some not contributing economically but relying on their wives – this causes women to bear burdens that were not originally assigned to them by God. The wife was meant to stay with the children and cook at home, not carry the heavy load of supporting the family.

Let each person appreciate their spouse’s role. Everyone should understand their responsibilities in marriage. You are one body; if a goal is conceded because of the foot, the face is what is seen on camera – yet the foot doesn’t complain!

A man should remain neat, organized, gentle, and provide for his family with clothing, shelter, and food. A wife should maintain the home well – toilet, bathroom, and kitchen – and learn to cook well, not be lazy. “Love keeps no record of wrongs.” Learn to be gentle, don’t criticize, dominate, or try to change your spouse. Only God can bring real change, so pray for them. You cannot change a person on your own.

Be moderate; avoid excess even in good things like exercise, eating, and sexual relations — 1 Corinthians 7:5, 1 Corinthians 9:25. Intimacy is not a dirty or shameful act; it's not a sinful indulgence. Maintain good communication that promotes affection so both parties desire intimacy. Be cheerful and clean, and create a pleasant environment. Many people live in single-room homes where children can hear everything. Children should not sleep with their parents. Due to financial hardship, many people sleep in the same room with their children, even school-going ones. Make plans, even if it means returning to the village to build, rather than destroying your lives and your children's.

Try to create privacy so your affections are not extinguished. When problems like unemployment or grief arise, encourage one another — don't make things worse with blame and scorn. Each person should correct their own flaws. Families with plans and love speak louder about our Christianity than our lazy sermons.

People spend a lot of time studying, making money, and building big houses, but if the home is not peaceful, they start fighting, and in the end, it's all for nothing! Use your time to learn how to build a strong marriage. I once saw a husband and wife, both professors at a Kenyan university, who fought all the time, spied on each other, and even physically fought. They had spent many years in school, earning doctoral degrees, but lived in misery. The wife told the school staff that the husband should never pick up their children — only she could. Eventually, they even involved the teachers in their quarrels. They divorced, but the hostility between them continued. I once saw them after the death of one of their children, a five-year-old — even then, in their grief, they kept clashing. Life already has enough battles — we don't need to add more!

Better is a poor, uneducated farmer in the village who loves his wife and shares simple meals with her than a wealthy couple who are always at war with each other. It's absolutely true. George Carlin once said:

“We are in the most advanced age in history, with bigger houses but smaller tolerance, wider roads but narrower minds. We buy more, yet enjoy less. We have bigger homes and smaller families; more conveniences, yet less time. More degrees, but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgment. More experts, but more problems. More medicine, but less wellness. We drink too much, laugh too little, drive too fast, get angry too quickly, stay up too late, wake up too tired, read too little, watch too much TV, and pray too seldom. We've multiplied our

possessions, but reduced their value. We talk too much, love too little, and hate too often. We've learned how to make a living, but not how to live. We've added years to life, not life to years. We've been all the way to the moon and back, but we struggle to cross the street to greet a neighbor. We've conquered outer space, but not inner space. We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul. We've split the atom, but not our prejudices. We write more, learn less, plan more, but accomplish less. We've learned to rush, but not to wait.”

Two people in the same house now work and earn good salaries, yet divorce rates are higher. We've built computers to store information, yet we keep photocopying it. He ends by saying: Watch your time. Spend it with those you love, because you won't be here forever. Remember to say loving and encouraging words. Spend time with your family, because your children will soon be gone. Take time to love, to hold hands, because your partner may not be there tomorrow. And it costs nothing to show this love. Learn to laugh, to play, and not to regret how you used today with your spouse. Love deeply — like someone who has never been hurt.

CHAPTER 22

MARRIAGE PROBLEMS

Marriage problems among laypeople are no longer a new issue nowadays. Anything that destroys a marriage is the devil's scheme—whether it's selfishness, cruelty, negligence, or failure to meet the partner's needs, among others. It is wise to learn how to resolve marriage issues before they arise. Your lay ministry or preaching work will become difficult or even abandoned if your marriage is filled with problems. Every marriage has its own skeletons, but what matters is how the couple solves their issues.

When problems arise, it is important to acknowledge them instead of burying our heads and pretending everything is fine. That is like ignoring cracks without sealing them. Many spiritual leaders feel ashamed to admit that their marriage is struggling. Why are we hesitant to seek help? Perhaps it's because we are experts in counseling other people's marriages and don't want our congregation to see our weaknesses or challenges. Yet often, the members can tell something is wrong more than you think! Start sealing these cracks before they reach an irreversible stage.

Many laypeople's marriages fall apart due to stress, lack of continuous learning on how to build a strong home, complacency, routine lifeless living, too many responsibilities, or fatigue. These factors lead to impatience and words spoken carelessly due to emotional outbursts. Financial problems, illness, administrative duties, and criticism from church members are among the reasons why many marriages end up in trouble. The difference between successful and unsuccessful marriages lies in the couple's willingness to say, "We have a problem—how do we solve it?" If you remain silent, hoping the issues will resolve themselves, you'll end up building castles in the air.

Communication is crucial. Being silent in pain or fear within a marriage leads to bitterness, anger, unrealistic fantasies, defensiveness, and ultimately emotional and physical distance. Communication means talking and listening to each other to identify where repairs are needed. Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. Read Proverbs 15-18 and discuss them together. A good marriage doesn't just happen—it's a lifelong effort to learn how to live together well. Even if you were careful before entering this relationship, very few couples are perfectly aligned from the start. For most, it's a process. Don't take your

partner for granted. Pray to God; He promised us wisdom. Do not have unrealistic expectations of your partner. Don't read romance novels or watch love movies and start chasing fantasies. Remember, as long as Satan is alive, he brings trouble. Patience, love, understanding, and a forgiving spirit are vital. Your presence in every situation—through hardship and happiness—is the cement of this marriage (commitment). Erase the thought that you made a mistake in choosing your partner. Good people are not yet born, it's true—bad ones are whom we live with while waiting for Christ's return, for even we ourselves are not that good. Every day you are building a positive investment in your marriage. No one wants to throw away years of effort. Statistics show that 50% of first marriages end in divorce, second marriages over 70%, and third over 90%. Often, in second marriages, people start comparing with the first. I once heard a woman say, "The first one was a drunk, but he had a good heart. This one is a church member but stingy and mean."

If things don't work out, don't hesitate to go to a counselor—someone distant from your congregation. This helps each person express their pain, perceptions, or feelings in a safe space. If the counselor is wise, confidentiality is maintained. A professional counselor may also give you personality assessments that help you discover traits about yourselves that you didn't know and offer solutions. Apart from counselors, there are many books and recordings that address marriage issues. Don't resist seeking help, especially if things continue to worsen over the years. Sometimes it's necessary to accept help. Today, there are no more moral elders or family meetings like in the past. Tell your spouse that your marriage is important to you and that you'd like to seek help. But avoid finger-pointing or blaming. You can admit your own weaknesses that contributed to the problem, but keep your focus on solutions. If you want to persuade your spouse to go to counseling, use all the tools God has given you as a husband or wife.

Pay attention to in-law issues—brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, and parents-in-law have ruined many marriages. You don't marry into your relatives! In-law issues need to be addressed directly. This is a long discussion, but the key is transparency—before and after marriage. As an adult, you know your parents better than anyone else. You can tell when they are self-centered or well-meaning, or when they are hurting. Pray for wisdom from heaven. Many African societies struggle with this issue, and everyone sees their own family as holy while viewing others as evil. Be honest with each other, and if possible, involve an

outsider to advise on certain matters. Because families depend on each other, some relatives can be used by Satan to stir up trouble. Perhaps the mother-in-law has a dictatorial influence over the daughter-in-law. Some sisters-in-law mistreat the woman married to their brother, thinking she has taken what belonged to them. If she hasn't borne children, they make hurtful remarks: "She's just eating our food but can't give us children." On the other hand, a wife may mistreat or dislike helping her husband's family, even fighting them. The two shall become one. Both the husband's and wife's parents are important, but once you become husband and wife, God comes first, then your spouse, followed by your parents. But if your parents are in emergency situations and need help, assist them. The key is to be Christians—that helps in all relationships. Because with God, there is wisdom that may be lacking elsewhere. Even the practice of marrying within the same homestead is not healthy. Everyone should live a bit separately, so when you meet, love grows. The proverb on a traditional wrap cloth (kanga) says, "Mother, bless me, for living with people is hard," and it is very true.

Your parents may not be Christians, but they watch your example. If your behavior is bad, impatient, or unkind, it will be hard to witness to them. Parents should be helped and loved, whether good or bad. Sometimes they are also used by the devil. Often the problem is lack of transparency—husband and wife not discussing things. Many people's relationships with their spouses lack depth. They just go through the motions. It's said only 20% of marriages are truly happy; many are hanging by a thread. Everyone keeps their own secrets and belongings. When someone dies, many secrets are revealed, or their partner discovers things they never knew. In Dar es Salaam, I saw a woman crying at the Rural Development Bank. Her husband had mortgaged the house for his own affairs and failed to repay. She was shocked. She told me she had taken a loan at her workplace to buy the house and was repaying it herself.

One man, upon seeing his sister causing trouble at home, left the house early and returned late, pretending not to know what was going on. He couldn't bring himself to confront his sister and tell her she was wrong. He preferred to please his relatives, even if it meant destroying his home. Some relatives get jealous when you love each other, and if they are divorced, they make nasty comments like, "Let them break up too, then we'll all be in the same boat."

Another woman went to live with her daughter and tried to take over the household leadership. When her daughter told her that taking control in her

husband's house was not appropriate, she resisted. She would ask, "Whose dishes are these on the table, who ate here?" after her son-in-law had eaten. She often said, "I'm not a housemaid here to help with chores. I raised you already. I came here to relax and enjoy the shade." She caused great pain and tears for her children, even the grandchildren once asked, "Mom, when will grandma leave? It seems she doesn't even want us to talk to you. Every time we try, she says, 'Leave, I'm talking to your mother.'" It's true they say there are three types of people who always tell the truth in court—children, drunkards, and the mentally ill.

Try to ensure your children do not take sides with one side of the family. Teach them to love both sides equally. As a mother or father, don't insist that your children favor or support only your side of the family. Although some relatives also show favoritism to children of their daughters and not those of their sons—this is a bad practice!

The work of a layperson has a certain attraction, so do not live like a worldly person in your relationships. You can be a great layperson winning souls, but if your home is not in order, you will be sorrowful. Read books on marriage, attend seminars. These days, there are no aunts or uncles to give counsel. Everywhere is burning, and in some places, it's being consumed. However, God, through the Bible and His servants, has written much to us about marriage. He wants your marriage to be better than yours or your relatives'. Do not think that loving your wife or husband means being subdued. Showing love is not a sign of weakness or failure. We are here on earth for God's love, and we will go to heaven because of that love. Let us learn so that our homes may be little heavens here on earth. Love is the character of heaven, and it will endure forever. GOD IS LOVE!

Do whatever pleases your spouse, as long as it is not sin. Love does not go together with pride or self-exaltation. It is difficult to show love to your husband or wife if self is in control. True love has humility because it puts your spouse's interests first, and they do the same; not pleasing yourself first!

It is a burden to carry the weight of a broken marriage alone in your heart, and there is a temptation to start telling others! Many secrets have been exposed by involving those you lead. Avoid this problem. Many relationships have been restored by the grace of God—if both partners humble themselves. Some who separated were those who refused to seek solutions. Others had to stop preaching. Their church members were saddened, friends and relatives hurt, even heaven

weeps for these marriages while the devil scores goals against those who serve God. “He who hides a sickness ends up crying—he who reveals it is helped.”

Remember, there are no perfect people on earth that, if you live with them, you will live in perfect peace as in books. These are weak people. God has placed us to live with them, and surely, even you are being endured. If you haven’t realized it, look carefully in the mirror. One friend said, “God gave me this same flawed person to live with, because I too have my flaws. So I won’t ruin the good and the bad; this flawed one I was given will help me reach heaven, and I will help them too by the grace of JESUS.”

A female layperson used to complain to her husband, “I’m just like a widow, my husband doesn’t help me at all.” The husband had a good job and brought sufficient provision home. They even had the privilege of a good house and a car. But the laywoman, who had married a worldly man, was not satisfied. “I’m like a widow, my husband doesn’t help with chores,” she said repeatedly, although the husband was helping. When the man died, the woman cried many tears and was deeply sorrowful. Another layperson who had heard her complaints asked, “You used to say you were like a widow while your husband was alive, so why are you crying so much now—you buried him long ago?” The laywoman burst into tears and replied, “That was just a saying—I was only pressuring him to work more!”

Why do we place flowers on graves and cry when our spouses die, yet while they are alive we strike them with the whips of our tongues? Layperson, begin practicing sweet words for your spouse, even if it is not part of your culture or religion. The culture and tradition of Jesus allows it. Be at peace in your heart to follow the culture of JESUS. In heaven, we shall speak sweet words—start practicing here! List such words here: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5!

Believe that your marriage can be restored. Your marriage is important to preserve in every situation. I can say it is very rare that a marriage broke up so that God could be glorified. That’s why the Word says, “What God has joined together, let no man separate.” Many human relationships—between parents and children, or siblings—have faced great troubles, not just marriages. Children have killed parents, and parents have killed children. All relationships have broken down; it’s just that marriage is so highly valued, which is why we reference it often!

Today, if you sit with your parents, you may be shocked at how much you argue! You'll wonder if these are the same people who raised you, or different ones. One mother told her daughter at home during a quarrel, "That's why you're not married." Who wants to keep hearing such bitter words all the time? Learn how to live with people. Use all your efforts—heaven is doing everything possible to help you continue living together. God will help you in your challenges. He is the author of the home and the family. Trust Him to guide and protect you. He will not let you down. Proverbs 3:3-5.

CHAPTER 23

ADORNMENT

Appearance is important, especially for a layperson (evangelist). For those with families, it's good for your family to see you looking presentable. Often, if someone was not matched with a spouse by others, they chose based on the attraction to their spouse's appearance. Appearance matters. They say "neatness hides poverty." Don't neglect yourself; we need to be tidy and presentable. God's work requires us to be neat, and that's a very good reason for us to look good (attractive).

Look in the mirror before going out: Have I combed my hair well? Have I cared for my skin with oil? Is my weight a threat to my health or attractiveness? Do I take care of my teeth? (They say salt, baking soda, and hydrogen peroxide are the key treatments for your teeth if used in moderation daily.) Do I smile? When did I last inspect my clothes in the wardrobe?

You only need a few clothes that look good. Don't have too many clothes like a museum keeper or someone selling second-hand garments! Do the colors I choose suit me? A lay friend of mine wore a red shirt, yellow trousers, and a purple coat. People said he looked like a Christmas tree. I didn't mind much since I don't have the gift of color matching, but for a layperson, these things are important—while preaching, people shouldn't focus on your shiny button and miss the message! (Although they too would be at fault for being too focused on your appearance.)

Ask tailors for help. The advantage in our countries is we have many tailors—you don't have to wear ready-made clothes. When going to sew, choose a tailor (designer!) who knows how to tailor according to your body shape. There are people with a gift for evaluation—ask them too when choosing fabric.

Dress well not just for going out! Dress well even at home. Why make passersby happy by looking good, while your household sees you looking shabby like scarecrows in the field—just because you're saving outfits for when you go 'out'? Guests and strangers don't care how you look and don't even know you—but your family does. I've often worn shabby clothes, but now I realize this.

Money is hard to come by, so what can a layperson do to look good? First, set a goal to be neat and attractive. Then save money gradually. Let your conscience

not accuse you for looking good—don't be wasteful with money, but don't go to the extreme of wearing rags. These days, even tailors have style books—check them out. There might even be nice second-hand suits—use that opportunity.

Cheerfulness is also an adornment that makes us attractive. Cheerfulness reflects our thoughts, appearance, and feelings. It is supported by good grooming, orderliness, kindness, serving others, joy, laughter, caring for others' needs, confidence, contentment, not being bitter or sad because of those who annoy you, and letting go of negative thoughts. In short, the elements of cheerfulness are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faith.

Watch how you dress while preaching—it shouldn't draw attention to yourself instead of the message. For example, a shiny button in the center—people end up staring at the button instead of hearing the sermon. Let's not assume only women have expensive and distracting items like earrings and bangles. There are other more expensive distractions that can make us focus on appearance instead of our lay ministry. I've seen laymen wearing \$100 ties, while criticizing others with 5-cent earrings!

Because we are ambassadors of God, we should dress well—but not extravagantly or without moderation, looking like a peacock walking through a poor village.

For the youth, it's good to avoid inappropriate fashions. But at the same time, don't wear very outdated clothes and look like you live in the Stone Age. Honestly, most men don't have trouble with beauty and negative adornment. We women struggle a bit more in this area. I haven't seen men wearing clothes that expose private parts.

Perhaps young men wearing sagging trousers—and I think this trend is now outdated. Always remember that you represent God in your dressing and in your use of resources.

I will briefly address the challenges of beauty and health that I learned from three doctors: Dr. Clifford Majani, Dr. Rahel Manongi, and Dr. Dorcas Ayayo.

DISEASES CAUSED BY FASHION

It seems that many people, especially women, face issues related to fashion. These problems go back a long time—to the time of the Egyptians, Babylonians,

and others. Ever since our mother Eve wanted to appear different and knowledgeable in the garden, many things have plagued us. We all have struggles—it's not just certain people. This is something we should pray about daily. And when our children see us wearing strange things, they copy us and often make it worse. This is a personal matter to pray about with your God—concerning shoes, clothing, and body ornaments.

I will try to give examples from the Word of God that speak about adornment. Read in the Song of Solomon and elsewhere. Bangles, eyeliner, mirrors, belts, and other things are not new. Since this book speaks to laypeople, I will speak only briefly about fashion.> “The Lord said, because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet...”

This chapter shows many ornaments we still use that are over 2,500 years old! Items such as:

“Earrings, bracelets, headbands, nose rings, chains, perfume boxes, charms, rings, festive clothes, turbans, fine linen, small mirrors, handbags, shawls, purses, veils, hair braids, and sashes.”

Cosmetics

The skin's functions are to protect the body, absorb or remove dirt, sense stimuli, produce vitamin D, and regulate temperature.

Why do people apply substances to the skin? For attraction, beauty, to correct a problem, to change appearance, or to alter skin structure.

Cosmetics can treat, prevent diseases, alter appearance, or affect skin function.

Types of cosmetics include creams, lotions, ointments, powders, nail products, lip products, underarm products, and hair dyes.

History of cosmetics - Song of Solomon 1:13-14; Ezekiel 23:40; 2 Kings 9:30; Ruth 3:3; Isaiah 57:9; Proverbs 27:9.

History from the Egyptians and Greeks shows these practices existed.

Cosmetics like corticosteroids, hydroquinone, and mercury compounds can be harmful—they kill skin cells, cause allergies, skin irritation, etc.

Commonly used cosmetics include:

Disporone, Mediven, Betnovate, Dremovate, Betacort, or steroids—which can cause acne, thinning of the skin, and heart disease.

Cosmetics containing quinines and mercury—like Body Clear Gel, Mekako Cream, Rico Cream, Tura Cream, Ultra Clear Soap, and Butone Cream—can cause skin irritation, cancer, skin peeling, skin patches, kidney damage, hearing loss, nervous system issues, brain damage, and organ failure.

Bleaching cosmetics, such as white cement, bleachers, or bleach (Jik), also have harmful effects on the skin.

It's not wrong to beautify, to smell good, or to want smooth skin—the issue is when we harm the skin's function and structure or develop distorted ideas of beauty. God created us all beautiful.

Having false beliefs like thinking that being dark- or light-skinned defines beauty—or having small noses, big breasts, or small waists—leads to trouble! Every culture has its own ideas of beauty, but as laypeople, these ideas often conflict with the values of our Heavenly Father.

Let's strive to be beautiful on the inside; over time, people will see the outward beauty too. The Bible does mention beautiful people like Sarah and Absalom, but that shouldn't worry you in your work as a layperson. I've noticed that very beautiful girls sometimes attract people too quickly before building proper relationships, which can lead to bad matches with those only interested in “winning” them. Value yourself as a human being for whom Christ died.

Cleanliness and neatness are important, but some creative trends need to be let go.

Shoes

Shoes should be worn depending on activity, transport, and a person's health. Shoes can be for sports or special purposes. Open shoes help reduce fungal

infections, but in hazardous work environments, feet must be covered to protect them from falling objects.

Those with fungal issues or smelly feet may benefit from soaking feet in baking soda and vinegar. Dry feet well—moisture promotes infections.

High-heeled shoes began with short men 500 years ago wanting to appear taller. But men realized heels restricted movement and left them to women. Even today, most shoe designers are men—yet if they had to wear the heels women wear, they couldn't last an hour!

Yet women wear heels all day—even when they hurt, they endure it. Some now carry sandals in their bags and switch to them during the day. Some heels are over 14 cm high at the heel and only 2 cm at the toes.

The designer likely intends the following image of a woman:

1. The foot appears short and small—considered beautiful in Eastern cultures. In fact, Chinese girls had their feet bound or forced into small shoes to prevent growth—otherwise, they wouldn't get married.
2. The design lifts the buttocks for a more pronounced look.
3. The ankle movement makes a bouncing walk.
4. The chest appears more forward.

Foot doctor Alan Kalker from the U.S. said:

> “If you choose shoes to please the eye rather than the feet, prepare for health consequences.” Improperly chosen shoes cause:

Toe deformities

Sores and infections

Muscle damage and shortening (calf contractures)

Arthritis in the knees

Back pain

Foot pain

Falls or fractures

Ingrown toenails

A study in the U.S. showed that 90% of women wear shoes smaller than their correct size.

Measure your feet well before buying shoes. Shop in the evening when your feet are more swollen than in the morning. If you wear stockings or socks, ensure they fit well with the shoes to avoid pain. Spend money on quality, stable, comfortable, and breathable shoes.

Care for your feet—don't let them crack. Use lotion. Cracked feet let in bacteria and can even tear bedsheets. Eat natural foods like vegetables and fruits to reduce cracking. Wear shoes and wash feet well—some soil easily causes cracks. Avoid standing too long, and reduce your weight to support your feet. It's better to walk for long periods than to stand still for long periods.

Take care of your feet—they are part of your overall health. If you have diabetes, even small scratches can be dangerous, as wounds don't heal quickly. Many people neglect their feet more than their face, but feet and nails can reflect your health condition.

Clothing

Clothes have a strong link to health—for protection from weather, environment, uniforms, work, or cleanliness.

Clothing has been an issue since Adam made his own from fig leaves—which didn't properly cover him or his wife—until God made garments for them from animal skins.

The primary purpose of clothing is to cover our nakedness so we don't feel shame. Everyone has private parts—they are not meant to be displayed while walking in public.

We must ask ourselves when dressing: Do our clothes support our health? Do they cover us appropriately? Do they help us socially, spiritually, economically, or mentally?

You may think this is a minor issue, but fashion has hurt many.> “Behold, I come like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.” —Revelation 16:15

Even men must wear respectable clothing—don’t let trousers sag.> “Make tunics for Aaron’s sons and make linen undergarments to cover their nakedness. They must extend from the waist to the thigh. Aaron and his sons must wear them whenever they enter the Tent of Meeting... so that they will not incur guilt and die. This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants.” —Exodus 28:42-43

As laypeople among other religious groups—like Muslims who dress modestly—we must be careful not to cause offense to others or bring reproach upon our faith. Western Countries and Clothing Culture - Translation

In Western countries, there are communities where people go swimming or to certain hotels without clothes; some even take their children with them. I visited a certain European country and found that people do not wear clothes inside their houses, and when you knock at their door and they see you’re not one of them, they rush to get dressed! While with a friend, we saw a woman sweeping in front of her house completely naked, except for shoes. Then we saw a man working in his garden without clothes. When he saw us, he ran inside, and my friend told him, “Sir, if you wanted people to see you, why are you running away?” He later came out fully dressed. These were adults in their 40s.

Dear reader, you see, everyone knows that being naked is uncomfortable. If they didn’t know that, they wouldn’t run to get dressed. Even a friend of mine who works in a hospital once said, “What exactly are these people trying to show? Everyone has the same parts!” I believe you would not want to walk around naked or half-naked without reason. Especially if you are a woman, you might invite trouble such as sexual assault, social rejection, or not being accepted to preach.

It is good for women’s clothing to be different from men’s. Scholars of ancient writings say that everyone wore honorable robes with inner shorts, but colors varied. Many now claim they can wear anything, regardless of gender, saying that

men and women are the same except for reproductive organs. This idea is off track. It is true that men and women are equal before God, but there are differences in anatomy and roles by design. If you try to bring this thinking into lay ministry, you'll ruin it.

A man can wear just shorts and continue farming, but can you, as a woman, do the same? Men have their anatomy and women theirs. Clothing is a major issue even in true worship. We see two women used as symbols of true and false worship in Revelation 12 and 17. It's not proper to wear clothing with offensive or suggestive words. People can read your mind through your clothes and group you accordingly. I've seen T-shirts with writings like, "Come take me, I'm yours," or "Looking for a rich woman to marry." I know we sometimes buy secondhand clothes or wear kangas without reading the words. But how do you interpret such messages?

Clothes that are unhealthy both physically and spiritually include those that are short, expose body parts like the chest or thighs, have deep slits, or are too tight. Some clothes are heavy on one side, sweep the streets, or leave legs exposed to the cold. Many illnesses are caused by fashion that disregards health. More people die due to fashion than we think. Examples include: restricted lungs, compressed nerves and blood vessels, headaches (due to reduced blood flow to the brain), digestive issues, and nosebleeds.

For believers seeking spiritual health, remember: "Whoever looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Everyone is responsible for their own spiritual health, but if your clothing causes others to stumble, there's a problem. Men are visually attracted, while women are drawn to men who care for or show them love. Don't dress carelessly, even around other women—why expose yourself unnecessarily? Clothing gives you a certain image; some outfits are meant only for bedtime, not for public wear.

Sometimes, we forget when dressing our young daughters, putting them in tiny shorts or sleeveless clothes. While they are still very young this may not be a big deal, but it becomes hard to know when to stop because they are no longer babies. Many girls who grow up wearing tight trousers and being immodest find it hard to sit properly in dresses. It's wise to dress them like in the Old Testament—put shorts under their dresses. Some women face this same problem, wearing tight trousers without long shirts or blazers to cover those parts.

Fashion can sometimes reduce humility. I've seen people in churches (especially churches, because in mosques women dress respectfully), wearing inappropriate clothes, turning worship into a time to showcase themselves as different from others. High heels are even nailed at the bottom to make noise. People strut around for no reason. If you struggle with self-display like some of us, begin by choosing a few modest clothes for worship. If your temptation is to show off, start minimizing your wardrobe so you don't feed the fire.

Worship is not a fashion show, competition, or self-display. Worship is a time to focus on God—not you or me. We lose the purpose of worship when we distract our brothers and sisters.

Hair

In the past, hair wasn't much of a problem, but nowadays other cultures have brought us many hair fashions. In my opinion, cleanliness and neatness are important, but self-display is a common temptation for all humans. Many believe a girl must cut her hair very short or shave completely. Truly, it is not a sin for a girl to have long hair. Sometimes, it even distinguishes us as female. Many of us thought it easier to wear a headscarf or wig to manage hair or save time. However, covering hair constantly with scarves, hats, or wigs leads to baldness and poor ventilation for the hair.

There are many hair products these days, and most salons have poor ventilation, exposing people to harmful chemical fumes (volatile organic compounds and carcinogens). A U.S. study showed that hairdressers are at higher risk of leukemia and other cancers because of daily exposure to chemicals like ammonia, hydrogen peroxide, formaldehyde, and phenylenediamine. You can research more about hair dyes (Henna, etc.) that have been investigated and found harmful. Try using natural alternatives.

Everything should be done in moderation. We see Jezebel: "When she heard, she painted her eyes and adorned her head, and looked out of the window." I mention her because although she adorned her body, she didn't adorn her soul. I won't cite many verses since these are matters hard to tell people directly and lack exact scripture, but as one grows in the journey of fearing God and living a life of moderation and godliness, they begin to discern what to let go of and what to keep. Everyone is at a different stage. It was written: "Your beauty should not

come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight." (1 Peter 3). I believe this was written because we are often tempted to focus on external appearances.

A preacher in the U.S. once told a woman, "When the Lord returns to reward you, where will He place the crown? Your head is already full—beads, pins, wraps, and all." It was a joke, but it made me think; we spend too much time on adornment instead of focusing on spiritual life. Do we spend as much time with God (reading His Word, in worship, and in prayer) as we do with mirrors and hair?

Many wigs are made of horse tails, plastic, or other people's hair. They create heat on our bodies and add weight to our heads. They also reduce cleanliness. As mentioned, once you start wearing wigs, you stop combing your real hair, laziness takes over, and baldness follows. That's not how your body was meant to function! Many of us think we have bad hair while whites or Indians have better hair. The One who created you didn't say it's bad. Who told you that lie?

My friend Boni from Zimbabwe once shared a strange story. He said, "I thought my breasts were too big, so I decided to get surgery to reduce them. I told my husband, and he was shocked and said, 'But I've never complained. Once you're done with the surgery, change your address!'" The husband insisted.

Hot combs or hats also damage the scalp, especially when chemicals are applied to the crown. Many people have lost their hair. Hair sprays also harm the lungs. Hair styling has existed for thousands of years, and indeed hair is a woman's glory and enhances beauty—but don't let yourself go or cut it all off; instead, practice moderation. Focus first on what's truly important. Hair should be washed regularly for health. Many people go a month without washing their hair, covering it with wigs—this causes harm. Others clean their hair using oils instead of water, claiming it shortens the hair. But water is the best solution for cleaning the body. Only cars should be cleaned with oil—not the human body.

Use your own comb, and if you must borrow one, make sure it's washed with soap to prevent skin diseases or lice. Unwanted body hair like on women's chins, stomachs, etc., should be trimmed with scissors—not shaved with a razor. Hair needs protein like keratin, so a proper diet is essential. Deficiencies in minerals

like zinc or hormonal imbalance. Hair includes body hair, eyebrows, eyelashes, and pubic hair. Body hair helps the skin to remove body waste and protects the body from dust or sweat. Pubic hair aids cleanliness, reduces moisture, itching, odor, etc., and this helps reduce bacteria. It is advised not to completely shave off this hair and remain bald in that area because of the roles it plays. Cuts caused by razors or chemical hair removers create openings for bacteria or viruses to enter. Skin left bare without hair is more vulnerable when it comes into contact with sweat that carries waste from the body. Trim the hair with scissors to keep it as short as possible. Wash body hair daily and dry it properly to prevent moisture buildup and growth of fungi or bacteria.

Eyelashes and eyebrows remove dust and dirt caused by the accumulation of oils and cosmetics. Cutting eyebrows is not advisable, but they should be well arranged. Even for those with thick eyebrows, shaving often causes them to grow back even thicker. But if you leave them alone, they grow normally. This is a personal choice, but note that the more you shave them, the thicker they grow. In the past, people did not shave their eyebrows and everything was fine! Unless there is a serious medical issue, it's best to leave them alone. Creams used to remove thick eyebrows are harmful due to their chemical content and can cause irritation or eye problems.

Gray hair (mvi) usually appears after age 35, but genetics, hormones, chemicals, alcohol, smoking, and highly acidic foods can cause premature graying.

Many women, upon reaching menopause and ceasing menstruation, start to grow facial hair. This poses psychological challenges, especially for younger girls. If this happens, it is advisable to have hormonal tests and seek medical advice. A woman wants to look like a woman—without beards—so if guidance is to be given, advise trimming with scissors instead of shaving, as shaving makes it worse.

Often, young girls should seek more medical guidance regarding such hormones.

Some causes of facial hair growth include:

Overproduction of hormones in the uterus

Tumors in the ovaries

Use of birth control pills

Use of cosmetics containing male hormones (testosterone or steroids)

Tumors near the adrenal glands

Excessive weight gain—which can cause male hormones (androgens)

Other bodily changes

For men, if you grow a beard, keep it clean and well-trimmed. If you choose to shave, do so neatly. Also, avoid excessively long hair. We once went for a preaching mission with a group from ShareHim.org, and they encountered a problem because one of the young men, aged 18, had dreadlocks and chose to keep long hair. This young man was one of the public speakers. The local members insisted he should cut his hair because, in their culture, he wouldn't be respected while preaching about Jesus. The young man argued, but eventually, he was removed from the schedule. They told him since he was already in Africa, he would instead be taken on a safari, but would not preach.

Artificial nails and nail polish cause infections, loss of nails, weakened fingertips, or bumps around the nail area. Lipstick - ask yourself, do you really need all these cosmetics? Often these colors are not healthy for everyday use and remove your natural skin pigment.

Eye makeup: These cause eye infections, skin irritation, blindness, hair loss, itchiness, skin cancer, allergies, pimples, and loss of eyelashes.

Creams, lotions, and shampoos: They can cause eye irritation, skin damage, skin burns, skin discoloration, wounds, bleeding, skin thinning, skin cancer, and sun sensitivity. Manufacturers often write that they are “natural,” but natural doesn't always mean good. Many plants are poisonous, harmful, or intoxicating! Even if something is labeled natural, it may still contain chemicals, bacteria, industrial fertilizers, or pesticides. Natural does not mean 100% pure, safe, or clean.

People using eye makeup or mascara often moisten the brush with saliva, causing infections. They sleep with makeup on, harming the eyes. When exposed to heat above 32°C, makeup can enter the eyes and damage the cornea, cause eyelashes to fall out, or lead to vision issues and blindness.

> “Though you wear scarlet, adorn yourself with gold jewelry, and paint your eyes with kohl, you beautify yourself in vain; your lovers despise you and seek your life.”

Often, jewelry and cosmetics are associated with rebellion, prostitution, adultery, or seduction. These things contribute little to spiritual health. Therefore, let us be moderate—because if everyone displays their wealth by decorating themselves with gold here and there, it becomes a show. Do your possessions have no use in God’s work, to hasten Christ’s return?

Even men are now adorning themselves to mislead others. In the past, even perfume was not used by men, but today some men wear stronger fragrances than women! Most cosmetic manufacturers are male chemists, and they would like women to use these products. Many women want to look good for their husbands and thus wear them. Here, a layman should tell his wife what he finds acceptable or not.

Strong perfumes should be avoided due to allergies or attracting inappropriate attention. Many scented soaps have caused allergies in people. The brown laundry bar soap is often better for many people, especially those with allergies.

History shows that jewelry often drew people away from true worship when they began to worship ornaments as idols or used them for self-display:

> “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Tell the Israelites, You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments so that I may decide what to do with you.’ So the Israelites stripped off their ornaments from Mount Horeb (Sinai) onward.”

In many cultures, body ornaments were a form of worship. We see Jacob telling his family, “Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, purify yourselves and change your clothes.”

Body piercings for jewelry cause skin issues like keloids (swelling of the earlobes).

Cosmetics: The use of cosmetics relates to one’s skin health. The skin protects the body from bacteria, fungi, harsh sunlight, regulates body temperature, removes body waste, aids non-verbal communication, produces oils, and helps synthesize vitamin D for immunity. Many modern cosmetics damage the skin because they

contain toxic and medicinal ingredients. They can erode the skin, nails, and hair. Many contain harmful substances like hydroquinone, cortisone, steroids, mercury, and others. The skin may develop spots, wrinkles, and lose its appeal. Other cosmetics thin the skin, making it easy to tear or slow to heal from major wounds. Some cause allergies, asthma, or cough due to their scent, or pimples on the body. Cosmetics containing female hormones interfere with a person's hormonal balance and can disrupt girls' menstrual cycles or cause other body changes. Some nail products contain formaldehyde or toluene—preservatives used for corpses or meat—which are harmful.

Healthy skin and nails depend more on good nutrition than cosmetics. Nutrients like calcium, protein, vitamins A and B are essential for healthy nails.

> Are you ready to accept yourself the way God created you?

For those using perfume, it's best if the scent is not too strong, to avoid triggering allergies (like sneezing) for yourself or others. Often, there are underarm deodorants that eliminate bad odor without strong perfume smells—these are better. But everyone has their own preferences. In the past, men didn't use perfumes, but nowadays, some men wear overwhelming fragrances. In short, everything should be done in moderation, especially for a preacher. Don't wear strong scents that distract people from the message. Try to avoid being the center of attention.

Nail hygiene is very important to avoid bacteria and illness. Clean thoroughly with soap, aloe vera, or garlic. Don't bite your nails—use a nail cutter or razor. A nail file also helps prevent nails from breaking. Don't use your nails to scratch recharge cards—it's unhealthy. Toenails should be soaked if they're hard to cut, or cut after bathing.

> We repeat: Are you content with how God made you, or do you want to look like someone else?

We've observed that our white counterparts are not ashamed of their hair or skin, but we often want to look like someone else. Contentment and godliness are very important.

s can affect hair. Often, changes in thickness or color can indicate your health condition.

Contentment and Godliness

Contentment along with godliness is a very important thing. Don't think you have no value unless you do certain things or appear a certain way. I strongly believe that many people who don't wear jewelry dress in a more showy and expensive manner than those who do wear jewelry! The key issue here is moderation. I've seen people wearing a \$200 scarf sneering at someone wearing a \$10 wig!

Underarm deodorants should be used with caution because they can affect the lymph nodes. Try to find non-toxic deodorants. Many contain aluminum, which is toxic, so avoid it. Some people have made their own deodorants using natural ingredients. A woman once told me that for shampoo, she mixes two tablespoons of vinegar and two tablespoons of baking powder with water—and it works very well for her. I'm currently researching natural, non-toxic underarm deodorant. I believe things like baking soda and vinegar can be good starting ingredients.

This week I saw in the newspapers that many dentists recommend brushing teeth with baking soda, salt, cloves, and hydrogen peroxide (diluted). Mixing all these makes a better toothpaste than commercial ones, and even using just one of them can be beneficial. Be cautious with fluoride—it has raised many questions. Those living near Mt. Meru may agree with this.

Check if your hair creams or oils contain placenta or female hormones and avoid them. African-American women have used these products more than we have, so we can learn from their experience because they have similar skin to ours and have used such products for a long time. They are very particular about clothing and hair, and I once read in a newspaper that, though they are a minority, they buy 80% of all clothes! I'm not sure about these figures, but because they are often perceived as poor, they feel the need to dress well to feel good or to avoid being seen as thieves when walking in affluent neighborhoods.

Research in their community shows many lost hair in adulthood due to chemical relaxers (perm), and breast cancer rates are almost double those of white women, partly because of using hair growth products that contain female hormones (estrogen). You can make your own hair oils if you are willing!

You can also make your own soaps—natural herbal soaps are better for your health (check YouTube for “how to make your own soap”). Many imported soaps nowadays cause allergies. The charcoal soap, once called “mbuni” soap, was

considered one of the healthiest! I've been given facial soaps from China said to enhance beauty. But I believe such products should be used with caution. True beauty comes from the Lord; when you know Him, He changes your perspective!

We should remember that many products from other countries do not meet quality standards—they bring substandard products to Africa, whereas in the West, they fear losing their markets and only supply high-quality goods. A Tanzanian songwriter once said, “What did we Africans do to God to deserve all the bad things? Anything bad is assigned to Africans.” My brother once told me, “If there's anyone who really needs to strive to enter heaven, it's the African, because we've been oppressed, exploited, and despised through slavery, colonialism, dictatorships, poverty, and neocolonialism. If we miss heaven, then we've missed both here and there!”

In general, make your lifestyle simple—even with body oils. Nothing is better than edible oils. You can find a fragrance and mix it with sunflower oil for application, instead of using petroleum jelly. Shea butter and cocoa butter are expensive in many countries but are natural African products and very good for the skin. Coconut oil has recently gained praise in research, both for consumption and external use! Avocado oil is also good but expensive. If you grow avocados, try extracting the oil yourself. Keep experimenting and create your own products.

In Conclusion

For an evangelist, the most important thing is to lift up Jesus—not to show off or be a spectacle. Don't lag behind by wearing outdated clothes, and don't go overboard chasing fashion trends. Fortunately, there are some outfits that are timeless (evergreen). They never go out of fashion. Most men will agree that their clothing doesn't change much in style—suits, when clean and polished, are always appropriate. Shine your shoes, and you're good to go.

Loving fashion too much, especially for followers of Christ, shows a heart focused on the wrong priorities. A woman who loves God will wear modest clothing that doesn't draw unnecessary attention. The best adornment for any woman or man is a gentle spirit, humility, and love for God. A person's character is reflected in how they dress.

People often wonder why others dress inappropriately at church. Dressing also needs support from men. Clothing is a complicated issue, especially for women,

because it is closely tied to spiritual awareness. Men don't face such temptations, although nakedness is an issue. You rarely see a man walking around shirtless or in very short shorts. It's said, "Men are tempted when they see women dressed seductively, and women are tempted to dress that way to attract men." Because of sin and falling short of God's glory, this becomes a direct equation: one desires, and the other wants to be desired.

There are three main things that bring down men—women, money, and power. Experts say if people don't look at your face but at a specific body part, you're probably dressed inappropriately. As Christians, we set a poor example for Muslims. We say we are the people of the Book, yet we dress in ways Jesus Himself would never endorse—WWJD (What Would Jesus Do)?

As parents, especially of daughters, it's a real challenge. You buy them decent clothes, but they change once out of the house, even in church, and you're surprised. Modest dressing in women doesn't start with clothes but with the heart. "My son or daughter, give me your heart." External behavior matters less than inner attitude and intention. The Pharisees did many outwardly good things, but their hearts were rotten.

A child told to sit down by her mother replied, "I'm sitting, but in my heart, I'm standing." This illustrates the proverb: "A person convinced against their will is of the same opinion still." Someone forced to do something will comply but remain the same inwardly.

People have set standards like skirts six inches below the knee, etc. Others have had their clothes cut by police but it didn't help. The main thing is: Do I dress in a way that pleases Jesus?

As parents, we must also avoid dressing young children in indecent clothes, especially short ones. Nakedness in children isn't very visible, so when they reach adolescence, they should already be accustomed to proper clothing. I know secondhand clothing (mitumba) has introduced strange fashions—let's be careful. By God's grace, none of us is perfect—we are all at the feet of the heavenly Father, learning as we go.

For religious leaders of all kinds, it's important to be cautious not to lose souls on this sensitive issue or act like Pharisees. Help gently, so the person can recover. True religion is likened to a woman dressed in honor versus one dressed like a

prostitute. Some of our sisters don't even know—they act in ignorance. But they need help. Designers of shoes, clothes, handbags, etc., are mostly men. If men decide they don't want a certain style, women will adapt. Women dress to please men, not other women (unless in the case of homosexuality).

I once asked my close relative, who wore very short dresses in the 70s even as a married woman with kids, why she dressed that way. She replied, “My husband used to buy them for me; he liked me in short dresses.” What was his intention? Men who help buy clothes for their wives—consider whether it's wise. Wanting others to desire your wife may be another trap of the enemy. What's the motive?

In all of this, our fathers, brothers, sons, and husbands must be part of the solution, because often, someone has no bad intention—they just need help (feedback). Sometimes we see things differently. Our culture of wearing a kanga across the chest or wrapping a kaniki has affected us; many women's clothes today expose the chest, even among older women. In our culture, we breastfeed in public, so nudity is not upper body but lower. However, in some places, breastfeeding in public without covering can lead to jail time—whether that's good or bad, I'm not sure.

I once asked a church sister, why do people expose private parts when we all have the same ones? She replied, “Because men don't have what we're showing.” I don't know if that's true.

On women wearing tight trousers that reveal the V-shape—many believe women shouldn't wear trousers, only dresses. But this might not be accurate. Some reformation groups wear trousers for practical activities like climbing trees. They wear loose trousers with long blouses covering the hips. Others wear dresses that are too tight, too short, or cut in indecent ways. In all things, let's exercise moderation and not judge too harshly—but there is a proper way to dress, and it's no secret. It starts from the heart.

Our mother Eve broke this rule. If we, the modern, restless Eves—or shallow scientists—break it too, we'll bring down our fathers, brothers, sons, and even our husbands. Is it worth it?

In the Word of God, men and women dressed similarly—robes, with undergarments like shorts—and the body was properly covered. Perhaps colors and tailoring differentiated gender.

Why should we wear clothes to cover nakedness? Why not just go around as we wish?

Answer: When we covered ourselves with leaves—perhaps only the front and back—God “slaughtered the Lamb to clothe us completely.” Meaning, after sin, we lost God’s glory that once covered us and became aware of our nakedness. We don’t look good walking around exposed, and even we won’t feel peace in our hearts. Our conscience will accuse us unless the Spirit of God has left us entirely.

Even Aaron and his descendants were told not to let their thighs show when serving in the temple, or the Lord’s wrath would burn against them. There is no attractive nakedness. God has created body parts that He wants covered, and if we slip up—which has happened to me too—let others in fellowship help us gently, as Matthew 18 instructs. Because we can’t claim to love God while doing just as we please.

Bottom line: Our Christian faith does not allow us to do whatever we want. Jesus has not given us the license to live however we wish. If you try to live by your will, and others do the same, what will happen? The great controversy is SELF. In this case, it’s about showing off, wanting to be seen.

Pride in clothing is no small matter—it is great evil, as time and money are spent adorning the body while neglecting heavenly virtues. External displays do nothing for spiritual matters. Satan continues to invent new fashions to waste people’s money and time, so their hearts are divided—giving almost all their strength to the world. People must be balanced—don’t buy ragged clothes, but dress neatly without extravagance or showing off.

Take time to visit the sick in hospitals, prisoners in jail, and those in need of clothes or food, instead of exhausting your mind on temporary things. Contentment and Godliness

Contentment and godliness are very important. Don’t think you have no value unless you do certain things or appear in a particular way. I strongly believe that there are many people who do not wear jewelry, yet their clothes are flashy and more expensive than those who do wear jewelry! But the main point here is moderation. I’ve seen people wearing a \$200 scarf, yet pointing fingers at someone wearing a \$10 wig!

Underarm cosmetics (deodorants) must be used with care as they affect the lymph nodes. Try to get underarm products that are non-toxic. Many contain aluminum, which is poisonous—so avoid applying them. Some people have made their own deodorants using natural ingredients. One lady told me that for her hair shampoo, she uses two tablespoons of vinegar, two tablespoons of baking soda, and water—and it helps her a lot. I’m currently investigating a non-toxic deodorant. I think you can start with ingredients like salt-based items such as baking soda and vinegar.

This week, I saw in the newspapers that many dentists recommend brushing teeth using baking soda, salt, cloves, and hydrogen peroxide (diluted). Mixing all these for brushing is better than regular toothpaste; even using just one of them can help. Be cautious with fluoride—it has raised many concerns. Those from Mt. Meru would likely agree with this. Check if hair creams or oils contain placenta or female hormones, and avoid them. African-American women in the U.S. have used these products more than we have, so we can learn from their experience and research since their skin resembles ours and they’ve used them for years. They are very concerned with fashion and hair. One article once stated that although they are a minority, they wear 80% of all clothes! I can't confirm these statistics, but since they are often perceived as disadvantaged, they want to dress well to feel better or to avoid being suspected of theft or being looked down upon in cities.

Some findings from their research noted that: many women lost hair as they aged due to hair perms; the rate of breast cancer is nearly twice that of white women, largely due to hair growth oils containing female hormones (estrogen). You can make your own hair oils—if you have the will!

You can even make your own soap—herbal soaps are healthier (check YouTube for “how to make your own soap”). Many foreign soaps today cause allergies. The charcoal soap, once called “mbuni soap,” is healthier than many others! I’ve been given Chinese facial soaps said to enhance beauty—I think such things should be used with caution. Beauty comes from the Lord—knowing Him changes your outlook!

Let’s remember that foreign products often lack proper quality standards when sent to Africa; they bring us what hasn’t passed quality checks, while in Western countries they fear market backlash and so only distribute good-quality items. A Tanzanian songwriter once sang, “What have we Africans done wrong to God?

Everything bad seems to be for Africans.” My brother once told me, “If there’s anyone who must strive to enter heaven, it’s the African—because we’ve been oppressed, abused, and scorned through slavery, colonialism, dictatorships, poverty, and neocolonialism. If we miss heaven, then we’ll have missed both here and there!”

Generally, make your lifestyle simple—even body oils. Nothing is better than food-grade oils. Find a fragrance to add to sunflower oil for your skin rather than using petroleum jelly. Shea and cocoa butters are expensive in many countries but are natural products found in Africa and are very good for the skin. Coconut oil has recently gained a lot of praise in research, both for eating and for applying. Avocado oil is also great, though expensive—if you grow avocados, try extracting the oil yourself! Keep experimenting and make your own oil.

In Conclusion:

For an evangelist, the greatest task is to lift up Jesus—not to show off or become a spectacle. Don’t lag behind wearing things that are outdated, nor be too forward, always chasing fashion trends. However, we’re fortunate that there are outfits that are timeless (evergreen). They never go out of style. I think most men will agree that their clothes aren’t much affected by fashion. A clean suit can be worn year after year, and once your shoes are polished, you’re good to go.

Loving fashion excessively as a follower of Christ means allowing your heart to be filled with priorities that shouldn’t come first. A woman who loves God will dress modestly and not appear as though she’s trying to draw too much attention. The best adornment for any woman or man is the adornment of a gentle spirit, humility, and love for God. A person's character is related to what they wear.

People often ask why others dress inappropriately in church. Matters of dressing also require help from men. Dressing is a complex issue because it is closely tied to one’s spiritual awareness—especially for ladies. Men do not face these temptations as much, although nakedness is typically from the waist down rather than above; you rarely see men shirtless or in short shorts on the streets.

They say, “Men are tempted when they see women dressing immodestly, and women are tempted to entice men so they may be desired.” This is a direct proportional equation—he who desires and she who wants to be desired.

There are three things that bring down a man—women, money, and power. Experts say that if people don't look at your face but at certain parts of your body, it's likely you are dressed inappropriately. As Christians, we set a poor example compared to Muslims. They are told, if they can't read the Book, then observe the people of the Book. Yet we dress in ways that Jesus wouldn't—WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?)—He wouldn't do such things.

For us parents with daughters, it's a challenge. When we go shopping for clothes, it's not easy. What I want as a parent, they don't want. They dress decently at home, but once outside, they change. You may be shocked by what they wear to church, even though you were just with them at home.

For a woman, modest dressing doesn't begin with clothing—it starts with the heart. Modesty of ladies does not start from the clothes, but from the heart: “My son or daughter, give me your heart.” External actions are not the main point—what matters is the intent and the heart. Mindset and attitude.

The Pharisees did many good deeds, but their hearts were rotten. A child once got scolded by their mother to sit down, and after repeated commands, the child said, “I am sitting, but in my heart I am standing.” That proverb is true: “A person convinced against their will is of the same opinion still.” When someone is forced to do something against their will, they may do it, but they are still the same person in their heart.

Some have measured skirts to be six inches below the knee, or this or that. Others have had their clothes cut with scissors by police, yet it didn't help. The most important thing is: Do I want to please my Jesus with the way I dress?

As parents, let's also remember: when a child is young, don't dress them in indecent or short clothes. A child's nakedness may not seem obvious, but when they grow to about 14, they need to know how to dress properly and be accustomed to modest clothes.

I know secondhand clothes (mitumba) have brought strange fashions—so let's be cautious, by God's grace. None of us are perfect; we all sit at the feet of our heavenly Father, the ultimate parent, to learn.

Religious leaders of all kinds also need to be careful so we don't lose souls over this sensitive matter or become like Pharisees. Let's gently help people heal from

this issue. True religion is likened to a woman dressed with honor—not one clothed like a harlot.

It's true some of our sisters don't know better; they do these things unknowingly, and they need help. After all, the designers of shoes, clothes, handbags, etc., are men. If men would declare, "We don't want this style; we'll design this way," women would simply follow. Because, truly, a woman dresses to please a man, not another woman—unless there is a same-sex desire.

So, our men—when designing—should be cautious. A woman may be educated, but she was created to delight a man (in a good way). A relative of mine in the 1970s, when I was a child, wore extremely short clothes, though she was married with children. I asked her recently about it, and she said, "It was my husband who bought them—he liked me in short clothes." What was his intention? I don't know.

Men who help us buy clothes—keep this in mind: wanting other men to admire your wife is another trap of the enemy. What's your motive?

Ultimately, our fathers, brothers, sons, and husbands can be a help to us. Sometimes a person has no bad intentions—they just need feedback—because often we view things differently.

Our culture of wearing a kanga across the chest or the simple wrap (kaniki) has influenced us. Some women's clothes these days expose the chest, even among older women. Perhaps it's cultural—since we breastfeed openly, nudity is not considered from above but below. However, in some places, a woman breastfeeding publicly without covering can be jailed. I don't know if that's good or bad.

I once asked a sister in church, "Why do people reveal private parts when we all have them?" She said, "Because men don't have what we have to show." I don't know if that's true.

When women wear tight trousers that show the V-shape, many argue women shouldn't wear trousers, only dresses. But that might not be the full truth. I know some modest women who wear trousers when doing specific work like climbing trees—but the trousers are loose, paired with a blouse that covers the backside. Meanwhile, some dresses are tight, cut oddly, and too revealing. In everything, let's be moderate and not overly critical. But the fact remains: there is a way to

dress—and it's no secret. This way comes from the heart. Our mother Eve broke this principle—and if we break it too (as modern restless Eves or self-assured scientists), we'll bring down our fathers, brothers, sons, and even husbands. Is it worth it?

In the Word of God, men and women wore similar clothes—robes with shorts underneath—and the body was well-covered. Perhaps colors and designs were what distinguished men from women. Why should we wear clothes to cover our nakedness? Why not walk however we want?

Answer: When we covered ourselves with small leaves—just front and back—God "killed a Lamb to clothe us completely." That is, after sin, the glory of God we once wore departed, and we became naked. We don't look good walking around exposed—and we won't feel peace in our hearts either. If the Holy Spirit hasn't left your heart, your conscience will convict you.

Even with men, Aaron and his family were told not to let their thighs be seen when they went to the temple, lest the LORD's anger burn against them. There's no attractive nakedness. God created body parts and told us which to cover. If we neglect that—which I myself have done—let the fellowship help us lovingly, as Matthew 18 says. We cannot say we love God and then do whatever we want.

Bottom line: Our Christian faith does not allow us to do as we please. This Jesus of ours never gave us permission to act however we like. Try doing whatever you want—and others doing the same. What would happen? The great battle is against SELF—selfishness. And in this case, it's about showing off—wanting to be seen.

The pride of clothing is no small thing—it is a great evil. Time and money are spent decorating the body, while the time for developing heavenly character is neglected. External show doesn't help spiritual matters. Satan is constantly inventing new styles to consume people's money and time so that their hearts are divided—and almost all their strength is given to the world.

We must also have balance. One shouldn't buy poor-quality clothes—but they should be neat, without extravagance or showiness. Find time to visit the sick in hospitals, prisoners in jails, and those in need of clothing or food—instead of wasting your mind on temporary things.

CHAPTER 24

THE ALPHABET OF PARENTING

Since parenting for laypeople is essential, we'll briefly touch on it so that our children won't become a shame to us as lay Christians. A child with bad behavior brings shame to the mother, but good behavior brings honor to the father. Many mothers can relate to this. It's best for mothers to stay close to their young children whenever possible. Don't delegate this vital responsibility to someone else. If you can stay at home to raise them, remember: children are extremely important.

Many mothers today entrust their children to nannies, who may not have the same understanding or deep concern for the child's future. We strongly advise against sending children to boarding schools, at least until secondary school, and even then, only if necessary. A child learns about God best at home and understands how to relate to others and prepare for marriage within the family setting. Sadly, some parents have been replaced by staff at boarding schools—fathers become "uncles," and caregivers become "mothers." Stay with your children. Read parenting books. We have written one and can send it to you at an affordable price.

No one is a perfect parent, but God's Word gives this promise: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." That's a promise—our role is to do our part and claim the rest from God. There's no better parenting book than the Bible. Books like *Child Guidance* are excellent because they are written by those who sincerely love God. Such books are rare in our region, but we should pray that we can access them here in East Africa.

A child is a child, whether they are the child of a church leader or of an ordinary citizen. Yet people often harshly judge leaders' children. For example, if your child refuses a request, someone might say, "And you're the child of a church elder? How arrogant!" A pastor's child in South Africa once told me he felt pressured to be either rebellious or hypocritical because of church members' comments. Remember, your call to serve God is yours—not your child's. One day, they will make their own choices. Raise them as children of God whom you want to see in heaven, not as people with special status. They must know God personally, because faith is not inherited. God has no grandchildren—only sons and daughters.

Give your time to your children. A father who is always away at church programs and one who is always in bars may have the same impact—the child only sees absence. He doesn't know the difference; you do. And when you return, he observes how much you care. Show love without limits—whether your child is well-behaved or not. Even God corrects and disciplines us in love. Don't discipline your child in anger—it must be an act of love.

Choose your child's toys carefully. These days, some dolls have strange appearances and are linked to occult themes. Some like Barbie dolls promote promiscuity and corrupt ideas not fit for a child's mind. To children, play is as serious as life is to adults. They often can't distinguish between fiction and reality. Be cautious and investigate harmful toys. One author wrote a book called *Tumult in the Toy Box* and listed toys that children should not own.

In the past, grandmothers and helpful neighbors taught young mothers about child-rearing, but now many live in cities or far-off areas without such support. Some new mothers have no idea how to care for their babies. We get advice from television that often lacks sound moral values, and we let children watch anything or wander without supervision. The use of plastic diapers has made even simple toilet-training less common. In my neighborhood, six-year-olds still wear diapers simply because mothers don't have time to train them. Meanwhile, these children know how to use computers, have boyfriends or girlfriends—but are still in diapers. Don't let TV or society raise your child.

Create a checklist of what to teach your child—don't assume they'll just learn on their own. Character is the only thing your child will take to heaven—not their toys, cars, clothes, or food. We'll find better things in heaven than these. As Scripture says: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived—the things God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Raising children is more than giving food, clothing, and shelter. They need our love, example, time, and instruction.

The first lesson a child should learn is obedience. It's the most important lesson. Since children don't see God, if they learn to obey their parents, they will one day obey God. You are their example. If you want your child to reflect God's character, you must demonstrate it yourself. They learn more from what you do than what

you say. Children observe everything—your tone, your behavior. If you're harsh, they will be too. If you tell them to read the Bible but don't read it yourself, they notice. Watch how you speak to your spouse, to your parents, to church members, to the poor, to orphans and widows. Be careful—very careful. You can only achieve this through God's grace and intentional devotion to His Word. As Psalm 119:110 says, "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word." The Word in your heart will transform your children through your example.

I've heard mothers say crushing things to their children like, "You dog, just like your father," or "Lizard! You'll never succeed." If a child's father is a "dog," then the child will be one too? Harsh words are like heavy stones. Insults are an addiction we must ask God to remove, especially when directed at children.

The second lesson children must learn is self-denial and self-control. This enables them to resist temptation and take responsibility.

The third lesson is work and skill. This is even more important than school, because one day we send them to school so they can earn a living. If you're unsure what chores are appropriate at what age, read McCullough's work or our own book *Alphabet of Parenting*. Also check out *401 Ways to Get Your Children to Work*.

Many children fall into alcohol, smoking, bad groups, and immoral behavior because they never learned these three lessons.

Choose entertainment wisely. Avoid taking children to discos or certain types of parties if you want them to love God and others. Our grandparents avoided such things even with little education—why expose our children to such evil now? Learn what healthy entertainment looks like. I remember the inter-school discos in secondary schools like Ndanda and Rugambwa, and the immorality they produced. I speak from what I witnessed.

Avoid competitive sports. They foster aggression and pride. Encourage games for fun and exercise—not for rivalry. Teach children to lose gracefully, as a chance to bond and strengthen their bodies—not to harbor resentment.

A layman may be too busy with leadership to spend much time with his children. The mother should plan meals and chores so that when he's home, he can spend quality time with them. He might help with homework or play with them, depending on the situation.

Study ways to help your children love God. Books like *Yes, We Can Keep Them in Church* by Tetz and Hopkins, and *Grow a Word Changer* by Adventist Frontier Missions, are great resources. Let's keep learning from others—no one has all the knowledge. There are many books to help our children continue worshipping with us, because when they reach around 13 years of age, they want to be independent and may resist attending church. Statistics show that 75% of all children accept and trust in God before they turn 10, and 23% before they reach 17. After that, it's almost like everything is over! Beyond that point, it is only by the great grace of God that people come to believe—only 1% of people trust in God after the age of 53. I want to point out that even Satan believes that God exists, but his intentions and actions are evil—he does not want to worship God. So teach children that believing in God alone is not enough; they must know and trust Him.

Many cruel children, when investigated, were found to have had mothers who raised them with extreme harshness. For example, the mothers of Hitler, Idi Amin, or Napoleon. Mothers, let us pray to God for love that comes from Him for our children.

It is said that by age 3, a child's character has already been formed, and by age 6, it is fully developed. The Catholics say, "Give me a child until they are 7, then take them away, and they will remain Catholic for life." "Bend a fish while it is still young," they say. The child Samuel may have stayed with his mother until about age 5, but he was already prepared to be a brave leader for God. Moses also stayed with his mother until he was about 12 and became a champion of God. Even a child is known by their deeds. Do not despise small beginnings. Jeremiah 1 says, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I sanctified you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations. Then I said, 'Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.' But the Lord said to me, 'Do not say, I am a youth, for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you,' says the Lord."

Sometimes, a spiritual leader is so focused on solving people's problems and attending to various calls that he forgets his own children. His wife may feel that her husband does not care. Perhaps he is exhausted from hearing problems all day, and when he gets home, he doesn't want to deal with more issues from the children or his wife. When the wife reaches this point, she longs for a husband and father to her children—not just a preacher or spiritual leader. A pastor might have

MaarifaMtandaoni.Com RohoYaUnabii.Net pg. 345

promised his child that he would attend their football game, but when church members start calling, he cancels. He should learn to evaluate whether the call is truly urgent; if not, let the message be taken and delivered later so that he can have time to raise his children. Just like Moses was advised by his father-in-law Jethro to delegate responsibilities and not do everything himself, this is important so that he can also serve his family.

It's also important that his family gets rest, like sleeping at night instead of having guests and talking until dawn. This creates chaos, especially for young children. There needs to be balance in family matters. Children should not grow up without any time with their father. I know that children of spiritual leaders understand to some extent that they will have to tolerate certain things. Children should learn that order is a principle of heaven. There should be set times for meals, sleep, prayer. Children love order from birth—it brings discipline. A newborn should have regular feeding times, for example every three hours. This helps them develop personal organization and discipline in adulthood. Feeding them every time they cry will make them lack self-control or discipline. Some children admire their father's work for certain reasons. For example, they get to meet many people and have useful connections. Take your children with you when preaching, teach them the work so they can inherit and gain experience in lay ministry. Don't exclude them. Bring them along to lay meetings when possible.

Teach your child to love your lay ministry. Do not be full of complaints and grumbling to the point that your children begin to hate lay ministry and God. If you have complaints, speak privately with your spouse. Many have cursed their own children, who then abandon the faith and say, "I know the people in that church; I've heard my father talk about them—they are all hypocrites! Why should I stay in the faith or in church?" My in-law and his wife used to gossip about pastors, members, and leaders often in front of their children. That was poison, and I saw its effects in their children until I became afraid. Let's pray for wisdom—sometimes even your spouse doesn't need to know everything about your church members or your fears; select wisely what to share with your family. Sometimes you reconcile with a member, but your family still dislikes them, unaware that you have already made peace.

Let's consider the example of Abraham, when he was told to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. He evaluated the faith and love of his wife and saw that it wasn't as strong as his own. I believe he didn't tell his wife, only his son. He had to tell the

boy about God's plan. And the boy was spiritually mature—he had grown in faith. That's no small matter!

I once read a newspaper about 24 pastors in Australia from the same extended family—grandfathers, cousins, uncles, etc. I was amazed, because usually we speak negatively about ministry and discourage our children. We make them and our wives feel like we are martyrs. Yet God's work has its joys too. I saw many pastors receiving abundant gifts from members. Haven't you ever received gifts from members as you tend the spiritual fields of their souls? A friend of mine in Kenya, married to a pastor, told me many times, "Many wives of church workers complain too much about the church. I think it's a curse because the church pays our rent, covers 75% of our children's school fees, and members give us gifts. We get almost free medical care, paid for by the church. Yet people still complain." Avoid the habit of complaining. Before you began serving the Lord, you deeply desired to do so—but as time passes, you feel cheated and think others are benefiting more than you. Pray that this spirit leaves you. I went through this myself. When I got my first salary, I thought I was underpaid! After two years, I started grumbling that these people were cheating me! It is very easy, without Jesus, to fall into the Israelite trap of grumbling, and often with what seem like good reasons.

For example, John the Baptist may have thought, "Jesus is my cousin, and I'm doing good work—why isn't He helping me?" His faith was shaken, but eventually he understood: "He must increase, and I must decrease." The Word says, "Among those born of women, none is greater than he!" I don't even know what that means—after all, everyone is born of a woman, except Adam and Eve!

A child should not be shielded from the reality, joys, or pains of ministry. They need to understand the struggles of people so they know the burden their father carries and get some sense of the journey of life. They need to know that people are not perfect and that some make life hard for spiritual leaders. Children can be included in special prayers for such families and in supporting ministry in some appropriate way, for matters that are not too private. A pastor's wife once said, "Children of God's servants who hate their fathers' work have not been educated about the pains, beauty, and pressures of ministry. There's so much in ministry that children can learn from—for example, meeting people of different languages, tribes, and families, learning from their testimonies, interacting with professionals and benefiting from their services since they are led by their father,

having a morally upright father who is not a thief or drunkard, knowing God closely, and praying in all hardships.”

Some believe children should not be involved in ministry so that they don't have a negative experience. But it is precisely because of the battle between Satan and God's kingdom that children should be involved—they could be a blessing to the work. But families must choose. Look at missionary families abroad and locally—how their total family commitment, including small children, has led to great success! Gently remind your husband that the children miss him and that they will soon grow up and leave home.

One thing I've observed in Western countries, which in my opinion weakens ministry, is having a wife who holds more authority and decision-making power than the spiritual leader. This becomes difficult, especially when you feel God has called you to a certain ministry or place, and your wife is completely opposed. I have seen pastors who are transferred to lead somewhere, and the wife refuses outright because she has an important job, and the pastor is expected to follow her. If this man had an ordinary job, that would be fine. But in the work of serving God, priority should be given to this calling—if people truly want to do this work. Because we are at war with Satan, and if we treat it lightly, we will fall on the battlefield.

CHAPTER 25

THE LAY MOVEMENT AND SPIRITUAL LEADERS

As laypeople, we are involved in counseling those with problems and solving issues within our fellowships. Visiting the sick, conducting funeral services, board committee meetings, counseling engaged couples, raising children, and addressing family and community issues—although these are important responsibilities, it's necessary to occasionally step back and rest for restoration. This helps us to be of more service in the future, rather than burning out and losing the passion for our work. A layperson may have to counsel a father whose child is rebelling, a mother who has been beaten by her husband, or a woman who has had a miscarriage. All of these burdens weigh heavily. You are, in a way, taking on the weaknesses of others. You need to be nourished and comforted by your fellow believers.

If you feel compelled to start a lay group, that is a good thing, because every initiative begins with the vision of one person. If your group already exists but is dwindling, perhaps you can take the lead to revive it. If you feel unready to join any group because you have other means to manage your current situation or you are too busy, that is also acceptable. Needs differ based on individual personalities and the members involved. Some churches are very large, with many people and varied needs, while others are small.

Laypeople can even host members from other churches or denominations. We are advised to pray for and with people of different denominations. Some might fear that their faith will be compromised, while others may take this opportunity to share their testimony and assist others in God's work. Today, we had Pastor Don Jacobson and his wife who are involved in prayer ministry here in the U.S. He shared that in California there was a large meeting where Pastor Vandeman from "It Is Written" preached. He told all members to bring a non-member guest, otherwise not to come! The members were upset and offended. Upon investigation, it was discovered that it was the church elders who had no one to bring! They had been in the faith so long that they didn't have even one non-member friend!

Many laywomen also enjoy having their own support groups to help each other in different matters. There are many women who become our "Elizabeths." They help with advice and encourage us. We couldn't accomplish our work without God using such people. "When Mary received the shocking and heavy news that she

would give birth to a Child called Jesus, who would save people from their sins,” she was a young girl, possibly in her teens. We are not told that she told her mother, sister, or aunt—but that she traveled far to tell Elizabeth. In our lives, God has placed Elizabeths who, when we speak to them, they listen and comfort us during critical moments. Even if you’re married, other women in similar ministries as you and your husband can help strengthen your journey. Perhaps Paul and Silas and Barnabas and Mark were like that.

Groups help build fellowship, and as you grow and develop trusting relationships, you can discuss life and service issues. Friendships can be formed with fellow laypeople, so that your loneliness decreases compared to when you’re by yourself. Sometimes, because of denominational lines in the churches we serve, we may feel alone even though surrounded by many people. You can discuss your problems and find solutions from others or arrive at solutions after reflecting on what you heard. Thoughts and problem-solving foster friendships—avoid gossip. These groups may even help you more than professional counselors. Long-time laypeople can serve as mentors for others. You can take time to pray together. They say “prayer is 50% of studying the Word of God.”

Be cautious if you’re learning things that may not align with your family’s values. Some shared group activities can include reading and discussing a book, picnicking and praying together, going to the market, learning a skill like carpentry, or evangelizing together. Once a year, you can all meet with your spouses and get to know each other.

Pray about whether this is something suitable for you; give the Holy Spirit time to guide you, and talk to your spouse about your intention. Call other laypeople nearby and explain the idea of the group. Discuss how to get members and where to meet. You may have a leader, but rotate leadership during meetings. No single layperson should have ultimate authority. Often, it’s best if the group doesn’t exceed 12 people to foster closer relationships—small groups are more effective. Meeting once a month, every two months, or even quarterly is fine. If invitations or any costs are involved, members can contribute financially. To ensure effectiveness, members should commit for one year. Confidentiality is important, especially for members who come and go and might share private matters elsewhere. Everyone should be listened to, and what’s said should stay within the group.

Although this is a book for laypeople, many forget and begin their meetings without prayer. He should be number one! Begin every meeting with prayer, take prayer requests, praise God, and then pray in pairs. Everyone should write their prayer requests in their notebooks. Writing down our prayers is crucial, especially when they're answered—it strengthens us and gives us evidence. I've been doing this for five years now, and it has strengthened me. During discussions, feel free to pause the meeting to pray for a need. This is not a formal office function with strict rules. You can kneel or stand, but kneeling is wonderful—it brings glory to God. The angels in heaven always kneel and praise; how much more should we on earth, in our weakness, rejoice in praising our God! Jesus, our Lord, also knelt! The Lord dwells in the praises of His people. Songs of praise should not be rare!

Your group will grow based on the personalities and needs of the people; and it will become rooted and a support not only spiritually but also socially, during times of grief or joy. You will find your time well spent and become a better person. It's not just you who benefits, but also your spouse and children. Maybe you were sorrowful because of the struggles in your fellowship, but now you have brothers and sisters doing the same work and realize your burdens are not yours alone—everyone has their own challenges.

Personal Testimony of Being in a Lay Group:

I would like to share my testimony of being part of a lay movement. In 1996, I discovered lay fellowships, as I've mentioned, and we went to Rhode Island, USA. Since then, every year we've attended two lay conventions—regional and national. Meetings are important. I live in a place where there are many spiritual meetings, yet many think they don't need them because they believe they know it all. Not so! The Bible says one will chase a thousand and two will put ten thousand to flight. The English call this "synergy." One plus one should equal two, but with God, it becomes ten times more! I know that laypeople do a lot and could continue alone, but unity is strength! Where one layperson could win 10 souls, with advice and fellowship, they can win 20. A layperson should not be an island without reason, isolating from others. I'd like to testify to a few things I wouldn't have achieved if I hadn't worked with fellow laypeople, pastors, or attended spiritual meetings.

I want to say that every layperson has many testimonies in God's work, and each could write books about them. But we must pray for our nation to develop a

culture of reading and writing books! George Müller, a German who started orphanages in England and cared for 10,000 orphans, was a hero of faith. Layperson, seek and read his stories—they are amazing. There are people whose testimonies you should read to run this race with a great heart, like William Carey (missionary to India), Adoniram Judson (missionary to India), Brother Andrew of the Netherlands, and thousands of others.

Müller vowed never to ask for anything from anyone to meet the needs of the orphans—only through prayer! When he died, his children read his daily diaries. He had recorded every prayer and its answer for 50 years, resulting in 50 volumes. He had 50,000 answered prayers over those 50 years! Layperson, keep similar records of the great works of Almighty God.

Here are examples of my testimonies from being in the lay ministry: Once, at a lay convention, we had a ministry booth. There were around 300 booths, and next to ours was “Bibles for Africa.” I asked the man and his wife which countries they helped in Africa. They said “Kenya.” I told them Kenya has more Bibles than Congo. I shared a story told to me by Pastor Msafiri Mtenzi, who ministers in Congo—that they had gone to 14 villages without finding a single Bible, and in the fifteenth village they found one missing the books of Moses and Paul’s letters! They were seeking donations from laypeople to buy 1,000 Bibles. I ran to call Evangelist Barry Mosier and Pastor Mtenzi from their “Congo Frontline” booth to speak with them. Months later, they called me and said they had been given \$80,000 by this ministry to purchase 10,000 Bibles. Glory to God! Their goal was not only reached but exceeded. Hallelujah! I have many such testimonies from lay ministry.

One prominent lay leader from a certain Christian group in Kenya named Francis Njoroge requested an invitation to a lay ministry meeting in the U.S. When he arrived, he shared his passion for starting a television station. We visited the Gospel Ministries of Pastor David Gates and 3ABN Television. Pastor Gates agreed to come to Kenya, and in 2012 they went. The Kenyan government granted them a channel, and they continued that ministry. Truly, as laypeople, we may not do much alone, but we can be like Apostle Andrew. He brought people together. He told his brother Peter, “Come and see the Messiah,” and he told Jesus, “The Greeks are looking for you.” He had the simple role of being a connector. We have connected many people to go and preach in different places by the grace of Jesus. We may not have the gift to design outreach programs, but if we use those created

by others or follow their advice, the Lord blesses. Small things, when committed to God, are elevated.

For example, at a lay ministry convention, I met Elder Fjarli and his wife, laypeople from Oregon, USA. They had a large construction business and decided to use their wealth to build churches in India. By the time we met, they had built 500 churches. I shared with them my husband's and my desire to build a church in India but said we lacked the funds. They said, "No problem." It costs \$5,000 to build a small church. They showed us the design. We hoped for funding, but at that time, my boss denied me annual leave, saying it was a new year and I'd lost the previous year's benefits. I was upset. A new boss came, and I explained my past injustice. He wrote it down but told me not to expect too much. A month later, my coworker laughed and said, "I have your check, let's split it." When he gave it to me, I opened it and found enough money to build one church in India! Praise the Lord! We sent it that same week to Layperson Fjarli, who helped us build a church in India.

Beloved, I have many such stories—as you do too! Even today I called a layperson from Tanga and another from Umasaini to share their testimonies. Every day we are surrounded by the mighty acts of the Lord. Hebrews 11 says, "What more shall I say..." and then recounts the great acts of faith. You, layperson, today are continuing to write the acts of faith of Hebrews 11.

Other lay intercessors have blessed me greatly. I met them practicing united prayer. They say that where two or three are gathered and pray, the Lord answers (Matthew 18). This ministry has helped me immensely in praying with other laypeople. Wherever we go—in the valleys, mountains, and plains—we feel we are working together as a team, scoring goals together. Hallelujah!

CHAPTER 26

MENTORING OTHERS TO BECOME LAY MINISTERS

As human beings, we build each other up and support one another in many ways. Unity is strength, division is weakness. Sadly, today many prefer to live alone. Even husbands and wives would prefer to spend only two days together a week and the rest of the time apart! The ability to tolerate others has greatly diminished, and the practice of mentoring others to do better work is disappearing. Iron sharpens iron. Being a coach and teaching others the work of lay ministry is very important.

Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:2, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.” Raising others to help in the ministry is one of the key duties of a lay preacher and of any follower of Christ. Mentoring others to do what you do is a form of multiplication. A lay minister cannot work alone; many are needed to join this army. For the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Furthermore, a lay minister will age and eventually die, so he must prepare someone to take his place. Train others well so they can do the work even better than you. Take the young people in the church and involve them in public preaching, house-to-house visits, and healing ministries, and train them both in theory and practice.

Do not be selfish, thinking someone might surpass you—let them increase, and you decrease! As public preaching continues daily, have a class to train lay evangelists. I saw Evangelist Herry Mhando use this method with great success. It is very important to pass on your techniques. There are no secret methods—don’t hide those that bring success and glory to Christ. The methods you know and use are goals scored for the Kingdom of God. Every preacher should have a plan to train others in the work they do. You are only one person, but if you train 100 others, you will have 100 people doing the work you do, bearing fruit a hundredfold!

Take time to build friendships, even with people from different backgrounds. We see that Zacchaeus was from a different background, but when he saw that Christ was willing to befriend him, he was ready to become a lay minister. Look for open doors among those who want your friendship. Ask what they like, and take time to build relationships. Take time to understand people's problems, how to help them, and build bridges with them. Do not be a person who constantly blames others. See in every person a future disciple of Jesus. Strive not to lose focus. Be

intentional in seeking converts and followers of Jesus. Be steadfast; persuade someone and move forward with them. When the Samaritan woman spoke with Jesus, she was ready to call everyone to come and hear: “Come and see...”

God is not looking for people with extraordinary talents but for those who are willing to be used and depend on Him to bring Him glory. You may waste time with someone talented, thinking they will greatly help the ministry, only to find they become a stumbling block. Humility and wisdom go hand in hand and are extremely important. Remember, the fruit of the Spirit is the most important thing—then the gifts of the Spirit. Any humble worker will accomplish great things, touching that which echoes to the end of time. Where others bring in tens for Christ, such a person will bring in thousands. Use the talent of Barnabas (the son of encouragement). By encouraging others, he helped people like Mark to do God’s work. The young women and men in your fellowship are an army ready to serve God if properly trained.

We see people like Elizabeth who were used to encourage Mary when she was going through a difficult time, when others weren’t ready to believe her. This helped Mary to continue with the will and work of God given to her. We see that the laywoman Mary was a young girl, perhaps under 20 years old, yet she was ready to serve the Lord: “Your servant is listening...”

We must also understand that God has no grandchildren, only children. Those of us born into faith families must take our personal faith seriously. We see the sons of Sceva, a high priest, who would have become priests themselves, being asked by the devil, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?” The devil beat them up and tore off their clothes, leaving them naked. Today, many are fighting or being fought, but being left spiritually naked by the very “friend” you serve is a great blow. If we serve the devil, he will indeed betray us.

Titus 2 gives us a model to follow (please read it). Older men are to be temperate, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in endurance—not slanderers, holy in conduct, and teachers of good. This character is instructive for young people and new converts. Well-trained youth form a mighty army in the work of the Lord. Let no one discredit our lay ministry or our faith due to our conduct and thus stop serving God.

Teaching young women will add value to their homes. For example: loving their husbands and children, being self-controlled and pure, working at home, being kind, and being subject to their husbands so that God's word is not dishonored. Doing this is being a disciple of JESUS! Elderly widowed women have time to help young women and mothers walk in godliness and teach their children. These should be used by the church and empowered to give teachings that make disciples of Jesus.

I saw one widow this year speaking to newly married women. She noticed many were complaining about their duties, unruly children, and living with their husbands. She told them how she wished time could turn back and her husband be with her again to ease her loneliness and help with the challenges of life. She urged them to enjoy the time with their young children and to teach them morals and life skills, because soon the children would leave home or the women would become widows like her.

Young women are the ones who will take up the current ministry roles of women in churches today. Women are raising laypeople, preachers, and heroes of the faith. This is no small task. This is not the time for complaints, gossip, or criticism. Timothy writes to Titus to help the church raise tomorrow's evangelists. He was to teach them the doctrines of life. Young women will truly understand Proverbs 31 as they observe older women who have gone before them. Naomi was an elderly woman, but she encouraged Ruth daily. Ruth was ready to listen to Naomi. Perhaps Naomi herself learned from Ruth how to let go of bitterness in her heart ("Call me Mara, not Naomi"). Likewise, Timothy was taken by Paul and trained in God's work. His mother Eunice and grandmother Lois worked to train him into a warrior and lay minister for Christ. Deuteronomy 6 reminds us: "Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up..."

Sometimes we are blessed by being taught, and sometimes we bless others by teaching them to become champions in God's work. It is a two-sided coin.

Young men too must be admonished with moderation in all things, being examples of good works, showing integrity and dignity in teaching, and using sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that anyone who opposes may be ashamed, having nothing bad to say about us.

Teaching new converts and young people is very important because they need to grow and not be tossed around by every wind of teaching, or the cunning and deceit of men. It helps them grow in love and reach Christ, who is the head.

It is not true when a layperson says, “I cannot teach.” Our actions teach and are copied! Everyone is a coach in their own way, even without knowing it. It seems Paul wrote this to Timothy as something important, not optional. I believe age doesn't matter here, but rather spiritual maturity. Everyone can learn from another based on experience—either their own or someone else's. You might think you don't have sound teachings to offer, but if you're a layperson striving to grow in faith and obedience, then you do have teachings that bring life.

Being a spiritual mentor to someone does not mean you're holy or theologically trained! Not at all! It simply means you are growing in the grace revealed to you to reject worldly passions and to live a self-controlled, upright, and godly life. You never know whom you might give hope to, based on the mess in their life—but the Lord will bring you into contact with such people.

Set aside time; do not always be someone too busy and avoiding people. Don't disappear and reappear at will. Answer people's questions, letters, or calls—especially those you are mentoring. Many laypeople have a habit of not replying to letters or calls. When you meet them and ask if they received your message, they say yes. You don't have to say yes to everything asked of you, but respond politely and explain what is not possible.

A layperson who is diligent in their work and has good communication bears much fruit. Don't think you're doing people a favor by replying to their messages. No—it is ministry.

And when you are low, the Lord will connect you with people who will build you up.

The profound words of Mary in the Magnificat, which have encouraged the whole world, were spoken only when she entered Elizabeth's home. It seems they already had a relationship—perhaps they used to write letters to each other, or spent time together doing chores like sorting rice—supporting one another with ideas and building their friendship. Mary felt joy and safety being near Elizabeth. She didn't go to her mother to talk about the great work God had given her, but to the one with whom she had built a friendship and who was her mentor.

Elizabeth said, “Why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” Mary replied, “I am the servant of the Lord.” We see Mary speaking humbly from the beginning. It is important to be humble both when being taught and when teaching.

Psalm 133 says: “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” Elizabeth’s words affirmed to Mary that she had been chosen for a great task. Many times, we fear going to people who are busy, who don’t take time to help us with the doubts we have about the Word or lay ministry work. When we ask, they don’t respond—even if we are right in front of them. Everyone prefers going to someone who is approachable, encouraging, and helpful in teaching the work of lay ministry. Layperson, look at this opportunity to mentor and raise others, especially the youth.

Don’t be a moody person! When someone approaches you for encouragement or teaching in ministry, don’t show off as if you know everything, or wear a sour expression that puts up a barrier. Speak openly so that the person is refreshed. For the young ones you intend to help, don’t disappear whenever you want and reappear only when you feel like it or when there’s some personal benefit—be it emotional, material, or otherwise. The work of lay ministry is not about feelings—it’s about praying for God to use you where needed, not where you simply feel like going. Don’t show up with a bang and vanish when truly needed.

Don’t be the kind of person who sees others as a threat to your position, or fears that others will be more successful in ministry than you, leading you to belittle them. We see that although Elizabeth was old and childless, she rejoiced in helping and encouraging Mary. Some people, when they see a promising young person, try to shut them down using subtle tactics. Others—adults—have a habit of thinking young people are unfit for ministry and lack seriousness.

A young girl, 16 years old, said a spiritual mother once called her and her friends to teach them the Bible and God’s work. She remembers this woman even 40 years later because she built her a bridge to become a missionary in four countries. Though this woman has since passed away, she says she looks forward to seeing her in heaven to tell her, “Your ministry helped me do lay work and reach heaven.”

Sometimes it's easier for women to form friendships and learn spiritual things from others. It turns out that even love is something we must learn, as seen in Titus 2! I believe love comes with lessons, just as 1 Corinthians 13 teaches.

When I began my nursing ministry at a hospital, I was shocked by how many women would criticize new nurses, discourage them, and even hope they would quit. They would say things like, "Where did you even go to school? You don't know how to draw blood—or did you buy your certificate?" These were grown Christian women speaking to young nurses and demoralizing them. They constantly reported trivial things just to get others fired. This is a terrible example of mentorship. At that time, America had two million trained nurses, but only one million were working. No wonder—many had already been discouraged by older colleagues who lacked a calling to serve. They had joined the profession after divorces or joblessness. A saying emerged: "Nurses are the only profession that eats its young."

Prayers for those we work with are very important—even for those who have faced divorce, rebellious children, or other pains. These things don't disqualify them from teaching us to be better laypeople. Everyone has a role in the Lord's vineyard. Some are timid or ashamed and need someone to set an example and encourage them. Perhaps Dorcas (Tabitha) encouraged people like this.

Greet newcomers at church joyfully and invite them to your home. You'll see many join God's workforce. When someone greets you, don't stay silent—respond cheerfully. I once met two laypeople at my local church who were off-putting—when greeted or congratulated, they frowned. But once they began witnessing and people started joining the church, they suddenly became warm and engaging! That's when they began acting overly friendly—but this is double-faced behavior. If you're reaching out to people, be careful. Others will sense if you only love them to bring them to your church but don't truly care.

Some young male laypeople have had bad relationships with their fathers—fathers who abandoned them or were harsh disciplinarians without concern or love, or self-centered men who ignored their wives and children. These young men need spiritually mature laypeople to be father figures and teach them how to reach others. Some hide from people to avoid reliving the trauma of those early relationships. Let laypeople build fences of protection for these youth and encourage them to move forward. Create a safe space where they're willing to open up. You'll be breaking chains of past wounds. They will begin to share their

past or current struggles, and you'll help them reach out to others. This will help them overcome painful experiences and move forward.

These are people who haven't forgiven churches that mistreated them, or parents and relatives who hurt them—but they're still moving forward to serve Jesus.

WHEN A LEADER FALLS INTO TEMPTATION

There's falling through disobedience to the Ten Commandments and falling through false doctrines that go against Scripture.

This year I saw statistics from the U.S. about spiritual leaders—54% watch pornography regularly, and 6% occasionally. Since this isn't yet widespread in our culture, we might think it's only their problem. Not at all! “If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall.” Maybe pornography isn't as rampant here, but fornication is. I remember a friend who worked at the national exam board, and when he took Saturday off to attend church, his colleague said, “You struggle to keep the Sabbath, yet you can't overcome fornication.” This issue affects us all—our brothers, fathers, husbands, mothers, sisters, etc. The problem is that we make it a secret and hide it.

A layperson once led a group and found rampant fornication there. When he tried to speak up, the elders saw him as a threat. They devised a plan using a young girl who was pregnant, and during their meeting, they told her to say that the layperson had impregnated her. She lied, and things became so difficult that the layperson was expelled for something he didn't do. Years later, the girl came back to ask forgiveness and confessed that it was the elders who told her to lie. In lay ministry, you'll encounter many challenges.

Even my preacher friend told me he once went to preach and the whole church groaned and said, “We don't want you to preach—step down now.” He left in sorrow. But many years later, he met a certain woman and asked, “Why did you all refuse to let me preach?” She replied, “It was for your own good. We loved you so much, but the leadership was watching you closely that day—they wanted to ruin your name. I was changing my baby's diaper when I overheard them, and I spoke to someone so that when you got up to preach, we'd protect you by saying we didn't want you to preach.” This preacher sighed in relief and thanked God. The devil wants the preacher to fail—he will stir up many storms. But he is already defeated. He reminds us of our sins because he is the accuser of the brethren.

Sometimes when spouses suspect their partner is living in sin, they panic. They think no one will believe them. They're tempted to hide the sin because they fear losing their position or financial support. A wife may help protect the marriage, but she needs a counselor to help her husband break free from those sins. There are cases where a layman beats his wife, uses substances, or other marital issues. We must pray for our marriages, especially if they don't reflect Christ.

When should you, after speaking with your spouse unsuccessfully, seek help from outside? What if it's a continuous sin that disqualifies one from ministry—do you keep hiding it to protect their reputation, or do you seek help?

A preacher's wife once said that her husband had been committing adultery for a long time. She knew and confronted him using the principles of Matthew 18. He showed remorse and promised to stop—but continued. A year passed, she spoke again—still he continued. After three years, she sought counsel from a preacher in a neighboring church. He and his wife helped, but the preacher's wife told others and everything became public. How do you see this case? The husband didn't stop the adultery, but the wife was angry at the other preacher's wife for telling people?

Some sins are hidden and no one will catch us, but we must avoid them. They easily entangle us. They've ensnared me, and today I want to say I fight them daily! These include pride, complaints, gossip, grumbling, envy, anger, hatred, unforgiveness, hypocrisy (you can add your own list).

We're told to love even our enemies. Even worldly people love their own. A thief steals to take things to his mother or father. If you only love your people and hate your enemies, you're no different from anyone else. We should pray about this—many of us think we love our enemies but are just avoiding conflict! Or giving them space so they don't bother us—or quietly sneaking away! I've done this many times. (Some say, like Joseph trying to avoid Mary.)

When we see people who annoy us—quarrelsome, always complaining, or those who borrow and don't repay—we avoid them, yet smile to their faces and pretend we're fine. But inwardly we think, "They'll never warm themselves by my fire." Let's ask God to help us—not to let people trample us, but to have the kind of relationships God desires.

As husband and wife in ministry, we must take time to keep watch and pray. So that we don't grow weary, we must live moderately. Ministry brings hardship and great tribulation—even the most humble servant of God sinned at the waters of Meribah because of fatigue. How can we escape? I once read Moses' words and cried in pain when he said—in my paraphrase—"Lord, these people trouble me so much. Did I give birth to them? Did they come from my loins? Why are they troubling me like this? I can't take it anymore. Please Lord, if I've found favor in Your eyes and You truly count me as Your servant, then take my life—I need rest. This is too much for me."

Ministry brings suffering and great distress. Let's encourage ourselves by living moderately and keeping watch—for our bodies grow weary. We are flesh, not iron. And when it gets too much, it's like a bomb has gone off! Watch out that ministry doesn't lead you into sin like it did with many priests and people in the Bible. You are not immune. You are not an island removed from sin. No—if you think you're standing, be careful not to fall—with your spouse.

CHAPTER 27

MEDIA, MUSIC, AND ENTERTAINMENT

Media, music, and entertainment are a significant part of our modern lives. It is important to discuss these matters seriously as pilgrims and strangers on this earth. A layperson must be very careful in choosing such things. Sitting and watching any TV program, listening to radio or using a computer, or being constantly on the phone or iPod, engaging in idle conversations is a serious mistake (see digitalinsanity.com). All these things do not help your brain in dedicating yourself or working for God. Many say that the beats of music don't matter as long as the lyrics are good and godly. Don't be deceived. There are certain beats which, even if you sing "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," it is still a serious problem. Those who help you in ministry or family members—let them know your stand on these matters so they don't bring bad books, strange music, and similar things into your space.

As we've mentioned, laypeople often travel for evangelistic missions or other ministries to proclaim the Word of the Lord. If the husband is away and the wife remains at home, the layperson staying back should hold worship at home. Many women do not like to read, not even a newspaper—this is our weakness. But they enjoy watching TV. Some newspapers contain immoral images and DVDs of inappropriate content. In the past, church communities were strict—even magazines like *Baraza* were banned. Nowadays, church publications are filled with insults and mockery of leaders. If our children grow up seeing cartoons that insult our national leaders, how will they respect us? Those who use foul language should be given soap to cleanse their mouths—it would help broadcasting channels. Even if leaders have faults, they should be given a certain level of human respect. If our children see us disrespecting others, they will also stop respecting others—and eventually even God.

Television—and now its sister, the computer—has a few good things but mostly harmful ones. The Bible is a summarized book written before the invention of television, but if you pray for wisdom from the Lord, He will reveal the truth to you. Many people have thrown away their TVs. The harm they cause is in stealing your time to communicate and build healthy relationships with your family. Instead, your mind gets absorbed in watching all day. It leads to a lack of physical exercise; your body can be harmed or weakened by laziness and prolonged sitting.

We think we are learning a lot, but our understanding remains shallow because we become accustomed to being fed someone else's opinion instead of thinking or researching for ourselves. The brain becomes numb in its critical thinking and judgment areas. Many people damage their eyesight and spend money on things they see in commercials without knowing it. Immoral content and profanity are no longer surprising. This moral decay is the main reason to avoid these platforms.

If you listen to the news, that's okay—to stay informed. But ask yourself: Do you pray for and support those affected, or do you just listen to others' tragedies and move on—building emotional numbness over the years and failing to show compassion for others' pain?

You may be spending six days in Babylon and one day in church and still think you're doing fine. Avoid watching ungodly things for six days and then preaching on the seventh.

These media platforms are full of selfishness—they make you focus on yourself and not on others. They produce a kind of intoxication, and eventually, you will start loving them, making them your other god. I used to spend time on the computer before reading the Word of God or praying. After that, I would find myself starting to cook breakfast, and the day would be gone. If the Lord is not number one in your life as a lay spiritual leader, then you have placed other gods before Him. We only have two masters to serve—and only one at a time. Either we serve God or the devil. Today, there are no standards for imported content—commercials and clothing shown on TV even surpass Western standards. I once took a bus from Nairobi to Mwanza that had a television showing violent and inappropriate content. One mother with small children told the conductor, “Sir, please change the tape; we have young children here.” The conductor responded, “Tell your children to look down.” Western countries have bad content too, but they don't show it in public. People watch it in their homes because everyone has the freedom to choose their own sin. But don't drag others into your sin—they already have their own weaknesses. Here in Africa, they force us to watch all their garbage. If you have young children, you are ruining them, because they don't yet know how to distinguish between fiction and reality. Comedies and sitcoms are not helpful. They will watch things when you're not around. This has contributed to the disrespect of men and the role of 'father' in the West. Fathers are portrayed in sitcoms as clueless fools who don't know what they're doing—this creates harmful ideas in children's minds.

My friend in a country with over 900 channels had a 9-year-old child who woke up at 2 a.m. and watched many shocking things while the parents were asleep. Most parents, when told about their child, do not believe it. They think you're accusing the child unfairly. Many of us think our children are angels. But every child is born pagan until they are converted through faith in God—that's when we can stand for what is right.

Phones are another area that needs self-control. The phone has become like a god. Yes, you need to answer calls from church members, but be moderate—see digitalinsanity.com. Find time to pray, read the Word, assist your husband, be a wife, etc. Learn to manage your money and time. Don't be a "hello hello" person all the time. I've seen this waste both time and money for many. Use the phone as a work tool only. My children noticed I loved the phone so much that I would tune out everything else while on it. They once said, "Mom, even if the house was burning, you wouldn't notice—you love that phone more than us!" In the West, some people pay for monthly phone usage and are reported to send up to 5,000 texts a month—I heard this on the news! How does such a person find time to do anything else?

Some TV content is so foolish it will shock you. My non-Christian neighbor came last month and said, "Today on BBC I saw people in a cockroach-eating contest. One person ate thousands until he choked and died on the spot!" This really happened. Can you imagine a grown, sane adult doing such a thing? People stare, and even when something is clearly foolish and immoral, they continue watching. This deeply grieves our Heavenly Father who died for us—even brings Him to tears. His people destroying themselves by eating cockroaches? My friend, who follows Eastern religions (New Age, Buddhism, and Hinduism), was shocked and appalled as well.

As for books—we are avid readers. We've even wondered, "When will we find time to read?" Maybe if Jesus delays His return and we retire in good health! One day I saw a white man at the library wearing a T-shirt with a sad image of someone crying. Below it were the words, "So many books to read and no time." Translated into our language: "My goodness, so many books to read and no time." Truly, reading is our hobby—we enjoy it very much. The first book in your life should be the Word of God. Meditate on it day and night. Self-help books that broaden your knowledge of life are good, but be cautious not to prioritize them above spiritual growth and knowing God. Knowing God and understanding Him is the key to eternal

life. Eternal life is knowing God and Christ who died for us (John 17:3). Avoid romance novels, which many women enjoy reading, books about witchcraft, and other literature that promotes evil (like Harry Potter, Wicca). I remember a friend from Zimbabwe who was married to a pastor teaching at Helderberg Seminary in South Africa. She loved reading romance novels. When her marriage began to experience problems, these books influenced her decisions in ways her friends believed she wouldn't have acted if she hadn't lived such an illusionary life. Women who read romance stories often begin comparing their husbands to characters in those novels: "A beautiful girl met a tall, handsome man, and they lived happily ever after." These stories are not based on real life and often describe a man who constantly says sweet things like, "I can't sleep or eat, I just dream of you and think about you." Yes, it is good for couples to express love and say kind words to one another, but let it be genuine and not like a script from a book—for how can one dream without sleeping? Daydreams, perhaps!

I remember when I came to faith in God at age 15, I took six months to read through His Word. It takes about 70 to 90 hours to read the Bible through, but if you want to understand it well, dedicate six months to a year. However, I fell into Satan's trap and began reading detective novels like James Hadley Chase and Agatha Christie—I would read until 12 midnight. My father came and told me to switch off the lights and sleep. These books wasted a lot of time. Yes, they helped me learn English, but they also caused me to lose my taste for the Word of God. And knowing English does not mean one is intellectually gifted, and I could have learned the language through better books.

At our church in Magomeni, the library had good books—I should have invested my time there. It's no secret: you lose your appetite for God's Word when you read strange books and watch too much television. You'll find that reading the Word becomes boring, but other things excite you. However, when you place God first, His Word becomes thrilling—you may even wake up in the middle of the night to read it. Hallelujah!

We used to read comic books like Dennis the Menace and Tin Tin—they wasted so much time. I noticed my 11-year-old son had started reading them, so I shared my story with him. Truly, some things are inherited! Let's pray our children do not inherit all these foolish habits. He loves reading comics every morning as soon as he wakes up—now tell me, is it good to start the day with humor and not the Word of God?

If you have a computer, place it in a common area like the living room so that everyone knows what is being viewed. If you are sure only you and your husband are using it, you may place it in your bedroom. Do not waste time on it either. Music is more than just lyrics—it includes rhythm and tune. If you don't believe it, try singing "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" with rap rhythm and voice. Is there reverence for God in it? None! Check out the websites of Ivor Myers and Christian Berdahl on music. History shows us that music was originally meant to praise and worship God. But humans have invented many other styles. Music strongly influences people's behavior more than we realize—it is a language and culture in itself.

Let the songs you play at home glorify God. I'm not saying you should only listen to worship music, but choose carefully the lyrics and tunes of what you listen to. Don't buy anything just because it makes your children happy. Nowadays, many songs do not glorify God. Remember, Satan was a singer in heaven—he knows how to draw people through music. Many have fallen in churches where music became like a drug, leading to fornication and adultery. Songs carry a kind of intoxication if they do not glorify Christ.

Music makes a big difference—it can motivate people, bring joy, express sorrow, etc. Even animals respond to music. Research has shown that cows produce more milk when music is played, or pumpkins grow better in fields where music is present. I must say, we've copied too much, like rap music, without understanding.

Studies in Western countries show that rap music increases violence, crime, and evil behavior. Search online for "rap music and behavior," and you will be shocked. Rappers have been linked to crime like promiscuity, adultery, murder, and theft. This culture is foreign to us, and I'm not saying that every rapper kills, but morals get greatly compromised, and spiritual matters are weakened until they die altogether. Layperson, is this a mystery to you?

People like Bob Marley, Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston, and Elvis Presley started singing in church to glorify God. For instance, Presley was said to have a deep bass voice like Africans—which is why he thrived (he was "a white man with a black voice"). In Africa, many of our modern musical styles have been copied from rock music and others that I heard in Venezuela and Brazil during lay missions—some resembled traditional witch doctor music (voodoo music).

These four singers had gifts first recognized in church. Then the world called them to sing for it, and they died due to drug addiction or other vices, becoming slaves of the devil. I am not saying they won't be in heaven—no! God is merciful. Even at the last minute, one can receive His mercy like the thief on the cross. But don't take another's grace for granted, and remember there was only one thief saved, so that we don't toy with God's mercy.

In the past in Africa, traditional dances were done in groups—often women with women or men with men. Some were for work, like farming, and were not sexually suggestive (revelry). When colonizers came, they introduced dances between men and women holding each other as close as one millimeter. They called African dances primitive, while theirs were supposedly civilized. Truthfully, both are inappropriate for a layperson who loves God and serves Him in spirit and truth.

Let me say this lovingly: a layperson and his spouse who want to be close to God or to each other should never engage in such dances! In boarding school, they said it was part of “social life,” so they organized dances between boys' and girls' schools. I saw it myself, but by God's mercy, I didn't like dancing—in my heart, I felt shame and a sense of sin. I didn't attend, but other girls who did came and told me terrible stories. I was thankful I didn't go.

The stories went like this: “They would dim the lights, use colored bulbs, and play vulgar music. Boys and girls would be that close—one millimeter apart.” “Even with teachers watching, a boy and girl were caught in a corner having sex and were taken to face disciplinary action.” I won't say more—you likely know the rest.

There's no man you should embrace apart from your husband—or at times close relatives like your son or father for greetings or consolation. Avoid embracing people randomly—sexual sin begins in the heart, and you don't need to undress for it to happen. Read more in Matthew 5. I know Ethiopians have their form of greeting, but greetings differ from immorality. Any man you come close to like that is being tempted, and you too are in the devil's territory.

Let's not be deceived—whatever a person sows, they shall also reap. You cannot plant spinach and harvest marijuana! No human being is above falling—be careful lest you fall. I repeat briefly: sin is not just the act; it is the thought, the meditation, the repetition! For example, if you plan to steal a bicycle and go for

it but find it's not there—have you stolen or not? The act was fully conceived, only the opportunity was missing.

God's plan is not for you to place yourself in tempting situations—by embracing others, you're putting yourself into trouble. Avoid even meeting the opposite sex in secret—even during courtship. The traps of the devil are real. For those who are unmarried, this should be completely forbidden! It is fornication—there's no debate about it. Ask any loving husband if he'd want his wife touched by another man—he'll say no.

Westerners have introduced strange customs, and we've accepted them without question—to the point of taking our kids to children's discos and corrupting their minds with sexual thoughts from an early age. Just because someone from the West does it does not mean it's not sinful! May God help us understand this deeply.

I'm not advising that you live like a monk while serving God. Take time to go out or do things that bring you joy—recreationally. These can be hobbies, but choose them wisely so that they glorify God, even though you live in a dot-com generation.

There are many good forms of entertainment like singing, traveling, sports, attending group discussions, and various kinds of celebrations. Also, when you find yourself in a place where sin is taking place—have the courage to excuse yourself and leave, or even say, “This is sin, and my spirit is disturbed.” You know, when the Bible was written, it provided guidance for everything—even things like tobacco, which were discovered later. Let us read and pray that the Holy Spirit may guide us. Choose something that pleases you but does not cause you to stumble, and also something that does not cause others to stumble. If it's about watching TV, choose your programs wisely. I have sometimes seen foreign movies, such as those from Nigeria, entering homes full of misleading words and strange comedy.

Christian Berdahl, a layperson working with the music ministry Shepherd's Call, said our homes are filled with TV, internet, radio, and filthy magazines. These days, you don't even need to go to a cinema—you bring all the movies home. He said many homes are like Babylon six days a week (in chaos), and only one day is spent outside Babylon, the Sabbath day of worship! Is it right to live with two different standards like this?

In the past, before churches were built, worship was conducted at home, meaning your body and your house are also temples of God. Do not involve yourself in unclean things. It's not just about going to church—your body and thoughts also need to be kept pure.

The spiritual reformation done by Martin Luther was greatly associated with music, which is why he also took time to write hymns. Music is a vital part of worship. As we reform our understanding of the Word of God, our songs and music must also undergo reformation.

When you have time, think about what to do, watch, or read. Consider Philippians 4: “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

I will speak a bit more on music, but in this globalized world, it's good to do your own research. Music is a universal language that everyone can understand. Various people like Brian Neuman, Christian Berdahl, Ivor Myers, and Little Light Studios have done extensive research, much of which is available on YouTube. Many of them went through the music world and encountered problems such as alcoholism, drug use, immoral behavior, depression, mental illnesses, loss of interest in studies, involvement in occult practices (tarot reading and astrology).

Music has lyrics, but the most influential parts are the melody, harmony, and rhythm. Melody touches emotions, spiritual aspects, and aesthetics. Harmony touches reasoning and the intelligent part of the brain (frontal lobe). Rhythm touches the physical and emotional aspects.

Pagan worship music emphasized rhythm and loud noises that could deafen you. Today, young people listen to such music, and 6 out of 10 have started experiencing major hearing issues while still young. This music conveys disturbing messages. Our pastor's 15-year-old son once listened all night and asked his father to hear it. When the father listened, he was shocked—the song kept repeating “Kill yourself, kill yourself, what are you waiting for?” for over three hours in the middle of the night.

Indeed, we modern people with advanced technology have other kinds of problems. In the past, a child did not have a phone—only the national radio was available. This type of music is called metallic, and some people have heard scary

artists like Michael Jackson. When I work in the hospital, I sometimes enter rooms where patients are playing such music, and I wonder how they expect to get well amidst such a serious threat in their rooms. They now say that Elvis' music sounds like kindergarten compared to today's.

Forty years ago, Christians were completely warned against such music because it would totally ruin their spiritual awakening. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We were bought at a high price. Some people may not listen to this music directly, but the TV shows they watch contain the same content.

The original purpose of music was to glorify God by praising, thanking, and promoting refinement. Whatever we do must be for God's glory. Music crosses all barriers. We are temples of the Holy Spirit, a royal priesthood. We cannot live by the motto: "If it feels good, do it." People who read the Word of God will be guided by the Holy Spirit to do things that bless others and are without reproach.

The gateways to our souls are the eyes, touch, smell, hearing, and taste. By watching and staying close to certain things, we are transformed. By beholding, we become changed. Guard the avenues of your soul. Protect your heart's emotions—they can lead you into a pit. Guard your passions and appetite; do not let them control you, for they will become chains that bind you. We must learn to deny self and reason out things. Why do people use music in films, malls, or other places? Because they know it will affect your emotions.

Nothing changes a person's behavior like music. Music can ruin a person's character—or build it. Observe the music to understand how people are controlled or what their culture is like. Music shapes the character of its listeners and changes their lifestyle. The Russians said, "There is no music without ideology." Music makes people unite—it is a powerful weapon.

Lucifer, the angel who rebelled and became the Devil who torments people to this day, was the choir leader in heaven, so he will not allow music to remain neutral. He must inject his evil influence. Many singers have fallen into the devil's traps. Music can change a person's value system, make them meditate, calm down, act according to its message—or resist it (indoctrination). Music causes transformation, even revolutions. John Lennon sang the song Imagine and captivated many people with that communist song. Music can make someone a

communist, a God-lover, a capitalist, or a socialist. It can change a person for better or for worse.

We see that when King Saul was afflicted by evil spirits, he called for the harpist, King David, to help him. Here, music was used as medicine.

Repetitive music has started dominating many churches. This music was initially outside of worship, but now it has entered, bringing people into trance and hypnosis. This week, I went to a certain church. The pulpit was small, only a stand for placing the Bible. The pastor came wearing jeans and preached for about 30 minutes. Most of the time was taken by a praise and worship team of about six people. They dominated the pulpit, sang loudly with instruments that repeated rhythm like the traditional witchdoctors from where I was born. They turned off the lights and used colored lights like those in bars. They also released smoke that floated in the air. I didn't understand its meaning. The sermon was good, but the singing took one and a half hours, while preaching took only half an hour. The noise was very loud. The melody was unpleasant, but the rhythm was just like ordinary worldly music.

Some have asked about musical instruments. We're not here to judge people, but musical instruments must be used with reverence and be consecrated. For example, drummers often beat drums repetitively until someone becomes numb. These songs are called punk or bubble gum. TV channels like MTV—check your blood pressure before and after watching—you'll notice an increase and effect on your nervous system (nervous breakdown). Those who go for morning runs should avoid running while playing such music. Some people have developed heart disease.

African jazz is music rooted in spirits; it originates from voodoo, drums, primitive, jungle styles, sex, rap, paganism, and hip hop.

Beware of wolves in sheep's clothing. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit. Not everyone who says "Lord, Lord" will enter heaven... "If they speak not according to the law and the testimony, there is no light in them."

Should we follow the ways of the world to reach the world with worldly music, or follow God's way? Worldly entertainment is not good for a Christian.

Christian songs must glorify God, not man. These days, Christian Rock or Christian Rock and Roll has emerged, and people call it “audio adrenaline” which brings about physical feelings. These provoke emotional rush and excitement. It’s true God can reach people and lead them to Christ, but that doesn’t justify using bad methods.

Some say they’re reaching people just as Jesus reached tax collectors and prostitutes. But did Christ dress like a prostitute? No! Yet we want to dress and shout like prostitutes, claiming we’re trying to reach people where they are. They talk of café church or user-friendly church. People can come as they are, but they must change. Some say Jesus had a “party ministry.” He attended about three gatherings that we read of—at Cana, at Simon the leper’s house, and with Zacchaeus.

Some say Martin Luther and others took secular songs and changed the words to become hymns. That may be true, but it does not justify bringing worldly music into worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We are trying to resemble the world so much in order to reach it, that we have become like it. On the plain of Dura, three young men were forced to join a false worship service, but they refused.

There were many who claimed to worship the true God, yet they joined the false worship. They were told, “When you hear the sound of music, you must bow and worship.” How many in these last days, in this Dura of our time, will stand without bowing or serving the false god?

The worship on Mount Carmel by the false prophets revealed false worship. Elijah asked, "How long will you waver between two opinions?" This was about being lukewarm. We must worship God in the way He desires. When evaluating music, consider the following:

Does it have something worthwhile to say in terms of morality and the atmosphere it creates?

What is the intention behind the music? Philippians 4:8 asks if it stimulates spiritual and intellectual thought and has a positive message.

Does it communicate its message effectively? For example, does it convey joy, reverence, or even righteous anger? (See the definition of reverence in the dictionary.)

Are the instruments used appropriately? Some are not suitable for secular-style worship.

Today, there are many love songs that have been repurposed into Christian songs. Their lyrics are questionable, containing sensual elements and lacking reverence. It sounds more like someone speaking to a boyfriend, with repetitive expressions.

I know we have spoken much about the education surrounding music. Apostle Paul says, "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." We must have love for others, as Paul teaches in relation to "things sacrificed to idols." Some music, such as drums, may be a stumbling block to others; while some are fine with it, others may be spiritually troubled by it. In such cases, it may be better to worship God without musical instruments. We should not have two types of worship. If we argue so much about music, we have lost the vision. God cares about music, but He also cares about the unity of the church in worshiping Him in spirit and truth.

Look at the people on the Titanic. The musicians who had planned to play worldly songs abandoned them and began to sing the hymn "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

God has not been silent about the kind of music He wants us to use in worship.

Amos 5:21-23 says: "Away with the noise of your songs, I will not listen to the music of your harps." Why did He say that? The book of Psalms is filled with songs of praise to God. God has shown us in many ways what kind of music He wants in worship. Everything has its place. You cannot go to a funeral and sing a national anthem.

God has given us the ability to love and appreciate music.

Deuteronomy 12:4, 30-31 warns the Israelites that when they enter the Promised Land, they must not worship God as the pagans worship their gods. They were not even to inquire how those people worshiped. Angels have worshiped God for thousands of years. So then, who determines how we should worship?

I know that as human beings, we sometimes make mistakes, but we must return to the doctrine or teaching of how God should be worshiped. In Malawi, there was

a choir of 4,000 people. God did not choose just anyone, but only those of the priestly family who knew His laws and could sing. Why did He choose people from Levi? Because He wanted those who would worship Him in spirit and in truth.

You can sing words and say things, but there could still be a flaw.

God has set us apart to worship Him in the way He desires — see 1 Chronicles 25:6. Instruments like cymbals, trumpets, lyres, and harps were used. They were dedicated to music day and night. They were exempted from other duties. Not just anyone with talent was involved — only Levites. They had to have a relationship with God, sing with understanding and reverence, not like parrots. The songs were meant to speak on behalf of God — see 1 Chronicles 25:1. It wasn't about repetitive chants but delivering a message.

The earthly temple resembled the heavenly one, where we are told there are harps, trumpets, and horns.

Drums were often used by those who worshipped the sun as god.

Does this make drums evil? No. Drums were used in the Bible, for example:

Genesis 31:27, Isaiah 24:8, Jeremiah 31:4, 1 Samuel 10:5, Psalm 81, 1 Samuel 5:12, 1 Samuel 6:8, Isaiah 30:32.

Drums were more common in the Old Testament. Why? They were used in the context of war and victory. Women came with drums to rejoice after battles. It was women who played the drums, not on the altar. These were physical battles, not spiritual ones. There is nowhere in the heavenly temple where drums are played.

Do we have battles today? Yes, but they are not physical.

God of Psalm 149 and 150 is the God of weddings.

What about clapping hands and lifting hands? Psalm 47:1. The Psalms describe lifting hands as an act of prayer and supplication. Lift your hearts to God. Lift holy hands. David in 1 Chronicles 15:12, 16, 18 failed to follow the proper method of moving the ark. Drums were not used there. He did not ask God about this matter.

Jesus continues to worship and praise God.

We praise God for creation and redemption as He continues His priestly ministry.

Reasons for worship in heaven:

Firstfruits

You are worthy, and we are not.

Some say, “I don’t like worship or going to church; I don’t get anything from it.”

But the pattern of worshipping God must be followed. Obeying God, humility, and receiving blessings go beyond temporary emotional stirrings and excitement. Sometimes emotions may be stirred during worship, but they must be a part, not the focus. We must be careful and establish a doctrine of worship from the Bible.

Have you ever been offended because you did not see drums in a church?

Are there people who are offended when they do see drums? Yes.

Drums cause great controversy in church.

Is God really concerned if we use instruments? No — I could worship God without using any instruments at all. If you are uncertain, then wait until you have better light. Worship should be in the spirit of who God is and should not offend others.

Is it okay to use canned music or backing tracks (pre-recorded tapes)?

If the music is appropriate, then it is okay.

God was the leader of Israel’s armies. The truth remains.

Let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Organ/Piano:

In the New Testament, there was no sanctuary. A new church began, progressed, and was financed. They began to build sanctuaries or synagogues.

Do not use funeral songs for worship. Avoid songs that are cheerful in tone when solemnity is required. Voices should be modulated — softened and subdued. God is not pleased with disorderly or indecent music. Right worship pleases God more than wrong worship.

God's people should engage in correct, harmonious singing.

The heavenly plan of harmonious singing also benefits unbelievers.

Bringing good music to unbelievers can lead to favorable impressions.

So, who determines how we worship?

God or man?

I would be cautious about using drums too much. The mentions of drums in the Bible are mostly related to:

War and celebration after physical battles

Never used in the temple or heavenly worship

Drums should not determine how we worship.

Believers will be held accountable for the light they received.

Christian parents and leaders do a disservice to young people when they tolerate low-quality music just to keep them in church. What a responsibility they bear!

Let God be the guide of the youth.

Sound advice for Christian music.

CHAPTER 28

CULTURE AND OTHER ISSUES AT WORK

Our customs and traditions are very important when we serve. Some things are not sinful in themselves, but they may offend others or seem very strange. Let me give an example: when I visited Ndanda Hospital to see a patient, I noticed that the hospital does not provide meals for the patients, but rather their relatives and friends bring food. If instead of bringing food, fruits, and utensils I brought flowers, how would that appear? Especially if the flowers were expensive. The patient has nothing to eat, yet they have flowers! On the other hand, here in the West, hospitals provide meals to patients, and I rarely see patients being brought food. Perhaps those from different cultures do so because many of the hospital foods here are processed, unhealthy, and based on American culture—which is a mixture of many traditions. For example, this week I visited my Filipino friend Lea who had been paralyzed and was admitted to Hackettstown Hospital in New Jersey. I found she had been served refined macaroni, cheese, and cake! Continuing our lesson, I went to the hospital and brought a smoothie (blended fruits). Others brought flowers, which she also enjoyed.

My teacher, Dr. Gottfried Osterwaal, a pastor at a seminary from the Netherlands, was employed by the large Whirlpool company, known for home appliances like fridges, washing machines, dishwashers, etc. He conducted research on “culture and market” to help them sell their products. He had missionary experience in many countries like Papua New Guinea, Africa, the Far East, etc. He told us that when they tried to sell white refrigerators in Hong Kong, they failed to sell. Years before, he had helped establish a mission hospital there, and when they painted the hospital white, people were afraid to come! When he asked why, he was told, “In the Far East, like China, the color white is associated with death or spirits, so you're scaring people.” Even brides did not wear white at all. Blue was seen as the color of blessing. It seems Western culture has evolved to accept white nowadays. What I want to say is that the color white is not a problem in itself, but are you doing things that are unusual and scare people away or make them feel you don't care—especially in the place where you are trying to reach people in your lay ministry?

Give examples. At the same time, this teacher Osterwaal told us in class that in 1954 he traveled with his wife to Papua New Guinea as missionaries. They were

on a cargo ship from the Netherlands to Papua. There were about 21 sailors and workers. They ate in the bar because there was no other dining room. His wife was the only woman. He said, “We felt uncomfortable sitting in the bar and hearing the foul language of the sailors. I don’t advise a person of God to stay in a bar or even sip alcohol, but I believe this was the only opportunity God gave us to reach these sailors.” After their month-long voyage, 18 of them accepted Christ! Now I’m not saying stay in a bar to evangelize, but observe your environment.

Pastor Osterwaal gave another example. When they arrived in Papua, a few days later they were welcomed at the church center, despite Papua being known for cannibalism! At midnight, he heard a woman knocking on their window calling, “Nana! Nana! Wake up and come outside!” (Nana means father). He asked his wife who it was. He was only wearing shorts without a shirt. There was no electricity. His wife asked, “Where are you going, and what kind of relationship do you have with that woman to call you like that?” The knocking and calling continued. So Pastor Osterwaal gathered courage and stepped outside in his shorts. He found the woman and hundreds of people—he guessed even thousands but was too confused to count. They had drawn a line on the field and all shouted “Nana! Nana!” while staring at the full moon. They would all say “Ah” and jump over the line! They repeated this ritual until morning. At sunrise, the village chief said, “You are flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, now tell us anything and we will follow you.” They believed and followed Christ—all of them. Hallelujah!

He said that lesson helped him always pray and seek God’s guidance on what to do. In his thoughts, as a Westerner and man of God, he thought these were pagan rituals practiced by illiterate people who wore barely any clothes. He asked himself, “How can I glorify God in this?” Layperson, I truly don’t advise you to go dancing in the night just to share God’s love, but God will guide you on what to do, based on that culture.

Could it be that perhaps, for a layperson, that’s how people are reached? For example, a woman whose husband worked in the incinerator at KCMC (Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre) made me laugh this year when she told me that every participant she was nursing was told to “stay at that preacher’s house.” Since hotels are expensive and sometimes we have no relatives nearby, we’ve done this, and it’s a good thing. That lady said the participants used their bathroom for bathing, and because they were friendly and easy-going with people, everyone got

used to them. They slept in rooms, and sometimes they even bathed in the pastor's private bathroom if the children's was in use. Sometimes someone would knock on their master bathroom door wanting to shower, and they learned to lock their door because it wasn't unusual to be barged in on anytime! When they moved out, the next pastor who took over had a hard time being compared to them. It's true the personality of a pastor and his wife—or in this case, the layperson—is new and different, but it's important to respect the local culture and at the same time maintain balance. In today's life, you must be discerning, otherwise people will say, "That pastor's wife isn't godly; the one before really cared for people and God." Yet one also needs some privacy, along with generosity and love. There are no rules about these things. The Holy Spirit will guide you in how to lead wisely in such situations.

When you are among people like the Maasai, do you engage with their traditions when they are not sinful? Or do you think your culture is superior and see yourself as better? Do people eat your food, but you refuse to eat theirs? Like a Ugandan student we studied with named Musa. He liked pinching his nose and came from Germany. His father was an ambassador. He said, "African bacteria." Like the British Airways staff who sprayed disinfectant on flights from Africa claiming to kill African germs. Musa liked boasting a lot and saw his culture as superior. We were studying for a biology degree, and he kept boasting even in the computer lab. Eventually, I was tired and said, "Why don't you praise God instead of praising yourself?" He replied, "By praising myself, I am praising God. I don't know how He created such a creature like me. I must be beautiful, and I know He took a long time on me!" There are people like that, who see themselves as more important than others. We are all important. Read Philippians 2. I want to say: we human beings—of different languages, races, tribes, sizes, and wealth levels—are precious to God. He died for all of us, not for one nation or person. Examine people's cultures and find a way to reach them without discrimination.

I researched and saw that all foods in the world are equal; the difference is in preparation. Many Africans who come to the West feel inferior about their foods. People from the East like China, Japan, and Korea are confident and invite others to meals to build relationships. Different services in different areas can help reach people. Let me give examples of how churches near where I live offer services to reach people: teaching gardening, cooking soup and inviting people, washing clothes, washing people's cars, babysitting, putting money in parking meters,

cleaning people's toilets, etc. Observe the culture and traditions of your area and identify community service opportunities that can build bridges to reach people.

Avoid following bad traditions of your tribe or region. I saw my grandfather, a devoted layperson who even helped start church schools. After 30 years of marriage, he married a second and third wife. He defended himself, saying "Even Solomon and David had many wives." Just because those dark times existed does not mean God approved. Read Acts 17. This layman insisted that having only one wife was like having one eye. He defended this heavily using Scripture because he had read and finished the Bible over 50 times! But he was caught by his tribe's polygamous culture. His relatives weren't Christians and respected him, but when he married more wives, he struggled more than his non-believing relatives who were polygamous. All of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. If we sin, we should confess—not defend ourselves. Who is perfect? Others may also have mistresses or be involved in sexual immorality, which is just as bad as polygamy! If your customs and traditions are too strong and oppose your faith, it's better to leave lay ministry.

If where you live has customs that easily lead you into sin, strive even to move away from there (the sin that so easily entangles). My grandmother, his wife, said, "He really had issues with women. But he just hadn't been caught. One day I walked into the room and found a girl jumping out the window!" Adultery was his issue while we lived together. You and I each have our struggles, and if we see we're about to fall, let's flee like Joseph. Dear laypeople, everyone has certain temptations. Consider whether they are connected to your native culture and find ways to abandon them.

Secular songs we rejected due to our Christian upbringing—I found myself listening to them when abroad. We often played old hits. They reminded us of home, and we loved them. Two were especially popular: "I sing and sing but I have no joy x2, when I remember my Hadija. Let's dance, let's dance the Twist," or "On my wedding day, uh uh uh, I'll see a girl, moon-like face, a girl crying for me, uh uh uh." But as a Christian, you are now in a new culture. Such songs, even if popular, do not align with our faith in God! Even some advertisements have sweet melodies but terrible lyrics. A preacher friend told me there was a beer commercial for Chibuku with a catchy tune saying, "Drink Chibuku, it's a good beer!" One day he found himself singing it in front of people. Avoid traditions that go against your faith as a layperson or that diminish your spiritual power. Since Satan began his

work 6,000 years ago, he hasn't stopped. As the English say, "He punched in but hasn't punched out." So he's very experienced, far beyond our lifetime—even if we live a hundred years.

All who preach the gospel must understand that people are of different kinds. And all need to know God. Every culture responds in a certain way and has its challenges, but no culture is better than another. God is above all cultures. All cultures are touched by sin and need a Savior. God respects all cultures, but He wants us to leave behind any cultural elements that are sinful. These exist in every society. Paul encountered this:

> "Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a servant to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."

We see that we try to follow customs where they do not contradict Christ. Some customs must be rebuked and condemned, for God has no fellowship with darkness (2 Corinthians 6:14). Some of the customs mentioned in this book include being offered a woman to sleep with as a guest preacher, which is sinful and should be condemned.

Any evangelist going somewhere must understand the customs of the people and what is considered taboo. The evangelist should learn the people's worldview and religion. If possible, he should understand their emotions and language. He should also know how to dress and worship respectfully to avoid offending people because of their culture. We observe that our Muslim brothers dress modestly, and we Christians should also be cautious of the shameful things from the West, because even traditionally in Africa, we were people of decency and modesty as soon as we received clothing. One day my grandmother said to me, "These white people who brought us clothes, why do they not wear them respectfully themselves, while we do?"

We must meet people where they are, and pray for wisdom. Evangelistic methods should not drive people away but attract them. Be prepared to train people from that tribe or culture to continue the work. Usually, locals will do far more work at a lower cost than someone coming from afar. Don't be selfish or afraid that they will replace you—no, teach them everything! Love is a powerful language in every culture, tribe, and community.

Make every effort not to be a beggar, which I have seen in some laypeople. You are serving the LORD of Lords. I remember one day I went to a town called Boston, and as I approached a certain layperson, he ran away and later said to someone, not knowing I had heard him, "I know Grace will start telling us about building chapels and how we should contribute." Since building chapels was a burden I had carried since childhood, I was saddened and prayed that God would give me faith like George Müller, a German who lived in England and cared for 10,000 orphans. He decided not to ask people but to tell God his needs, and God answered. His children counted in his diaries 50,000 answered prayers over 50 years.

Don't be someone who begs for personal things all the time—people will think you are greedy. I've seen evangelists asking for cameras, keyboards, computers, money for their wives or children, and so on. It's not wrong to ask, because we support one another as human beings, but don't be so greedy that you ask for your personal needs more than the things of God. People may get tired and feel harassed. One person said he received 45 calls in one day from an evangelist who was asking for personal things. This person was not even someone interested in evangelism and was shocked that a servant of God would embarrass themselves like that.

Sometimes we ask help from poor church members like Pharisees, pressuring them for what they don't have until they feel burdened. Let's remember prayer is the only and most miraculous way by which God meets all our needs. And if God blesses you, don't wait for people to plead with you before you give. Give, and God will give back to you. Live a simple life and don't compare yourself with others. Aim to give more than to receive. Keep praying, thanking God for what you have, and when you receive more, share with others. Don't say, "This person is not my relative," or judge others—give to anyone in need. Giving is evangelism—let's not forget that.

If you are a layperson with means, remember you are here on earth like Esther, Joseph, Nehemiah, or Ezra to help God's people. Today we read about Esther because she repented from her hesitation when Mordecai told her, "If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish." Then she said those powerful words, "If I perish, I perish." Today, we don't know the name of Nebuchadnezzar's or Cyrus's wife, but we read about Esther. She also helped Nehemiah and Ezra in their work of reform and returning to the Promised Land. Even the rich young man's name is unknown, but the poor lay apostles are known by name even today.

Many preachers use technology, which is good, but they should also be prepared for everything—some places have no electricity. I remember when we went to Kericho to evangelize with 20 laypeople from America, the lights went out. I had written my sermons on paper and continued, but the next day when we met, they said at their sites they had to stop because their computers had no power. However, spending time in prayer and consecration is more important than technology.

Evangelist Golden Lapani of Malawi, in his village, received the call to reach people through prayer and fasting. In just a few years, he reached thousands and 8,000 were baptized—half of them were Muslims. The stories of what he experienced are amazing and encouraging.

Another important thing is to care for children and their cultural background. They will soon be champions for Christ. Don't think of them as "unripe mangoes." Since children are eager to hear God's Word, treat them seriously as your gospel clients. In Kericho, 600 children came every night. We had programs for them, and wherever I go, I carry small books and items for children and preach to them—they also make decisions. Be ready in season and out of season.

A layperson should have enough Bible education to preach effectively. However, do not be afraid—any lay preacher who desires to evangelize across all languages, tribes, people, and cultures will be led by the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit of God, preaching lacks power—you just become a speaker (orator). Education, eloquence, beauty, loud voice, talent—without the Spirit, there will be no result in convicting a sinner. But if we are united with Christ, we will have the gifts of the Spirit, and even someone uneducated will be an excellent layperson in bringing people to Christ.

Look to the customs of Jesus first, then others. We must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). Let us examine customs and traditions that help us maintain our love for God and promote lay ministry. For example, the tradition of attending spiritual meetings is very good. Or the tradition of punctuality—it increases our love for those things and builds good habits. Examine what customs and traditions in your life help you grow in spiritual matters and service to others.

But beware, like the Israelites, that these customs and traditions do not become mere routine without thought of why you do them. Some people celebrate certain days as traditions—for example, Father’s Day, Mother’s Day, Christmas, or New Year’s. These days may not be sinful and can even be used well to reach people of other nations. For example, on Father’s Day during prayer or worship, one could look up verses about how a Christian father should be, and about God as our Father, and meditate on them.

A birthday could be used to give testimony, serve, offer a thanksgiving gift, and bring joy and glory to God. Every culture has certain forms of entertainment. Examine the ones in your culture. Which ones should be maintained and which ones abandoned—and why? Don’t just copy things blindly, and at the same time, don’t reject things that could be used to reach people—lest you become an isolated island. Doing ministry without any form of recreation is not God’s plan. God wants us to be recreated.

Find entertainment that draws you closer to God, such as watching nature, walking among trees, rivers, and mountains. We know Christ didn’t pray in a marketplace called Gethsemane but in the Garden of Gethsemane. Christ’s entertainment wasn’t bars or dance halls or worldly pleasures. So always ask in everything you do: 1. Does it glorify God? 2. Does it edify others?

This includes how we use our gifts, time, money, influence, or health. In general, these are the things in Philippians 4:8. That is, in everything ask: Is it true? Noble? Right? Pure? Lovely? Admirable? Excellent? Praiseworthy? Memorize these eight criteria in your mind because you will need to evaluate everything by them repeatedly. Sometimes you’ll lose popularity because of these standards—but press on. Ask God to trouble and disturb you when you step outside of them. Even though our cultures may make certain things difficult, like Paul said—“To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews; to the Greeks, like a Greek,” just to reach them with salvation. This doesn’t mean sinning but learning and adapting.

Wisdom is also needed to live and work with people in this ministry. I'll give a recent example: There was an elderly woman, about 60 years old, who often asked us for transport. This woman criticized everyone—pastor or layperson. She constantly criticized how God's work was being done, even though she hadn't brought anyone to Christ. She knew the Bible and quoted it often. We learned a lot from her words, but her examples were not helpful to those younger than her.

She liked to buy expensive food and clothes. When we traveled all day, we offered her our food, and she ate without hesitation. But when she bought hers, she ate it in front of the children without shame. She was a lay leader of the church kitchen but believed she was poor and liked expensive food from organic health stores. She thought her food was too costly to share. One day we traveled for a week and drove about 3,000 km. We were a convoy of four vehicles. We always gave her food, and when someone had good food—even a child asked—she denied them.

I realized that Western culture, where people live apart from others, can make it easier to be selfish. So after six days, when she asked to be taken to one of those expensive food stores, I told her, "When you buy food and we are all in the car and you are the kitchen leader, you should share that food—because you've eaten ours, yet you shame even children who look at yours."

She got angry and started grumbling but finally shared it with us, though we told her to eat it herself since we had already eaten. We told her that Westerners avoid her, especially church members—not because they hate her, but because of her behavior. We said, "We don't avoid you, but we will tell you the truth."

At the meeting, she insisted on wearing expensive clothes and skipped many sessions. She spent a lot of time doing her hair and said it took her two hours. The whole time, she continued blaming others and criticizing the church. I asked her, "The people you criticize are the real workers and supporters of the gospel—why aren't you doing evangelism?" After some time, I realized she had a mental condition, and that her children had abandoned her because, even though she claimed to be a missionary, she always argued and demanded to stay in wealthy members' homes, saying she couldn't live in poor houses—though she had no job and received only a small pension. She always complained that members weren't helping. Eventually, we learned that her daughter was studying psychology to help her mother, and we understood she was mentally ill. Some people around us have

mental illnesses, though it's a secret. These people may disturb churches, and one might think they're just difficult. With such people, show human kindness, but don't waste ministry time arguing with them.

This woman had left two churches in three years. The last church's pastor and elder told me they had asked her not to return until she had reconciled with those she quarreled with, because she brought stress. In Western churches, they would likely just stay silent and avoid her. But in Black or other communities' churches, they would call you and tell you the truth.

CHAPTER 29

LOVING THE WIFE.

We have written in the book for wives of spiritual leaders about respecting their husbands. Since many preachers and laypeople are men, we are writing a book about loving a wife. If you are a laywoman, refer to the chapter in the book for wives about respecting their husbands.

It is something that God called him to do. I thank Teacher Marwa for his translation.

=====

Characteristics of a Gentle and Wise Woman

Her identity and value lie more in her relationship with her Creator than in her relationship with her husband.

She takes pride in the gifts given to her by God and is content with who she is.

With courage, she faces her fears instead of running away or hiding in shame.

She longs for meaningful things and does not waste time on petty, unprofitable matters.

She loves God and others, and is more concerned with giving love than receiving it.

She is ready to engage in something beneficial rather than giving up due to failure.

She holds firmly to God's promises and does not let them pass her by.

She protects and defends the vulnerable rather than using her strength to oppress others; she is known as a true comforter.

She is faithful and gentle. Others find comfort in receiving his counsel. He relies on the word of God as the source of his authority rather than being swayed by the voices of tradition and culture. In faith, he confronts by speaking the truth in love instead of allowing sin by remaining silent.

She walks with a boldness and humility that flows from recognizing God's work of grace in his life. He is able to influence and encourage because he lives under the authority of the Holy Spirit. His entire life is lived for the glory of God rather than for self-interest.

ASSIGN18=====Traits of a Harsh Woman Who Dominates Others

She stands on her own as an independent authority. Her identity is built on the mistaken belief that her life is her sole responsibility and that her freedom is of utmost value.

She is constantly driven by the desire for more; her desires are never easily satisfied.

She fails to recognize that ingratitude, pride, and suspicion are the driving forces behind her life.

She is motivated by things that are important to her and lives with a self-centered mindset.

She longs to be loved and pampered but can be deeply hurt when she feels rejected.

She frequently gets into arguments, confusing harshness with courage.

She is power-hungry and will let nothing or no one stand in her way of achieving it.

She uses her power to oppress her husband and others. While she may not be identified as an abuser, her critical attitude, negativity, and harsh tone are like acid.

She is harsh and lacks transparency, and she takes pride in being that way.

She often finds herself in conflict with others.

She may claim that the Word of God is her highest authority, but her reading of it is academic – it does not help her improve her relationships with others.

She doesn't mind quarreling, but her intent is usually for personal gain or comfort, and her behavior can be demeaning to others.

She walks with arrogance and pride, but she is blind to her lack of humility. She views humility as a sign of weakness.

She firmly believes that her disagreements with others stem from their lack of ability, spirituality, or confidence.

He often gets into conflicts with others. He may claim that the Word of God is his ultimate authority, but his reading of it is like that of an academic book—it does not help him to mend his relationships with others.

He often sees no problem with arguing, but his intention is for personal gain or comfort, and his behavior can be dismissive of others.

He walks with pride and arrogance but is blind due to a lack of humility.

He sees humility as a sign of weakness. He firmly believes that the differences he has with others stem from their lack of ability, lack of spirituality, or low self-confidence.

He wants to dominate others and has succeeded in elevating himself above them by using cunning and manipulative tactics. Even if he cannot admit it, his life is built on selfishness. He is only satisfied when he gets what concerns him.

CHAPTER 30

WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE ON EARTH?

It is important for you to understand that you are here on earth for God's creation, not by some accident.

You were created to give glory to GOD - that is the number one purpose!

Not to glorify yourself, nor to glorify certain people.

And this is easy to do if your old self dies.

The self (ego) is the greatest battle.

Not I, but Christ must reign.

Read Genesis chapters 1, 2, and 3, then read Revelation 12.

Almighty God created the heavens and the earth in 6 days and rested on the seventh.

Sin entered the world through the Devil, who was created and given the name Lucifer (the angel of light).

He began to rebel in his heart, seeking to exalt himself and favor his own views instead of God's.

He deceived other angels, and a third of them rebelled with him and were cast out of heaven.

"Woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you with great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time."

The Devil came and deceived our first parents - first Eve, then Adam - and they sinned.

That is the reason for all the sorrow we see today: death, pain, and sadness.

God created us to overcome, not to be overcome.

God loves you deeply, and don't devalue yourself - He created and redeemed you.

While theories of evolution continue to emerge, we Africans do not believe we came from worms, frogs, or monkeys.

We live near chimpanzees in Gombe, Kigoma, and we've never heard a neighbor tell us they have new relatives from the forest.

You don't need to be a rocket scientist to know that you didn't come from a chimpanzee!

We were created by God, and after the fall, we are in a state of restoration, preparing for heaven.

This is a long-standing battle - between God and Satan, evil and good.

Satan is a real being, and he is seeking followers.

Many people play around with Satan thinking he's not real.

If you don't know your enemy, you'll fail to confront him in battle!

Today, many Western films glorify the devil and witchcraft.

They play with witchcraft and say there are good and bad witches.

There is no such thing as good witchcraft - ever - because someone always gets hurt.

If you don't know your enemy, you've already lost the battle.

Jinn and demons are angels of darkness - they are billions - and every day we are in battle with them.

We are at war!

And this war is greater than World War I or II - greater than all wars.

You may ask, "But when I go outside, I don't see people fighting or soldiers in armor!"

The people I work with and my neighbors are kind.

Or where I live, there is peace."

If you forget everything, remember this:

Our battles are in our thoughts and our minds -24/7.

Every time a thought crosses your mind, a battle is ongoing - a battle to choose between God and Satan!

Within our souls, 24/7, the fight continues. God's Word in Ephesians 6 describes this clearly: "Put on the whole armor of God so that you can stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

Paul urges us to put on the full armor of God to stand against evil: the gospel of peace, faith, truth, the Spirit, prayer, and the Word of God. Only those who overcome will enter Heaven. Yes, it's true that we've all sinned and fallen short of God's glory, but we must be people of sincere confession, diligent prayer, and total surrender to God, just as John 15 emphasizes: "HE is the vine and we are the branches."

Don't skim the Word, study it in depth. Ask yourself whether what you believe is truly the whole truth or just inherited traditions and customs from your parents. Are you led by tradition or the Word of God?

The Word Is what cleanses us - John 15:3. We must completely surrender. Give God 100% - your heart, soul, strength, attitude, passion, goals, intentions, and mind.

Even though God has all power, wisdom, and knowledge, He cannot force your choice. Satan would claim God is coercing us and that we don't have free will. Because of His loving and just nature, God respects His Word and character - so He "ties His own hands." He cannot save you by force.

What helps God in this great controversy is your choice. Once you choose Him, He will fully fight for you in this spiritual war to save you.

We humans don't fully grasp the intensity of this war, but Revelation 12 and the book of Job give us a glimpse - of how Satan emerged and how God is battling him to save us. It's crucial to pray daily for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, study His Word, and learn together with others.

We speak of this because it's so important - we live in a time of tradition and customs, many of which won't help in this battle. Traditions have value, yes, we can't live without them. But not all are helpful. Jesus said of the Pharisees: "Do what they say, for they know the law in detail, but they don't practice it."

They were deeply traditional, knew everything, but their hearts and intentions were unchanged.

So evaluate your traditions. For example, if someone gets baptized but hasn't died to self, it's pointless. As some say, "he is just a wet sinner."

These are the truths Jesus shared with Nicodemus in John 3: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Though Nicodemus was a respected theologian, he didn't understand foundational matters of faith like the Holy Spirit's work or baptism by fire and water. Jesus asked him, "Are you a teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?"

He was teaching, but it was tradition-based teaching without true understanding. I, too, taught like that, without deep insight, living by tradition.

Even today, ask someone, "Have you received the baptism of the Holy Spirit?" - and many hesitate. We've read about Pentecost but haven't understood the Holy Spirit's work in spiritual growth and witnessing.

I once studied the Sanctuary at Hekalu Seminary just to pass exams, not to understand it. Yet the sanctuary message is a visual aid for our salvation.

Jesus revealed to Nicodemus deep truths, such as: "The Son of Man must be lifted up so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life. He didn't come to condemn the world, but to save it."

"Whoever believes is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already."

Reflect on those words. In your life, what is tradition, and what is God's true Word that leads to eternal life?

I had a Jewish friend who read many traditional Jewish stories but had never read the Bible. He said few Jews read the Bible - they are rooted in tradition. Laypeople and their spouses should examine what traditions they may need to abandon and root themselves in the Word.

Tradition is part of life - we admit that. But don't stop there. Let that tradition lead to true transformation. You must have progression in the truth you learn. Don't remain stagnant.

Reformers like Martin Luther helped us a lot. For example, he realized that some traditions like praying for the dead or working for salvation were just that - traditions.

While praying on his knees and feeling unworthy before God, he realized that "the righteous shall live by faith."

That insight led him deeper into Scripture, seeking truth over tradition. Others like Zwingli, Huss, Jerome, Knox, Tyndale, Calvin, Wesley - all found precious gems in God's Word and helped us.

But they did not reach the end - there's still more to learn. No human has full understanding of all of Scripture.

So don't be deceived - keep digging deeper. Follow Jesus, not tradition, and you'll find truths even those reformers missed.

Day and night, continue seeking and doing good. "He who knows what is right and does not do it - to him it is sin."

Don't just follow others - test what they teach against Scripture.

God won't save "good people" - only those who know and rely on Him. Knowing Him comes through knowing His Word.

Don't be misled - His Word and His law are supreme. Eternal life, as John 17:3 says, is to know Him, not traditions.

Pray that God helps you - though prayer doesn't change God's will, some things He won't do unless you ask. That's the heart of this great controversy - He won't take your freedom to choose.

To win the battle, ask God to transform you completely. We can't change ourselves. But if you allow Him, He will change you and make you like Him.

As a lay minister, put first things first. Matthew 6:32-33 says even pagans seek those same things we chase.

But "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you."

Micah 6:6-8 says:

"With what shall I come before the Lord...? Shall I offer burnt offerings...? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams...? He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you but to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God?"

Justice, mercy, and humility are most important. Look at your life and allow God to completely transform you.

There's nothing more important than spending time daily in prayer and studying the Word. Memorize verses, sing hymns - they help in solving life's problems.

Though Christ wrote the Word, He meditated on it daily! He sang when His heart was sorrowful.

This alone is the secret to winning the great battle.

Yes, it will be painful - because as humans we want our way, full of selfishness (me, myself, and I).

Tell God you surrender your will, heart, soul, mind, goals - everything - and He will transform you.

One day you'll rejoice, because "we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose."

Set goals and review them daily to remember God's plan for you. Let's strive to receive the reward we were created for. Hellfire is for the devil, not for us - don't help him by burning yourself.

Paul said, “I discipline my body... so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”

Every day, the door of mercy closes for someone. Every day, people drift too far from God’s grace.

We were created to reflect His glory and share the good news. Don’t live selfishly.

As a layperson, don’t pray only for yourself. Some pray only for their personal needs. I’ve heard people pray “to” their spouses instead of to God: “Lord, my wife is bad, she didn’t cook well today,” etc.

If you have an issue with someone, talk to them - not God. Yes, pray for yourself, but you were also created to carry others’ burdens. Pray even for those you don’t know.

You could set up a prayer journal:

Monday - pray for family

Tuesday - the sick

Wednesday - schools

Thursday - leaders

Friday - prisons

Saturday - evangelism

Sunday - your spiritual growth

Some things God won’t do until you pray for others. The prophet Samuel prayed for King Saul and said, “God forbid that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you.”

It’s vital to pray for others and live to bless others.

People who care for others often live much happier lives.

What does it profit someone to gain the whole world and lose eternal life? Better to enter Heaven with one eye or one leg than to go to Hell whole and burn forever.

God wants to heal us not only from diabetes or high blood pressure, but for eternal life - the ultimate health.

Don't say you're too busy if all your time is spent on personal things, not ministry.

Everyone is busy - maybe some have just forgotten why they were created.

We are here to glorify God, not ourselves.

Don't think you're too important by always saying "I'm busy." Some use it as an excuse to avoid serving, but they're only busy when it benefits them.

My husband and I once tried to reach someone who claimed to be busy all the time. We couldn't find him. We joked that maybe he was busier than President Obama!

Surely, he still had time to eat and shower, right?

Every Christian should be active in ministry. Yes, there's a time to say no and rest, but also a time to press on.

We worked with a preacher in the 90s who later got a high-level job in Tanzania and East Africa. He wrote to us, saying, "I can't continue with ministry - it's time-consuming."

We were sad, but thankful for his honesty.

A year later, he wrote again: "Please, let's return to our previous lay ministry work! This new office job isn't helping me spiritually - I've gone backward. I now see how much that ministry helped me."

We welcomed him back, and continued together.

So yes, there's time to rest, and time to work - but in all things, may the Name of the Lord be glorified.

We're not here just to eat, fetch firewood, weed grass, and shop at the market - those are part of life, yes, but the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.

That "main thing" is to give glory to God and exalt Christ, who died for us.

CHAPTER 31

STRESS

One of the challenges facing a layperson or spiritual leader is stress. Our life is like a single candle we've been given. We must be wise in how this candle continues to burn. To reduce stress, it's very important for a husband and wife (or those living together) to communicate regularly. When communication is close, you understand the thoughts, intentions, and decisions of those around you. A layperson should talk with their colleagues at work and find time for rest and recreation. This helps others benefit from your service.

Returning to those who are married, for example, a preacher told his wife, "A young woman came to me today. I had seen her teaching children here at church. She said she loved me and that every time I preach, I look her way, so she thinks I'm ready to start a romantic relationship with her. I told her I don't have that kind of love for her, and she doesn't really love me as she thinks because she doesn't know me. Besides, I don't want to fall into sin." His wife said, "When my husband talks to me, I don't doubt him because we often talk and resolve our differences, and that reduces my stress."

Those leading small churches or places of worship often experience high stress due to people's expectations and few workers. Taking vacations becomes difficult. A wife's support can help her husband realize they need to ask the church board for time off. Family problems can arise due to ministry. Sometimes it's good to travel with your wife, especially if there are no small children. The congregation shouldn't expect the leader to be available all the time without rest. Sixty hours a week in ministry is too much. For refreshment, healing from fatigue, and renewed mind, one needs entertainment and restful changes. This reduces negative emotions, fosters gratitude, and helps one continue working. Don't travel far if you have small kids—it will only increase stress. Go somewhere nearby and peaceful, not too far to become another stressful task.

Relocation also causes stress—packing, finding new friends, locating basic services in the city; children changing schools, which may not be ideal. People visit hospitals with pains or allergies, only to realize it's due to stress. Stress has many symptoms. In today's world, full of social, family, work, and spiritual responsibilities, can we say "no" when asked for help, or must we always say "yes"? Stress results from how the body responds to events. Both negative and

positive experiences can disrupt body balance. Our bodies must manage such events to maintain internal balance.

Stress pushes us to find answers and adapt to life. We should avoid negative thinking and seek solutions. I read a study where psychiatrists researching suicide ended up committing suicide themselves, except one. They had trapped themselves in a negative mental space.

During stress, the body releases cortisol hormones. These affect blood vessels, heart rate, and breathing. Chronic stress leads to major physical, mental, and spiritual health problems. All three are crucial to whole health—like the three legs of a stool; you can't manage with just one or two. People are affected differently by stress—conflicts, busyness, depression, etc. The longer such things go on, the more negative emotional effects arise. Major events like death, divorce, work, money, parents, health, and marriage are among the causes. In a study, only 5% of people said they had no stress.

Stress also has a good side. For instance, it helps us react in danger (fight or flight), increasing heart rate, sugar levels, breathing, and muscle readiness. It helps us focus and prepare, e.g., for exams. But prolonged stress harms us physically, mentally, and spiritually—like insomnia, poor digestion, pain, anxiety, sadness, negative thoughts, poor concentration, and accident-prone behavior.

Stress increases with widowhood or divorce. Below are some ways to manage stress:

Surrender to God—He is all-powerful. Life brings regret, but read His Word and pray. Prayer is you talking to God; the Bible is Him talking to you. You can't solve everything—leave it to the Almighty.

Some stress is good, like preparing for an exam or publishing a book.

Recognize if you're stressed and identify the cause early—it'll be easier to manage.

Write down your stressors, talk to wise close friends, and determine whether you can change the situation or must learn to live with it.

Don't make too many life changes at once—e.g., moving, having a baby, starting school.

Let go of hate, anger, jealousy, complaints, and unforgiveness. Enjoy life, don't obsess over your dreams or chase stars in the sky. Live one day at a time. Don't worry about yesterday's failures or tomorrow's unknowns. Ask for forgiveness and believe God has forgiven you. If He has, why can't you forgive yourself?

Rest—you're not made of iron. Sleep 8 hours, don't work more than 10 hours a day. Rest one day a week—it's a command for healing. Even if you're important like a president, you'll be replaced the day you die.

Exercise—farm if you have land, walk, observe the sky, trees, rivers, and mountains. Enjoy creation.

Avoid junk food (high in fat, salt, sugar). Stay away from refined foods—they increase stress.

Reflect on positive things and be grateful. Listen to calm music—not loud bus or matatu sounds.

Don't bring work home—leave it at the office.

Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs.

Live a natural life, preferably outside the city. Don't model your life on what you see online—many celebrities are overwhelmed by stress, live fake lives, and struggle with real friendship. When you're successful, fake friends are common.

Stop consuming caffeine, Coca-Cola, or black tea—switch to herbal teas.

Drink at least 2-3 liters of water daily.

Women taking care of kids, the sick, or elderly face a lot of stress. They need help and time with friends for encouragement.

For financial stress, seek advice, look for jobs, train in new skills, or pursue entrepreneurship while praying to God to open doors. With Him, all is possible.

For marriage stress—husband and wife must function as one team and one body. No one harms their own body. Attend seminars, read books, and seek wisdom from the experienced. No one is born knowing how to make marriage work—learn to make it better. Don't be too proud to be taught. Studies show happy marriages

correlate with better health. If you didn't care, you wouldn't have married. Make it fresh and fulfilling.

Seek counseling—some people silently suffer and harm themselves when a solution could be found.

Care workers should take time off. Let's meet, talk, and discuss everyday issues outside the work environment.

Set realistic goals. Don't overreach and end up disappointed or burned out. Don't overload your schedule. Avoid becoming a workaholic—but don't be lazy either. "He who does not work shall not eat." In a jar, if you put in big stones, then small ones, then sand, and finally water—you've filled it. There's no more room. You've reached the limit.

Thoughts lead to actions. Actions become habits. Habits become character, and character determines destiny. "As a man thinketh, so is he." Don't keep replaying yesterday's failures—live for today. "Let love and truth never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name with God and people. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of your crops. My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or resent His rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, as a father the son he delights in. Blessed is the man who finds wisdom and gains understanding."

A cheerful heart is good medicine.

Top Stress Causes (numbered):

Death of a spouse

Divorce

Separation from husband

Imprisonment

Death of a relative or close family member

Serious illness

Marriage

fired from work

Changing jobs or having dangerous jobs

Debts

Disobedient and rude children

Children getting pregnant at a young age

Frequent transfers (relocations)

Conflicts at the workplace

Not getting along with neighbors.

High Demands from Parents and Relatives

Unexpected Disasters (e.g., theft, accidents, etc.)

Loneliness

Conflicts Related to Marital Intimacy

Retirement - For many, especially men, their identity or sense of worth is tied to their work. When they retire, they feel diminished. Such individuals should try to volunteer or find meaningful activities. Many women take care of grandchildren and manage the home, and they are affected differently. Before retiring, plan with your spouse - find land and make strategies for living gracefully in old age with Christ's help. I'm struggling with this too; whenever I make plans, I encounter obstacles or things fall apart. Let's pray for one another.

I tried to save for retirement - about eight thousand dollars in a bank over six years. The bank went bankrupt, and I was left with only half - four thousand dollars! I got angry, withdrew what was left, and used it for ministry. Now I ask myself: what should I do?

The future - let us entrust it to Christ, trust Him, depend on Him, and obey Him; but still plan within our ability. Even though we know many have planned and failed or never enjoyed the fruits. My own father planned to retire; after moving into the house he had prepared, he died a year before retirement. We plan only as humans.

There are jobs known globally to cause stress - such as prison guards, police officers, loggers, firefighters, miners, nurses, certain artists; these come with high health risks or complex challenges.

Beyond food and the ten simple remedies for health that we talked about, stress is a major contributor to illness. Let us ask God to help us, even in sorrow, to know how to cope and grieve in a way that reduces rather than increases stress.

Experts who study grief advise people to grieve when tragedy strikes, but also to know when to move on. Failing to grieve can also bring stress. In many Western societies, I've seen that after the loss of a partner, the bereaved is left alone immediately after the funeral - sleeping alone - which increases stress. Some don't even bury their loved ones due to the high cost of land; they donate the body to medical research, and this leaves unresolved emotions.

In some places, cultural norms forbid crying for the deceased, and this has led to stress for many, because tears are healing. We see that Christ wept - and He is the Lord. He felt sorrow and compassion when His friend Lazarus died, even though He is the Resurrection and the Life. He was about to raise Lazarus - yet why did He weep? Let us not fear to cry when we are sorrowful. I've seen global cultures say, "Men don't cry." That's not true. There is a time to cry. Is there any man greater than Christ? Yet He cried. Even God Himself shed tears. Again, I ask: He knew He was going to resurrect Lazarus, and yet He cried. Why?

Being part of a community and being supported during tough times or tragedies is essential. God's Word is an example for us in our times of stress - look at what happened to those before us. Their stories were written as examples for us. They didn't read them, but we can - so that with endurance, we may follow, be comforted, and be blessed.

Peggy Rankin once said:

“After serving your children, serving your church, supporting your husband, doing your job, caring for your friends, maintaining your home, and ensuring everyone’s happiness - you will finally get a little time for yourself. The problem is, there is never any time left, and if there is, it’s not much! How can you serve the whole world and still care for yourself? How can you stretch without breaking?”

From what she said, here are some things to reflect on

Control your involvement, or you will be controlled. If you are controlled, you might lose your marriage, your family, or even your relationship with God.

When ministry opportunities arise, even among the good ones, choose the best ones. It’s likely all opportunities will seem good - that’s where restraint is needed.

Recognize that you cannot meet everyone’s needs - only God can. Some people’s needs are so enormous that even if we spent our entire remaining life trying to meet them, we still wouldn’t succeed. In trying, we might fail to meet even those we could have helped. Beware of “spiritual leeches” - people who, knowingly or unknowingly, drain your energy under the guise of Christian duty.

Reduce in order to focus. Choose to do just one thing - see Philippians 3:13 - and direct all your energy there. This “ministry focus” might require canceling, saying no, and reorganizing, but the benefits can be eternal.

Understand that the effectiveness of your ministry corresponds to how much of God’s Word you consume and reflect. Note - it’s not just the amount of time you spend in the Word. Even long hours of devotion can yield little if we don’t apply what we learn. The key is to make the Word of God part of us.

Serve from your overflow, not your reserve. Think of yourself as a vessel with a limited supply to give. You pour a little here and there, and before long, your vessel is empty, and you’re looking for even a drop inside. Fill until overflowing, and let ministry come from that overflow. Then you lose nothing - and everyone benefits.

Make time for solitude and refreshment. Schedule it. Find something that makes you laugh, listen to music, create a “sanctuary” space. What matters isn’t the activity, but the solitude.

Consider eternal matters. It would be tragic to reach the end of life and realize you lived in vain. Putting the Lord first removes that fear. Apostle Paul said, “For to me, to live is Christ.” And so he was able to say at the end of his life: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness.” What a life, so close to God’s glory, surrounded by people to the end!

Other matters;

We acknowledge that we are free people who have not been paralyzed or bound under authority.

We must be able to say no to good opportunities so that we can say yes to those that are better.

To choose to do fewer things without feeling obligated to do everything.

To offer our services creatively without comparing ourselves to others.

To prioritize certain people in our lives by listening to them more than others.

To make the sacrifices God requires and let go of those He does not.

To focus on relationships more than activities.

To refuse to feel guilty when we are not involved.

To read the Bible so it helps us, rather than just as a duty.

To know that we matter to God even when we are doing nothing.

To pray while on the run, knowing we are training in the presence of GOD.

To filter what we hear—even from church—through the Word of God.

To “seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness,” knowing that other things will be added.

CHAPTER 32

TALKING WITH GOD-PRAYERS.

Prayer for a Layperson - A Lifeline

Prayer for a layperson is like breath — it must be done continually, throughout the day without ceasing! Pray with your church too, even midweek. God clearly told us, “My house shall be called a house of prayer.” Not just for preaching, singing, praising, or worship — not even for food, though these are important — let prayer come first. Don’t have a series of church programs without prayer.

It took me 30 years since I believed in the Lord to realize this — that being on your knees is the first priority. When I was less than six years old, I heard my grandmother praying loudly in a house without a ceiling at 4 a.m., saying, “God of Isaac, Abraham, and Jacob...” I thought she was wasting time, praying every morning — it didn’t seem enjoyable! Now I understand and appreciate the richness she had.

A good layperson is one who receives direction from God through prayer, not just through seminars. Daniel prayed three times a day or more — we should pray without ceasing. If you’re too busy to pray, then you can’t do lay ministry; find another task immediately. You must feed yourself, grow, and serve others — none of which is possible without prayer (Jeremiah 10:21). Start every task by listening to the voice of God. People will eventually see whether you are a person of prayer or of mere chatter.

We see members of other denominations praying even at bus stations, and we marvel — at least they are fulfilling their duty. Prayer should be our first solution, not our last resort. Let’s ask God to make us people of genuine prayer. Don’t just prepare sermons without seeking God’s face. Let’s learn to recognize God’s voice. Find people in your fellowship willing to form a prayer team. Ask them to pray for you to become a person of prayer. Have a list of people to pray for — weekly or daily. Pray for God’s guidance, protection, and blessings. Don’t preach to people you haven’t prayed for. Prayer shows you’re empty and ready for God to fill you. Without prayer, you’re like a ship without a rudder.

The biggest enemy of prayer is the lack of discipline in prayer, being too busy, and running from place to place. Prioritize prayer and fully commit. Find a prayer

partner — if you can't meet in person, pray over the phone. Organize your prayer points and write them down. Just as God never abandons us, we should not abandon Him by neglecting prayer. Prayer enables us to do His work and fulfill His will.

Don't let your prayers be like fire extinguishers — crying out in trouble, then vanishing when the problem is solved. God is merciful — we've all done that. In times of trouble, we run to Him, then disappear until the next crisis. One church member once told lay leaders, "I prayed so hard for wealth, and now that God has given it, if I return to pray again, He'll wonder why I'm still asking." But we should use the term "praying" with reverence — what matters most is your relationship with Jesus.

God's Word is Him speaking to you — the Bible is His voice. Often, we want to tell God our problems but don't care to hear His voice. Let's take quiet time to listen. Much has been said about prayer in His Word. Christ woke early to pray, and many images show Him kneeling. If He knelt, shouldn't we? I admire our Muslim brothers and others who aren't ashamed to kneel — they even have prayer rules. It's a blessing for us to kneel in private and public prayer. Even the apostles knelt. In heaven, angels cover their faces in awe of God's glory and bow — how will we escape judgment if we neglect such reverence?

Pray for your character. Ask the Holy Spirit to descend so you can fulfill your lay ministry every day. Does your work cause you to be harsh, competitive, or selfish? Ask God for a new one, because at judgment, you won't stand. Remember, on the Day of Atonement, the Israelites stopped working to reconcile with God. Pray over such things — don't let them cost you eternal life. Pray over sin — it's no small matter. Sin separates us from God. We must understand Jesus' work and follow the Lamb by faith wherever He goes.

Let us focus on Psalm 139's prayer: "Search me and know my ways; see if there be any grievous way in me." Sin is rebellion that hinders our prayers. Set everything else aside and enter the temple like the Israelites on the Day of Atonement. They stopped cooking and all work to seek God's face. Some things only change through fasting and prayer. Handle the most important matters first.

On Fasting

Fasting is a deeper topic. In short, if you have no health issues, fasting once or twice a week helps both spiritually and physically. Don't overly rely on organized fasting events with your church or fellow laypeople. There are many types of fasts. In these notes, I can't go into all of them.

Examples:

Eating only simple plant foods (no meat, dairy, fish, eggs, sugar, fried, highly seasoned, or refined foods)

24-hour water fast with one meal afterward

72-hour water fast followed by fruits and vegetables for seven days

7- to 40-day water or juice fasts (consult your doctor)

Daniel's 21-day fast from meat, bread, and rich foods (Daniel 10)

Fasting benefits body, spirit, and community. Read all biblical examples, like Isaiah 58, on the kind of fasting God desires. We are told not to fast for show. We see lay preachers like Jonah whose preaching led everyone, including animals, to fast. Transformation came, and God relented from disaster. We fast to humble ourselves before God so He changes our hearts and hears our prayers. Invite others to join — there is power in united prayer.

A healthy layperson shouldn't love food so much as to avoid fasting. Laypeople shouldn't eat continuously without setting aside fasting times. This is as important as giving time to prayer. Have family, church, or community prayer days. Fasting is not just skipping meals — it's reading the Word and praying. I've fasted before but didn't read or pray because I was busy at work in a care home. Fasting means skipping meals to build yourself spiritually.

Set specific times to pray when fasting — some pray every 3 hours until bedtime (e.g., 3 a.m., 6 a.m., 9 a.m., noon, 3 p.m., 6 p.m., 9 p.m.). It's good to pray more than three times daily when fasting or more than usual. Ministries like Modern Manna by Dan Vierra have some insights on fasting and prayer. From the Bible, everyone is expected to fast — even if just one meal when sick. We see fasting in both Old and New Testaments — in Acts and in reformers like John Wesley, who required those being ordained to fast twice a week (Wednesdays and Fridays).

Prepare your mind to receive blessings from the Lord and adopt an attitude of fasting. We don't need further inspiration — fasting is a command. Today, many Christians realize fasting gives strength to overcome temptation and avoid gluttony. If you're tempted by junk food or overly processed meals, fast for three days on water, then eat fruits and raw vegetables — the cravings will fade. Even carrot pulp after juicing tastes good!

Let your prayers be filled with faith — without faith, it is impossible to please God. We must believe He exists and rewards those who seek Him. The reward may not be visible, but God will reveal hidden treasures of great value. Don't wait for a special revelation to fast.

Fasting brings clarity, health, helps receive Christ's righteousness, and understand God's glory. Many prayers are answered during fasting that wouldn't otherwise be answered. Fasting gives divine guidance, satisfaction, and physical renewal. It strengthens us — our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Through fasting, He teaches us how to use our bodies rightly.

Fasting helps in many areas — know them so you can pursue them. If you aim at nothing, you'll hit nothing. David said fasting helped him humble himself (Psalm 35:8). Let's humble ourselves before the Lord, and He will lift us up. James tells us we fast to draw near to the Lord. We also fast to understand the Word better — our thoughts become clearer without mental clutter, and we comprehend Scripture more deeply.

When in trouble like Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20), fasting brings solutions. Fasting prayer is also a ministry for interceding on behalf of others — for their salvation and needs. Have you ever fasted for your brother or wife who doesn't believe in Christ? Make a list of prayer points and revisit it after a few years — you'll be amazed!

If you have never fasted, begin with a short fast by skipping the evening meal; you will have fasted for 18 hours. If you manage that, skip two meals—breakfast and lunch—and you will have fasted for about 24 hours. If you have no health issues, fast for 72 hours while drinking water.

Hebrews 11:6 says God rewards your service—you'll be amazed how God blesses you when you pray and fast to reach others.

When you purpose to fast, don't waver when you see food—unless it's an emergency. Daniel 9:3.

When you feel hunger pains, take time to pray and rest quietly. Your stomach is used to food, so you will feel hunger. Don't be afraid of hunger. Drink water; the stomach will settle its rumbling.

Fasting reveals our physical and spiritual problems. Don't blame fasting—thank God and ask Him to help you find a solution.

If you fast for a longer period, like a week, and want positive results, take time to rest and read the Word. Even take time off work. Exercise and get fresh air—it will boost your strength. Drink plenty of water, even 4-5 liters to cleanse your body well, and do a warm saltwater flush in the morning. You can squeeze lemon into your water. Avoid tea or coffee. If you must, drink only herbal teas.

Watch your bowel movements. If you have trouble, drink saltwater every morning during the fast (on an empty stomach). Take two tablespoons of non-iodized salt in one liter of warm spring water. Drink it quickly. It will cause you to go to the toilet—it's a good body cleanse.

When fasting, the body cleanses itself. If you're constipated, the toxins are reabsorbed, so remove them with saltwater (some use coffee enemas, but saltwater is easier). After drinking, stay close to a toilet—you may go two or three times, and your colon will be left clean and empty.

Watch out—this is the time the tempter may come to you as he did to Jesus. The important thing isn't just giving up food but spending time drawing near to God.

You may experience joy, peace, and cheerfulness—or fear, loneliness, anxiety, and doubt. Don't entertain these feelings. Matthew 6:16 warns us not to boast about fasting like the hypocrites—they've already received their reward (public praise).

Sometimes people will need to know you're fasting, such as those you live with, but avoid bragging. This also applies to scripture memorization. Some in the FAST memorization program realized people were boasting about how many Bible books they could recite. The goal isn't to impress people! Continue your daily activities humbly as usual.

Some may experience headaches, dizziness, or nausea. Many experts say it's due to detoxification, and once the body finishes, the mind and body feel calm. If it's a medical emergency, consult a doctor.

Digesting food is heavy work—fasting allows your body to rest. Avoid stuffing your stomach before preaching. Preach on a relatively empty stomach so your mind stays sharp.

When you break your fast, don't eat greedily. Your stomach will struggle. Start with fruits, vegetables, and simple foods—your stomach is like that of a child. Overeating after cleansing ruins your physical and spiritual progress.

Your stomach shrinks, so you'll feel full faster, but you will begin to feel hungry again. After extended fasting, hunger may disappear, but during the fast, you might fantasize about all the tasty foods you've missed. Don't dwell on this.

Many of us have made this mistake—breaking the fast with overeating, even late at night. That's not true fasting—skipping daytime meals just to binge at night. Gluttony was the first sin in the world—it came with disobedience to God's command.

Alternate fruits and vegetables. Give yourself only two hours to eat after breaking the fast—one hour for the main meal, rest, then fruits. After that, wait until tomorrow. This is a good time to adopt healthy habits and easily drop old, bad ones.

Eating like a caterpillar or termite should be a thing of the past. Fasting doesn't help reduce weight if you binge afterward—you'll gain it all back.

There are many types of fasts in the Bible. Some lasted 40 days without food or water—this is only possible by God's power. Jesus, Elijah, Moses, and Paul did this. Esther and the Israelites fasted three days without water.

In today's world, I wouldn't advise going without water. Daniel's fast (Daniel 10:2-3) involved eating simple food. He was weeping and sorrowful (Matthew 5:4).

Continue meeting and praying with others—some prayers are answered in groups, not alone. Hebrews 4:9, Joel 1:14, Leviticus 16:29-31, and Isaiah 58 connect fasting with rest (Sabbath). Sometimes, it's best to stop work and fast to seek God's will.

Prayer is talking to God as a friend. They say we can't change God's mind—but He relents when our hearts change. God delights when we ask great things of Him.

You wouldn't go to your president, be offered anything, and ask for just an orange or a needle! We glorify God when we ask big things according to His will. We must confess our sins so He hears us, believe His promises, pray based on His Word, and claim His promises.

I believe some things God won't do until we pray! Claim His promises: "Ask and it shall be given, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened."

"You have not because you ask not." I won't stay without because I failed to ask—I will ask!

Sometimes laypeople fear reaching those of high economic status. Don't be afraid—pray, and God will answer. If you reach such people, they will easily reach many more through platforms or media. They'll use their money and time to become agents of the good news. They'll reach others in their class and families. Visit and pray with them so they see you care about their welfare. Show that you care about their families.

Don't feel inferior or scared. Take time to pray for those in authority—if they believe in the Lord, they'll become salvation agents for many.

Pray not to preach entertaining sermons, but soul-saving ones. But prepare well so people are spiritually fed. Preaching is not comedy, style, or clever examples—it is being used by God to draw people to Him. So, pray that your sermons are clear, Christ-centered, helpful, and aligned with God's Word.

Ask the members to pray for you so you can preach effectively and understand the Word deeply. Ask them to pray so they understand your message, that you live what you preach, and that you get time and inspiration. Pray to preach with boldness and zeal.

One church member said, "I've never seen our preacher's eyes—he closes them while praying and looks down while preaching. I end up closing mine too!"

Don't rely on your own strength to preach—pray! Without prayer, you'll run out of energy.

Visit people and pray with them—they'll know you care and love them, and this builds bridges. Walk around the neighborhood praying for your neighbors and your city. Ask the Spirit to lead you—He brings the fruit.

Take time to pray in the morning, noon, evening, and as you walk—pray without ceasing.

When talking to someone or teaching the Bible, silently ask God to work a miracle in their life. You are God's ambassador. Pray when counseling others—don't postpone. You don't know what tomorrow holds.

Preacher H.M.S. Richards told how he once visited a woman who was thinking about choosing Christ. She had guests, so he just made small talk and didn't bring up the gospel to avoid embarrassment. The next day, he heard she had committed suicide. He was asked to conduct her funeral. From that day, he asked God to help him always guide people spiritually whenever he speaks to them.

Lift up Jesus to people at all times, and then lift them up to Jesus in prayer. Most who attend meetings were invited by friends or relatives. Pray for members to invite others and not be lazy.

List all your prayer requests and be intentional.

Don't be lazy to pray—the more prayers, the more power. Heavenly angels are amazed that God is ready to give us so much, yet we don't ask! It's truly astonishing.

We must pray in faith. We can move mountains and dissolve problems through prayer. Jesus woke up at night to pray. What about you and me? Don't we need more prayer?

Kneel in reverence and pray. I've seen many pictures of Jesus kneeling in prayer, seeking strength from the Father. How will we survive if we don't care about prayer?

Read scriptures about prayer—they teach principles of prayer. Set special personal and group prayer days. We are advised to pray with and for people of other denominations. This is a very good command.

Consecrate yourself each morning when you wake. Kneel and thank God for life, ask for forgiveness and guidance. Commit your plans to Him, ask to live in Him and Him in you. Give yourself wholly to Him.

Continue in communion with God throughout the day like a close friend. Talk to Him, cast all your burdens on Him. The Lord wants to do great things for us—how blessed are we to drink from His fountain of boundless love?

Christ found hope and joy on earth through communion with His Father. He is our Father—let's not hesitate to remain steadfast in prayer. Let's not lose trust even if answers delay.

Prayer is the key of faith that unlocks the treasures of heaven. Without it, we easily fall into temptation. If we hunger for His righteousness, He will fill us. We've been told: "Ask and it shall be given to you." We come to Him through the blood of Jesus.

Let's pray in faith, believing He is real and rewards those who seek Him.

Often, because of our sins, we don't know what's best for us. When we don't receive something, let's trust that He knows what is best.

Come to Him with merciful and forgiving hearts toward others. Be quick to thank God for everything He does for you.

We don't need to act overly pious or spend all our time in prayer—but let us, like Christ, balance service and prayer.

Always continue speaking with Him and thinking about heaven. This becomes easier when we read and meditate on His Word.

Let our prayer lives be filled with praise and glorifying God—not just asking for things. Our God is merciful and compassionate. Let's not see His work as joyless.

Rejoice as you worship and serve Him. God does not delight in being seen as a harsh boss. Always praise and glorify Him with songs as you pray.

CHAPTER 33

BEING A LEADER.

No one should think that church leadership is a hindrance to their work. The Church of God was founded on prayer and wisdom from Him; it is a chosen vessel to reach people. When people are baptized, they enter into fellowship that has a plan to nurture them and send them out to preach. When people gather without leadership, they become a group marked by chaos and disorder. For any group to thrive, leadership is more necessary than money or anything else. What is needed is spiritual leadership.

Noah was not lazy; he was a spiritual leader. He was an engineer overseeing a massive construction project, taking care of animals, and preaching. He pleased God (Genesis 6:9).

Spiritual leaders are not cruel tyrants. They take time to pray with people and to please God. People should feel free to come to you for counsel and prayer. A leader does not have the final authority—God does—so kneel in prayer. Spiritual leadership doesn't come through schooling alone, but through tears, prayer, true repentance, heart-searching, and the infilling of the Holy Spirit. This is essential!

A spiritual leader must be a person of vision; without vision, people perish. A spiritual leader is not content with weak success or small dreams when it comes to God's work. He has clear goals in the mission to succeed.

A leader must spend time with God—reading, meditating, and praying. We are small people doing a great work for God; let us never think we are great people doing a small task. Be someone who is quick to listen and slow to speak. Be gentle, kind to those you lead, courteous and compassionate. Do not speak harshly or arrogantly. Let us not be people who run from responsibility.

A leader should not cause people to lose courage or die inside. Our calling to serve is a lifelong one. Let us be faithful to the end, and God will give us the crown of life. God cannot use those who are not fully committed, especially in tough and urgent times. We need to stand for truth and righteousness, especially when many are fleeing. Continuing the fight when even the generals fall—that is the test of who can be a spiritual leader. We must get warmth from the cold-hearted and courage from the fearful.

Every organization needs a leader. As a leader, learn to lead effectively and efficiently. Know your goals and your direction.

A five-year-old child came home and told his mother, “I was chosen to be the chairman of the whole school!” The mother was surprised and asked, “How did that happen?” He replied, “They wanted someone who could write to be the secretary—I couldn’t write. Then they wanted a treasurer who could count—I couldn’t count. So, they made me the chairman!”

When you’re given authority, don’t assume it’s because you’re special or that you know everything!

When you begin working, know who has the skills for what job, and who works well together. Don’t pair Paul and Barnabas! Life is short—don’t burden yourself with unnecessary pressure or stress. Before a committee or board meets, it’s good to discuss strategies or items you want to present on the agenda. Don’t be someone with more plans than necessary—be moderate. Overplanning is like David wearing Saul’s armor to fight Goliath—it limits effectiveness. Plans should be well arranged and not clash. For example: don’t schedule a public evangelism event that clashes with a camp meeting or crowd many programs into one month while the rest of the year is empty.

Write letters, emails, or messages of encouragement and hope to those you lead whenever you get the chance. Apostle Paul wrote letters that became blessings to the churches.

Try to manage well the budget for any resources entrusted to you, especially money. Don’t only think about your local church; encourage people to go beyond—even to other places.

Three years ago, we heard that Bhutan had very few Christians, and our denomination had zero presence. That’s when the church strategized to enter there. They built small churches for \$1,500. When we heard this, we also joined in by building one small church. Budget wisely so that you can support your local church and reach beyond, like Macedonia.

Relationships with people at your station are very important. “Mama, give me grace to live and work with people,” is a saying I found on a khanga cloth. We must learn to live with others. Jesus left us an example (1 Peter 2:21). Today,

psychologists sell us advice on how to relate with others, but the problems are still many.

We've gone to the moon, but we've failed to visit our neighbor. When we have a relationship with Jesus, He helps us with the wisdom to live with others. Let's strive to live like Him and follow in His footsteps closely.

Let Us Be Compassionate People

"He had compassion on the crowds." Read Romans 12 for more information.

We must be willing to engage with lowly matters, and we must also be willing to be led if we want to become leaders. When we are busy, are we trying to avoid people and showing them coldness? Do we show favoritism, visiting the wealthy more often and pretending to pray for them? We must have genuine love.

Perhaps we fear the rich and circle around them like islands without reaching them with the gospel? I know some wealthy individuals are prideful and unapproachable, offering discouraging responses, but even they need eternal life. No one wants to go to hell.

People must have faith in your leadership before they can begin to support you. Treat others the way you want to be treated. Strive to speak kindly and compassionately to people. Many leaders face tough battles in their lives, and they need someone to offer them comforting words or even just a cup of water to refresh them.

Leaders should help their fellow workers who are in need. Proverbs 3:27 says:

"Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbor, 'Come back tomorrow and I'll give it to you'—when you already have it with you."

Sometimes I've been asked for something as simple as a phone number, and I felt lazy to look it up or share it, and I told the person, "Call again" or "Come tomorrow." This is an evil thing. As much as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, especially to the household of believers.

Let's seek advice from those we work with. Look at the life of Rehoboam; 1 Kings 12:5-19. A good leader will receive counsel from both young and old. A wise person

listens to advice and gains knowledge. “Where there is no guidance, a nation falls; but in the multitude of counselors, there is safety.” Advice must be taken in moderation and thoughtfully.

Often, I’ve received so much advice that it becomes hard to make the right decision. Everything has its limits; God will help you as you gain experience.

Do not be afraid of making mistakes—every human makes mistakes. Admit your mistakes, correct them, and move on; don’t dwell in arguments. Don’t seek praise when you do something, and sulk if not praised. Let others receive praise too!

Be ready to restore joy and hope to others by giving second chances even to those who have failed. If leader Barnabas hadn’t taken Mark under his wing, we wouldn’t have today’s bold gospel writer. Paul had given up on him, but another leader supported this young man.

Work with people, don’t just command “Do it”—say “Let’s do it together.”

When we work and face hardships, we tend to feel others have it easier and that we were assigned the toughest tasks. It’s hard to know the shoes others are walking in. Let us be compassionate, and let our gentleness be evident to those who are struggling, so they know they have an advocate. The Lord is near; we are sent to heal people’s wounds, not to beat them with whips.

If you are the chairperson of a committee, how do you handle your role? We have many committees in church operations; the effectiveness of a committee largely depends on its leader. The Holy Spirit is needed in this work. With God’s Spirit in us as leaders, there will be no hatred, jealousy, or unnecessary criticism.

We are advised to love one another with brotherly affection; honoring each other above ourselves. Not lagging in zeal, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

The chairperson should know where they are, where they’re going, how they’ll get there, and what will be done upon arrival. Letters, policies, reports, finances, and all agenda matters should be well-prepared and orderly. A leader should not guess or answer questions without evidence.

Before placing matters on the agenda, the leader should pray, reflect, and discuss them. This does not mean the chairperson has all answers or absolute authority, nor should they bulldoze others.

To be a chairperson, one must have a gift of leadership; and spiritual matters are matters of life and death. It is good for the chair to allow people to express their ideas. Don't shut others down or interrupt. The agenda shouldn't be discussed endlessly—time must be saved—but remember, we serve people and God, not time.

Though people offer solutions, the leader, as chairperson, must know how to steer the agenda and stop discussions when they veer off-track. Learn how to handle opposition during committee discussions, etc.

President Abraham Lincoln said, "I thank God for my enemies because they help me avoid many mistakes. When I make mistakes, my friends don't tell me, but my enemies tell me immediately that I have done something foolish—so I thank God for my enemies."

There's only one way to handle opposition—with the Spirit of God. Let's love others. Don't argue when it's clear you're wrong. Even when you've been treated unfairly, remember the Lord can turn trials into blessings. Don't take judgment into your own hands.

Look at the stories of Joseph and Daniel—even though they were treated unfairly. The chairperson must be a peacemaker. It's an art to divide bread in such a way that everyone feels they got the biggest piece. Anyone who lacks wisdom is told to ask God—but ask without doubting or double-mindedness.

As a chairperson, be willing to admit your mistakes, thank people, and move forward. Be ready to implement the policies of your church. Be ready to make decisions for your committee. Remember, it is God who leads the committee, and we pray for guidance before we begin.

True wisdom is pure, peaceable, gentle, full of mercy, full of good fruit, willing to yield, without partiality or hypocrisy. Let's remember that with many counselors, nothing will fail.

Leadership is not a place to indulge in personal comfort.

The Word contains hard truths:

"Rescue those being led away to death, and save those stumbling toward slaughter." - Proverbs 24:11

“The lost” - Luke 19:10

“Those who sit in darkness... and in the land of the shadow of death...” - Matthew 4:16

“Those perishing” - 1 Corinthians 1:18

“He was thrown into the lake of fire.” - Revelation 20:15

“All their lives they were held in slavery by their fear of death.” - Hebrews 2:15

“He rescued us from the dominion of darkness.” - Colossians 1:13

“Whoever does not believe stands condemned already... whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.” - John 3:18, 36

“They will be punished with everlasting destruction, shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.” - 1 Thessalonians 1:9

These words are not just theology in the head, but they describe real people—people you and I know.

All who do not know God and have not repented of their sins—this is what awaits them.

Try inserting your name or that of someone you know, then reflect on its meaning!

Is taken away and killed, thrown into the lake of fire, already condemned, will be punished with eternal destruction, separated from the face of the Lord and the glory of His might.

How do you feel about these words?

When Jesus sees people going to the market or leaving school, He does not just see shoppers or students, but souls heading for destruction.

Do you also have that kind of vision?

To be a spiritual guide, you must see people in their true condition—“perishing eternally”—and have the love of Jesus.

May God plant in your heart the desire, as a spiritual leader, to reach people and save them from the greatest punishment of all.

You are God's ambassador, and He has entrusted you with the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to a wicked person, 'You will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade them from their ways, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. But if you do warn them... and they do not turn... they will die for their sin, but you will have saved yourself." (Ezekiel 33:7-9).

Sometimes you must leave the ninety-nine sheep to search for the one who needs you the most.

Leadership requires a person who can make decisions.

Life presents many situations that require judgment. We need heroes who can decide!

Every morning we wake up and ask: What will I wear? Should I attend that meeting? Should I go to the market today? Should I rent or buy a house?

Some decisions are urgent; others take time.

Eternal life is attained by deciding to choose God.

Getting a wife starts with the decision to begin a friendship.

Spiritual leaders make many decisions in their daily duties. God's work needs people who can make timely, firm decisions.

If you keep hesitating, analyzing every problem and doubt you encounter, you will accomplish very little.

To decide is to acquire knowledge about something, make a judgment, and take specific action.

It is okay to make mistakes sometimes, but it's better to keep moving and make decisions than to stall everything.

As a human being, you will make mistakes—but with God’s help, take on your responsibilities and stick to your resolutions.

Understand your issue well, and earnestly pray for heavenly wisdom.

Solomon prayed for this and received it. God is still generous today.

Gather all relevant information; not everything that glitters is gold.

If it involves numbers, get full details. Write everything down and meditate carefully.

A leader is a mature person who has gained experience through service in different situations. They are blessed because they’ve learned from their mistakes and others’.

Test whether something works.

One church in a certain country needed to build 1,300 buildings.

The right thing was to pilot a few before launching a full-scale plan.

Take time, go home, reflect, and pray.

Find a trustworthy advisor and consult them.

If the matter is difficult, form a committee or board to decide together.

When you make a decision, be ready to take responsibility if things go wrong.

Don’t start blaming others—everyone makes mistakes—but with God’s help and understanding colleagues, you’ll find a solution.

Be humble and relational.

Learn how to encourage other leaders or members to do what you are doing.

Have a vision for advancing God’s work, whether it’s church building or visiting people.

Eliminate thoughts like “I will fail” or “It’s impossible.”

Instead, say: “With God, I am a conqueror.” You will be the head, not the tail.

Plan your work well.

If you're preaching, don't start big with a bang and then disappear, causing people not to come back.

Make realistic plans that are easy to follow.

Genuinely thank all involved.

Remember, only the one who finishes gets the reward.

Know how to finish—and finish well.

Learn how to redeem time.

Time is not ours—it is loaned by the Almighty.

One day we will account for how we wasted it (Ephesians 5:16).

If we waste just one hour daily, by age 70, we'll have lost thousands of hours.

Those hours could be used to read the Word, learn a new language, write books, learn instruments, and more.

Everyone has 24 hours.

If we value time and use it wisely, we'll have time to do all we want for ourselves and for winning souls.

We need wisdom and prayer to manage time.

Westerners work long hours and value time—but they also arrive late to church!

We must not treat time-wasting as a cultural trait—as in “There's no hurry in Africa.”

Time-wasting is a universal sin.

Some waste time sorting excessive household items and clothes—if they simplified, they'd have time to witness.

Plan how to use your time daily.

Write down how you plan to spend each minute/hour.

If you aim at nothing, you'll hit it!

A Christian must be organized and efficient.

We're often good at planning things that benefit us, but when it comes to God's work, we slack off.

Write out what you want to do each day. Don't just drift through it.

Check off what you've done at the end.

Use every minute productively.

Don't sleep in—late rising wastes hours.

By 9 a.m., you should have accomplished a lot.

Go to sleep at 9 p.m. and wake up at 5 a.m. to receive natural energy boosts!

When waiting for a bus or a person, have a book to read.

Many books have been written while traveling—even though some excuse themselves saying travel is why they don't read or write.

It depends on you and your mindset.

Often when you travel, you're alone—use this time fruitfully.

Be diligent—not lazy.

Time is precious. They say people spend a whole year of their lives just waiting.

That year could be productive, not just waiting to “protect your stomach.”

Start your day by tackling hard tasks while your mind is fresh.

Call ahead before traveling to avoid wasting time.

Organize your documents—e.g., Bible study notes.

Learn to multitask—like eating and listening to the radio.

Keep spares of essential items, like house keys, in case you lock yourself out.

Preserve time now—the past cannot be regained.

Are you weak in times of trouble?

It's easy to smile and get along when things are calm.

But your true character shows during storms.

Those you lead watch how you handle crisis.

Preparation time is not when problems begin—but before.

As Christians, we must not use worldly tactics in trials.

We cannot act like corrupt politicians or arrogant businessmen—we are God's followers, and our conduct must reflect this, even in hardship.

Control your temper.

Let your words be seasoned with salt.

Don't be harsh or loud under pressure.

Listen carefully to understand others' perspectives.

God gave us one mouth and two ears to listen more than we speak.

Sometimes just wait—let the other person finish their sentence.

Weigh your words.

Try to “sell” your thoughts—don't argue.

As a leader, don't use your position to crush others.

Ask thoroughly to understand what's going on.

Be quick to commend those who do well.

Avoid bias or judging without discernment.

Be patient when insulted or opposed—that is the test of a good leader.

“Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but one who has a hasty temper exalts folly.” (Proverbs 14:29).

As a leader, expect criticism.

If you have your own ideas and share them—you’ll be opposed.

But if you truly want to lead, be brave and follow Jesus’ way (Philippians 2:2-5).

Can you handle criticism?

You must ask yourself this.

A leader who can’t take criticism cannot lead.

Leadership invites much critique.

Have you ever criticized your leaders?

This question helps you understand: don’t criticize without reason—examine matters first.

Often, people talk behind your back.

That helps no one—especially when change is needed.

It’s easy to find fault.

One person said: “You don’t need talent, brains, or character to grumble about someone.”

Jesus was perfect, yet He was criticized often (eating with gluttons and sinners, being a friend of tax collectors).

Even John the Baptist, whom Jesus praised as the greatest among those born of women, was criticized.

So if even they were criticized, how can a leader escape?

But some criticism helps us grow.

Don’t dismiss everything—ask, “Is there truth here?”

“Can I learn something from this?”

One man who disliked a preacher told him, “You preach poorly. You bore people. You’re unprepared. Go get trained!”

The preacher took training, learned vocal control, and began delivering powerful sermons.

Indeed, many preachers lose effectiveness from misusing their voices.

If you are a spiritual leader, learn to speak well, to counsel, and to breathe properly for long speaking.

Even your enemies can teach you. Listen and learn.

Sometimes, a critic may be hiding their own sin by highlighting your minor flaws.

One church member involved in adultery kept criticizing the pastor to cover his own faults—watch for this.

Be gentle with critics so they may even feel ashamed.

If you stay silent, they have no one to argue with.

Speak well of your critics—perhaps if it’s your fault, they’ll forgive you.

Pray for your critics, and don’t quit God’s work just because someone criticized you.

Also learn to forget.

I received many harsh letters.

But when I realized they lacked truth and were attempts to make me feel guilty for not giving money, I let it go and stopped reading them.

Some people you can’t change—they may have nothing to do and use you to vent their stress.

It’s best to delete such files from your mind.

Leave your critics to God—He is the judge, not you.

And don't fall into the same pit of fault-finding.

If you've never led, you won't understand Moses' struggles.

It's easy to grumble when you feel like saying anything for comfort or revenge.

But you, as a leader, must be an example.

Learn to trust those you work with and those you appoint as leaders.

Many think only they can do the job right.

But others are also capable.

It is a blessing to work with God's people.

Leadership and faith grow through mutual respect, love, trust, and harmony.

The fear of the Lord is a firm foundation.

If you ask new members to visit others, and they don't see you doing the same, they'll lose trust.

Therefore, being an example is crucial.

CHAPTER 34

LAIITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Courage in seeking livelihood is essential. A layperson should care for, protect, and provide for their family. There are three principles to help meet your needs and obtain a livelihood:

1. God owns everything,
2. God is the provider,
3. God is the first, the last, and the best in everything.

When you have anything, divide it into three portions: for God, for your household, and for the world.

Having a budget is also important because it gives you direction and focus, prevents wasteful spending, instills financial discipline, helps you be a good steward, involves your family in decision-making, supports in times of emergency, and enables you to care for those in need.

It is our hope that, in the future, business teachers will write books for laypeople that explain step-by-step how to conduct market research, start a business, manage it, keep records, earn profits, and other aspects of entrepreneurship.

A layperson should also have a garden that can provide vegetables, fruits, beans, and even grains. Gardening has helped us a lot—we only need to buy flour. We even share vegetables with friends. Did you know that tomatoes are both fruits and vegetables? If you can't grow large fruit trees, grow tomatoes. Learn how to dry vegetables too. In the past, people dried vegetables for times of drought and used them later. Last year I passed through Mwanza, I saw plenty of vegetables and rain, but no one was drying them. During the dry season, vegetables become scarce! This year we dried bean leaves, tomatoes, and other greens.

In heaven, farming will continue. Other jobs like healthcare or accounting may not be there, but farming—being the first work given—will remain! Gardening helps to clear the mind, bring joy, and also provide income.

A self-supporting layperson usually uses their own effort to meet their needs while seeking opportunities to witness for Christ. They return tithe and offerings so that

full-time ministers can continue preaching. Typically, they are not wealthy. If you are a self-supporting layperson and desire wealth, then transition to being a fully-employed layperson or full-time businessperson who supports evangelism financially and also sets aside time to witness.

A self-supporting layperson uses what they have to advance the Lord's work. Don't be a beggar, always seeking aid. We've been told that we shall eat by the sweat of our brow. Especially men—though today, women seem to have taken on everything: they eat by their sweat and give birth in pain.

A layperson should avoid lazy tasks. The command was that we should eat by our sweat. Don't seek cunning or dishonest jobs that don't align with your faith. For example, I had a Christian lay relative who advertised alcohol. This job does not represent Jesus. Alcohol was once called a little devil, but now it's recognized as a big devil. An evangelist should never drink. Look at the lives of all Nazarenes—none let alcohol pass their lips.

Do not oppress others to gain income. Your life is a sermon. A layperson should not do just any job simply to earn a living. Let's consider the life of Jesus. He did the hard work of carpentry for thirty years, then preached for only three and a half years. Most of His ministry was through manual labor! The work you do as a layperson is also important.

Let's recognize that our jobs are great sermons. You might have a humble job like the shepherds who saw the star when Jesus was born—watching over someone else's sheep. That's a job given by God. Love it. It was shepherds who were invited to witness Jesus' birth—not kings, engineers, accountants, judges, doctors, or priests. It was those with humble jobs who were called. God shows us He remembers every kind of work.

Some people laughed at us when we farmed in Michigan (USA), but when it comes to faithfulness, may the Lord, the Master of all lawyers, welcome you into His kingdom.

Learn to speak positively. During trouble and hardship, God is glorified, and our hearts are strengthened. Look at the 72 hours before David was crowned king—everything was taken: their wives, children, and possessions. They cried until they had no more tears.

CHAPTER 35

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN DOING GOD'S WORK.

The Old and New Testaments mention many women who gave their resources and selfless service to God, becoming examples for today's laywomen.

Examples include Deborah, Miriam, Naaman's servant girl, Esther, Naomi, Lydia, the widow of Zarephath, Philip's daughters, Salome, and Mary. Women followed Jesus, served Him, and were involved in the work of the gospel (Luke 8:1-3). Paul, in Romans 16 and other letters, mentions women who supported the ministry. I've discovered that in many countries today like Zambia and Zimbabwe, many people know Christ because of the ministry of laywomen. God created everyone with a special purpose, and we do not choose to be male or female at birth.

The command to go into all the world and preach the gospel applies to everyone: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:19-20). Women, like men, when trained to develop and recognize their gifts, can be effective witnesses for Christ. They can go places where men cannot, just as men can go where women may not. Women can reach out within their communities and to their neighbors to share the gospel. Many women love to talk and can use this gift to speak the words of Christ to a lost world. They can easily connect with other women. A woman can go to a neighbor of a different religion and pick vegetables together without opposition. Women have a high capacity to understand emotions and the inner feelings of those they serve, as they tend to build relationships more deeply. They can use their warm, appealing voices to plead and persuade others to believe in Christ.

Today, 70% of church members are women, so if they unite, they form a great army. It's easy for them to use informal settings to spread the gospel when intentional. Let women not be lazy or feel inferior; let them get involved in witnessing for Christ. Women are hardworking. A FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) study reveals that women in Africa work more hours than men in rural areas. They fetch water, gather firewood, clean, wash, bathe children, care for the family, and go to the farm. The study says 90% of agricultural work is done by women. Even those with jobs still handle multiple household duties.

The problem among women in East Africa seems to be a reluctance to read. In contrast, in the West, women read more than men. When we did literature

evangelism, it was hard to sell books to women—even reading a newspaper was a challenge. They often use busyness as an excuse, but I think the real issue is a cultural habit of not reading from childhood. Martha used this same excuse, but Jesus told her that her sister Mary had chosen the better part! Let women rise up and realize the Holy Spirit has given them gifts to use. When their love for Christ overflows, they will desire to witness. They will become women of prayer, revival, reformation, and the Word—staying up all night if needed. They will want to tell everyone about this agape love. This hope will drive them, and love will compel them.

A woman is of great value—created and redeemed.

Attend seminars to learn how to reach people. My husband and I try to attend at least one seminar every three months, and they’ve helped us a lot. In the early days of churches, pioneers devoted themselves to the Word, fellowship, sharing meals, and meetings to move the work forward.

I discovered I had a lot of fear when it came to preaching or persuading others. Even today, I still struggle with fear, but I’m fighting it. Don’t hesitate to exalt Jesus and the hope He brings for our daily lives. Emphasize reverence for God’s Word in your sermons. Teach the foundational doctrines of faith. Let reformation and revival take center stage in preaching.

I’ve found that personal stories and testimonies are powerful—they help people see that their own lives can be changed. Praying and crying out for the Holy Spirit helps give us a message to share every day.

Even ministering to just one person is valuable, for there is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who comes to Jesus. “How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I surrender you, Israel?” (Hosea 11:8). Emphasize both God’s hatred of sin and His love for the sinner. Even if only one of us is lost, God feels pain. Urge people to choose eternal life or face eternal loss. “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. Choose good!” Tell them today is the day of their salvation. Hebrews 3:7-9 says, “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” It is encouraging to see someone reach heaven as a result of your work—by the grace of Jesus.

Encourage people not to say “tomorrow, tomorrow,” because no one knows what tomorrow holds. Even those who once chose Christ and turned back should not

lose heart—God forgives and we begin again. Making an appeal is important—even in the Bible. Elijah said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”

In His earthly ministry, Christ made appeals to those He met—from the apostles to people like Nicodemus, Zacchaeus, and others. “Today salvation has come to this house, for this man too is a son of Abraham.” “Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” The apostles also made appeals: Paul with King Agrippa in Acts 25. We see Agrippa was afraid and refused. He was convicted but didn’t want to give up his pride. You will meet people like Agrippa. Don’t be discouraged—others are ready to receive Christ with joy and love.

Appeal to your children too, and the children you meet. Mothers often have more opportunities to teach children than fathers. This is a chance to reach them. Don’t think children are not part of God’s mission field. Many have known God from childhood and done great work for Him. Your first mission is your own family—your “little flock.” Priesthood is especially hard for women, and this is one reason it’s difficult. It’s hard to go visiting at all hours with your husband while managing small children. Try as best you can, because your husband should be with you in these activities.

Many men have jobs and want to be free from household responsibilities. When will you manage both ministry and watching little ones at home? It’s a great challenge! But there are many small windows of opportunity for women to witness about the God of heaven. Spend time with neighbors in small prayer and Bible study groups. Many women love praying together and sharing thoughts and activities. This is a great way to reach many.

In the end, tell people of the final invitation we’ve all been given:

“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ Let the one who hears say, ‘Come!’ Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.” (Revelation 22).

You are an ambassador of God, sent to proclaim His mighty acts. Don’t waste time talking about God’s work every day without doing it. As in Noah’s day, people perished—destruction is near. Tell them there is judgment and a reward in paradise.

A preacher from Laymen Ministries Montana shared this story:

There was a seminar on how to harvest mangoes. People from all walks of life were invited to attend at a farm. Thousands came. From morning to evening, the seminar covered everything about mangoes—preparing the soil, choosing seeds, watering, grafting, weeding, fertilizing, harvesting, marketing, and more. By evening, the farm was full of ripe mangoes—but no one picked a single one! They had only talked all day. Someone finally asked, “The trees are full of ripe mangoes, and soon they’ll rot. Why don’t we harvest them when this seminar is about harvesting mangoes?”

Likewise, we’ve attended many “mango harvesting” seminars, but some of us have delayed—we’re not putting the teachings into action!

Just as Christ reconciled us to God, He has entrusted this ministry to us. We are ambassadors. Being an ambassador is a high honor, from childhood to adulthood.

We once lived near the homes of ambassadors from various countries: the UK, Germany, Russia, USA, Burundi, Syria, Egypt, Algeria, etc. I saw how they were respected. They had drivers, staff, official cars, special events, and many work benefits. They were like presidents of their countries there. Even if they accidentally harmed someone, like in a car accident, the case went to the UN, not local courts. They had presidential-level immunity. We saw how well-dressed their wives and children were, with many privileges—and we used to wish our father could be an ambassador. We even asked him, “Why don’t you become one?”

All laypeople have been given the high honor of being ambassadors for the King of the universe—the eternal King—a greater calling than representing any world leader.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 says:

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”

Those who are lost do not know God's Word or His laws. They are searching for truth and feel a certain loneliness, even if they don't express it. They often don't understand our language, and we confuse them with terms like "Holy Trinity," "salvation," "reformation," or "revival." It's important in the "business" of preaching Christ to explain our words clearly so they can understand and enter the rescue boat.

Sometimes we must be like Queen Esther and say, "If I perish, I perish," for this is a matter of life and death! Prayer is the first step to salvation.

"LAYING HANDS ON WOMEN (these are personal views from a member of one denomination)"

Laying on of hands refers to being set apart for a special work of God. In churches, among those laid hands on for special work are deacons, elders, and pastors. It is a unique way of serving God at a higher level. It is a privilege because the work of saving souls could have been done by angels. It is a high honor that we, weak and sinful beings, are given such a great responsibility.

We know there is a royal priesthood where every believer is a priest, but there are special duties that pastors are called to and are ordained for—such as baptizing, officiating weddings, organizing churches (transforming groups into formal congregations), dedicating church buildings, and even disbanding churches that have gone astray.

We understand that all are invited to the great wedding feast of the Lamb—children, youth, women, men, and even the elderly. When Jesus came to die for us on the cross, He extended the invitation to all. We accept this invitation when we accept Him as our Savior through baptism.

God also calls His people for special tasks in unique ways. From young to old, people have been called across all generations: some were called to be prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah. Others were called to be judges, teachers, pastors, and even doctors—some professions are callings. If someone gets into these ministries without a specific calling, they will not succeed.

Among those called for special tasks were children, men, and even women. We see Deborah in the Bible was both a prophetess and a judge in Israel (Judges 4:4). Anna was also a prophetess (Luke 2:36-38); she was given a promise that she would

not die before seeing baby Jesus. These women of God and many others performed significant roles. Even today, God has called many women to serve. We read their books, sing their songs, and heed their advice. Let us not think everyone is wicked—no! Many have dedicated themselves and are filled with the Spirit of God, perhaps thousands or even millions who have not bowed to Baal.

Even today, people are still being called for special service. Pastor Muasya from Kenya often tells pastors during ordination, “If there is a pastor who called himself, he won’t last in this ministry.” If someone saw that the work comes with honor, attention, and a stress-free life—just finish college and get employed right away—then there is a problem, for this work belongs to God Himself.

In the past, when there were bursaries to train pastors but few people wanted to take on this sacred calling, church leaders would visit congregations to look for young people who could be sponsored to study for pastoral ministry. When they asked members to recommend someone, they would say without hesitation, “So-and-so is fit to be a pastor.” How did they know? Proverbs 20:11 says, “Even a child is known by his deeds.” You can’t hide a calling. For example, you’ll notice someone never misses or arrives late to church meetings. They contribute generously to church projects without complaining or boasting. This includes everyone—even girls and women.

Due to the culture of the time, in some places girls were not educated as much as boys. So, boys were favored to fill such roles. But today, girls have equal opportunities. If a girl feels called, she can go study theology just like her male counterparts. After graduation, they are all assigned churches. After observation, leadership may recommend they be ordained. They go through all the necessary evaluations and interviews, and a day is set for their ordination. It’s a very special day—but only male pastors are ordained, and their female counterparts are left out.

This sparked a major debate a few years ago after some Protestant churches decided to ordain their female pastors. Why are others left behind? It appeared as though women were being discriminated against, despite having the capability to lead like men.

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, this issue was brought to the 2015 General Conference session in San Antonio, Texas. A vote was taken, and it was rejected

by 59% of delegates. Comparing the 41% who supported it and the 59% who opposed it, the numbers were quite close. This suggests that perhaps in the future, the issue may be accepted. As we wait for that time, let us consider our own thoughts. Having served in this work of the Lord for many years, here are our suggestions:

First, we should not do things just to imitate others. As Christians, we have gone astray by lacking conviction. Remember when the Israelites wanted a king just to be like other nations—it ended badly (1 Samuel 8:20).

Second, our responsibilities as women are many and significant. Even though modern times have affected us and we no longer strictly follow traditional family roles, the woman remains the homemaker. We don't deny that men can help with chores like cooking, laundry, ironing, childcare, shopping, etc., but the woman is still the primary overseer of the home. Many homes have broken because of trying to switch traditional roles and competing with their husbands. Personally, I don't think that will work in my home—I have young children in primary school, and I homeschool them. I've seen that good faith-based schools are far away. In government schools, they teach young kids things like “gay pride day” (wearing rainbow colors), using condoms at a young age, etc. Even though the children will learn these things eventually, I believe it's better they reach around age 10 first so I can explain them along with the Word of God and provide wise counsel. These are my opinions—everyone is entitled to their own. It's a human right. I'm not telling you to follow them—you're free, be at peace in your heart.

Let us be clear—if our motive is competition, like the English saying, “What a man can do, a woman can do better,” then we've lost our way. If our intention is pure and aligns with our calling, that's okay. We've had great female leaders in the church and even in government.

Our question is: Can a female pastor with a young family, ordained, with small children, truly manage five churches (some places have over ten)? Planning itineraries, attending church boards, preparing sermons for various departments, Holy Communion, baptisms, campaigns, weddings, funerals, traveling, home visitations to pray and encourage—will she really have time for her husband and children? It would be extremely challenging. Maybe if her husband is also a pastor, they can help each other by combining their churches. Otherwise, many husbands have demanding jobs that involve traveling or working late. We may think

housemaids will suffice—but maids don’t love your children the way you do. Even so, a mother who is a pastor knows more and can provide better moral and spiritual grounding. A mother is more than a queen. Many jobs will go unnoticed in heaven—be it engineering, accounting, chemistry, or medicine—but every mother’s work will be seen in heaven one day—or in hell. May God help us. I say this trembling and with fear, because I too have challenges at home—please pray for me.

Third, although women have proven to be excellent leaders—like the former President of Liberia—like it or not, many men in Africa still believe they are superior to women.

There’s a true story from a church I attended. A man refused to be baptized when he saw women were to be baptized before men—as is customary. He protested loudly and demanded that men be baptized first because “women will contaminate the water!” When the pastor ignored his demand, he flatly refused to be baptized after women and walked out. To our shock, not long afterward, he died! We said, “That man died before he was baptized!” He didn’t seem to consider that even men can be ritually unclean from things like semen, yet he didn’t want a woman as a pastor. Can men with such attitudes really respect a woman who is a church leader? A man is also the priest of his home, though many neglect this role—that’s on them. This can cause conflict at home. A woman will need much wisdom to respond gently; otherwise, there will always be resistance, and things will fall apart.

Fourth, this ties into the earlier story and concerns the physical nature of women. What happens if a female pastor is menstruating and has a scheduled baptism—will she enter the water? Especially if she has medical issues during her period? I know some swim during their period for a few hours, but baptisms can take much longer. Perhaps in the West where there’s one baptism a year—but in other places, she might always have to ask male pastors for help. Add that to taking kids to the hospital, etc. I’m not saying those women being baptized were on their periods, but maybe that man thought so. In my school, I’ve seen girls skip swimming during their period.

PS: This story happened in Karura, where we used to live. The man jumped into the river and died. In his will, he had written that my husband should bury him. My husband was called and told to be ready at any time—they would bury him the same evening. To this day, we haven’t heard from them again. The man didn’t say

outright that women would defile the water because of their period—but he left. That’s what we thought. Some said, “But at night he sleeps with his wife—he doesn’t see her as unclean then.” We talk openly about male and female matters until they involve our mothers, sisters, or aunts—then we avoid the subject.

Let’s not allow such a man to discourage laywomen from witnessing. Tainting the names of women who cook for and love him is not right. Even he came from a woman. If she hadn’t had her period, he wouldn’t have been born. Both men and women rejoice at pregnancy news, especially in cases of infertility. A baby is a joy and must pass through that blood. Without menstruation, no baby can be formed—that’s how God created humans.

Those who struggle with infertility celebrate these biological facts and openly discuss them with doctors. Men are tested for sperm count too. These aren’t easy topics to speak about casually. If someone mentions them just to demean women, it’s not right. Women have discharges; men too. The book of Leviticus is clear on this, and everyone knows it. A good church member bringing such “reasons” for or against ordination brings imbalance—it’s a distortion of truth. If we told our children such things, we’d pollute them unnecessarily. Medical workers understand all these facts.

No one wants to have a sister or daughter who never menstruates—it would sadden them. These natural processes have nothing to do with ordination.

In conclusion, these are the views of us—the writers and editors. We believe that women can serve God in many ways, even without ordination. We can preach powerful sermons, lead Sabbath School, head any church department, even conduct public crusades, etc. Many have come to faith through women’s preaching—especially in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Jamaica, and Brazil.

Above all, we women have a powerful impact when conducting home Bible studies, offering counsel, and praying with people. It’s a ministry we can do anytime, anywhere, without restriction. We can go to Hindus and Buddhists with ease—where a man may not be welcome. Let’s focus on these impactful ministries that God has already placed in our hands, rather than chase roles that may bring resistance to God’s work.

I'm not saying this because I haven't studied—I studied theology, and those I studied with were ordained. Courses like homiletics and exegesis are beneficial for both men and women—but pastoring is a different matter.

When other Christian churches like Methodists or Presbyterians began ordaining women, men left the churches in large numbers. This is not ideal. Perhaps it's because man was created to lead his city, and when roles are reversed—where the wife is the pastor at church and the husband leads at home—it creates confusion.

Ultimately, if pastoring is about authority or earning a high salary, that is not reason enough.

The issue of laying on of hands to appoint someone as a pastor in Christian churches has existed for many years. Denominations like the Baptists, Methodists, and Lutherans have discussed this and some have decided to have female pastors. Perhaps due to circumstances, culture, or the nature of the work, this might be effective for them.

I will share my personal thoughts. Even though I pursued theology in my undergraduate degree and studied subjects like hermeneutics, exegesis, public preaching, and others, I hesitate to say that the pastoral role suits me as a woman. The courses I took seemed more fitting for me to become a religious teacher for children or at colleges.

I believe that the roles of being a woman—i.e., a mother and a wife—do not allow me to perform pastoral work as effectively as a man would. In my view, this is why in the Bible men were used as priests. Our home environments in Africa also make it difficult for a woman to do this work. This is because pastors are involved in extensive soul-winning activities outside their homes.

Let me give examples of friends I studied with who were ordained and now serve as pastors. Some wake up in the middle of the night and walk alone through bushes or ride dangerous motorcycles for evangelism. They stay away from their homes for several weeks or even months handling these responsibilities. Some pastor many churches—for example, I met Pastor Gesaya in Mara who was overseeing 54 groups and churches. This kind of work is very hard for women, especially when you consider that her husband needs support at home.

Perhaps it would be easier if they served in nearby communities and shared responsibilities as a team. People come even at night with problems or for dispute resolution, and sometimes the pastor has to go out alone at night to handle issues with male church elders—this environment is difficult for a woman. Walking far at night, and similar tasks. Being a spiritual leader and priest appears to have been designated for men, and if a woman is to be a pastor, she must have a husband who is also deeply inspired. Otherwise, if he is not supportive, this can bring conflicts at home, and such women pastors may end up being abandoned.

Honestly, I don't see the reason to pursue pastoral work if I have been abandoned. Though one can remarry, it becomes difficult for many women to find a husband willing to marry them after they have been divorced and have a job that involves constant travel. Some men even prefer their wives not to have salaried jobs. So consider all this. Pastoring alone while also raising children is a real challenge in this line of work.

If women are seeking the pastoral role for the sake of employment, good income, benefits, or power, then this is a role that needs deep reflection and discernment. Even among many male congregants, such a woman will face resistance.

My seminary teachers in Michigan saw that women were very gifted in languages. Dr. Leona Running and Elly Economou from Greece were highly skilled in biblical languages like Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and others. They assisted pastors through their doctoral research.

It's true that men are facing temptations to ignore spiritual matters in this 21st century. Women, having experienced struggles and recognizing that our mother (Eve) suffered for stepping outside God's boundaries, have seen that drawing close to the Lord brings healing. But for a man, as a ruler, things may still seem to work well for him.

Due to the great controversy and the sin of humanity's fall, we may not always see it, but men still possess more suitable traits to be priests of the people than women—due to nature, culture, and perhaps even willpower.

In general, if women pastoring will bring disruption to the church and certain shortcomings, why insist? If I want to preach the gospel, there are many platforms as a woman. The role I've been given is great and has eternal value. A brain surgeon, engineer, accountant, or pilot may have impressive jobs and wealth, but

in heaven, these may not matter much. But my work as a mother has value here and eternal resonance—no king or queen in their kingdom has a role quite like a mother or wife who loves Christ.

In fact, in heaven, a mother should be the one riding in the president's car and escorted as a leader more than worldly kings and rulers. Isn't that remarkable? So when will I do my job as a mother and wife if I start taking on the roles of others?

Some have asked—aren't men disappearing from the church, so shouldn't we help spread the gospel too? You know, 80% of people have come to know Christ through blood relations (family) and friends. So even we women shouldn't think that many people came to church because of the ordination office. If we are led by the Spirit, we can still reach people from our own homes.

May God bless you.

CHAPTER 36

CHURCH PLANTING.

The Great Call to “Go” and Reach the Lost - Church Planting

The great call to “Go” and reach the lost continues—and there is a day it will expire! See Matthew 20:28. This call began when Jesus gave the command and will end at the end of the world. In heaven, we will not preach or carry out lay ministry—everyone there will already be converted. As a layperson, you help people reconcile with God.

Church planting is one of the ways to fulfill this call. It seems this call was carried out by communities, not just individuals alone. Churches, together with their leaders, should implement this collectively. Let it not be because of conflict that people separate and start a new church. Rather, it should be out of love and cooperation in the vineyard.

One day I met Pastor Ron Gladen at a lay meeting, and he gave me a book I really enjoyed. He said, “Planting churches is planting the future.” He noted that church planting is a method used in both the Old and New Testaments. Many say, “There are already so many churches, why plant more?” I’ll say a few things here because laypeople are very much involved in church planting.

In our churches, people have started small home churches (like simplechurches.com), and they have been very successful—but they work under the authority of the local church. They inform their pastor of what’s happening, since they are also members of that community.

Often, in the first three years of a new church, three people bring in one new person. By year four to ten, it takes seven people to bring in one. After ten years, eighty-nine people bring in one new person. When the membership hits 200, attendance starts to decline—or if it grows, members often become inactive, as the English say: “they’re sitting on their hands,” not doing the work.

Assess your church: If it’s not growing, maybe it’s time to take 10 members as seeds to plant a new one. Your pastor will guide you well. Don’t plant churches because of conflict. When I was a member in New Jersey, our church was overcrowded, and since 1950 no new church had been planted. Pastors advised it, but members didn’t want to be separated from their friends. This risked turning

the church into a club. Finally, one brave pastor went to the conference and got approval. We started with eight people, and after about a year we reached 200.

Small churches with all new people are not threatening to most, but large churches where everyone knows each other can scare off newcomers. Evangelism becomes harder—like rats, too many in one hole don't dig. Don't rest on past history. Saying, "We planted churches in 2008" is history. Even reading the Bible in 2009 and a book like *Njia Salama* is past. Keep pace with the times. If you truly love Jesus, your love will burn fresh daily—not a history flame. Don't sing, "Give us the old fire," but "Give us the fire today—your Holy Spirit help us today."

Push forward! You're surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses—run!

Many people worldwide have no church or fellowship; they are easier to reach through a new church than through a large, established one. In Lake Tanganyika, Pastor Butoke and laypeople helped start a small church with eight people. When it was officially launched, it had 32; by the end of the year, 200. Planting small churches and dividing groups is a way to reach everyone. For example, in Canada and the U.S., there are about 350 million people—200 million of whom don't attend any church.

The Lord said, "Open your eyes and see the fields, they are ready for harvest." Our calling needs risk and experimentation. Let's not be satisfied with what we did last year. People like this come easily when a new church starts—there's no unfamiliar jargon or customs. We need to translate our "church language"—phrases we're used to—so newcomers understand. Someone new might ask, "What does Lamb mean? What's the third angel? What's revival and reformation? Why will we rejoice with the harvesters?" We know these slogans, but new people need clarity.

Big churches have their place, like Joel Osteen's in Texas with 40,000 people. Some love big settings, but it's hard to connect with people there. That building cost \$150 million; air conditioning and heating cost \$25 million. Many services cost money, yet bringing in new people becomes hard. Everyone feels like just a number. Evangelism suffers.

We need research—do things like a business would. Example: Coca-Cola changed their bottle shape to a more curved one, and sales rose 50% in a day! You might think, "Why buy a drink for the shape?" Forget that—if it attracts customers, use

it to plant a church! Think about how you package your message. If it doesn't resonate, change your style. In 1985, they changed Coke's flavor—and sales plummeted.

Lesson: Don't change the core message—but the method of delivery can be refreshed. We carry a message of life or death—eternal consequences. Let us prepare well and avoid boring preaching. Our churches should look welcoming. You may endure poor preaching—but a newcomer notices everything.

Know your church's "goals"—so you can reach people and answer questions. Each year, about 134 million people are born and 54 million die. Not all can fit in our current churches. In Haiti, I saw more than half of churchgoers sitting outside—space was too little. Many churches were needed there. Let our priority be the lost—not ourselves.

Even non-members can offer insight on outreach, since we, being inside so long, may miss the obvious. One church spent \$5 million on more offices and classrooms. I thought that was too much—they could've reached more people planting new churches. Another spent \$600,000 on an organ, while outreach programs had small budgets. Ask yourself, as a board member: is the organ more important than the lost?

Boards often have those who prioritize saving souls and others focused on accounting. Both matter—but pray that God shows you: souls first, then the books. The church is not a worldly business—it's about saving souls. Place an empty chair at every board meeting to represent a lost soul. Before making any decisions, discuss that person—remember they won't go to heaven unless the church acts.

Jesus came to seek the lost. Our needs may be important, but we have other means to meet them. The lost, if not reached, will be lost forever. Jesus' heart broke for those outside God's love. Does what hurts His heart hurt yours? Do I care with compassion for my neighbor's family that could be lost forever?

Let's not sit with church members and pat ourselves on the back: "At least I'm saving myself and my family." Speak out—interrupt people and share God's full love. For some, it will be the last chance they hear it. Don't fear preaching. Paul said when I appear modern and eloquent, it's for your sake; but when I seem crazy, passionately preaching—that's when I'm truly working for God.

If you take a big bowl, put in large stones, then small ones, then sand—you'll still have space for water. Once full, nothing more can fit. The church is like this. At some point, growth stops unless a new one starts.

Consider practical issues: No nearby bus stop? No parking? Is the pastor training members for outreach and sending laypeople for discipleship training? Are people's needs being met? Do members reflect Christ's love? Is a poorly dressed sinner safe to come, or will they be torn apart? Remember, Jesus loved us while we were sinners.

We are 24/7 preachers. Let others grow spiritually too by mentoring well. It's said 19 out of 20 Christians in the West will never bring someone to Christ in their lifetime. East Africa has done much—but the work is still vast. Some now say missionaries should come from Africa to the West, just like they came here in the 1800s.

All churches are like people—when mature, they no longer grow in height unless we plant new ones. New churches grow 10x more than old ones. Let's bear fruit. Don't let it be like one member who said, "Our church is pregnant but gives birth every 10 years."

Churches are where most converts happen. Any midwife will tell you: if a mother delays giving birth—it's dangerous. The same applies to churches.

Childbirth is painful. So is church planting. But have you heard anyone say, "I won't have kids because of pain"? Many give excuses for not planting churches: "We must first improve ourselves," "churches are closing every day," "starting new ones is expensive," "groups are hard to manage," "parent churches suffer."

Discuss that paragraph with your lay friends. If you wait to improve, you may forget how, and your children will grow up without good examples. As for money, people fund what they value. Work hard—night is near. Like Isaiah said, "before deep darkness covers the earth."

God works through principles, not only big miracles. He expects us to strategize so He can bring great results.

A layperson once said: "I used to pray, 'God bless what I'm doing.' Now I pray, 'Help me do what You are blessing.'"

In the early church, even preachers were not allowed to lead until they had planted a church. Don't forget those who have backslidden. See FORT (Former Adventist Recovery Ministry), and similar resources. Start in Jerusalem (your neighborhood), then Samaria—to the ends of the earth". From Algeria to Zambia—A to Z.

The core of our mission is sacrifice. We learned this from Christ, the founder of our faith. Hebrews 11 speaks of those the world was not worthy of—those who left families and countries to reach others. We thank them. Hebrews 11 continues today—and your name is next! So, let this be our passion and burden: reaching people and planting churches. For all who believe, God has placed this burden in our hearts—to start more churches. Pray for it. Support others starting new groups. Visit them. Write them letters of encouragement. Be faithful to this heavenly vision.

True love for the lost will drive us to plant churches. Most of the lost come easily to new groups. Keep praying for this—you'll be breaking the devil's nests. Even backslidden members love coming back through new groups. You might plant without reaping—but no one reaps without planting. Let the church tithe its best members to start a new group—to hasten the work!

Don't worry about losing your best. God will provide others. Other denominations don't oppose church planting. Some even rent out their buildings—but our own church boards often resist each other. Let us continue adapting outreach methods—without compromising faith—for greater fruit. Don't be stingy with what people need. Sometimes we think giving someone food is a big deal—yet they needed something else within our power. A convert may need help with school fees or a shirt. When they come, don't think giving them food is the end of it.

Let's continue to rejoice, for our reward is great in heaven—Matthew 5:12. When planting churches, be kind and loving. I recall when we helped plant a church in New Jersey, people came to us anytime—24/7, which was unusual for that culture. They came to choir practice Fridays and Saturdays—30 people and their kids. On Sabbath, services were in our home the first year until they had enough money to rent space. We took all calls. These days, people avoid calls—especially ones they find annoying or time-wasting. Phones now are like someone knocking at your door—try answering them, or at least respond.

CHAPTER 37

MEDICAL MISSIONARY/MEDICAL LAYPERSON.

THE CHALLENGE OF ACCESSING MEDICAL MISSIONARY BOOKS

The problem has been getting books on medical missionary work, as most are written in English. For those who can read English, I recommend the following books: Medical Missionary, Ministry of Healing, and The Broken Blueprint. The prices are very affordable on leavesofautumn.com or lostandfound.com; if someone can help you access them, they're only around \$3 each.

I had the opportunity during the 2012 Women's Conference in Dodoma to hear Herbalist Livingstone Kingu speak about the challenges of conventional and traditional (also known as herbal/alternative) medicine. He helped me understand various perspectives at home regarding formal and alternative healing approaches.

True healing or genuine medicine comes only from God. He is the source of all knowledge, all healing, and all power. It's important to understand the truth in healing that God wants us to engage with. Many healing systems have emerged, so caution is very necessary because an evangelist might find themselves involved in healing that comes from darkness instead of light. However, the human body has no spare parts, so wisdom in choosing healing methods is crucial.

Nowadays, there are many scientifically proven remedies that work. When we combine these with the Word of God, we have a complete tool as laypeople in helping others receive healing. Don't be a fraud or pretender when helping people with their health. Study to gain knowledge, do scientific research, and attend schools and seminars.

There are two types of medicine we commonly know: conventional medicine (modern/formal) and alternative medicine (non-formal systems). Traditional medicine was despised during colonial times, and even beneficial remedies were labeled as pagan. Today, these have been improved and are now referred to as natural or alternative medicine. Sometimes conventional and alternative treatments are used together for pain relief or nutrition—this is called complementary medicine.

For example, a diabetic patient may be advised to follow a proper diet and exercise after receiving formal treatment. When they follow these guidelines consistently, they often recover fully and stop needing conventional medications.

Conventional treatment is provided by professionals who are trained in the human body and how it functions (anatomy and physiology). They are taught the causes and effects of diseases (morbid anatomy and pathophysiology). Diagnosis is based on history and physical assessments, using lab tests, X-rays, and physical examinations. Medication is taught regarding how it works in the body (mechanism, distribution, excretion, interaction, side effects, etc.). Services include counseling, preventive education, nutrition, diagnosis, medication, exercise, surgery, radiation, vaccination, and health education.

If the condition is beyond them, patients are referred to facilities with better equipment, specialists, or services. Referrals can be emergency, routine, private, or special. The referral system includes dispensaries, health centers, district hospitals, regional hospitals, national or specialized hospitals. Formal medicine is internationally recognized and standardized, the education is transparent, and a patient is treated by more than one specialist. Medications have known names and dosages, which are adjusted based on specific measurements or allergies. There's follow-up to track drug efficacy. The country has a dedicated ministry to oversee and register all institutions.

People involved in conventional medicine include herbalists, nurses, lab technicians, pharmacists, physiotherapists, dentists, and specialized doctors.

A lay evangelist has a good opportunity to witness for God while helping others heal. They work with God. Psalm 139:13-18 (read it all) emphasizes that we are fearfully and wonderfully made—everything, including our bones and eyes.

Non-formal healing methods include naturopathy, hypnosis, witchcraft, dreams from God, faith prayers, massage, meditation, Ayurvedic, yoga, biofeedback, chelation therapy, guided imagery, chiropractors, homeopathy, hydrotherapy, exercise, nutritional healing, osteopathy, energy medicine, therapeutic touch, Chinese/oriental medicine, iridology, reflexology, etc.

Scientists argue that these informal treatments fail to meet scientific verification standards. However, you and I know that even if we don't understand how prayer or dreams heal, God is the healer. Still, we must not be extremists, saying we will

never see a doctor or take medication. Hezekiah could have been healed by prayer alone, but he was told to apply fig leaves to his wound. Jesus healed many while on earth. The young man who said, “I was blind, now I see” was healed miraculously, though science couldn’t explain it—the results were evident.

Avoid the lies of informal healers who claim they can cure everything: diabetes, high blood pressure, financial loss, family issues, love problems, job challenges, arthritis, heart issues, kidney failure, impotence, malaria, epilepsy, syphilis, asthma, ulcers, diarrhea, stress, depression, seizures, cancer, HIV, and more. Only God can heal all things. If we could heal everything, no one would die!

Formal medicine also has advertising and business interests. Many health professionals promote unnecessary surgeries, such as gastric bypass to lose weight. Many undergo unnecessary surgeries. We need to pray for wisdom. A gynecologist once told me I had an ovarian cyst, but during surgery, they found nothing. Each surgeon got \$10,000 for that unnecessary operation.

Don’t scare people or lie just to make money or be seen as a divine figure. One evangelist treating people simply would pretend to have visions about their illnesses. Maybe some were true, but avoid anything that glorifies Satan or manipulates others.

A friend told me a traditional healer asked people to bring a mourning dove and a lion’s heart for a ritual. When they couldn’t, he said he’d get them himself—for a large fee! Let’s not be like traditional healers. Our mission is to exalt Christ, not to make money.

Alternative medicine often has roots in culture or tradition—like Chinese medicine. It’s said that over half the world uses alternative medicine, including those relying only on prayer. The Chaga people have a saying: “The first doctor is yourself.” This holds truth; you know how you feel and can’t go to the hospital for every little thing. You learn simple health support and prevention from experience. But if you break a leg or face a serious emergency, you’ll go to a health center. Malaria and typhoid require lab testing and timely treatment.

People turn to alternative medicine for chronic illness, side effects of Western drugs, enticing ads, promises of hope, faith in God, or a desire to avoid health regulations. Others use it due to hospital costs or poor service. The danger lies in relying solely on it. A child with diarrhea and vomiting must get rehydration

quickly or may die. Some go to traditional healers and receive charms or ineffective remedies, wasting precious time.

Alternative treatments align with our beliefs and systems. Colonizers found these in place. Globally, people began with such methods before modern science. Even George Washington, the first U.S. president, was reportedly killed by doctors of his time who drew blood to reduce fever and infection (bloodletting).

Traditional healers often cross the line into spiritual darkness. A lay evangelist should never go to such healers—you'll fall under another authority. Many go out of desperation, thinking God can't handle their issue. Some have even sought promotion through witch doctors.

It's true—we've discarded useful herbal knowledge and over-relied on formal medicine. I've visited many health centers with no medicine, not even Panadol. We've lost valuable herbal knowledge that could provide simple care. It's like throwing away a club while waiting for a gun from the West—with conditions.

Now, many Western nations are returning to natural treatments like hydrotherapy. I remember my 6-month-old child once had a fever from an ear infection. We rushed him to a hospital in Greenville, New Jersey, just 100 meters away. In emergency, they registered us and brought a basin of warm water. After 30 minutes, the fever dropped—without medication. They handed us a \$700 bill! I wondered—why pay that when I have water and a basin at home?

I've worked with many doctors now using both conventional and natural methods. For example, Uchee Pines, with Dr. and Mrs. Agatha Thrash, have helped many using both approaches. He was an internist, and she a pathophysiologicalist. Educated people now study both sides to choose wisely depending on emergencies, cost, time, or side effects. Check out ucheepines.org for health advice.

It's said women and the weak prefer alternative medicine—probably because they feel they have no other refuge. But these methods take time. If my child had received Panadol, maybe the fever would have subsided faster. Still, it's no secret—many drugs are toxic. Nowadays, flu vaccines are preserved in mercury and other harmful substances. Maybe the vaccines themselves are fine, but preservatives and mixing multiple shots have harmed some.

Vaccines start with newborns, like Hepatitis B. No one fully knows the long-term effects of modern technology, like mobile phones. We must study and seek wisdom, as most of us know very little.

Even local dentists are warning about mercury and fluoride. Many now prefer alternative fillings. Dentists today advise extracting all four wisdom teeth! I asked one, “Did God make a mistake creating them?” One dentist told my husband the same thing. I later read that the dentist who came up with that theory never removed his own or his family’s wisdom teeth!

Another doctor told my friend to remove her gallbladder because it had a minor issue. He didn’t recommend a natural flush but immediate surgery. Formal medicine is good, but may God give us wisdom—many practitioners are profit-driven and, if they don’t fear God, we are at their mercy.

Where I live, half the women give birth by surgery, though research shows it’s not always necessary.

Many have started alternative medicine practices to earn money, help people, gain fame, or support their families. They advertise through signs, radio, TV, and websites. Some patients testify of healing, though others raise questions.

Christians should be careful with dark practices like hypnosis, witchcraft, acupuncture, yoga, and iridology. Know these things well so you don’t violate your faith. Even naturopathic certifications require studying such dark practices, which makes them hard to obtain. Many Eastern healing traditions raise concerns—most don’t worship the God of heaven but follow Buddhism, Hinduism, or Confucianism.

If you’re only given herbs, it’s not a problem—hospital medicines also come from plants. My husband, a pharmaceutical chemist, says their medicines are mostly plant-based, but natural resources aren’t enough, so they manufacture synthetics. Whoever treats you should understand your disease, how it affects the body, short- and long-term effects, how medication works, testing methods, and referrals if they can’t help.

Avoid those who completely reject hospital medicine; everything has its place.

Some say such medicines destroy kidneys or cause infertility. There is some truth to this, but not all of it. Some medications are necessary for a period until you

find alternative treatments that genuinely work. A U.S. study discovered that 400,000 people die each year due to hospital medications. It's no secret—these days, all information and statistics are openly available! Even where I live, if you want to know a healer's reputation, you can search their name and get some information—although people's testimonials are more important. But they do provide information about a healer—if they've been to jail, if their treatments are ineffective, etc

Where I work, a lot of medicine is dispensed. Some elderly people take up to 24 pills a day. If they drank enough water, exercised, prayed, and did other things once the acute phase of illness subsides, they could reduce their medication. Some Christian-based elderly care homes have a “drug-free day” once a week. The patients have greatly improved. When I started working in 1991, almost every woman over 55 was being given estrogen hormones to supposedly prevent heart disease. Ironically, they developed heart problems and had to stop. Women who had just given birth were also being given Sinemet to suppress lactation—it caused issues and was withdrawn.

In these 23 years of working, many drugs have been recalled due to toxicity. And we're taught in formal medicine not to give certain drugs anymore. Pharmaceutical companies have been sued for causing deaths with specific drugs.

Let no healer—conventional or alternative—spread false propaganda, unscientific claims, or unverified information.

Let each of us, even scientifically trained practitioners, learn how to use simple remedies and what they were trained in to better help patients. Alternative healers should not be jealous like the fox that missed out on grapes and said, “Doctors only know pills and injections.” Millions of doctors have helped many, and among all professions globally, medicine is one of the most intensely studied. Many doctors attend university for over ten years, and many continue researching medicine their whole lives

Alternative healers should not claim expertise in everything. When they realize a situation needs formal treatment, they should be honest with the patient immediately. They shouldn't take people's money and keep treatment secrets. If they know something that works, they should share it with others so they can benefit.

An evangelist's goal in healing should not be money.

Many started as good evangelists but later fell into this trap. That's why, even though some criticize the healer of Loliondo, I see something good in him: he sold his medicine at a very low price. He may not have had deep theology, but he wasn't greedy like many of us who know more but are money-hungry.

Pharmaceutical companies don't like researching things that won't bring them profit! If they studied garlic, onions, turmeric, lemons, ginger, bitter herbs, or cayenne pepper, they would help many affordably—but they know those things are cheap and accessible. In the past, researching one drug until FDA approval could cost \$80 million. There's a strong partnership between doctors and pharmaceutical companies. In my work, I've seen doctors invited by drug companies, given allowances and seminars to promote their drugs. This isn't a secret.

Even the American Medical Association has rules to protect its own interests, not necessarily the patient's wallet—for example, limiting the number of doctors to keep fees high. These are worldly matters.

We must understand that just because something is natural doesn't mean it's harmless.

Some used neem (muarobaini) without dosage and went blind, even though it's helped many when used properly. In India, it's been used medicinally for over a thousand years (see research on the Neem tree). Another example: cabbage juice is good for ulcers but should only be taken for two weeks. I didn't follow instructions and took it for a month—my heart rate dropped from 70 to 40.

Some plants are toxic. Just one plant can harm you. Alternative medicine works better if started early—like at the first signs of malaria. Everyone recognizes their own symptoms. Or when a cold starts, take about seven drops of food-grade hydrogen peroxide in a glass of water and drink. There are many natural remedies for malaria, as people have treated it for centuries—but they're less effective during emergencies. Never rely on alternative medicine in a medical emergency. The malaria parasite can kill within hours or a few days

Research has advanced on plants for various diseases. Aloe vera, for example, has undergone extensive research. I once called a top U.S. research company working

on aloe vera, and they told me it has no known side effects, even though many back home believe it damages the liver.

Stick to natural remedies like food and water—but even those should be used in moderation. I emphasize again: plants contain certain toxins. Just one toxin can be fatal. Don't use herbs unless you understand them well.

It's better not to delay treatment. Getting proper treatment early can reduce costs.

As an evangelist, your natural remedies should be safe and simple. Learn them well, study human anatomy, don't be greedy, and it's wise to start with those in your household once you understand the root of the illness.

Many Christians have written books on natural medicine to help others. But for some evangelists, these books have become tools for greed. Most were meant to be used at home and in evangelism to help people affordably, yet many have exploited poor patients with high fees.,

Doctors who wrote such books often included their names and warnings not to replace formal medical advice. However, some local translators omit names or publishers, raising doubts about authenticity and intent. Be transparent. Even if your intentions are good, if you act slyly, people might think you're a con artist—are they wrong or just telling the truth?

Books can be academic or not. Investigate thoroughly—even academic ones, though peer-reviewed, are written by humans. But if someone signs their name and stands by their advice, it shows some confidence in their knowledge.

Focus more on prevention than cure when helping people. Prevention is better than healing—it reduces almost all diseases.

But also learn how to offer simple treatments, as you'll meet people with physical, social, spiritual, or economic struggles. That's why it's important to take short counseling courses. Naturally, people will start asking you for advice. Pray for wisdom and read books. Never sit idle without a book—whether at home or on the road. Read, read, read. Be open to counsel and evaluate it.

Reading the Bible and praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance, along with your experience, will give you enough direction to help others. Counseling as a

profession is still young. People used to receive guidance from spiritual leaders or elders—and it was free. Today it's expensive. Where I live, it's \$100 per session, but many of my friends and spiritual leaders have given me valuable advice for free. I'm thankful for that. Great things come from wise counsel. But the advice must come from the wise.

Don't destroy God's temple (your body)—this is a challenge when seeking treatment.

There are unofficial and unlicensed treatment centers, drug shops everywhere (some without permits), labs without professionals, and constant doctor strikes.

Whether you eat, drink, or do anything—do it all for God's glory.

As a layperson, don't exaggerate with claims like, "Come and be delivered! The lame will walk! The anointed elder! Resurrection and life!" People's primary goal should be to receive God, trust Him, and rely on Him in life—not just chase miracles

A layperson should know that formal medicine has verified many things, and hospital tests—if properly used—are very helpful in diagnosing problems, even more than any other human methods.

They should also know that some alternative treatments contradict the faith. They should know when to go to a clinic for tests, and when to use simple remedies. Science is a good thing—but we must recognize that many Western scientists have failed to acknowledge that God is the author of science. Scientists know little, yet make huge claims.

If you ask a traditional African healer who created him—despite using dark powers—he'll say, "God created me." But a layperson should never seek diagnosis from a traditional healer! We know there are only two kingdoms—and we don't go to the kingdom of darkness for advice.

Ironically, many Western doctors, when asked who created them, will give you evolution theories! It's true their tests are more reliable than those of traditional healers—but they are not the source of knowledge or healing.

Science talks of a "big bang" where all creatures supposedly emerged! Museums, zoos, children's books, labs—all push this nonsense of evolution, and call it

science. Yet, it doesn't help anyone become a better doctor, pharmacist, or health expert. Why obsess over this nonsense?

As a layperson, when you visit such a practitioner, focus on medical advice—not on evolution theories and billions of years, when our world hasn't even reached 7,000 years.

When the 10 simple remedies (the 10 doctors) apply, use them to avoid harm from formal treatments.

This is a long chapter, but I believe you've gained some insight. Keep thinking, reflecting, discussing with fellow laypeople, and experimenting.

CHAPTER 38

SELF HEALTH EVALUATION.

The health teachings provided are for general education only, not specific medical advice.

We are not medical professionals and cannot diagnose you, especially without seeing you. You should consult your doctor.

Using this chart will help you reflect on unhealthy habits, but it is important to talk to your doctor about how to improve your health.

Take charge of your health.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Ethnic group: _____

List any health issues or illnesses you have:

When did you last see a doctor? _____

Are you currently under treatment? Yes / No

If yes, what treatment are you receiving? _____

List any surgeries you've had and their dates: _____

What illnesses have you had in the past? _____

Circle any of the following conditions you've had:

Dizziness, fainting, nausea, pain, heart palpitations, extreme fatigue, forgetfulness, insomnia, difficulty breathing, numbness, cold and clammy skin, cold hands/feet, constipation, diarrhea, heartburn, flu, cough, poor eyesight, worms, swelling of body parts, foul odor from body parts, sexual dysfunction (married individuals), hair loss, fever, infections, bleeding, weight loss, obesity, anemia.

Emotional or mental health issues:

Depression, codependency, phobias, chronic anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, neurosis

Your age: _____ Gender: _____

Marital status: Married / Divorced / Widowed / Single

How long have you been married or divorced? _____

Weight: _____ Height: _____

Blood pressure: _____ Heart rate: _____ Blood sugar: _____

2-hour post-meal blood sugar: _____

Cholesterol: _____ Triglycerides (body fat): _____

List all prescribed medications you're taking: _____

Do you seek to repair harmful health habits?

How? _____

List any herbal remedies or vitamins you're taking: _____

DIET (Circle or write the answer beside each question)

Do you eat pork, octopus, shrimp, or rabbit? Yes / No

Do you eat meat, milk, cheese, chocolate, eggs, or fish more than twice a week?
Yes / No

Describe your consumption: _____

Do you eat refined foods like white sugar, white bread, white rice, refined maize or wheat? Yes / No

How many fruits do you eat daily? _____

How many vegetables do you eat daily? _____

Do you use spices like mustard, cinnamon, vinegar, black pepper, mayonnaise, tomato sauce, pickles, nutmeg, or MSG?

Do you eat fried foods? How many times a week? _____

Do you use margarine or butter? How many times a week? _____

Do you use baking soda or baking powder? Yes / No

Do you eat bread baked with yeast within the first 48 hours after baking? Yes / No

Do you drink Milo, cocoa, or coffee? Yes / No

What kind of oil do you cook with? _____

Do you read food labels before buying? Yes / No

What do you use to sweeten drinks? (e.g. sugar, honey, artificial sweeteners)

Do you eat nuts? How often per week? _____

Are you on a special diet? Which one? _____

Do you like eating out? How often per week? _____

Do you use salt? Is it iodized? _____

Do you fast at least once a week for at least two meals? Yes / No

EXERCISE

Do you exercise? Yes / No

How many times a week? _____

What type of exercise? Light / Intense

What exercises do you enjoy? _____

How do you feel after exercising? _____

Do you experience pain after exercising? _____

WATER

How many glasses of water do you drink per day? _____

What type of water do you normally drink? _____

Is the water clean, filtered, and boiled? _____

Is it stored in plastic for long periods? _____

What temperature is your drinking water? _____

Do you like eating ice? _____

How many glasses of juice do you drink daily? _____

Do you drink tea, wine, alcohol, milk, soda, or vitamin water?

Do you drink water with meals? _____

What color is your urine? Yellow / Brown / Clear

SUNLIGHT

Do you get at least one hour of sun daily, especially morning and evening? Yes / No

Do you stay in the sun all day? (for persons with albinism) How many hours?

Are you sensitive to the sun or do your medications cause sun sensitivity? Yes / No

Do you take Vitamin D supplements? Yes / No

Is there a history of skin cancer in your family? Yes / No

TEMPERANCE

What work do you do? _____

List five past jobs and how many years you did each:

Do you use tobacco? Yes / No

Did you use tobacco before? For how long? _____

Do you consume any form of alcohol? Which one and for how long?

Do you drink caffeinated drinks like coffee, cola, tea, or energy drinks? List them:

Do you overeat? Yes / No / Sometimes

Do you eat too fast? Yes / No / Sometimes

Do you make healthy food choices? Yes / No

Do you eat or drink between meals? Yes / No

Do you eat cakes, candies, or sugary foods? Yes / No

Do you eat meals at consistent times daily? Yes / No

When do you eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner? _____

Would you say your dressing is modest and health-conscious? Yes / No

List your favorite leisure activities (e.g. TV, sports, dancing, board games):_____

How much time weekly do you dedicate to recreation?

Do you overwork or work long exhausting hours? Yes / No

List any addictions (alcohol, cigarettes, coffee, drugs, etc.):

Have you used illegal drugs? Yes / No

List the kinds of books you read (e.g., fiction, fashion, computer games, pornography, science fiction):

Do you attend movies, clubs, or parties? List which ones:_____

Do you play dangerous sports? Which ones? _____

What kind of music do you listen to? (e.g. rap, disco, rock, witchcraft, gospel, patriotic):_____

AIR

Where do you live? Urban / Suburban / Rural

Do you sleep with windows open? Yes / No

Do you open windows daily for fresh air? Yes / No

Do you live in a smoky area or near factories? Yes / No

Do you live with smokers? Yes / No

Do you grow many indoor plants? Yes / No

Are there any air pollutants in your environment? Yes / No

If yes, name them:_____

Do you wear tight clothing? Yes / No

REST

What time do you normally sleep at night? _____

Do you wake up at night? Yes / No

Do you eat right before sleeping? Yes / No / Sometimes

Do you sleep with the lights on? Yes / No / Sometimes

Do you work shifts (e.g., day and night)? Yes / No

Do you wake up before sunrise and fail to go back to sleep? Yes / No

Do you take sleeping pills? Yes / No

Do you go to bed at the same time every night? Yes / No

Do you take time off from work at least once a week, especially on the Lord's Day?
Yes / No

Do you fast at least once a week for two meals? Yes / No

TRUST IN GOD

1. Do you pray every day? Yes / No
2. If not, would you like to start? Yes / No
3. Do you read the Word of God daily? Yes / No
4. Do you faithfully return tithe and give offerings? Do you help those in need? Yes / No
5. Do you struggle to trust God with your problems? Yes / No
6. Do you have regrets, guilt, fear, or doubts currently? Yes / No
7. Do you believe that if you confess your sins, God forgives completely? Yes / No
8. Do you struggle to understand God's will for your life? Yes / No
9. Do you think your family has healthy relationships? Yes / No
10. Does your family value spiritual matters? Yes / No
11. Do you feel at peace with God and others? Yes / No
12. Have you broken promises you made to God that were within your ability to keep? Yes / No
13. How do you feel God has been treating you? _____
14. How have you been treating God? _____
15. If today were your last day, or Judgment Day, and your life were evaluated, do you believe you would be saved?

CHAPTER 39

HOW TO DETOX THE BODY.

The body is exposed to pollutants from the air we breathe, water, and soil. These pollutants include farm fertilizers, car exhaust (carbon monoxide), chlorine, DDT, insecticides, bacteria, viruses, fungi (molds), genetically engineered plants, plastics, formaldehyde, and many others. We must regularly cleanse our bodies by drinking water and making juices. Every three months, we should take three days to focus on this: cleansing the liver, body cells, and the colon.

There are many ways—perhaps over 100—to detoxify the body. It is recommended to do this every three to six months. Our daily lives are full of pollution and stress, making body cleansing essential. Before undertaking detox methods, consult your doctor, especially if you have conditions such as diabetes, as you may need supervision.

The body naturally cleanses itself when you fast properly according to health principles. Animal experts have observed that animals, even dogs, stop eating when injured or ill, and this aids healing. Some people, under medical supervision, have fasted for up to 40 days, drinking only water, for physical or spiritual reasons. I won't cover that here, but I will discuss eight methods of detoxing the body.

During detox, avoid oils, refined grains like cornmeal, rice, wheat flour, or sugar. Drink at least three liters of water daily. Do not eat meat, dairy, or eggs. Focus on eating raw vegetables and plenty of fruits. Exercise and ensure you rest. Reduce salt and spices. Use garlic in your salads.

Salads should be raw and include: onions, tomatoes, cabbage, cucumbers, radishes, beetroot, carrots, bell peppers, celery, coriander, avocado, cashews, coconut, etc.

In the past, many Africans had yearly body detox routines using certain herbs or tree leaves that induced diarrhea. Some were not well-researched. However, aloe vera, garlic, lemons, and bitter herbs have been studied more and found helpful in detoxing and balancing body pH to 7.35-7.45. This helps reduce conditions like cancer, flu, hypertension, and diabetes. The body should not be too acidic but slightly alkaline.

I recently saw doctors researching cancer treatment using a mix of juice from three lemons and non-aluminum baking soda (sodium bicarbonate), taken twice daily to reduce body acidity and potentially eliminate cancer. Look up practitioners like Dr. Mark Sircus online.

An acidic body with low Vitamin D is linked to weakened immunity and a higher cancer risk. Detoxing helps restore proper pH and balance in the body. However, affordable natural remedies are often ignored by big companies that profit from disease, so such research is underfunded.

When breaking a fast or completing detox, avoid cooked food immediately—it can upset the stomach. Start with fruits, a few vegetables, or raw juices for a few days before returning to cooked meals.

BODY DETOX SAMPLES

Water Fast & Raw Food:

Drink 4 to 6 liters of distilled water daily for 72 hours (3 days). If distilled water is unavailable, use clean spring or well water without chlorine. After the fast, eat only raw vegetables and fruits for seven days. By the second day, your hunger will likely fade. Do not mix fruits and vegetables in meals—if breakfast is vegetables, lunch should be fruits, and so on. Dr. Calvin Dence from Savannah, Tennessee, has helped many through this fasting method.

During the three-day fast, use coffee or water enemas to clean the colon, preventing reabsorption of toxins. If enemas aren't possible, do a salt flush: in the morning, mix two tablespoons of non-iodized sea salt in one liter of warm water and drink it standing to avoid vomiting. Stay near a bathroom for about 3 hours. Repeat for three mornings.

Steam therapy: Boil 4+ liters of water. Cover yourself fully with a blanket while sitting, and place the steaming pot beneath you (don't touch it). Stir the water to produce steam, allowing it to reach your face gently. You'll sweat profusely. Do this daily for 3 to 7 days if you lack a sauna.

Activated Charcoal & Aloe:

Drink a tablespoon of activated charcoal in water every morning. After one hour, drink aloe vera juice (fresh or powdered). Later, drink water with a pinch of

Cayenne pepper. Continue drinking 12-16 glasses of water daily. Do this for two weeks to a month. Eat large salads with lots of garlic. Avoid refined foods, meat, and oils.

Sugarcane Detox:

Drink a mix of sugarcane juice, Cayenne pepper, and lemon for 7-10 days. If sugarcane juice isn't available, use maple syrup and lemon (or possibly pure jaggery). Mix to taste, forming a pleasant drink with a pinch of Cayenne pepper. If too sweet, reduce the sugarcane juice. Expect to lose about 5 kg during this time.

Whole Food Cleanse:

For ten days, avoid oils, all animal products, and refined foods. Eat mostly leafy greens, vegetables, and limited legumes or nuts. Drink 12-16 glasses of water. Eat plenty of raw salads.

Honey & Lemon Water:

For seven days, drink only water, but to protect the mucus lining of your intestines, prepare four glasses of water with honey and lemon daily. Drink them if you don't have diabetes or other conditions (ask your doctor first).

Herbal Detox:

Many herbs can help detox, e.g., Gaia Herbs Supreme Cleanser, which helps reduce allergies after detox. Pollution, especially in Western countries, contributes to many allergies, especially during pollen season. These herbs are available at natural health stores in some countries.

Psyllium Husk & Molasses:

Mix one teaspoon of psyllium husks and one teaspoon of molasses in a glass of water and drink before each meal (3 times a day). Continue for 1 to 3 months. (See earlier diet guidelines for detox.)

Gallbladder Cleanse:

Recommended every six months. If you have acute gallstones, see a doctor. Otherwise, drink half to one gallon of apple juice daily for four days. Use organic apple juice if possible. Avoid all other foods.

On the third night, around 8-9 p.m., mix $\frac{3}{4}$ cup olive oil (extra virgin, cold-pressed) with $\frac{3}{4}$ cup fresh lemon or lime juice. Chill slightly to make it easier to swallow. Drink while standing, then lie on your right side with knees bent, head elevated on two pillows. Stay like this until morning.

In the morning, prepare a salt flush with one liter of water and two tablespoons of non-iodized salt. Drink it. If you have stones in your kidneys or gallbladder, you may see greenish-blue stones floating in your stool.

On day four, continue drinking apple juice and water. In the morning, repeat the salt flush. That evening, you can begin eating fruits, vegetables, or fresh juices.

Many websites recommend magnesium (Epsom) salt for gallbladder cleansing, but it can cause allergic reactions in some. Apple juice cleansing has fewer known side effects, though it requires discipline (no food). Those using magnesium salt usually do a two-day cleanse and are allowed to eat lightly. The apple juice method is safer for most people.

CHAPTER 40

TEN HEALERS.

God's Plan - God's plan began in the Law of Moses - Genesis

Godly Trust - Genesis 2:17

Proper Rest - Genesis 2:3

Open Air - Genesis 1:6-7

Lots of Water - Genesis 2:10

Daily Exercise - Genesis 2:15

Always Temperate - Genesis 2:16-17

Sunshine - Genesis 1:16

Nutrition - Genesis 1:29

Others: A spirit of gratitude and serving others

The modern world has brought many things that affect our health. Human beings were created to eat natural foods and live a certain kind of life. Health is extremely important. We learn about health to remove pain, to glorify the Creator who gave us the command to care for our bodies, to serve or bless others in the community, to have the strength to carry out our responsibilities, and finally to serve as the right arm in preaching or spreading the good news of the Kingdom.

People spend a lot of time chasing wealth, and after losing their health, they spend much of that wealth trying to restore it. Without health, you cannot do anything. Some people say, "Let me just eat and do whatever I want – why should my health concern anyone else?" That's not true. Living healthfully helps reduce pain and prevents financial loss. It also helps others, as you will be a blessing wherever you go – as a relative, a friend, a good Samaritan, or a family member. You will be strong and able to perform your daily tasks.

One person said, "Let me die happily, even if I eat or drink harmful things – isn't it my body?" But our bodies are of great value, and we are stewards, not owners.

God created us to glorify Him. When we are sick, our Creator is saddened. So if we are ill due to our lifestyle, we must evaluate and make changes

Our communities need to care for us. For example, if a person suffers from diabetes and ends up having their legs amputated due to complications, their community will have to care for them — providing food, pushing them in a wheelchair, or transporting them with special equipment. Human beings are not islands; we are now like a global village. The productivity of the sick decreases. Their families — spouses and children — suffer seeing them in such a condition. No — it is not true that your health is only your business; it affects others too.

On another level, governments spend billions addressing people's health across the world. It is said: "You are your first doctor." The doctor may not have much time for you. He has many people lined up waiting. He may spend just two or three minutes with you and then writes a prescription. My neighbor said, "Our doctor is too free with the pen!" He doesn't know you, doesn't know how you feel, and doesn't share your pain — yet he has already prescribed medication before you even finish explaining.

You know what you are feeling in your body and how things have been progressing. You should go to the hospital or clinic for preventive checkups — maybe once a year — and go for emergencies or acute conditions (like a broken leg, paralysis, or a sudden illness) immediately. Otherwise, nurture your health by doing simple daily things.

When we are sick, we deny our neighbors the good they could have received from us — whether from our example or our support. You can't help physically, socially, spiritually, or economically if you are sick. For example, you won't be able to help someone move house by carrying loads. Good neighborliness becomes difficult when you yourself are worn out and needy in every area. You can't help others, even if you want to.

In Western countries, people tend to live longer, but they also suffer from many chronic illnesses and much pain. Their lives are held together by a "spider's thread" — machines, drugs, oxygen, or some kind of therapy

I emphasize this: We must understand that the science of medicine has come a long way — but God is the ultimate healer and the founder of science.

After working in health centers and hospitals for 22 years in Western countries, I discovered that it's only been around 70 years since medicine has had effective diagnostic tools and guidance. Even something as basic as handwashing between treating one patient and another, or before surgery, only became common recently. Yet now we realize that handwashing and general cleanliness—including removing shoes when entering the house—are among the world's leading preventive measures.

It's said that 80% of all illnesses heal themselves without treatment! That's how God created us. Our role is to create the conditions that allow our bodies to use their natural healing abilities effectively.

There is something surprising that was studied in many countries like Israel and even the U.S.—during doctors' strikes, death rates actually decrease! Is it because there's no one to issue death certificates, or are there other reasons such as hospital-acquired infections, poor care (nosocomial infections), and so on? Try doing your own investigation! Every human being has the right to do so, because each of us is responsible for taking care of our own health—it's not just the duty of health workers.

Mercola.com, a research physician, says that sometimes going to see a doctor is risky: you go in with one condition, they suggest surgery or other procedures, and you end up with a new problem—I've seen this myself. Since you are someone who believes in God and are an adult, keep praying for wisdom from God, as we said earlier. (A U.S. study found that up to 400,000 people die each year due to hospital medications.) Most doctors should focus more on prevention than cure. Some are so driven by money that they perform unnecessary surgeries just for financial gain.

I had a C-section and was told that a normal delivery with a three-day hospital stay costs \$30,000, but a C-section costs \$72,000—and I got a bill as proof! I know some of this money goes to hospital stay, baby care, and the various doctors involved like the anesthesiologist, pediatrician, and obstetrician. But did God really design childbirth to be this expensive? If everyone gave birth like this, would the world even have seven billion people?

You need to be an informed consumer, because this affects us all. Money is the root of many evils. It would be better if money was used to improve health rather than destroy it.

Modern medicine has certainly progressed and discovered many helpful things. Today we have certified doctors helping people, but in the past, very few certified individuals treated people. During the 1700s when America was fighting for independence, there were about 4,500 medical practitioners, but only 300 had formal medical degrees.

It's good that people—whether practicing formal or alternative medicine—study and get licensed in their communities. If you're treating people in your home just to help like a good Samaritan, the government may not require a certificate or license. But even home practitioners should understand their limits and know when a referral is needed. It's best to study well so you can help people effectively. Don't claim to cure every disease or call yourself a super-expert.

I want to emphasize: God is the ultimate healer—He created the human body. We try our best, sometimes we succeed, but often we fail. This is good in a way because it humbles us and reminds us to be modest. If we could heal everything, what would happen? Would we grow proud, charge outrageous prices, and become arrogant?

Americans have a saying that surgeons are the most arrogant doctors because they act like they are next to God. Christian medical practitioners should not let the enemy, the devil, raise his head through them.

I've spoken with many East African doctors and realized that, because many attended government—not Christian—colleges, they were not prepared to understand God's plan in the ministry of healing. Medicine is a calling, like ministry or teaching, and it may even reach someone's heart more directly and bring them to Christ.

If you are a Christian doctor or health practitioner, I recommend you read these four books before practicing: Ministry of Healing, Medical Ministry, Counsels on Diet and Foods, and Counsels on Health.

To emphasize, though we have many diseases in the world today, the root causes are very few. I've seen doctors here earning up to \$4 million a year due to their specialties. Tell me, who is paying for all this?

Most diseases stem from the mind, emotions, and bodily stress caused by how we mistreat our bodies through lifestyle. Eating overly processed foods, overeating,

lack of exercise, pollution, indulgent living, workaholism, and immoral lifestyles are all contributing factors. Not every disease is caused by a virus or bacteria. Sometimes our habits or lifestyles are what destroy our bodies. There are good bacteria in our gut, and when we eat improperly and kill them, we suffer various issues.

Did you know that what we often call “disease” is actually a friend and not an enemy? Disease is a sign telling you that something is wrong—try to fix it! For example, if you didn’t feel pain after placing your hand on fire, what would happen? The whole hand would burn, especially if you weren’t looking.

Similarly, fever is a way the body signals that something is wrong and needs correction. When the temperature rises, white blood cells—the body’s soldiers—speed up to fight infections, and the blood vessels widen to let them through easily. But we rush to take Panadol (paracetamol) the moment we feel sick, instead of allowing the body to do its work. Take Panadol if the fever is severe, but if not, let the body heal naturally.

Sometimes we take medicine for minor headaches without asking why we have them. Did we go to bed early enough? Did we consume something like coffee that could trigger the pain?

Poor humans—we don’t realize that disease is a way for the body to detox or fix internal issues. Sometimes we take antibiotics for viral infections, where antibiotics don’t even work.

Again, did you know? Thousands die in hospitals due to medicines and doctors—iatrogenic causes. Even common drugs like aspirin have many side effects. Look into it: aspirin can weaken the heart, cause bleeding, and destroy vitamin C in the body. Don’t take medicine without thinking.

I worked with a doctor named Michael Wagner in New Jersey. He was a heart specialist and had worked with the U.S. military in Japan during the early years of American deployment. He told me that all his classmates had died before reaching age 50. When I asked why, he said it was due to the lifestyle of doctors—bad eating habits (junk food), no exercise, alcohol, smoking, lack of sunlight because they worked 18-hour shifts in hospitals.

Studies even show that among all professions, doctors have the highest rate of car accidents due to fatigue, and many use narcotic drugs 400% more than the average person.

To be clear, there are many doctors with good health habits who do the simple things we talk about. But I want you to understand that studying health and actually practicing healthy habits are sometimes two different things.

Simple things often benefit health more than high-tech solutions. Technology helps, but sometimes it gives false hope—then lets us down.

I say this because my friend lost her husband this year. He was hooked up to many machines, but eventually the doctor told her, “Your husband is no longer breathing on his own. The machines are doing everything. Now sign to have them removed because we’ve done all we can.” My friend cried, spoke to her adult children, and felt guilty—as if signing meant she had killed him. She became depressed. But God knows everything, and He wants us to focus our minds on prevention so even the poor can benefit. He shows no favoritism—He loves us all and lets His sun shine on both the just and unjust. Let us follow His simple instructions.

Try taking any medicine and look at its side effects! Nausea and vomiting will be listed among all of them. I’m not saying you shouldn’t use medicine—certainly not! But don’t take medicine without knowing what illness you actually have, or without taking time to think. The pharmaceutical companies want you to use their products all the time! But you, as a human being, must exercise your right to think and choose what will help you at that moment. A medicine might be appropriate today, but on another day a different treatment could be better.

Filter out media noise, understand your body and your family’s needs, and decide wisely what to use. Be an educated consumer. About 50-70% of your food should be raw—that is, fruits and vegetables. And if you’re dealing with a serious illness, then 90-100% should be raw. Completely avoid sugar—it is one of the body’s poisons. Constipation is dangerous because it prevents the removal of toxins, leading to dirty blood and poisoning of the body through sugar and refined foods.

We must emphasize that cleanliness is extremely important, though this book cannot explore it in full detail. Personal hygiene, clean clothing, and a clean environment are all crucial. Every form of dirtiness tends to bring disease. Disease-causing microbes thrive in dark and dirty corners of the home. In rotting filth,

moisture, and stench—there lies danger. Don't allow rotting vegetables or piles of leaves to remain near your house as they contaminate the air. Anything dirty or decomposing should not have a place in your home.

Many cities that are thought to be clean are actually found to have many fever-related and infectious diseases—often due to rotting garbage. One day it rained, and the newspapers reported that New York had 12 million rats! Don't leave dirt or trash around your house due to laziness. Bathe thoroughly and teach your children to bathe and wash clothes properly every day. Wash your hands, and don't enter your house with shoes you've worn all over the city—you're bringing disease into your home. Clean your house well.

Cleanliness of the heart is very important—it improves your health. Human waste outside, animals roaming where crawling babies can touch feces, or unprotected wells—these are all threats. We must avoid polluting rivers and our environment, because the consequences will come back to us.

Hatred, gossip, jealousy, greed, complaints, pride, quarrels, grumbling, criticizing, arrogance, disrespect, stubbornness, selfishness, witchcraft, drunkenness, unforgiveness, cruelty, conflict, gluttony, blame, immorality, and others—they destroy health.

The Important things for good health are the following—simple remedies. I'll call them the 10 physicians.

Nutrition

Exercise

Water

Sunlight

Temperature

Fresh air

Rest

Trust in God

A spirit of gratitude

Serving others and hospitality

After creation, man's health—physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental—was perfect. The breath of life God breathed into man gave him complete life (whole or total health). But after the fall of man, life changed. We must learn from the life in the Garden of Eden and from heaven. That life is the perfect standard to follow—the way man was originally created to live. God is the one with the manual or instructions for taking care of our bodies. We are travelers; after man fell from Eden, restoration was needed. The battle between good and evil has continued since the first sin happened in heaven and was brought to earth by Satan. He was cast down along with a third of the angels—but God will be the victor.

After that, life changed: thorns, deserts, hunger, pain, weeping, and death—things that did not exist—began. Before the fall, man ate and did only what God wanted, but after the fall, he became rebellious, wanting to oppose what God had instructed, even though those things were good for him.

Even here in Africa, we've imitated Western lifestyles that are not natural to us. Westerners themselves have now realized that what they did 100-200 years ago was wrong. They've started returning to natural foods and medicines, water, exercise, and other practices that God originally designed for us.

Examples of harmful foods include refined wheat, white sugar, refined maize, processed oils, and polished white rice instead of brown rice. These have been discovered to be toxic to our lives. Health professionals will tell you that one of the major causes of rising cases of diabetes, high blood pressure, cancer, and arthritis is these "white" foods (white rice, white sugar, white flour). Health experts around the world teach that eating raw vegetables like salads can cure diseases. Vegetables and plant-based foods are visually attractive, even featured in magazines because of their beautiful colors! Meat or fish don't have the same visual appeal. The Creator put those lovely colors in fruits and vegetables to attract us to eat them. Just take a photo of different types of fruits or vegetables in a bowl—the colors are so appealing.

Many healing centers have been established using fruit and vegetable juices and raw foods. Check websites like hallelujacres.org or search for raw food and healing, and you'll see how people have recovered from many illnesses through MaarifaMtandaoni.Com

such methods. The Greek philosopher Socrates said, “Let your food be your medicine and your medicine be your food.” The Egyptians say, “One quarter of the food you eat is for you; the other three-quarters is for paying your doctor’s salary!”

So choose your food wisely, so you don’t eat and end up sick.

Before sin, God gave man three things in the Garden of Eden: marriage, farming, and rest on the seventh day for worship. Gardens are very important. It’s said that good character in adults and children is ten times better in rural areas—farms and forests—than in cities. I prayed for nine years for God to take me out of the city and give me a garden because it brings me joy. And truly, God answered me. I moved to the countryside, where even my church has a farm. When there are leftovers, we go glean like Ruth the. We’ve cried tears, realizing we’re in places with abundant farms and food, and we could send some of it to Sudan or Ethiopia—what a blessing that would be! Just yesterday, we were given n Moabites early four acres of maize that the owners didn’t have time to harvest. I stayed out until night, thinking about many Bible verses from the field, like: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few,” and “Do your work while it is day, for night is coming when no one can work.” The saying “you will reap what you sow” didn’t apply here—we reaped what we didn’t plant, like the birds of the air whom our Father feeds.

Pray that God helps you have your own garden. We’ve seen on TV that even in countries like America, people are growing their own food, knowing exactly what they’re eating. Even if you have the money to buy food, do you know what is put in it? Do you know how many chemicals are used on your produce? Some fruits, like strawberries or apples, are sprayed with pesticides up to 19 times before being harvested! These chemicals are meant to kill living things—it’s only because humans are large in size that we don’t die immediately, but we are harmed and later suffer from strange diseases.

Avoid harmful additives like MSG (Ajinomoto), food colorings, and nitrites. Items like mayonnaise, black pepper, nutmeg, and other strong spices are not good for the body. Eat food as naturally as possible—as God created it. Eat a variety of foods. Eat two main meals per day if doing light work, or three if doing heavy labor.

Many doctors only study a little about nutrition. In fact, some medical schools in the past didn't offer any nutrition courses!

Manual labor is very important for health. It builds the body, and it's more beneficial than simply running or jumping around without purpose. We're told that many earthly careers like law, accounting, and medicine will end—but farming will even exist in heaven! But we won't farm by sweat—we will enjoy it. Seeing things grow in your garden is a miracle and a form of healing—therapeutic for the mind. It's said that the grapes of Canaan were so large that two men carried a single cluster, the size of watermelons!

I want to emphasize that the most important and eternal health is eternal life. We must be on God's side for our health to be complete and lasting. Even if we do all the right health things—drinking juices, eating raw foods, and living correctly—we might only live 70 years or a bit more here on earth. But eternal life lasts forever. Healthy living starts here on earth. When we do the right things and live moderately, it clears our minds, helping us understand God's plan for our lives.

Read and understand simple natural remedies, and follow them with your family. Many people have destroyed their families through bad food—especially mothers. I even read a book written by a local author titled “How to kill your family with food—and not go to jail!” If graves today were labeled with “Died because of the food they ate,” most would say that. Westerners say, “We dig our graves with a fork and knife,” and for us Africans who eat with our hands, we'd say, “We dig our graves with our hands and spoons.”

Be your own doctor by following health principles.

In the past, we used to think being overweight was a sign of health and wealth. Nowadays, we've seen that Western people are running away from obesity after suffering in the 1800s-1900s. Our time has now come to make this revolution and end the dark ages. It used to be rare to see a woman wearing a size 20 dress, but nowadays it is common. A woman's waist should not exceed 35 inches and a man's should not exceed 40 inches in order to maintain good health.

A true story from the UK says that a king once heard of a very healthy 120-year-old man and was very eager to meet him. He sent an invitation to the palace. When the old man arrived, the king talked with him and heard about his lifestyle.

Wanting to honor him, the king prepared a royal feast—three meals that day with lots of meat, fat, sugar, and salt. The next day, the 120-year-old man did not wake up—he had died. That food was toxic to his system. Heavy meals are not good for the body. If you don't do strenuous work, they will harm you. Solomon said, "When you are invited by a ruler, put a knife to your throat"—meaning eat moderately and don't show greed.

If you don't know where to start with improving your health, begin with salads, fruits, and nutritious juices. Don't strain your juices or add sugar. Make them thick like porridge by using little water. Problematic foods often carry some form of addiction and are hard to quit once you're hooked.

They say that 85% of all questions asked to doctors or health workers are related to food or nutrition! As a parent, you have the responsibility to learn about nutrition and how the body functions according to God's plan for eating. Every electric appliance comes with a manual or instruction guide. If a diesel car is filled with petrol, it will be ruined and may cost thousands to repair. Likewise, after humans were created, they were given a manual. People spend time learning how to drive and maintain a car or machine. But no machine is more valuable than our bodies. A car can be replaced. No human being knows how to create another human. Have you ever heard someone say, "Today we've created a human in Kigali"? I remember a friend whose brother's wife maliciously put salt in the petrol tank of their new car. It cost them more than \$7,000 to repair it.

I understand we live in a sinful world, and due to the great controversy, diseases will continue because they are a result of sin. But do not harden your heart by ignoring God's health plan. Try your best to follow the health principles in the Creator's book, and even if you fall ill, you'll be able to say, "Lord, I tried my best, knowing I live in a sinful world." But if you live carelessly and eat poorly, your conscience will not be clear—you may even feel punished for your rebellion or greed.

Let's remember that the Garden of Eden was lost because of food, and it will be restored by mastering food appetite. Food was our first sin, and to this day many say, "Their god is their belly." As a child, I used to be surprised that my cousin Cheeliza would lie awake for hours thinking about what to cook tomorrow—breakfast, lunch, and dinner. I laughed and dismissed it. But now the same thing happens to me! I find myself thinking: "If I cook cabbage, will my husband eat?"

What about the children—will they eat pumpkin?” Sometimes I lie in bed at night thinking, “Wouldn’t it be nice if we only ate once a month? We wouldn’t have to work so hard day and night!”

They say poor people walk long distances to find food, but rich people walk long distances to burn it off! If you’re the one who cooks for your family, I’m sure you’ve had similar thoughts. In the West, I discovered many people don’t cook! They eat at restaurants or cafeterias. Only during Christmas or Thanksgiving do they cook huge amounts of food that lasts for weeks. Most people live on junk food every day. As their own poem says: “Junk food, no good!”

Junk food includes three things: too much fat, sugar, and salt—or highly refined products.

The most important meal is breakfast—eat well and don’t go to sleep right after eating. Allow three hours before bed. Eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a queen, and dinner either not at all or like a pauper. Even eating just twice a day, around 10 AM and 4 PM, is good.

If your food doesn’t spoil or attract bacteria or fungi over several days, something’s wrong—it has no nutrition. Bacteria are smart—they prefer unrefined, nutritious food and reproduce quickly in it. Milling food removes nutrients and introduces toxins. In the past, white rice was rare, but now it’s common and causing issues. People prefer its white color and shelf life, but even bacteria know not to eat poor-quality food. Try this experiment: cook brown rice and white rice in a cool place like Bujumbura or Nairobi. The white rice can last three days without a fridge, but the brown rice will spoil by the next day. In warmer areas like Dar or Mombasa, brown rice spoils the same day! White rice can last until the next day if covered.

To know whether food is nutritious, observe how microscopic creatures (bacteria) react to it. It’s amazing—single-celled organisms know better than we do! We have trillions of living cells, but bad habits enslave us.

Even the one who invented the milling machine led us astray.

Let me say this: health is not our god, but it helps us understand who we are, why we are here, and where we are going. I encourage you, dear reader, to ask yourself these questions often. I personally reflect on them frequently. In this world, you’ll

meet people who will confuse you or diminish your worth. Some say we evolved from frogs or apes! I've heard young Western girls say, "I don't know who I am. I'm going to find myself."

I once heard a preacher, Bulengela from Mwanza, say even monkeys whisper among themselves, "These humans say they came from us—impossible! They put smoke in their mouths, argue constantly, and eat bad food. We monkeys don't!"

Dear reader, you are valuable to God—whether short, tall, fat, slim, black, white, rich, or poor.

Here's a little insight I use when I reflect on those big questions:

Who am I? I am a child of God. My name is Momadi.

Where did I come from? I was created by God.

Why am I here? Sin entered the world. I am here for restoration.

Where am I going? I am going to Heaven

Ask yourself these questions, dear reader, and wherever you see my name, replace it with your own.

Don't let anyone deceive you by saying that you came from apes. There are only three countries in the world with apes: Tanzania and Rwanda have chimpanzees, Congo (DRC) has gorillas, and Indonesia has orangutans.

I was born and raised in Tanzania, yet I have never heard on the radio or from the locals in Kigoma saying, "Today we welcome new citizens from the Gombe forest who have come to join us."

Monkeys say they descended from the trees—not from human beings.

Africans do not believe in the theory of evolution.

How is it possible that a European discovered that a monkey becomes a human, while he lived many years without ever seeing a monkey—because monkeys do not live in cold countries, nor do apes?

Evolution is a way of turning people into unbelievers and blaspheming the most wonderful creation of God.

A famous scholar, Mbiti, an expert in African religions and author of African Theological Thought, said that Africans are deeply religious people.

This is true—we believe in a Creator and that we were created.

We did not come from worms, frogs, or apes.

We may have other sins, but the sin of evolution is not ours as Africans—so let's not get involved with it!

Avoid enslaving yourself with this foolishness.

Try going to a village to someone who cannot read or write and tell them, “You came from a chimpanzee!” Please come back and tell me their answer!

My email is given at the beginning of the book. Write to me and tell me what you were told.

There is danger for many of us—just because we are human and know very little—we try to seek knowledge by worshiping speculation.

Evolution is a theory only 200 years old!

So, in these past 7,000 years since the first human lived in Eden, people didn't know where they came from?

Or is it like David Livingstone, who “discovered” Lake Victoria in 1874—did he also discover the people there? Before that, didn't the Baganda people know the lake existed? Didn't God know He had created it?

Our knowledge as humans is less than 0.000000000001, but our pride for knowing a little is great. May the Lord have mercy on us, for we have all gone astray!

How many things do human beings not know? Very many—almost everything!

(Dangers of speculative knowledge):

No matter how clever you are, you will not know even 0.00001 of God's matters. So I urge you not to waste time inventing weak theories that reduce your health or the health of others.

Because of the difficult translation of many English words, I will write them as they are. If I tried to use modern Swahili, you wouldn't understand either.

I've decided to use English where necessary because I've recently tried reading books with complex language and understood nothing. Please forgive me.

Since our countries were colonies of the British or French, you will find someone who can translate for you without distorting the meaning—so that you can take steps to protect your health, which is the goal.

I was burdened in my heart by strange words that have no clear translation for most Swahili speakers—so much that I thought maybe I shouldn't write. But I realized this message is important for prevention, so that people can take responsibility for their own health.

Also, many books are written in English, and many people do not have access to read them.

What I am writing is the alphabet of human health—simple things to understand, the A, B, C, D of health.

Nutrition

King Solomon, in the book of Ecclesiastes, said: “Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobility, and your princes eat at the proper time—for strength and not for drunkenness.”

It is said that Solomon's decline in morals began when he started eating three meals a day instead of two. Feasting and gluttony became common, reducing spiritual devotion.

Let not food lead us to hell; it is essential for our lives to put into our mouths only what we were created to eat—natural things, and in moderation.

Nowadays, people have invented many things—even juice!

The kind of juice we should drink, if we must drink juice at all, is the kind made from the whole fruit. For example, if I want to make juice, I blend a banana (removing only the peel), or mango (removing the seed), even pineapple and oranges. You can add a little water, and it becomes thick like porridge. Drink it with a spoon or directly if it's more liquid—do not add sugar. It has a very good taste

If you eat an orange and just suck the juice while throwing away the white inner skin, you've consumed a stripped-down food.

We should eat foods as they were created—unrefined and unprocessed!

If we refine or process them, it's either out of habit or greed—and such habits should be rare or avoided entirely.

Craving for food has caused the downfall of thousands, while if they had overcome this temptation, they would have had the spiritual strength to overcome all other temptations of Satan.

Those who are slaves to appetite struggle to build habits that support their physical, mental, and spiritual health.

Satan has used the craving for food to make food-related temptations especially hard to resist.

It's said that lack of self-control is at the root of many of the world's problems.

Look at nations like Greece, which once ruled the world. Its leader, Alexander the Great, conquered the entire known world—but couldn't conquer his own appetite. He died at age 32 due to drunkenness.

As for Babylon, we see King Belshazzar holding a feast, completely unaware he is about to be invaded.

See the image of unrefined grains.

(This refers to a wheat kernel or rice grain—when you refine it, much is lost. Out of 26 minerals and vitamins, only 8 remain. For language clarity, I will write some terms in English.)

The foods we were originally created to eat are fruits and nuts. Later, we were also given vegetables, grains, and legumes.

Vegetables were added after disease entered the world, to serve as medicine.

While passing through the Mwanza and Mara regions, I saw people had many vegetables growing naturally in their fields—such as blackjack (mgagani), jute mallow (mlenda), amaranth (mchicha), and others I couldn't identify but I ate them.

People in Mwanza and Mara complained that they had no vegetables—perhaps they called fish “vegetables” instead of “relish.”

Many people think they must drink milk daily for good health.

Thank God that most Africans, especially those south of the Sahara, cannot afford milk daily—otherwise, we might suffer.

The highest milk consumers in the world are in the Nordic/Scandinavian countries—Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland—and other Western nations. They buy milk by the gallon, unlike us who buy in tiny bottles!

But research shows that Bantu women lead the world in bone strength.

A major bone condition, especially for women, is osteoporosis, where bones become thin and porous, making fractures easier.

Yet this condition is rare among Bantu women, who often don't even have access to milk—except perhaps pastoralists or wealthy urbanites.

Most people add just a drop of milk to their morning tea, while Westerners might drink a whole liter a day. They use milk on cereal, in most of their meals, with cheese, and even mashed potatoes. We don't cook like that.

The research into the strong bones of Bantu women gave these reasons:

High sun exposure (equator)

Carrying heavy loads

Eating lots of leafy greens

Leafy greens have enough calcium. In contrast, calcium from cow's milk is not well absorbed by the human body.

Where do cows get their calcium from? Grass!

God put that calcium in the cow's milk for calves. Calves walk the same day they are born, while human babies may take up to a year.

That's why, when a mother is unable to breastfeed, cow's milk must be diluted half-and-half with water—otherwise, it will harm the baby.

Other foods, like eggs, should be consumed very carefully.

I've seen people eat eggs even three times a day when they can afford it.

This is not healthy—eating two eggs a week is enough.

There are things we should never eat—they should never enter the mouth.

Examples include: paraffin (kerosene), soap, cats, dogs, pigs, shrimp, crabs, eagles, donkeys, crows, frogs, rabbits, lizards, and other unclean creatures.

You could add to this list yourself.

All these animals contain toxins harmful to our bodies—they were created to clean the land or the sea.

After they've done that work, we eat them?

Don't be overly argumentative.

Even research confirms these things.

And the more argumentative you are, the less room the Holy Spirit has to work in you.

Jesus didn't call you to defend yourself—but to defend Him.

We live in times when meat and fish are highly contaminated.

Unless you raise your own meat or fish, you must be very careful.

I live near the Hudson River in New York City, just a mile from the World Trade Center collapse site (September 11, 2001)

There, many male fish have turned female due to pollution!

Polluted water causes male fish to become female.

A local man from the countryside said his fish were given drugs to ensure they all became male—because they grow bigger!

Now imagine what happens when you eat such fish.

In Puerto Rico, pharmaceutical factories have released chemical waste into rivers, causing major health issues.

For instance, 6-year-old children developed prematurely due to early puberty.

Do you raise the chickens you eat?

Because most modern chickens are fed things we'd rather not hear—like ground-up dried cow blood or the meat of dead animals.

That's different from raising your own local chickens.

Last year I went to Bunda, Tanzania, and was surprised to drink milk I hadn't tasted in 30 years. It came from traditional cows—not pumped with antibiotics or growth hormones.

In today's world, farming is more about profit than health.

This has reduced the immune benefits of our meat and fish.

If you eat meat or fish, try cutting back to once a week.

As time goes on, reduce it even further, and you'll see your health improve.

In some Western countries, poultry like turkeys are injected in the chest to make their breast meat grow larger—so sellers make more money.

Breast meat is preferred because it's lean, but now it's being misused.

Some turkeys have died from overly enlarged chests—they burst, according to our health teacher Baraglia from Guatemala.

Avoid excess salt—it damages blood vessels and causes other diseases such as high blood pressure. In general, avoid the five white foods: refined maize, wheat, or rice, white sugar, and white salt. Try to eat at least five fruits daily—they're good medicine and contain no salt.

The Garden of Eden had no cooking pots. Many of us spend our entire day cooking. If we discover that we can eat fruits at night and sleep soundly, we'll realize our stomachs won't grumble but instead, we'll enjoy deep sleep.

Living food is often better than dead (cooked) food. You cannot plant a cooked seed and expect it to sprout! This means much of its strength is lost. Eating sprouted foods improves our meals. Sprouts contain up to six times more vitamins and minerals than ordinary seeds. The young men in Daniel 1 ate seeds—read that chapter and reflect.

If you have many health problems, try eating only raw foods—like vegetables, fruits, and nuts—for 3 to 6 months. For example, in the morning eat ripe bananas, oranges, pineapples, coconuts, cashews, jackfruits, soursop, tomatoes, avocados, grapes, apples, watermelons, tangerines, guavas, passion fruits, pawpaw, melons—choose two or three and eat to satisfaction. As a child, I heard people say fruits were for monkeys and children—because they were expensive. That's not true—fruits are excellent for building strong immunity. Good health isn't only for children, but for all of us.

Let's not insist on eating only ugali and vegetables without considering fruits—they're vital. Many people are beginning to realize this, and fruit prices are rising. I remember we had 300 orange trees and fruits like jackfruit, sugarcane, avocados, soursop, papayas, coconuts, bananas, pineapples, tangerines, and others—but our mother would still buy soda for visitors. One day I offered to squeeze orange juice for guests, and she said, "You'll embarrass me in front of my guests!" Today, things have changed. A glass of freshly squeezed orange juice is very expensive!

Another meal could be raw vegetables like kachumbari (tomato-onion salad) mixed with raw coconut. Cut them into small pieces. Vegetables like cabbage, kale, tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, bell peppers, lemons, onions (regular and green), leeks, kohlrabi, and others you know are beneficial. People from areas like Masasi and Mtwara, who rarely eat meat, have great recipes that are easy to follow.

Planning meals (menu): Buy different types of beans, grains, seeds (like sesame, coconut, peanuts, sunflower), various vegetables, and a variety of fruits. Mix and vary colors to prevent boredom. Learn simple recipes using these ingredients. Colors are pleasing to the eye, and each color represents different nutrients.

Other good vegetables include dandelion, stinging nettle, mnafu, mchicha, and mashona nguo. Do local research and ask knowledgeable elders about natural remedies. Buy a Natural Remedies Encyclopedia or check out websites like Harvestime Books, which sell affordable resources (the book has a pink cover).

Fruits like pomegranates, figs, apricots (similar to peaches?), lemons, papayas, grapes, pineapples, noni (from Zanzibar), and many others are extremely beneficial. Even the seeds of fruits like papaya, pumpkin, and grapes are medicinal. I've used papaya seeds to treat worms, stomach issues, and even malaria. Grape seeds boost the immune system to fight disease.

Common foods like turmeric, ginger, and onions would surprise us with their medicinal power if studied as thoroughly as pharmaceutical drugs—but they don't make money for big companies. First, get tested if you're unsure of your illness. Diseases like malaria or typhoid can quickly become serious if left unchecked. You can't study natural cures while you're seriously ill! Go to a hospital, get tested, and receive proper treatment quickly.

As you gain experience using fruits and vegetables as medicine, you'll learn to treat early symptoms like a cough. A good home remedy is a mixture of honey, ginger, garlic, onion, lemon, pineapple, and radish or aloe vera. But if symptoms persist, seek medical tests—you may have something more serious.

We once struggled with our child's illness. We were advised to use lemon and garlic. We did this for three months, but the illness returned. We went to a doctor, received hospital medicine, and the child was healed in two weeks. You must know how to balance simple remedies and hospital treatments. Refer to the section on simple remedies for more insight—and feel free to share your own experiences with us.

If a tooth decays, see a dentist—but also care for your teeth daily with baking soda, salt, and occasionally hydrogen peroxide. Even natural toothbrushes are great. Research people with healthy teeth and learn what they eat and how they clean their teeth

If you eat 85% raw food for 3-6 months, your body will regain energy and eliminate many illnesses. Don't forget to drink 2 to 3 liters of water daily. If your body swells from water intake, consult a health practitioner (could be edema). Avoid fried foods—they are toxic.

I once visited a Chinese restaurant and saw that the food sold was all fried: fried rice, greasy chicken, and food full of MSG. Even vegetables like carrots were overly greasy. But when the workers took their break, they ate lightly steamed vegetables and plain rice—no grease or salt. Their bodies were slim and healthy, but the Black American customers were overweight—some looked like mountains. These people were clever: they cooked temptation for us but didn't eat it themselves!

Restaurant chefs often cook to please you more than your wife or mother—but not for your health. Avoid eating outside your home. Learn to cook well and healthily.

Fasting will change your taste buds to appreciate natural flavors. No hotel owner cares more for your health than you do. One woman said she chooses her secretary, tailor, or cleaner carefully—but none as carefully as her cook. A friend told me that some East Asian nations reportedly spit into food before selling it for spiritual purposes—avoid random street food.

Sometimes you may be on a journey and must eat out—but don't make it a habit. I've met men with large families who regularly stop for roast meat and street snacks but forget that home food is healthier. It would be better to use that money to buy nutritious food and learn better cooking. Men tend to suffer from heart disease, high blood pressure, colon cancer, lung cancer, and diabetes earlier than women—often from age 35—if they neglect the ten health “doctors” we've discussed.

Eating out regularly is a form of greed many of us suffer from. Ask God to help you overcome this temptation. Don't make it a habit. If you must eat fried food, do it rarely and fry at home using quality oils—never reused oil, which causes cancer. Even if it's wasteful, discard used oil.

Pork fat is forbidden. It clogs arteries. In the 1900s, Western countries used lard, resulting in short lifespans and heart problems. Plant-based oils are better—they contain no cholesterol. If you use animal fats like from fish, chicken, or butter—do so rarely. But avoid pork entirely.

Good oils for East Africa are sunflower, sesame, and coconut oil. Olive, almond, and flaxseed oils are excellent but expensive as they're imported. Perhaps it's time to grow these crops—no one expected Dodoma grapes to thrive like Mediterranean ones

Margarine is chemically altered fat (hydrogenated) and is essentially “plastic fat.” Plastics are made from hydrogen and carbon. Natural butter is better than margarine. Science once advised us to abandon butter, but now admits margarine harms arteries. Cook in clay pots or stainless steel. Avoid black non-stick pans—they damage the liver. Don't use steel wool for cleaning dishes—it causes iron ingestion. Use detox herbs like cilantro and chlorella to remove excess metals.

Always read food labels. If you can't understand the ingredients or they sound like chemistry jargon, it likely contains harmful chemicals (like MSG, sodium bisulfate, etc.). The best foods are fresh and unwrapped—from the garden or farm. In supermarkets, shop in the produce section—once you move into processed aisles, you're at risk.

Choose 100% whole grain bread. By law, the first ingredient listed is the most abundant. If refined flour is listed first, it means it dominates the bread.

Even for health-conscious people, these processed foods feel like punishment when avoided. Use baking powder and nutmeg sparingly. Yeast can cause intestinal fungus—avoid overuse. Traditional bread was made without yeast—like chapati. If you must use yeast, let the bread sit for a day before eating.

Check out Dr. Doug Kaufmann's website for yeast/fungus info. Fungal infections are even mentioned in Leviticus—if found in homes, priests were called to examine, and the house could be burned if not cured. Thankfully, African staples like ugali, rice, and bananas don't need yeast. Chapati is good, but because of oil, don't eat it often. Learn to make it without oil—Indians often use special stones for this.

Yeast can cause acid reflux and stomach issues. Many with undiagnosed illnesses improved by cutting yeast. Mercury in dental fillings is another hard-to-detect toxin.

Drinks like Fanta, Coca-Cola, tea, coffee, and ice cream are toxic. Fanta and Coke contain 12 teaspoons of sugar, artificial colorings, and caffeine. Put a bone or nail in Coke for a few hours—it dissolves! What about your stomach?

We eat these because of habit and cravings—but try to avoid them, especially for young children. Don't bring junk food home. That's the solution. If you don't want to eat something, don't bring it home.

Even if ice cream is cheap where I live, I don't bring it home to avoid temptation. When guests offer my children some, I sometimes allow it—unless they're sick—because you don't want to offend people or seem overly strict with your “food religion.” Accept kind offerings with love—but never accept sin like alcohol.

Tea and coffee stimulate the body—they're called “alcoholics' soda.” Some use them to sober up. They can cause addiction and headaches due to caffeine and tannins. If you try to quit, it's hard because your nerves are overstimulated.

There are many plants that make good herbal teas—like mashona nguo, millet, sorghum, and soy. Experiment with alternatives. Many people think they're not addicted—but can't quit. Like the alcoholic who says, “Quitting drinking is easy—I do it every day.” He meant he quits daily but always returns.

Exercise.

Exercise is very important for everyone. Start slowly if you have an illness. Farming and walking are the best exercises of all! Farming will even help you get crops! You won't be exercising for nothing; you'll gain some benefit. In gyms, people jump around in strange ways—if they were farming, they wouldn't need to do all that. Many of us in Africa have copied this thinking it's development. I used to go there until I realized, “They should pay me to exercise, not me pay them!” Walk 3-5 kilometers a day. In the Garden of Eden, there were no cars. Exercise at least four or five times a week, do what you enjoy so it doesn't feel like a burden. If you feel pain while exercising, see your doctor. Maybe you let your body get too soft, and starting suddenly caused problems. Few jobs provide enough physical activity, such as farming or athletics. But even athletics can be harmful—it can wear out the body even though it may help longevity. We were created to walk, not run. Many in the West have worn out their knees and needed replacements. One day while I was running, an evangelist told me, “Sister, we never read that Jesus ran—why are you always in such a hurry?”

Many of us walk a little and rest. For it to be exercise, walk for 30 minutes without stopping. Exercise prevents constipation and helps the lungs function properly. After a few hours of surgery, doctors often start a program called “mama cheza” (physiotherapy) so the body can recover quickly. This is done because lungs can fail to function if not used. Wear healthy shoes—don’t wear high ones, and make sure you’re comfortable. Shoes should support you well, your toes should not be cramped and should breathe easily. Seek advice on both beauty and health. When sitting, make sure your back is straight at a 90-degree angle. Even your bed should have a firm mattress. Many people say pillows don’t help the back or neck. If you can sleep without one, it’s even better. Jacob had a stone for a pillow for a specific purpose! Exercise improves your attitude and makes you feel victorious. Find friends to exercise with; it will encourage you and help eliminate loneliness, which is a global health issue! You may listen to good teachings or music for your health while exercising, but sometimes disconnect from technology and watch the birds in the sky! Don’t block your ears while walking—it can be dangerous if you don’t hear oncoming vehicles. Phones help many with songs or sermons, but don’t hold them too close to your body. Try using a speaker and listen with your left ear. Avoid loud music—it has caused many young people to become deaf early in life.

Avoid competitive or dangerous sports as exercise. Exercise should be a joyful activity. Many have entered competitive sports that create hatred, wanting only to win, and if they lose, they get angry at others! Video games are not exercise, not even ones like Wii! Go outside for sunlight; don’t sit constantly on the couch watching TV. Competitive sports like running have been found to be dangerous, and many die early. Everything should be done in moderation. Many have worn out their knees from too much running and have had to get artificial replacements. Muscles wear out when overused, pushing excess blood to process waste or carbon dioxide. As Latin says, cito maturum, cito putridum (soon ripe, soon rotten). Many athletes suffer from overusing one part of the body and forgetting the whole person. Look at the lives of prophets—did they run around all the time?

Many people strain to pass stool, which can affect the heart (Valsalva maneuver). You should go to the toilet for each meal eaten. If you eat three meals a day, you should have three bowel movements. Don’t rust before wearing out. Exercise makes you feel better and helps in illness recovery. You can swim, bike, etc. Exercise should be enjoyed to benefit the body—don’t do it grudgingly. Exercise

improves blood circulation, strengthens bones and muscles, and enhances lung function. It helps with many illnesses like diabetes, high blood pressure, aging, stress, mental illness (like depression), bone health, constipation, longevity, heart health, immunity, obesity, sleep, sadness, and enhances brain function and clarity.

Many unemployed youths fall into bad company. Let them exercise and avoid gangs. Nowadays, even chatting with strangers online has led youths into bad friendships because they can be easily deceived without seeing the person. Words are only 7% of communication; one must see the face and other cues to understand someone's truth on the internet.

Water

70% of the human body weight is water. You can survive a week without food but only three days without water! Water is a great blessing and the best drink of all. The body filters and recycles more than 800 glasses a day. Imagine if your body didn't do that—you'd need to drink 800 glasses instead of the 8 to 12 we're told to drink. To know how much water to drink, take your weight in kilos. For example, if I weigh 70 kg, I should drink 70 ounces of water (8 ounces = 1 glass).

Just like you can't wash clothes with soda, so too only water cleanses our bodies! Kidneys, lungs, skin, and intestines lose water. We get water into our bodies by drinking. Fever, breastfeeding, salty or high-protein diets, vomiting or diarrhea, sweating, and physical activity make us lose water and require replacement by drinking enough.

Water is essential for blood, boosting immunity, reducing weight, fatigue, and headaches, improving memory, youthfulness, positive thinking, lowering cancer risk, saliva production, tears, regulating body temperature to reduce fever, digesting food, and easing pain. They say drink five glasses to survive, eight for health, and twelve for rejuvenation.

Often people think they're sick, but they're just dehydrated. 92% of colon cancers, 60% of lung cancers, and 50% of bladder cancers are prevented by drinking water. See cancer studies from Johns Hopkins University. Drink 8-10 glasses of room-temperature water daily. Children (around 4 years) should have about three glasses, based on their weight. If you teach kids early, they'll drink water easily. But many forget to give children water—some have even tried drinking kerosene

due to thirst. Modern education tells us not to give water to breastfeeding infants—I disagree. Even young babies should be given clean, boiled drinking water.

Boil your water to kill germs, and if needed, filter it. Find good water sources. Dirty water causes many diseases. Don't drink ice-cold or hot water—it strains the body to regulate the temperature to 36°C. Ice can also damage your teeth. Fruit juices and sodas are not substitutes for water!

I worked with people who bragged that they drank water during their poor childhoods but now only drink soda—they misunderstand. Even our hands or clothes aren't washed with soda; water is the only real cleansing liquid. Alcohol should be avoided. The Bible speaks a lot about this in Proverbs and Revelation: "Woe to him..." and "Drunkards will not enter the kingdom of heaven." Don't drink with your food. I once met an evangelist who secretly drank alcohol. While traveling with fellow evangelists, they took his "drinking water" only to find it was konyagi (a local liquor).

When you urinate, the color should be light yellow or like water. If it's brown, your body is already dehydrated. You should urinate at least once every eight hours—about a glass or a quarter liter. If you don't urinate all day, something is wrong—see a doctor. For bowel movements, go according to how much you eat—if you eat twice, go twice. Some modern experts say once every three days is okay—that's not true! By then, the intestines are closing up! Why wait for that? How many kilos of food are sitting in your gut for three days?

Constipation is dangerous; the intestines can block. Drink water well. It helps many diseases. Eat plenty of green vegetables and fruits. Vegetables like mchicha (amaranth) help with bowel movement, but people eat little veggies and large amounts of ugali.

Your urine and stool should not smell bad if you eat and drink properly as God intended. I saw a child who ate lots of cheese (fermented milk), and when he went to the toilet, it smelled like a dead rat. Try eating and drinking correctly—you'll notice the change! No more air fresheners in toilets. Cows' dung is less offensive—we humans have problems because of what we eat and drink and the gas in our stomachs. People end up using magnesium medicine, which contains harmful metals like aluminum. Your stool should be a specific color (greenish-brown),

should float in modern toilets, and be S-shaped according to the intestines. Don't wait until you're thirsty—by then, you're already dehydrated. Many people bathe their bodies daily but never cleanse internally with water!

Urine shouldn't be smelly or cloudy. It's like washing your body in dirty water every day while wearing clean clothes. If urine smells, is cloudy, or causes pain or difficulty in urinating, it's a sign of urinary infection.

If you sprain something, rest it, apply cold water, wrap it, and elevate it on a pillow—RICE: Rest, Ice, Contain, Elevate.

We Measured People's Blood Pressure in Kegati (Kisii), Goma (Congo), and Hedaru (Tanzania)

We measured people's blood pressure in Kegati in Kisii, Goma in Congo, and Hedaru in Tanzania and found that many people had high blood pressure—even some as young as 16 years old. After a month of drinking water, many saw their pressure reduced. Water is medicine—both internally and externally.

You can use water to massage the body. For instance, if you twist or bump yourself, you should use cold water immediately to prevent swelling by contracting the blood vessels. Then, after a few hours, apply a hot water massage. If you have high blood pressure or a fever, take hot (but not scalding) water and put it in a bucket to soak your feet, while placing a cold cloth on your head. Sit for 15 minutes. Your blood pressure can reduce by up to one-third. Refer to the section on fomentation. Make sure the hot water doesn't burn you, as people with diabetes often have reduced sensation. Water is also used for massage and therapy.

When bathing, alternate between cold and hot water, ending with cold water. Do this three times. It boosts the immune system by increasing white blood cells that fight diseases. Look into books or online resources about hot and cold fomentation. If you have a sore throat, soak a small towel in cold water, wrap it around your throat, cover it with plastic and then a dry towel on top, and sleep with it overnight—your throat will feel much better.

Water, even through swimming, heals muscles and the body. It soothes and relieves stress. Even if you can't swim, simply walking in safe water has great benefits. Those who have visited waterfalls know that even the sound of falling

water is therapeutic. Looking at the blue sky and green leaves also provides natural stress relief.

Those with access to hot springs that aren't too hot can immerse themselves if it's safe. Living near water bodies like rivers, waterfalls, seas, or lakes is also therapeutic! The sound of flowing water calms many hearts. That's why houses near water are expensive in many countries—we now understand why

Clean Water and Solar Disinfection

Johns Hopkins University conducted a study on drinking clean water free from chemicals and germs. There are filters for chemicals, but for germs, add lemon or lime to water, place it in a clear bottle, and leave it in the sun for two hours—the sunlight kills the germs.

Water helps flush toxins from the body through the kidneys. Water sources should be kept clean and far from garbage or toilets.

Sunlight

Sunlight is very important to the human body. It enhances blood circulation and helps manage blood pressure. Two hours of morning sunlight is beneficial. Sit near an open window to absorb the sun's rays, or better yet, go outside. Sunlight increases white blood cells and helps fight infections. It helps treat jaundice, skin and eye diseases. Sunlight also improves liver function for better digestion, reduces cholesterol, calms nerves, aids sleep, strengthens muscles, improves food digestion, boosts mental outlook and health, and prevents depression.

Recent studies show that many people suffer from vitamin D deficiency because they stay indoors. I didn't think this applied to me until I was tested last month and found to have a severe deficiency. The doctor said, "You have the vitamin D level of a 100-year-old woman—are you tired?" The normal level is 30-100, and I only had 8. I had felt energetic before, but right after hearing that, I started feeling tired!

There's a trend of sending very young children—even infants—to daycare or school, where they stay indoors in small rooms with little to no sunlight. This has led to diseases like rickets and body swelling. Rickets, which causes bone deformities, is one result of a lack of sunlight—even in tropical countries! Mothers, let your

children get some sun. It was God's plan for everyone to have land and spend time outside. Due to modern living, many people lack land and suffer from inadequate sunlight.

The Israelites had many health laws, and even though they lived in the hot desert sun, which kills germs, these laws were important. Today, it's even more essential to get sunlight because we spend most of our time indoors. We should open windows and curtains (even sheer ones) to let sunlight into our homes and kill germs. Sunlight kills 99% of bacteria.

To disinfect drinking water, place it in a clear bottle in the sun for six hours. Sunlight helps with many things: blood pressure, diabetes, weight, and more. All human food originates from photosynthesis—sunlight hitting plant leaves to create nutrients. Sunlight is more important than we realize.

Sunlight also helps reduce depression. In countries with little sunlight—far north or south—people tend to be more gloomy. When the sun rises, we see colors, which influence our moods. For instance, green promotes healing, red increases energy, and pink helps relaxation.

Work outdoors to get enough sun. Come down from high-rise buildings if needed. One mother proudly said her six-month-old baby had never left their apartment floor! Just as plants grow with sunlight, so do we. Eat plants grown without chemical fertilizers.

If possible, make sprouts from mung beans, wheat, sunflower seeds, barley, millet, finger millet, or beans. Experts say sprouted seeds have 600% more protein, minerals, enzymes, and vitamins than unsprouted ones. Eat non-alcoholic sprouts—plants that receive sunlight help produce better blood for us.

People with less skin pigment (like albinos or Caucasians) should avoid sunburn and prolonged exposure, as it can cause skin cancer. Check your skin for dark spots that change shape, color, or size, or for wounds that don't heal. To avoid sun damage, gradually increase sun exposure. Avoid the intense sun between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Wear protective clothing, wide hats, and eat healthful foods like vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.

Fresh Air

We can live 40 days without food, 3 days without water—but only 4 minutes without air. Oxygen is essential to life and flows through every blood vessel. Open your windows to get fresh air, even in cold climates. When people keep windows shut, the morning air inside becomes heavy and makes them feel tired.

All our living cells need oxygen to convert food into energy. Walk outside and observe the beauty of creation—it will bring joy. Don't dump trash near your home—it pollutes the air. Dampness around the house is unhealthy. Many cities have poor air due to pollution and industry.

We need oxygen to live, but it also causes oxidation, which leads to rust—and similar effects on body cells. That's why we need antioxidants to neutralize oxygen's harmful effects. These include vitamins C, A, and E, minerals like selenium, and compounds like Coenzyme Q10.

Since this book can't cover everything, take time to learn about:

Energy-giving foods like whole grains.

Protein sources like beans and peanuts.

Disease-preventing foods like fruits.

Healing foods like vegetables.

Also, learn about essential minerals such as:

Phosphorus and calcium (lime) for bones.

Zinc for wounds and reproduction.

Clean your home to eliminate dust and black mold found in bathrooms, kitchens, or toilets. Mold spores are toxic when inhaled. In some cases, people have had to demolish or burn down houses due to mold infestations. In one nearby church in Lafayette, inspectors found mold, and even after fumigation, it persisted. They had to tear it down and rebuild.

Practice deep breathing: inhale slowly and exhale slowly, at least 4-5 times a day. Also do eye exercises—focusing near and far. Ensure your rooms are well-lit. If building a house, have an architect plan for good airflow and sunlight

Breathing is vital. Sometimes perfumes (if not natural) can cause allergies. Natural scents are better.

Practice proper posture—stand or sit upright at 90 degrees. Poor posture limits lung capacity, making someone like a smoker. Walking up small hills or stairs helps improve breathing. Reading aloud helps expel air properly. Breathe in over two counts and out over two counts. Practice this breathing technique three times a day: inhale through your nose counting to four, pause briefly, then exhale slowly counting to 12. Do this especially when sick, tired, anxious, stressed, or with a headache.

Smoking and Clean Air

It's important to talk about smoking when discussing fresh air. Smoking kills—but it's 100% preventable. Make up your mind to quit. Bathe frequently to cleanse toxins from your skin. Body cleansing helps remove toxins from your blood, which can reduce cravings to smoke.

Drink more than two liters (or eight glasses) of water daily—it flushes out toxins. Have regular mealtimes and avoid sitting idle after eating. Avoid alcohol, coffee, and foods that trigger smoking cravings. Stay away from overly spicy, fatty, or sugary foods—they increase the urge to smoke. Instead, eat fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nuts (refer to healthy foods). Breathe deeply. Avoid peer pressure from smoking friends. Find a hobby—keep busy—and trust God to help you escape this trap. Many began smoking in childhood because of peer influence, like Samson the Nazirite.

Temperance

Temperance means using good things in moderation and completely avoiding bad things. The Holy Book teaches that animals like pigs, octopus, hippopotamus, lions, dogs, cats, rats, lizards, and snakes are not good for our health.

Many studies on these animals, for example, pigs, have shown they carry many parasites. Research has found that people who rear or handle pigs, such as butchers, are four times more likely to suffer from appendicitis than others. Cigarettes, alcohol, coffee, tea, and drugs are substances we should never put into our mouths.

Alcohol affects the part of the brain responsible for judgment (the frontal lobe), and poisons body tissues such as the brain, mouth, throat, stomach, liver, immune system, and others. The dangers of tobacco include lung cancer, shortened life, heart issues, bladder problems, paralysis, lung diseases, brittle bones, a weakened immune system, stomach ulcers, impaired thinking, cataracts, developmental and behavioral problems in children, and stillbirths or babies born with health complications. Tobacco and alcohol cause irritability, restlessness, drowsiness or disturbed sleep, confusion, strong cravings for cigarettes, and unease.

The good news is that God helps. Try to drink water to flush out toxins, bathe at least twice a day, do physical exercises, walk outside to breathe fresh air, eat simple food, and ask God for forgiveness for misusing the body He gave you, then start a new life. It's easy to lose your health and hard to regain it. Therefore, we must not dare damage or cripple our minds or bodies through misuse.

French studies once claimed that grape wine increased life quality and helped prevent diseases like heart problems. It was later discovered that the health benefit came from the grapes, not the alcohol. So, if we want good health, we should eat grapes themselves—we don't have to wait until they rot into wine!

We should eat healthy foods like fruits and vegetables in moderation. That doesn't mean eating three buckets of vegetables or fruits just because they are healthy—even though I once heard that bodybuilders drank buckets of porridge! Take time to deny yourself and overcome your desires. Let's not be ruled by our appetites but overcome them through God's grace. Not everything we want to do should be done, or everything we crave be eaten. Avoid gluttony and overeating. We eat to live, not live to eat.

Wear clothes that do not constrict or compress nerves and blood vessels. Tight clothing can block blood circulation or restrict lung function. Also, remember that immodest clothing is shameful for someone who loves God. Even if you were invited to a menial job or to the State House to meet the president, you wouldn't wear strange things!

Heavenly angels are watching our behavior constantly. Let's not grieve them by being careless. Don't wear or buy overly expensive things to the point of idolizing them, letting them consume your thoughts and time. A person of God has a great

task of spreading the Lord's message before the end. Instead of wasting on clothes, we should bless others and give offerings to the poor.

Pray to overcome temptation and control your desires. Since sin entered the world, there has been a great war within the human heart—between the flesh and the spirit. Everyone knows this struggle, where we fail to do what we want and end up doing what we hate, hurting our loved ones and our Creator. Sin separates us from God, so we must pray to overcome temptation. But God does not command us to do anything without offering help. So remember during trials

The rewards promised by God to overcomers

The terrible consequences of sin

Not to love money or material things (you can't serve two masters)

Be ready to flee or leave quickly—wisdom sometimes means fleeing, like Joseph did

Don't follow crowds

Keep yourself busy

Have plans to avoid idleness and meaningless browsing online

Know your weaknesses and tendencies toward evil

Overcome evil with good

Don't be resentful

Take care of your health—some temptations hit harder when one is sleep-deprived and irritable

Most importantly, when you fall, learn how to stand again quickly. Don't lose heart—move forward, because no human has never fallen. Don't let past falls be an excuse to stay in the mud of sin.

Trusting God the Creator

It's important to know that God loves us and forgives our sins. Many emotional and mental illnesses come from people not valuing themselves, because they don't know they were created by God. This has caused many illnesses.

Not forgiving others, anger, anxiety, revenge, loneliness, mistrust, greed, lust, pride, fashion obsession, contempt, boasting, showing off, vanity, hatred, cursing others, a dulled conscience, dissatisfaction, arguments, quarrels, jealousy, doubt, complaining, guilt, and fear—these must be surrendered to God so they don't destroy our health.

Instead, be a person of temperance, striving to live a blameless, simple life that cares for the needy—orphans, disabled, widows, the poor, strangers, the elderly, and the weak. I recently asked myself—what orphan or widow am I helping “in my true religion”? The Word of God repeatedly emphasizes the importance of trusting in the Lord

It's said that 75% of all hospital patients suffer from guilt. Let's learn to forgive ourselves, even when we've failed, and begin again.

Read Deuteronomy carefully:

“If you diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and are careful to do all His commands... then the Lord will set you high above all the nations. All these blessings shall come upon you... You'll be blessed in the city and in the countryside, the fruit of your womb and your land and livestock... your basket and kneading bowl... you'll be blessed when you come in and when you go out... enemies will come at you from one direction and flee in seven... you'll lend to many nations but borrow from none... the Lord will make you the head and not the tail.”

But if you don't obey:

“All these curses will come upon you... you'll be cursed in the city and countryside... the fruit of your womb and land... the Lord will strike you with diseases, fever, inflammation... madness, blindness, and confusion... boils, tumors, sores you can't heal... you'll build houses and not live in them... another will lie with your wife... your cattle will be slaughtered before your eyes... from foot to head, you'll be afflicted with incurable sores.”

Reflect deeply on these matters for your health.

When my six-year-old child heard these verses during our Bible reading plan, tears welled up in his eyes. I was amazed. It's true that God's love is spoken of in thousands of verses, but the wrath of God is mentioned about 586 times. It took me a while to answer that question. I ask you, reader, to help me with answers!

Take time with family and close friends to enjoy life in moderation and laugh together. Look at creation—the skies, bird sounds, water, or mountains—these are great for health. Let's be people full of gratitude. Appropriate touch is healing. It's not weakness to hug your family or greet friends with a handshake—all these benefit health.

Teach children to love work, especially farming. Even those in school can benefit intellectually from agriculture. Parents shouldn't struggle alone. Many youth don't farm—they sell small items like water at bus stations while having land God gave them for their health.

Worshiping at home and in places of worship is also vital for health. Don't be quick-tempered. If anger comes, ask God to remove it before sunset. Ask forgiveness from those you've wronged, and know you've been forgiven. Then go forward with a clear conscience. Don't be someone who can't forgive themselves. If God has forgiven you, you are free!

Fellowship and social connection help with many illnesses. Be content—no one has everything. Overcome evil with good. If your enemy is hungry, feed them. You will melt their evil! Show God's love while people are alive—not just by placing flowers on graves. If they see your love while alive, you'll bless their health.

Don't think of yourself as inferior. Know that God loves you, but don't be proud—God loves us all.

Don't rush through life to finish school or get a job just to accumulate things. Many bad habits began at that point. People think they've started finding happiness, but true joy comes from trusting God and doing His will. We are travelers on this earth, looking out the window of the bus—let us enjoy the view, not just wait for the final stop to find happiness. Many of us live day to day without enjoying life, always rushing to the end. Yet the journey itself is a big part of the joy—not just old age or the end!

Do not use alcohol or smoke cigarettes because you harm your own body and those you live with. Your speech and judgment become impaired and negatively influence others. Your family suffers from inhaling smoke and being denied essential needs. This does not reflect God to the people you love.

It is very important to read the Word of God every day and pray. Many people say they have no time! That is a matter of poor priorities. If you have no time, then do this: don't eat, since you have no time to eat, until you've read the Word of God! If you fast for two or three days, you will feel the need to read the Word of God because hunger will compel you!

"My soul, praise the Lord... He forgives all your sins, heals all your diseases, redeems your life from the pit, crowns you with love and compassion, satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." Trusting in Him is a great blessing—even your health flourishes when you are forgiven! Spiritual and physical diseases can come from not forgiving or being unforgiven. Many have become sick or even died because of guilty consciences. Everyone passes through this station. Learn to forgive yourself and move forward knowing God cares more for you than you do for yourself.

Those with children would do well to get rid of the television altogether! Or become guards over your children to monitor what is being watched. TV does not help with knowing God; most shows display corrupt content. Even regular ads, like for mobile phones, often show inappropriately dressed women or people drinking—how are they even connected to buying a phone?

If you say it's time to worship and people are watching TV, everyone gets upset! It has its own kind of intoxication. Try distracting someone watching TV for just two seconds—observe their face! TV and computers have become our idols these days. Even adults are affected by inappropriate content.

Learn to choose wisely what to read. Don't read things that corrupt your thoughts! Some fictional stories draw you away from your Creator, polluting your mind and making His Word lose its taste. Avoid books and modern shows that involve witchcraft. Even young children have started reading books like Harry Potter, Twilight, and others. Witchcraft is portrayed as harmless and fun, as if "witches help people." The top seven grossing films the year before last all involved

witchcraft. It's become fashionable to engage in witchcraft through books, music, and movies.

Don't waste your time glorifying or depending on Satan, but on God. Satan is real, he rebelled and was cast down to Earth, and though he has some power, God is more powerful because He created Satan perfect—until he chose to rebel.

It is essential to depend on God in all sickness and situations. Any human who kneels in prayer has power to resist Satan. So spend time on your knees—especially in your room. If you're not praying in private, you'll struggle to do it elsewhere. Let us all learn to live lives of prayer, looking to Calvary for life. God is the true Healer and enabler, the most important of the "10 doctors."

Do you have morning and evening worship at home? You are the priest of your household. This is very important. Before preaching far and wide, start in your home. And if you're traveling, your spouse should be the assistant priest to continue the worship. When you wake up, give thanks, sing songs as a family, read the Word. Home worship is more important than any other. If you can worship God at home, you'll worship Him anywhere. Consider the children's age—don't have overly long prayers. Fifteen to thirty minutes is enough.

Many do not carry the burden of home worship. They think public services are the only priority. That's shameful. This happened to me for over ten years. I would do worship occasionally, but not consistently. Until we stayed for eight months with our friends Paulo Muasya and his wife—we saw their dedication to morning and evening worship. Their children, six and ten years old, loved it. If they missed it, they were sad. Then I realized—it was my fault for not putting emphasis on it. Sometimes we now hold worship even as early as 5:30 p.m., before dinner, so if any emergencies arise, we're not rushing like headless chickens or people with no purpose.

Let us abide in Jesus and He in us (John 15), giving God our choices, surrendering completely, asking forgiveness with genuine repentance, and reading the Word deeply. Let's pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit for true revival and transformation. Pray for faith, the fruits of the Spirit, and wisdom. He will generously grant spiritual gifts so we can reach others. He will justify and help us live sanctified lives. The Bible says He delights in His saints here on Earth. He is the One who sanctifies us to be holy

A grateful heart - An attitude of gratitude has been shown to help people live longer. It's very important to be thankful—not only to strangers but also to those in our own homes. The five golden words are vital: 1. Thank you, 2. Sorry, 3. Please, 4. Excuse me, and 5. I'm sorry. Some people say that when good is done to them, they do not give thanks but instead “repay” the good deed with another good deed to the one who helped them. That is good, but speaking words of thanks also has its own value. Do not be proud—whether as a husband, wife, or child—when someone does something good for you and you hesitate to say thank you. Your status won't diminish by saying it, and you will have influenced others to speak kind, encouraging words, possibly inspiring them to do good to others in the future.

You have a choice every day—to be a thankful person who counts their blessings or to focus on problems. A beautiful rose also has thorns; if you want to enjoy it, make the effort to focus on the beauty of the flower rather than the thorns. To overcome this, every night, list 10 things you are grateful to God for. Many relationships are built through gratitude toward others. Sadness, anxiety, discontent, hatred, a guilty conscience, mistrust, jealousy, anger, and fear bring stress and drain the body, even weakening its immune system. But hope, faith, compassion, love, contentment, forgiveness, generosity, joy, and gratitude bring health and add to your life.

Serving People or the Community (Service)

People who serve others are often seen to live longer—especially those who do good without expecting anything in return. When they face problems, they tend to forget their own issues, and in helping others, they often find that their own problems are somehow resolved.

There is a story of a man who went to a country where people had very long arms and couldn't feed themselves. They stayed hungry for a long time until one person discovered that they could use a spoon or hand to feed someone else! So they began feeding one another, and they lived happily. They served each other.

When you focus on the needs of others and deny selfishness and greed—which are the qualities of heaven—you will find that blessings increase. I've never heard of anyone becoming poor from helping or serving others.

Make an effort in your community to find ways to help those in need—the poor, widows, orphans, the homeless, and the unemployed—so they can become self-reliant. Even those who are in pain and need encouragement or transport to a health facility. The poor or those in need exist so our character can be tested! Many people have served angels without knowing it. Be careful not to fail that test. Put yourself in their shoes. Help them in a way that enables them to help themselves, with the opportunities you have.

If you work in a place where you can make a difference in your district or region, take action to support those in need. Speak words of encouragement to them—remind them that the pit they are in is not permanent. If there is a way to help them acquire land, do so, so they can farm and be self-reliant.

Those who are lawyers or have services that can support the disadvantaged—do not hesitate! Doing this brings better health, and at night you'll find yourself smiling in your sleep.

Don't be someone who squanders resources! We're not saying you should be stingy, but many people spend money on things they don't need, when they could be helping the poor. A woman named Grace Zuzo from South Africa once told me, "If you haven't worn a piece of clothing for a year, it's no longer yours—give it to someone in need!"

Ask yourself, Is the world a better place to live because you are in it? Strive to live a life of service. Sometimes, step outside your family circle or blood relatives and serve others. In many Western countries, people have reached a level where they help strangers or support organizations they don't even know. Often, we only help our own relatives.

Helping those you don't know will benefit you mentally, spiritually, physically, socially, and even economically. When we're sick, it's easy to dwell on ourselves and our problems. But when we shift our thoughts to helping others, we find our problems become lighter, and we realize many others face difficulties just like we do.

Try to work hand-in-hand with these ten "healers," one step at a time. Don't focus too much on how you'll change someone or force them.

Cleanliness:

Cleanliness is an important aspect of our lives—personal hygiene, clothing, our environment, and even the heart. A poorly maintained home can lead to many illnesses. Every form of filth tends to bring disease. Germs such as bacteria and flies that cause death are found in dark, neglected corners of houses. Filth that rots, dampness, foul odor, or mold create a breeding ground for disease.

God's Word said that if mold is found in someone's house, they should inform the priest, and if it cannot be completely removed, the house should be burned down. Doug Kaufmann, a nutritionist and mold expert, explains much about this—you can search his name online for more information.

Filth can include rotting vegetables or piles of fallen leaves. These should not be allowed near the house as they pollute the air. Anything rotten should not be kept indoors. Toilets and kitchens should be cleaned daily. Nowadays, it's been found that many toilets have fewer bacteria than items like computer mice, phones, TV remotes, etc. Many people never clean these items, even though they use them constantly! Ice machines have been found to harbor more bacteria than toilets.

Bathing at least once a day is good, depending on your activities. The body expels waste through the skin. If we don't clean our bodies, the pores get clogged. Clothes should also be washed regularly because the body absorbs dirt from dirty garments if clothes are not changed frequently.

Bathing improves blood circulation, refreshes the body, helps prevent illnesses like colds, energizes the brain, invigorates the body, calms the nerves, relaxes muscles, and aids digestion.

Toilet hygiene is critical. Every family should have a proper toilet. In our towns, people are building hotels and food outlets without constructing toilets. People fear drinking water while out because there are no public restrooms! This leads to people relieving themselves anywhere. When the Israelites left Egypt, God told them, "Cover what comes out of you, so the Lord your God does not walk through your camp and see your filth... and turn away..."

Domesticated animals can also cause disease through their droppings or by living too close to people—this must be addressed.

Washing hands is extremely important at all times—wash your hands! Wash after using the toilet, after sneezing or blowing your nose, before eating, after eating,

after working, when you get home, before cooking, and after cooking—wash, wash, wash your hands! Handwashing is the first defense against many illnesses. Scrub well for at least 20 seconds with soap. Natural bar soaps are best. Avoid “antibacterial” soaps—they kill the body’s good bacteria and make us more susceptible to fungal infections.

If counting to 20 seconds is difficult, sing “Happy Birthday” or “Zum zum zum, bee buzz away, flying far to find a good flower for food” about three times—that should be enough!

Let everyone strive to maintain clean and neat surroundings for the sake of health. Teach children to keep their rooms clean—open windows to let out odors, organize their belongings, and practice personal hygiene. They should brush their teeth morning and evening.

Wearing shoes is important to protect against parasites like worms and thorns. It’s advisable to remove shoes when entering the house. We can’t stress enough—wash your hands!

Check hair for lice, as these insects can spread disease. Wells should be built away from toilets, and river water should not be polluted. Communities must work together on these issues, as diseases spread within communities from person to person. During outbreaks like tuberculosis or cholera, isolating the patient (quarantine) is important. The patient should have their own eating utensils and be cared for in a way that prevents spreading infection.

Teeth should be brushed well, especially after meals. Remind children to brush thoroughly, taking two to three minutes and covering all areas of the teeth, including the tongue—70% of mouth bacteria reside on the tongue.

Animals like pigs and dogs should be monitored—their feces can contaminate the environment and spread disease. Crawling babies can be exposed to this waste, even through our shoes. That’s why removing shoes before entering the house significantly reduces disease. Handwashing and removing shoes are the two top cleanliness practices for disease prevention. In biblical times, people removed their shoes in sacred places.

Sweep the house well and open windows. Wash fruits, vegetables, and other items thoroughly. Keep food covered to prevent fly contamination. Do not eat spoiled

food—it may contain bacterial toxins. Try to cook just enough or reboil leftovers, as bacteria start multiplying within two hours after food cools down.

Avoid eating raw meat, especially pork—it harbors many harmful microorganisms. After handling meat, wash hands thoroughly. Household garbage should be disposed of properly, away from wells, and if possible, burned.

Set a cleaning schedule—every day has its tasks, and without a plan, cleanliness will decline.

Mobile Phones:

Mobile phones are a new concern—like cigarettes when they were first introduced, it took years to understand their health effects. You won't get lung or mouth cancer from a cigarette in one month—it takes years. Similarly, the full risks of wireless devices are still unknown. Many say they can cause tumors. Children are at higher risk because their skulls are thinner and their brains develop quickly, making them more vulnerable to radiation.

Avoid placing phones near your head. Use speaker mode. Don't keep phones in your pocket, waistband, or near your body. Use a wired home phone if possible, and use your mobile only for emergencies. Avoid using the phone when the battery is low—radiation is stronger.

To reduce radiation in general, grow your own food using compost instead of chemical fertilizers. Use your phone in areas with good signal strength. For more information, visit mercola.com.

Mind

The body and the brain are very closely connected. Many of the illnesses that trouble us began in the mind. Complaining, depression, deep sorrow, anxiety, discontent, anger, excessive harshness, over-ambition, a guilty conscience, distrust of people, greed, cruelty, self-pity, pride, hatred, jealousy, gossip, worry, selfishness, showing off, irresponsibility, oppression, self-love, stinginess — these are just some of the mental problems that eventually lead to physical diseases. Other illnesses come from imagination.

It's important to have a brave heart, faith, hope, love, and compassion in order to live a long life.

Experience shows that in the U.S., when mass shooters or serial killers are interviewed, many people who knew them say, “He was such a nice person, loved his neighbors, even helped me with this and that.” One wonders, where did this cruelty and savagery come from? It turns out it was hiding for many years in the person’s mind. From childhood, they continued with these things secretly while appearing good on the outside.

True goodness is knowing God and having a relationship with Him. That is what builds a wall of protection. No goodness can come from man alone; the heart is full of deadly diseases. One moment we seem spiritual and kind, the next we are filled with poison to destroy others (Apostle Paul spoke of this in depth in Romans 7). A person may look good, but deep in the mind they are sick – and one day, everything they suppressed may explode like a bomb. That’s why even in raising children, we must care about shaping the inner heart, not just correcting outer behavior.

Let us nurture the hearts of children – the outward actions will follow.

Try telling someone, “You look sick,” and then others say it throughout the day. By evening, you may find them in bed, and if you ask what’s wrong, they’ll say, “I’m sick!”

When caring for the sick, this is vital to consider. No one should give another person control over their thoughts. Don’t deceive the sick or discourage them – find a balance.

Do not look to another person as your healer; trust in God. Do not let another person hypnotize your mind – this is called hypnotism, similar to how a snake paralyzes its prey without touching it. Cursed is the one who trusts in man or makes man their defense. Hypnotism uses dark powers and should not be used in healing. Do not let someone rely entirely on you, or you control their thoughts.

People with mental illnesses need compassion and support. Many suffer when their minds are overwhelmed, they’ve lost hope and are filled with doubt. They cannot be helped by health workers unless they trust them and know their intentions (confidence). These people need comforting and encouraging words.

Don’t lie to the sick about their condition, but don’t speak discouraging things that make healing seem impossible. Teach them to find something meaningful to

do instead of remaining idle. Let them go outside and look at the sky, rivers, mountains, and more. Assign them tasks. Sunshine itself is a remedy – it removes people from daydreaming and unrealistic thoughts.

When we fully commit to living our lives loving God, He will never fail us in any circumstance. If anything happens – stress, confusion – He is our counselor and friend

Sometimes we mess up through bad habits, but God never leaves us. We confess and start afresh. Let's never leave Him either! He loved us first and sacrificed Himself for us – not the other way around. Don't only focus on what you give or do for God – keep Him in your thoughts. He has given more and wants you to enjoy the blessings He has given you.

When we invite Him into our lives, we will be transformed and experience peace that surpasses understanding – rest from stress and doubt. True healing and restoration come from Him – and it begins in the mind.

We must resist the spirit that seeks to harm our minds, through prayer. Don't forget – you are a child of the King of heaven. When asked how you're feeling, don't focus on the pain or lack of faith to earn pity. Try to speak of God's greatness and power – that He will lift you out of this pit.

It is good to pray with the sick in any difficulty. If there is anything that needs correcting, address it so that prayers may be answered according to God's principles. Let us accept God's will. Continue using simple or formal treatments when needed. Some illnesses last long (chronic); do not lose hope. After surrendering to God, leave it all to Him because He knows what's best for us.

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind! Don't let modern theories of human evolution – only 200 years old – influence your thinking, for they degrade us, making us feel inferior to animals.

For those with young children, try to maintain moderation in their environment. Avoid too many parties, loud noise, bright lights, excessive food, too much excitement, or extreme temperatures. A child's mind is affected by drastic changes (extremes). Calmness fosters curiosity and discovery. Calmness builds good character.

Many children develop depression from going to school too early or having packed schedules. Don't boast that your child can read at age 3 – that may harm their health unless it comes from their own interest. Children should interact with nature – animals, plants, sky, etc. Many world inventors were given peaceful homes, not noisy ones. Even mealtime shouting makes children wonder, "Should I eat or stop?"

Work helps children mature mentally. Those who entered school at age 10, but learned various hands-on tasks, often did well because such work engages multiple parts of the brain and body (psychomotor skills).

Teenagers face temptations such as junk food, sexual issues or masturbation, alcohol, cigarettes, dancing, or not sleeping enough. These can harm a developing mind.

There is danger in psychology being misused by the devil. Be cautious of thoughts that don't help your life. This doesn't mean avoiding psychologists, but choose one who loves God. Some psychologists give strange advice! Read a little about Freud – he helped with some things, but much of what he said is questionable, especially for Christians.

Since the devil is a student of psychology, he sometimes uses people (even psychologists) to promote shocking ideas – some are clearly sinful. For advice, seek wise and God-fearing counselors. God's psychology promotes purity, love, peace, and healing. Let it be in our thoughts always – God created our minds and is the source of all good.

Another important topic is emotional intelligence (EQ). Most of us have heard of IQ (Intelligence Quotient), used by teachers in schools. Adults can also measure it.

In 1983, psychologist Howard Gardner observed that the brain has different kinds of intelligence. He said classroom intelligence isn't the only kind. He listed several types, including:

Natural intelligence (nature smart)

Musical intelligence (music smart)

Logical-mathematical intelligence (number/reasoning smart)

Interpersonal intelligence (people smart)

Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (body smart)

Linguistic intelligence (word smart)

Intrapersonal intelligence (self smart)

Spatial intelligence (picture smart)

Existential intelligence (morality smart)

Then in 1995, another psychologist, Daniel Goleman, introduced the term Emotional Intelligence (EQ) – the ability to identify, assess, and manage emotions.

Goleman said emotional intelligence includes five components:

Knowing one's emotions

Managing one's emotions

Recognizing others' emotions

Managing relationships

Self-motivation to achieve goals

These five are crucial. We must always be aware of our emotions and manage them. Emotional intelligence is not just for decision-making but for thriving in life.

Studies followed high academic performers and found that many didn't succeed in life compared to some low performers. Success and joy in life relate more to EQ than IQ.

Experts found that people with high EQ avoid depression, fear (phobia), and substance abuse. They handle unavoidable tragedies better than those with just high IQ.

We all know people who are book-smart but quick-tempered or prideful, making others uncomfortable. Research shows that childhood experiences, genetics, emotions, and even diet contribute. Eating plant-based foods was found to improve EQ

Family meals with warm conversation help prepare for both present and future life. Watching violent TV shows, playing aggressive video games, and consuming dirty entertainment severely affects EQ.

The foundation of EQ is our beliefs. Our beliefs influence our emotions and real-life experiences. For example, Paul and Silas were imprisoned and chained, yet sang praises to God all night. Why? Because their thoughts and emotions were stronger than their physical circumstances.

We can learn to nurture positive emotions. King Solomon once said 37 times in Ecclesiastes that everything is meaningless — he had ruined his life through reckless living. But when he changed, his life gained meaning, and his mind aligned with emotional health.

If thoughts are bad or twisted, emotions will also be bad. Thoughts and emotions shape behavior

Good News — we can “be transformed by the renewing of our minds.”

How can we protect and improve our EQ?

Eat healthy food

Get enough sleep

Avoid immoral entertainment

Stay humble

Fill our minds with truth — what God wants us to know about our lives and His plans for us

Knowing the truth sets us free. Without it, we become victims.

To remove negative thoughts, replace them with good, positive ones. Choose to fill your mind with truths the Creator wants for you. Otherwise, you’ll exhaust yourself emotionally. Don’t let the devil distort your thinking.

Let our minds always focus on things above, not lowly ones. God has given us hope and great comfort — one day, pain, disease, depression, abuse, and injustice will end.

Let's keep thinking about these hopeful things. They will give us everlasting joy one day.

This is a disease that is starting to affect the whole world, especially in developed countries.

Life conditions and stress contribute significantly. Women experience depression more than men. Productivity decreases and the risk to life can increase as the patient may self-harm. It may be linked to hormonal changes during the female cycle – during menstruation and even during perimenopause. It is important to discuss this aspect with a medical professional. Some women struggle when they are married, taking care of families, after childbirth (postpartum depression), or even due to infertility.

Symptoms vary, but if you know someone well, you may notice changes such as fatigue, crying, sadness, decreased concentration, low self-worth, guilt, sleeplessness, lack of interest in normal activities or food. This person needs a specialist because it is dangerous to handle their treatment without knowledge of the condition.

“The Human Brain is GOD-SHAPED”

By Dr. Timothy Jennings of comeandletusreason.org

Just as physical exercise helps those who do it, so does training the front part of your brain to think – your thinking ability increases.

2. Be a person who loves the truth and seeks it eagerly. We struggle to reach truth because God is limitless, and He reveals His love to us daily (through Scripture, science, and experience).

A. Learn and delight in God's commandments and principles – the Law of Love, the Law of Freedom

Confirm all theories about God using the Scriptures.

Based on evidence of God's character – of high integrity and love – surrender to Him. Begin each day by inviting His Spirit.

Meditate daily on God's character — His love and wisdom. Reflect on truth filled with gratitude and meditate on God, His loving kingdom, and His work of creation.

Trust God with your life, future, and outcomes after understanding His faithfulness and experiencing it

Practice God's principles. Live generously, giving to others, being selfless, and sharing what God has given you. The more you give, the more you receive.

Find ways to share the truth about God's kingdom and love with others. Join institutions that demonstrate God's love in the world. Start ministries, lead Bible studies, collaborate with like-minded believers. Fellowship increases capacity and knowledge and shows God's love in healing and restoration.

Live according to God's plan for physical health. Avoid harmful substances such as tobacco, alcohol, drugs, stimulants, violent games, secular literature, or anything that distorts God's character.

Engage in regular physical exercise and promote the growth of neural connections, including those that regulate anger levels.

Get adequate rest, drink water, breathe fresh air, eat well, and sleep enough to ensure your brain functions well.

Live according to God's natural laws: Eat healthy foods, eliminate toxins, get sunlight — this will reduce many diseases.

Forgive: Don't hold grudges. Holding anger leads to fear and doubt and ultimately reduces your peace and health.

Be guilt-free: Guilt reduces peace and increases anxiety. It also affects innocent others. Confess your sins and move forward with life.

15. If fear and anxiety tempt you to act against your conscience for the sake of others' approval, take a step back and ask yourself: a. What is the truth? What is right? What is healthy? What is noble? What should I do?

b. Ask yourself, if someone rejected or got angry at you for doing what you believe is right — are they truly your friend? Do you need their approval?

c. Be willing to let others think or feel however they choose about you. If you think, “If I do what they want, they won’t be upset with me,” try letting them think freely about you – you’ll be free from the pressure of trying to please them.

D. Remember, love does what is healthy and logical because it is right – not just because it feels good in the moment. Look ahead and apply God’s principles even if they seem hard at the time.

e. Always look to JESUS, live with courage in the beauty of GOD, knowing the truth of HIS LAW of love, His plan for life – with all your heart, look forward to the day of HIS RETURN.

CHAPTER 41

EXPERT FRAUDS (QUACKERY OR QUACKS)

Reader: Test Your Ability (IQ) to Identify Expert Frauds (Quackery or Quacks) - your “Quackery IQ” - to help others during these deceitful and dangerous times.

To avoid excessive repetition, we will simply refer to these individuals as Quacks (pronounced like a duck’s sound - “quack quack”)

Answer True or False:

- Is it easy to identify a quack?
- The punishment for a quack when convicted in court is severe.
- Society generally strongly opposes quacks.
- Quacks cause minimal harm, only taking money from easily deceived “fools.”
- Compared to the past, today we have fewer quacks.
- Quacks are always involved in illegal and malicious businesses.
- A qualified doctor with a medical degree from a recognized university is never involved in quackery.
- A patient treated by a quack never recovers.
- All quackery is illegal.
- The statement “so-and-so is a quack” is merely someone’s opinion and not factual.

All the above statements are FALSE.

Statement: It’s easy to identify quackery.

Answer: It’s not easy to detect. Modern quacks dress in the garb of science and business. If it were easy, we wouldn’t bother writing this.

Statement: Quacks face severe penalties when convicted in court.

Answer: Typically, quacks receive light fines, not comparable to the hefty malpractice suits professional doctors face. Their penalties are closer to traffic fines.

Statement: Society usually strongly opposes quacks.

Answer: Not true. Most people are indifferent. Quacks are often viewed like careless drivers - wrong, but not alarming.

Statement: Quacks do minimal harm—just tricking the gullible out of money.

Answer: False. Quacks kill many people, often unnoticed. One person noted that deaths from quackery may rival those from criminal violence.

Statement: We have fewer quacks today than in pre-modern medicine days.

Answer: False. There are more quacks today. With the rise of medical solutions, quacks now claim many “breakthroughs” too.

Statement: Quacks are always deceitful or fraudulent.

Answer: Not true. Many are sincerely trying to help, even risking their lives or those of loved ones with unproven remedies they believe in.

Statement: University-certified doctors are never quacks.

Answer: Sadly, some trained doctors become quacks due to greed, desire for fame, or negligence. Anyone can become a quack, regardless of education.

Statement: Patients treated by quacks never recover.

Answer: Many illnesses resolve naturally or are psychosomatic, improving under any form of meaningful treatment. If a patient recovers, the quack takes the credit.

Statement: All quackery is illegal.

Answer: Unfortunately, no. Alternative practitioners operate in many places and it's hard to distinguish helpers from frauds. Governments struggle to regulate them.

Statement: Calling someone a quack is just an opinion.

Answer: False. The word “quack” implies someone who boasts about or promotes questionable remedies. Even licensed professionals can be quacks if they peddle unsafe or fraudulent treatments.

Quacks confuse many people because society assumes all quacks are malicious, which isn’t always true. Many are well-meaning but misinformed, delusional, or even mentally unwell. As the saying goes, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.”

Some quacks forge their credentials or attend unrecognized schools. Others do have genuine qualifications—MDs, nurses, pharmacists, dentists, PhDs—but abandon scientific rigor in favor of cultism, pseudoscience, or fraud. These combinations are real. Their charisma and psychological skill make them dangerously convincing.

Billions of dollars are spent each year on quackery. They make their products or services seem like bargains—especially with rising medical costs. But their services can become more expensive over time, especially with chronic conditions. Quacks are expert salespeople. Some say things like:

“If this cancer cure doesn’t work, I’ll refund you—with interest!”—knowing you’ll likely die or give up chasing your money.

Others claim to treat you for free—“Just give a donation”—knowing they’ll collect more this way than with set fees.

Old-time robbers would say “Your money or your life.” Quacks say “Your money and your life.”

They kill people. Diseases like cancer, hypertension, diabetes, malaria, typhoid, cholera, or kidney issues need timely, professional care. Some children have died because parents, deceived by quacks, avoided hospital tests.

Others, trying to lose weight, have died from extreme diets—some were told to eat meat and 10 eggs for breakfast. Beliefs about health and the people we trust can mean life or death.

Some quacks reject modern medicine or public health guidelines—just like bank robbers hate the police. They resist being investigated, and some people trust quacks more than credible health institutions. That doesn’t mean official medicine

is perfect—it's human—but betting everything on unproven therapies under the name of "health freedom" is dangerous.

Famous quacks are hardest to avoid. They target the dying or desperate, flaunting "advanced knowledge" and secret formulas no one else has. But real scientists share findings—like polio vaccines or HIV treatments.

Quacks promise quick cures. They exploit impatience, offering fast relief (like steroids for arthritis), masking symptoms instead of treating causes. They warn patients not to seek a second opinion, calling diseases "silent killers." They threaten critics with lawsuits, knowing few want the hassle of court—even if they're lying.

Some peddle eternal youth—bee pollen, fetus extracts, etc.—with no results. Yet all humans age, wrinkle, and die.

The food and supplement world is filled with quack claims—certain foods supposedly boost beauty, energy, or sexuality. Some warn that soil is depleted of nutrients, so you must buy their vitamins. Some praise raw milk, ignoring the diseases cows can carry today like TB. Others tout aloe vera, alfalfa, mung beans, or honey as miracle cures.

Obesity is rising, and quacks exploit self-hate. They promise weight loss through extreme methods—most only work short-term and can be dangerous. Claims that you can eat anything and still lose weight, or shed 20 kg in a week, are absurd.

Many diets just dehydrate the body. Others promote food that "burns fat," special belts that slim thighs, or diets eliminating all carbs.

Some even suggest ear injections or laxatives for weight loss. True health comes from self-control and understanding that the body adjusts to drastic changes—often negating the effect.

Others have received letters or messages from quacks about treatments to regrow hair for those with baldness, increase breast size, remove facial wrinkles, or obtain degrees to treat people through the post without an approved curriculum. Some quacks have criminal records. Others focus on offering cosmetic treatments to enhance beauty, muscles, or body shape. They often pressure or flatter people into making quick decisions to receive treatment. Whatever health need a client

has, they claim to have a solution. They are fond of selling vitamins and herbs at workplaces, churches, schools, or within communities. Many work through a system known as a 'pyramid scheme.'

Fraudster experts manipulate people's minds in unique ways, using fortune telling, palm reading, astrology, tarot, card reading, pendulums, or divination. These magical methods encourage people to stop using rational judgment when making decisions. Instead, they let the reader decide what their life will be like. They tell people that forces govern their lives, and these cannot be avoided. The sick person ends up trusting the 'seer, guru, or prophet.' Some people have lost jobs, broken engagements, or built emotional walls against certain people because of these fraudsters. Clients are willing to gamble with their lives simply because the 'expert' told them to. Others have been told they lived as someone else in a past life (reincarnation), and they believed it.

The worst fraudsters are witches. These give people amulets, charms, talismans, or objects meant to trap others. These items don't actually work but have a great effect on the brain, such as triggering revenge—which is detestable before the God of heaven because it causes us to hate and want to harm others. Truly, witches are very jealous people who love to hurt others and are not to be trusted with your well-being. Moreover, these are forces of darkness—followers of the Devil. We advise you to spend your time in prayer and seek the God of heaven to solve your problems, instead of going to witches. God is alive, and He has all knowledge and all power.

CHAPTER: EXAMPLES OF SIMPLE REMEDIES

Examples of simple remedies include the sweet lime, both the tall and short varieties. It helps neutralize excess acidity in the body and cleanses the blood. You can mix it with carrots or spinach.

Garlic can be mixed with other ingredients. It helps with blood pressure, digestion, appetite, stomach bacteria such as typhoid and dysentery, diarrhea, and respiratory diseases.

Radish, especially horse radish root, is very strong and should be used in small quantities mixed with lemon juice. Its juice dries mucus in the sinuses. Leek, onions, and garlic have similar effects.

Lettuce juice supports the liver, spleen, muscles, brain, and nerve function.

Papaya helps with digestion and blood clotting. Unripe papaya is more helpful for stomach diseases due to the enzyme papain. Ground green papaya is also good for ulcers.

Coriander should be taken two or three tablespoons at a time. It supports the adrenal and thyroid glands. Do not drink too much coriander juice alone, as it can affect the nervous system.

Raw Irish potatoes help with muscles, ulcers, STDs, and scar marks on the skin.

Tomato juice contains minerals such as calcium, potassium, magnesium, and sodium.

Edible pod beans help with diabetes.

Grapefruit is useful for colds.

Fruits prevent disease, and vegetables generally treat illness through combinations. You can try fruit mix experiments, but do not strain them. Examples of therapeutic fruit combinations include:

Watermelon, mango, and pineapple

Oranges, mangoes, and papaya

Avocado, mango, and papaya

Grapes, mango, and pineapple

Tangerine, banana, and mango

Mango, watermelon, strawberries or passionfruit, pineapple, and banana

Banana mixes well with everything and helps suppress hunger. Try any fruits you have—they all have great taste. Don't add sugar; just add a little water if you don't have watermelon, to make the juice thick like porridge without losing natural fruit sugar. Do not strain fruit juices, as it removes valuable fiber.

All juices help children's health, even improving attention and learning at home or school! Instead of using "energy drinks" like Red Bull, cleanse your body with

juice for adequate energy. Don't waste your money on energy or power drinks—they contain too much caffeine, a chemical that poisons rather than supports your blood.

Be patient; remember it took years to build up toxins in your body. Take months, or even a year, to heal and then maintain your health by following the 10 health principles! It's easier to swallow a pill than to take time to make juice, but these juices treat not only the symptoms but the disease itself! Blood cleansing is essential for overall health.

The lungs, skin, kidneys, lymph, and colon help eliminate toxins. Don't worry about being mocked. TV and other people often criticize healthy practices with phrases like: "He eats leaves like a goat and even makes his own juice! He'll turn orange from drinking too much carrot juice!" It's important to clean your juicing equipment properly because germs also love nutritious food—they may even know what's healthy better than we do!

Clean your vegetables and fruits well. Don't use rotting ones. Dry the machine in direct sunlight or wash it with hot water and soap.

Stool is also an indicator of health. For those using Western-style toilets, note that squatting is better for health since the human body was designed for that posture, helping the bowels fully empty. Stool should float, be soft, come out easily without strain, be odorless, follow each meal, and have an 'S' shape like the large intestine. It should not be in small goat-like pellets, which indicate the bowel hasn't properly emptied. You should have two bowel movements per day if eating two meals, and three if eating three meals, to fully cleanse the body.

Food should move through the system, or it will ferment and poison the blood—toxemia! The body then self-poisons through autotoxins. There's a strong link between cancer and constipation or colon issues. Constipation is a disease that leads to others.

Eat whole, unrefined foods. Look at a whole wheat grain—it contains 25 vitamins and minerals. Once refined (removing the outer layer), only 6 remain! Sure, it may last longer in stores because even insects know not to eat poor-quality food—but what about your body?

This is also profitable for companies selling vitamins. Why buy vitamins when your food had them originally, but you refined them away and gave the nutritious parts to pigs? Why waste money on poor nutrition? We feed cattle and pigs wholesome, unrefined grains—yet we eat toxins. Refined grains ultimately cause constipation, poor nutrition, and cancer.

The body was designed to eat unrefined foods; refined foods cause many diseases.

The body was created to be able to heal itself, but we must follow what the manual (the instructions for the use of our bodies) says. A study by Johns Hopkins University found that everyone has living cancer cells, but if the blood is free of toxins, the body destroys those cancer cells before they can grow into cancer. We must strive to live a healthy life. We cannot smoke, drink alcohol, and eat refined foods and still expect our bodies to withstand that kind of abuse.

Water therapy (Hydrotherapy) and Massage

These are simple treatments accessible to all, as they are inexpensive, easy to understand, non-toxic, and very effective. True religion and observing health laws go hand in hand. We see that the Word of God had healers, such as Luke.

People should be taught about disease prevention. If people were educated about medicinal plants, how to use them properly, and follow the ten health laws to prevent disease, there would be little need to run to the doctor regularly. We would have better health than we currently do.

Charcoal is one of the simplest treatments. The Lord has provided plants that can be used as medicine with no harmful effects. If used, they will relieve the burden of many serious diseases we see today.

One man in France conducted an experiment by drinking arsenic poison, which could kill 150 people! (Don't try this) Then he drank a lot of charcoal and recovered!

Examples of Simple Remedies: Compresses (Fomentation), Massage, and Charcoal

(Write to us if you have other remedies to help; everyone knows something others don't.)

Sorrel (Mchunga) - both the tall and short variety. It helps reduce body acidity and purifies the blood. You can mix it with carrots or spinach, in salads or juice.

Garlic - can be mixed with other ingredients. It helps with blood pressure, digestion, appetite, intestinal germs like typhoid, dysentery, diarrhea, and lung diseases.

Radish - especially horse radish root, is very strong; use small amounts mixed with lemon juice. Its juice dries up nasal mucus (sinus issues).

Juice from leeks, onions, or garlic - all have similar properties.

Lettuce juice - helps the liver and spleen, muscles, brain, and nerve sensitivity.

Papaya - aids digestion, prevents blood clots. Unripe papaya is particularly helpful for stomach issues due to its enzyme papain. Green papaya, when blended, also helps with ulcers.

Coriander (cilantro) - take 2 to 3 teaspoons. Helps adrenal and thyroid glands. Do not drink too much of its juice alone—it affects the nervous system.

Raw Irish potato - helps muscles, ulcers, venereal diseases, and scars on the skin.

Tomato juice - contains minerals like calcium, potassium, magnesium, and sodium.

String beans (French beans) - help with diabetes.

Grapefruit - good for colds. Fruits prevent disease, and vegetables generally cure.

Try fruit combinations based on what you have, but don't strain them. Examples:

Watermelon, mango, and pineapple

Oranges, mangoes, and papaya

Avocado, mango, and papaya

Grapes, mango, and pineapple

Tangerine, banana, and mango

Mango, watermelon, berries (e.g., strawberries or passionfruit), pineapple, and banana

Bananas blend well with every combination and help reduce hunger. Try any fruits you have—they all taste good.

Do not add sugar; use a little water if you don't have watermelon, so it becomes thick like porridge and retains natural fruit sugar. Do not strain the juice, or you lose the valuable fiber.

All juices help children's health, even with focus and learning at home or school!

Instead of using commercial energy drinks like Red Bull, cleanse your body with juice, and you'll have enough energy. Don't waste money on energy drinks filled with caffeine—a chemical that poisons your blood instead of helping it.

You need patience; remember, it took years to accumulate toxins in your body. Take months—even a year—to heal your body, then start eating healthy and following the ten health laws! It's easier to swallow a pill than take the time to make juice, but these will heal both the illness and its symptoms—not just symptoms, but they'll also cleanse your blood, which is vital for a healthy body.

The lungs, skin, kidneys, lymph, and colon all eliminate these toxins. Don't worry about being laughed at.

TV and people may mock you for taking your health seriously, saying things like, "He's eating grass like a goat and even making his own juice! He'll turn orange from drinking too much carrot juice!" etc.

It's Important to clean your juicing tools properly, as bacteria also love this nutritious juice! They may know better than us what's good. Wash your vegetables and fruits thoroughly, avoid rotten ones. Dry the juicer in the sun or clean it with hot water and soap.

Stool is also a health indicator. For those with sit-down flushing toilets: these are not ideal, because the human body was designed to squat during bowel movements for complete elimination.

Stool should float in the toilet, be soft, exit the body effortlessly, without a bad smell, be passed after every meal, and have an S-shape like the large intestine. It

should not be in small goat-like pieces—that shows your colon hasn't fully brushed out the waste.

You should go to the toilet twice if eating two meals a day, and three times if eating three meals a day, to cleanse your body well. Food should not stay stuck in the colon, or it may ferment and poison the blood—toxemia! The body ends up poisoning itself (autotoxins or self-poisoning). There's a strong link between cancer and constipation or large intestine issues.

Constipation is a disease and leads to others.

Eating unrefined foods helps your body. Consider a whole wheat grain: it contains 25 vitamins and minerals. Once refined (removing the outer bran), only 6 remain! Yes, it will last longer on store shelves—even bugs won't eat it because they know it lacks nutrition. But what about your body?

This is also a great business for those selling vitamin supplements! Why buy vitamins when your food was originally created with vitamins, and you refined them away to feed pigs?

Why waste your money on what isn't nutritious? We feed cows and pigs unrefined, nutritious foods, but we eat poison.

Refined grains eventually cause constipation, nutritional deficiencies, and cancer.

MASSAGE (KUCHUA) AND FOMENTATION (KUKANDA)

Elbow Massage Using Small Beans (Legume Massage):

Many people have learned and taught massage, which is the act of rubbing and kneading the body for health benefits.

Last week, we met a Chinese man named Sebastian. He taught us a type of massage invented in his country to help the body. You take a pillowcase and fill it with small beans like lentils. You can divide the pillowcase into about 10 sections to evenly distribute the beans. Heat the beans by roasting them, but don't let them burn. This is a good time to use a microwave if you have one (although microwaves have shown to be harmful when used for cooking).

Then, place three of your fingers on the neck where the spine begins to measure the width of the spine—never massage directly on the spine. From about one finger-width to the side of the spine, begin to massage downward along both sides of the spine until the end (what they refer to as the “tail”). Do this on both sides of the spine simultaneously. After massaging, place the heated beans on the area where you just finished the massage. Repeat this process three times.

Continue massaging with your fingers below the ear and on the neck near the spine, always using three fingers to ensure you avoid the spine. Do this three to four times daily, for an hour each time, especially for someone in pain. Some people have healed internal cancers like those of the pancreas and many other diseases. Try it for whatever ailment you have while still seeing your doctor.

In China, family members help each other with this kind of massage, which fosters closeness and compassion within the community. One woman who had been given only a few days to live hired four people to give her this massage, and she recovered!

The Chinese also use herbs such as cloves, papaya seeds, grapes, pumpkins, pomegranates, and artemisia (wormwood) in this type of massage. For heart diseases, they use cayenne pepper to thin the blood. Since we live in a globalized world, research all this online. We have used many of these remedies ourselves and attended courses—they have been helpful to us and others. God is not selfish, and you also know many things—keep learning and helping others without being selfish.

Bean massage helps warm the body when it is cold. Warm your body with ginger and cinnamon to heat the stomach, legs, and hands. Avoid cold feet. Don't eat unhealthy foods—junk food, cold or processed foods. Avoid all animal products except honey!

In Africa, it's easy to get sea salt—use either sea or rock salt. Use these freely alongside ginger massage, radish, cinnamon, turmeric, garlic, lemongrass, lemon, moringa, cumin, and cayenne pepper.

Continue bathing with steam (sauna).

The heat from the beans penetrates the body well. When the spine is under pressure, blood does not circulate properly. The key steps are:

Warm the body

Eat healthy food

Massage

Do not drink water with meals. Warm the spine as needed. Heat promotes proper blood flow and helps loosen the spine. If you have a trampoline, jump on it, or do stationary jumping. If you don't exercise, do not eat at all.

Life is a gift from God. He alone enables us to maintain life—let us do so for His glory. Let us serve the sick and those in need.

Ice Massage:

There's also ice massage for pain. Place ice in a white plastic cup like the one used for packing electronics (styrofoam). When the ice freezes, cut off a small piece from the bottom so you can hold the top without burning your hands. Gently rub the painful area with the ice for 5-15 minutes. You'll feel cold, then pain, then numbness. Once numbness sets in, the pain will stop. Continue this treatment morning and evening as needed.

Medical missionaries like Mama Mc Nelius and Cleveland have taught much about treating with water (hydrotherapy). Use heat of about 38°C for people with diabetes, pregnancy, illness, or poor circulation. For others, 47°C is okay. Be careful not to cause burns. Normally, heat improves blood flow and increases white blood cells to fight infections.

HOT AND COLD CONTRAST BATHS

A contrast bath is done by immersing a hand or body part in hot water, then cold. Continue switching for 5-15 minutes. Use hot water for one minute and cold for five minutes. Blood vessels expand with heat and contract with cold. Heat increases blood flow to the treated area, bringing oxygen and white blood cells that fight bacteria, speeding up detox and healing.

Conditions treated include infections, arthritis, sprains, muscle pain, headaches (use foot bath), swelling or water retention (edema), and nerve or blood vessel issues affecting the legs.

Caution: Don't use very hot water for diabetics, pregnant women, or those with poor circulation. Use 38°C for such individuals; otherwise up to 48°C is acceptable. Check to ensure it doesn't burn. Avoid extremely cold water. Maintain hygiene and clean all equipment. If there is bleeding, consult a doctor. After treating with massage, finish with a hot bath.

Required Equipment:

Large basin to cover the foot or affected body part

Kettle for hot water

Blanket or light cover

Basin for cold water

Soft cloths for compresses

Procedure and Preparation:

Keep the room at a moderate temperature. Gather all equipment. Explain the process to the patient and help them prepare. Encourage them, and if they agree, pray with them, placing their faith in God, the true healer. Some practitioners are hesitant to pray, being more focused on money—God is merciful.

Start with hot water and increase as tolerated. After five minutes, switch to cold water for 30 seconds to one minute. Ensure the water temperatures remain consistent. If hot water cools down, add more.

Place a cold wet towel on the head to prevent overheating. Excessive heat may cause confusion or seizures. Repeat the cycle 4 to 8 times depending on the patient's condition. Do this 1 to 4 times daily.

After treatment, dry the area well. If sweating, dry off and change wet clothes. The patient should drink water to rehydrate and rest for 30-60 minutes afterward.

For painful swelling, such as sprains, start with hot water for five minutes, then switch to cold for five minutes.

Hot and cold water can also be used while bathing to fight illnesses like colds, as it stimulates the production of white blood cells.

Heat:

Increases blood flow

Relaxes body

Causes fluid buildup in the area

Increases circulation

Reduces muscle spasms and pain

Eases stiffness in joints

Cold:

Reduces blood flow

Decreases swelling

Minimizes water retention (edema)

Slows bleeding

Increases joint stiffness

Hot Foot Bath: Helps with colds, chest issues, coughs, headaches, hip strokes, and prostate gland issues in men.

FOMENTATION (HOT COMPRESS THERAPY)

Fomentation is the application of a hot moist cloth or towel to any part of the body.

Fomentation helps the body and is easy to apply to any area. It is used to treat various illnesses. It:

Speeds up circulation of white blood cells to fight bacteria

Detoxifies through sweat

Reduces nerve, muscle, and joint pain

Soothes when warm temperatures are used

Increases blood flow to the skin

Duration: Around 5 minutes, starting with a hot towel followed by cold.

This increases blood circulation to the treated area and reduces pain.

Do not use cold water if the patient has lung issues (pleurisy), kidney stones, or painful menstruation.

You may need this treatment if you have:

Colds, flu, pneumonia, bronchitis, asthma, or pleurisy

To enhance organ function

Severe nerve pain (neuralgia)

Muscle and joint pain

Insomnia or anxiety (apply warm water on spine area)

To warm a body part before massage

Precautions:

Ensure the heat doesn't burn a patient who is unconscious, paralyzed, swollen, diabetic, or has poor blood circulation.

Avoid exposing the area to cold air. Replace fomentation promptly and avoid leaving the skin exposed.

Prevent the spread of infection by thoroughly cleaning equipment.

Do not use fomentation if there's risk of bleeding.

Required Equipment: If available, use a thermoculator, a cloth soaked in hot water. Fomentation ideally needs three people to ensure efficiency, so the patient isn't left alone while fetching equipment.

This device may cost around \$20, but you can still perform fomentation alone if necessary. If you're learning for business, get more equipment. Be cautious—a neighbor helping is not liable, but if it's a paid service, proper equipment is essential.

Needed:

Large pot or container for boiling water

Big bucket (for foot bath, if applicable)

Basin with cold water or ice for cold compress

Hot water container or kettle

Large piece of plastic to protect the bed

Pillow, two blankets, one or two large sheets

Soft cloths (e.g., two old t-shirts) for cold compress on the head

For fomentation:

Use large bath towels, you'll need three

A cover (blanket or dry towel)

Glasses or tubes if available for hydration

Preparation and Use of Hot Water for Fomentation Continues

How to Use a Towel Compress

Fold a towel lengthwise, hold both ends and twist it to wring out the water. Place the twisted towel in hot water, leaving both ends held outside the water to allow easy removal. Once soaked, lift and remove the towel from the water, and pull on both ends to squeeze out the excess water. Release one end to loosen the towel. Quickly place the hot fomentation on top of a dry towel already positioned on the part of the body to be treated. Completely cover the fomentation with another dry towel. Repeat this process three or four times during each treatment session.

Steam Method

Fold three bath towels in half lengthwise.

Soak all folded towels completely, then wring out the excess water.

Roll the towels one by one and place them on a wire rack inside a large pot or kettle, separating them from the water.

Add water, ensuring it doesn't touch the towels. Steam them for 20-30 minutes.

Remove the hot towel using thick gloves to avoid burns.

Quickly unroll the hot towel, wrap it with a heat-retaining cloth or covering for fomentations, and carry it to the patient's bed.

Treatment Procedure

Preparation

Warm the room; close doors and windows if it's cold. Calmly and cheerfully explain the procedure to the patient. Gather all supplies and prepare the bed by placing a plastic sheet between the blanket and bottom sheet. Help the patient undress and get ready for treatment. Keep the feet warm by wrapping them in a blanket or placing them carefully in a warm foot bath. Place the prepared fomentation, covered with a dry towel, on the bed under the spine. Lay the patient on top and cover them completely with sheets and blankets, leaving only the head exposed.

Treatment

Always remember to pray—healing comes from God. Prepare and place the fomentation as described. If it's too hot, lift one corner or place another dry towel under it. Leave the fomentation in place for the required time or until it cools. Remove it and quickly rub the warmed area with a soft cool cloth (like a cold t-shirt) for about 60 seconds. Dry the area completely before applying the next fomentation. Use 3-4 fomentations per session. Once the patient starts sweating, place soft cool cloths on their forehead and neck. Encourage them to drink water to replace lost fluids. Keep the feet warm by adding warm water to the foot bath, testing the temperature with your hand to prevent burns.

End of Treatment

Lift the feet from the foot bath, toes pointing upward, and pour cold water over and under the feet. Dry them thoroughly, including between the toes. Put on warm socks or slippers to prevent cold. Quickly wipe off sweat from the body with a cool soft cloth and dry the skin well. Remove damp clothing and dress the patient in

clean, warm clothes. Let them rest on a dry, clean bed for about an hour. Then they may bathe with lukewarm water.

HEAT-INDUCING COMPRESS

This involves using a cold, damp cloth (which can be cooled in a fridge or cold water container). Apply it to the body to trigger warmth in that area. Cover it with plastic to retain moisture, then a cotton cloth or towel to block outside air. This cold, damp cloth warms up and dilates the blood vessels in the upper skin layers, increasing circulation and reducing congestion in underlying tissues.

Applications:

Throat: Tonsillitis, sore throat, ear and nasal issues.

Joints: Arthritis and rheumatism.

Chest: Congestion, whooping cough, asthma, pneumonia.

Abdomen: Constipation, appendicitis, nausea, colic, sleep issues, nerve agitation.

Feet: Foot ailments.

Precautions:

Don't use on a patient who still feels cold. Don't apply too tightly to avoid discomfort or restricting blood flow.

Supplies Needed:

Light cotton cloth with holes (like bandage material), wide enough to cover the area.

Plastic covering for moisture retention.

Woolen outer wrap for insulation.

Safety pins to secure the compress.

Basin of cold water.

Treatment Procedure:

Preparation

Warm the room and ensure the patient is warm before starting. If they feel cold, warm the feet. Explain that the compress will feel cold at first but will warm up soon. Make sure the entire body is warm.

Treatment

Dip the cotton cloth in water, wring out the excess. Quickly apply it to the treatment area. Place plastic over it, then a woolen wrap or similar thick covering. Pin it securely. Leave it on for several hours or overnight. In the morning, the compress will have dried.

End of Treatment

In the morning, remove the compress and rub the area with a cool soft cloth. Dry the skin well. Keep the patient warm and comfortable.

CHARCOAL

Charcoal is a powerful remedy. It is made by burning and grinding wood or coconut shells. It absorbs toxins, drugs, bacteria, viruses, and other harmful agents from the body.

How to Make It at Home:

Burn wood in a pit. Once well-lit, cover the pit with metal sheeting, then heap debris on top to block air. This produces good charcoal. For medical use, grind into fine powder and store in a dry, sealed container (see online for “activated charcoal”).

Benefits:

Easy to use

Widely available

No side effects

Inexpensive

Highly effective

How to Use Charcoal

Drinking:

Mix one tablespoon of charcoal powder in a glass of water. Best taken between meals—not with food, as it absorbs nutrients.

Charcoal Poultice:

Mix charcoal with a little water into a thick paste. Spread it onto a folded cloth. Apply to the affected area and cover with another cloth to retain moisture. Don't apply directly to broken skin.

Common Uses:

Poisoning/Drug overdose: Stir 2 tablespoons of charcoal into half to one glass of water and drink immediately. Induce vomiting first unless the poison is petroleum, kerosene, alkali, or acid.

Diarrhea/Cholera: Take 2 tablespoons 4 times a day, or after each episode, mixed with a glass of water.

Dehydration: Drink rice water, carrot water, or vegetable broth with added salt and sugar.

Nausea/Vomiting: Adults: 1-2 tablespoons in half a glass of water after each episode. Children: half dose. If vomited, repeat immediately.

Gas/Bloating: 2 tablespoons in water as needed. Avoid overuse of magnesium tablets—charcoal is better.

Eye/Ear Infections: Use a charcoal poultice or apply filtered charcoal drops in eyes or ears.

Skin/Joint Infections: Apply charcoal poultice for several hours or overnight.

Insect Bites: Wash with soap. Soak area in warm charcoal water ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup in 8 liters) for an hour. Apply a charcoal poultice afterward.

Snakebite: Wash area. Soak in warm charcoal water ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup in 8 liters). Apply a large charcoal poultice, changing it every 10-15 minutes until pain and swelling

subside. Drink 2 tablespoons of charcoal in water every 3 hours for 24 hours, followed by two glasses of water.

Jaundice in Newborns: Mix 1 tablespoon of charcoal in water and give through a bottle every 2-3 hours. Expose the baby (naked) to soft morning or late afternoon sunlight. Avoid direct sunlight on the eyes. Continue treatment until symptoms reduce.

Liver/Kidney Disease: Use charcoal poultices over the back (kidney failure) or upper right abdomen (liver).

CHAPTER 42

REASONS FOR GIVING UP MEAT AND FISH

People have various reasons for choosing a plant-based diet (vegetarianism). Some aim to reduce the cost of living since meat, fish, and eggs are expensive. This choice also helps the environment by conserving natural resources and reducing cruelty to animals. Regardless of these reasons, scientific research strongly supports that a plant-based diet—grains, legumes, vegetables, fruits, and nuts—is healthier both physically and mentally.

Scientists and researchers at Tufts University in the USA state that 70% of all diseases, including cancer, are caused by the consumption of animal products. No scientist disputes this. Even athletes today are advised to reduce or eliminate meat and switch to plant-based diets to improve performance.

Many diseases are caused by animal-based foods. Even our behavior is influenced by meat consumption—for example, increased anger, armed robbery, bank theft, greed, violence, and cruelty. Examine your own tribe or visit a court and ask which tribe has the most cases of murder or excessive aggression! I once went to a court in Dar es Salaam and got an answer—but the judge told me this information is confidential. They don't want tribal discrimination, or people claiming a certain tribe is more violent. I agreed not to name any tribe, but people can check newspapers or TV themselves! Dear reader, even if you're not a rocket scientist, haven't you noticed that meat-eaters behave differently from vegetarians?

A plant-based diet protects us from many diseases, including chronic illnesses like hypertension, diabetes, cancer, heart and lung diseases, obesity, and arthritis.

In the past, people often ate meat, chicken, and fish that they raised themselves, so they consumed them sparingly. You wouldn't slaughter your cow every day! Bartering was difficult, so people avoided wasting livestock. Nowadays, because of commercial farming, people eat meat, chicken, or fish daily.

Many think plant-based meals are bland or time-consuming to cook. This is not true. It's just what we inherited while growing up—just like we inherit DNA from parents, we inherit dietary habits too.

My husband comes from a place where vegetables are valued, so he loves and appreciates their flavor. I also learned to love them from my parents. Even

vegetables I didn't grow up eating—like mgagani or mnafu—I've come to enjoy. There are millions of plants, but edible meat varieties are perhaps only about 20! Try listing all the plants and all the meats you know!

Learn vegetarian cooking—it's not hard and doesn't take long. Remember, meat was not humanity's original food. It was permitted after the flood, and human lifespan decreased thereafter. This is no secret. Watch documentaries like Forks Over Knives and others; they clearly show the problems of animal-based diets. Look up plant-based recipes on websites like 3abn.org and hopetv.org. Or just search “vegetarian recipes” on Google

Animals carry many diseases. A recent one is Kuru, or Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, caused by Western farmers (like in the US and UK) feeding animals with the meat of other animals.

I remember we used to go to slaughterhouses to collect dried cow blood, grind it into powder, and feed it to chickens to fatten them quickly. Much has been written about animal feeds, with some adding drugs or vitamins to make animals grow faster. This unnatural feeding caused madness in livestock and diseases that led to death or long-term health problems.

Health agencies warned that to avoid such diseases, people should not eat parts like animal brains or spinal cords. Animal foods like eggs, milk, chicken, and meat often carry harmful bacteria such as Salmonella and E. coli, which cause food poisoning. These foods require long cooking times, but many people don't follow this. Parasites also infest meat, especially pork, with millions of microscopic worms in just one animal.

Animals are often given antibiotics to treat infections and hormones to increase milk, meat, or egg production. Excessive antibiotic use (like tetracycline or penicillin) creates drug-resistant bacteria strains (e.g., MRSA or VRE). Overcrowded and dirty animal farms cause the release of harmful stress hormones that affect humans.

Heart disease is on the rise too. Animal fats clog arteries, narrowing or blocking them, causing clots and increasing cholesterol levels. The liver produces enough cholesterol on its own, but meat consumption adds unhealthy amounts. Try eliminating all animal products for three months—if your cholesterol is high, it will significantly drop!

Avoid meat, milk, eggs, and fish for three months. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables and observe how your health improves. Plants are natural medicine for many problems.

Many animals, like pigs or prawns/lobsters, are scavengers that clean the environment—they're like garbage bins, and when we eat them, we consume that waste.

A study of people from 30 countries showed that those on a plant-based diet reduced heart disease by 50% and cancer by more than 80%. Nuts and legumes were found to reduce heart and colon diseases.

Fish have also been found to contain mercury due to pollution. In New York's Hudson River, some fish have changed gender due to pollution—becoming female. This shows how animals are more affected by environmental toxins and become poisonous to their consumers. A friend of mine who raises fish in the village said a fish breeder told him to give fish drugs so they all become male—males grow faster and bring more profit. Dear reader, do you think those fish are good for you? Would you want all men to become women? Absolutely not! That's not God's plan!

Young girls are reaching puberty earlier due to meat, cow's milk, and modern chicken consumption. Children are becoming overweight and damaging their health.

Many people believe they can't live without meat or that meat gives strength. But that's surprising—most strong animals eat plants! Livestock consumes a lot of land and food. If we used those resources for plant cultivation, we could help end world hunger.

The Stockholm Water Institute in Sweden stated that by 2050, we may not be able to feed ourselves if we continue eating meat. Population growth, combined with land and food use for livestock, makes it expensive. We end up eating second-hand food (indirectly through animals) instead of eating directly from plants.

Meat was permitted after the flood, as an emergency measure, and it shortened human lifespan. Meat was meant to be eaten without fat or blood—very few do this today. If you eat meat properly, remove all fat and blood. Eating raw or undercooked meat is a serious health risk.

Meat shortens life—take the Eskimos of Greenland, who eat only meat and fish. They have a life expectancy of just 40 years! Begin transitioning from a meat diet slowly—not all at once. Start by adding fruits and vegetables. Even if you eat meat, avoid factory-farmed animals. Eat cattle that roam freely—not those confined and fattened unnaturally. These animals may never see sunlight and can even go blind. They release stress hormones like cortisol.

If you must eat meat, choose free-range chickens and fish that swim freely—not those from cramped ponds.

In summary, human greed drives meat consumption. Communities that avoid meat live longer than those that consume it. Avoid milk, eggs, meat, and especially factory-farmed fish and animals. If you must eat them, do so very rarely.

Learn More About Vitamin B12, Especially for Those Who Don't Eat Meat, and How to Address the Issue

It appears that some people need to take this vitamin while others do not. Speak with your doctor in detail.

Many people have asked whether soybeans cause cancer. In reality, soybeans that have not been genetically modified do not pose this problem. Long-term studies on soy in Japan and China have shown that it is a healthy and nutritious crop. Much information about Chinese soy has been published in newspapers and has been helpful to us. However, today, 90% of soy in countries like the USA has been genetically engineered. This leads to the loss of seed self-reliance and dependence on corporations to supply seeds every planting season. This is poverty! If we were born without seeds, what would life be like? For one, we wouldn't be able to have children, among other issues. (See more on genetic engineering on the Monsanto website.)

Issues like these may be the cause of the disappearance of the good natural elements of creation, such as the decline of bees or their complete extinction in some areas

COW'S MILK

Among all animals on earth, only humans drink the milk of other animals. Many animals suffer from numerous diseases. The reason is that they are given

antibiotics to kill germs, pesticides to reduce flies and tsetse flies, vaccines, and hormones to make them grow faster and produce more milk. It is time to ask ourselves whether it is really necessary to drink milk. The desire for profit over humanity has become evident in many businesses. Diseases like brucellosis, tuberculosis, anthrax, tapeworms, and kuru (Jakob-Creutzfeldt disease) have killed many people.

Kuru came about from feeding cows and other livestock like sheep and chickens with meat to make them grow faster. The digestive systems of these animals are harmed by meat because they were created to eat grass. Herbivorous animals that eat meat develop brain diseases and infect people who eat their meat. Millions of cows in the UK were slaughtered, and their food was incinerated.

Cow's milk contains many bacteria such as Salmonella and E. coli due to their diet.

Milk contains more fat than the human body needs. Excess fat in the body causes obesity, increases diabetes, and clogs nerves.

We were told for years that cow's milk strengthens bones in adults and children. However, recent research has revealed that the strongest bones in the world belong to people below the Sahara Desert. Surprisingly, people who drink the most milk in the world, in the so-called milk-consuming countries, do not have strong bones. Scandinavian countries like Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland, along with others in the West, lead in milk consumption. Yet, women in these countries have more bone issues than in other countries. Normally, women suffer more bone problems than men. Their bones become brittle and break easily (osteoporosis). Reasons given include that they carry heavy loads, eat green vegetables, and get year-round sunlight.

Parents should prioritize the wellbeing of their children over social circles and communities.

The liquid part of milk is called whey, and the curdled part is casein. Casein causes allergies in many people. If you have respiratory diseases like asthma, coughing, or lung problems, avoid milk—it is your enemy. If you develop rashes or swellings, try cutting out milk. Milk, eggs, and meats like mutton cause more allergies than plants.

Milk has become a big business, and it will be difficult for people to accept that it's time to quit milk. Traditional cows used to give around 3 liters of milk a day. The milk had a pleasant taste without drugs or hormones.

Things have changed. There are many milk fraudsters today, selling spoiled milk easily.

A friend who runs a milk factory told me they add chemicals to prolong shelf life. Some of these chemicals are harmful and toxic to humans. These include formaldehyde, sodium hydroxide, and boric acid. In truth, we should just pasteurize milk by boiling—it is not legal to use such chemicals. But who can really police them every day? For context, formaldehyde is used to preserve corpses. Even in small quantities, it is toxic. Some Western countries even add it to meat for preservation, though in regulated amounts.

Immediately after a cow is milked, there are about 10,000 bacteria per milliliter. After five hours, this can reach a million! Drinking milk fresh reduces the risk, making formaldehyde and hydrogen peroxide unnecessary.

Milk increases mucus in the respiratory system and causes gas and digestive problems. If you have allergies, asthma, or sinus issues, it's best to avoid milk completely.

Cows are increasingly falling ill due to obesity. They are kept in confined, dirty spaces without much movement or sunlight.

We've often been told that milk is natural and necessary for everyone. But this milk is not natural—it contains many bacteria and poses health risks. These stressed cows release cortisol hormones that are harmful when they enter the human body.

About 75% of adults cannot digest milk properly.

A cow can be healthy in the morning and die by evening. Milkers sometimes use medication on the cow's udder to reduce mastitis.

Milk has been found to contain toxins from fungi, called aflatoxins. These fungi grow in the feed given to cows and can damage the liver, kidneys, and respiratory system. A 2005 study in an East African country found 44% of milk samples

contained aflatoxins. This isn't just a problem in Africa—even Western countries have up to 25% contamination in their grains.

There is a technology called Mycosorb that absorbs these fungal toxins, but 50% of milk producers don't use it because it is expensive.

CHEESE

Cheese also has many issues, although it is not widely consumed in our region. Sometimes cheese is made using rennet, an enzyme from the stomach of a calf or piglet. This breaks down the milk proteins and alters them. It is said that Swiss cheese cannot be made without rennet. The rind of cheese may be coated with kerosene or vegetable oils and yellow food coloring. Learn more about how cheese is made. Even so-called cottage cheese is no longer safe. Watch how it's preserved and what's added to it. Green cheese is fully fermented with fungus, and bacteria are used in the fermentation process. There are as many as 2 million bacteria per gram of cheese.

Sometimes paraffin is applied to prevent mites from invading the cheese. Cheese is essentially spoiled milk with bacteria and lots of fat, which increases cholesterol in the blood. Milk comes from many cows that are sick. If you can avoid it, do so.

CHAPTER 43

HOW TO HEAL AND THRIVE IN CHURCH.

We decided to write this chapter after observing the emotional pain, confusion, and conflicts among people that arise from disputes—even to the point of physical fights—in churches. Many have concluded there's no need to attend church anymore. As a wife of a spiritual leader, you may encounter these issues, and you'll need to encourage others as the Lord enables you.

Pastor Doug Batchelor has addressed these matters in detail, and when I read his book, I realized that such issues exist everywhere, but we often hide them and act as if everything is fine—yet many are dissatisfied or hurting. It's wise to invite backslidden members back to church so they can be helped. Over 50% of members have left churches through the back door. When you ask them why, they say it's because of the pain. We'll summarize this topic briefly, but stay in God's boat—He is the best Captain.

Examples of common complaints include

Someone or people hurt me in church, and I don't want to see them again.

These people are hypocrites, and I don't want to go to church anymore.

The big problem with churches is that they have people in them—if we removed people, we'd have fewer problems.

The church is dead; the services are boring, and I get nothing from them.

Often, we attend church just to be entertained, rather than as Exodus 25 says: "Make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them and forgive their sins."

I don't feel worthy to enter church; I'm a sinner.

I'm too busy these days.

I don't think I believe in these things anymore.

Every Sabbath I feel too tired.

The church is too far from my home

The angels in heaven are amazed at how unmoved our hearts are by the privilege we've been given to worship God—something they delight in! They worship Him 24/7 with joy, reverence, and awe. They love being close to Him because He is their joy.

Before God poured out the Holy Spirit, the early apostles had to be in one place and be united for Him to pour out His Spirit. God's work will not be finished by preaching or Bible teaching alone—it will be completed by the Holy Spirit. For ten days, the apostles had to pray through their differences. Luke 22:24 shows that they too had disagreements. They had to be together in one place (Acts 2:1). This is vital.

Just a few days before that, Jesus had been betrayed, and all had scattered to their own places. God poured out His Spirit when they were together relationally and even physically in the same room (the upper room). We're told in Matthew 18:20 that when two or three gather in His name, He is there—and there is a special blessing when we gather together in His name.

Although the church has many flaws and weaknesses, it is still the instrument God uses, and it is very precious to Him. God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard on it. Because the church is the apple of God's eye, Satan is not pleased and is very angry with it (Revelation 12:17). We believe Jesus is coming soon. Before His return, the Holy Spirit will be poured out in the latter rain, and the power of Pentecost will return. But we must return to being “in one accord” like the apostles. This means worshiping together with others.

Let us remember Jesus' prayer in John 17, that we may be united—but not in evil, rather in Christ. In some churches, pastors or leaders are united—but it's a unity in oppressing others or protecting each other in wrongdoing. This is not the unity Jesus meant. Satan has come down with great wrath, knowing that his time is short (Revelation 12:12). Let us also be vigilant, knowing we have little time. The enemy has many traps, including spiritual slingshots designed to pull people away from church fellowship. Our prayer is that we will watch and pray so that when storms arise, we may receive spiritual warmth from one another and draw nearer to our Good Shepherd.

Many in the fellowship I attend see no need to go to church every seventh-day Sabbath. They stay home, and perhaps only go for Christmas celebrations or when

their children are involved in plays or playing instruments. Another preacher once said people attend church when they're born, married, and buried—"hatched, matched, and dispatched." So what reason should compel us to join a church?

Hebrews 10:24-25 teaches that being a Christian without joining a church is like being a bee without a hive, a soldier without an army, a merchant without customers, a politician with no supporters, or a football player without a team! Truly, we are members of the body of Christ, and the gifts we've been given are best used within His body.

Just like there are many types of beans at the market, so too has Satan invented many false religions and unbiblical forms of worship. Satan is not against religion—not at all! Since Eden, Satan has known that man was created with a longing to worship. He tries to trap humans by telling them it doesn't matter whom or how you worship—as long as you worship.

Cain fell into this trap too. He offered a sacrifice, then killed his brother. The people who crucified Jesus were deeply religious. We are told even those who receive the mark of the beast in Revelation 13 will be worshipers. Satan does not oppose religion! But he fights against the truth of the religion of Jesus. It's easy to become anti-Christ and follow our enemy. He confuses people, saying there's no need to attend church—you can worship at home. Yet our Lord Jesus went to the synagogue every week; it was His custom (Luke 4:16).

Some people join churches for reasons that differ from those Christ desires. These reasons include:

It's my parents' religion.

The church is close to my home.

The members are loving and friendly.

The choir is great.

The preacher is attractive and charismatic.

They have great children's programs.

The buildings are beautiful.

Important people go there.

The worship is exciting—we dance and shout

The church needs me;

While all these may be good reasons to consider joining a church, none of them is the right reason. There is only one valid reason to join a church: that the church is built on the foundation of the teachings of the Bible and of Christ. If the foundation of the church lies in the true teachings of God, and you are willing to follow those teachings, then that is the church to belong to. When seeking a church, don't approach it like someone choosing types of beans in the market.

Ask yourself: Are this church's teachings from Jesus and not merely its leader or founder? If the teachings are from the Bible and Christ, then it is God's church. Stay there—don't leave, even if storms arise! The church may have weaknesses like: member disputes, poor facilities (worshiping under a tree), or boring preachers.

If God has a church somewhere, do you think it will be perfect? Because Satan loves to disrupt what is true, he will want to be close to such a church. He'll try to discourage people and stir conflict in a church that worships God with reverence and true holiness. He'll make others call it names like "false prophets" or "cult" and try to get them to leave. He knows that people stand strong when united, but divided, they give him a chance to win. So he works hard to divide God's army. This should give us strength to keep our hands on the plow and move forward without looking back. If you truly love Christ and His truth, you'll want to be in a church that teaches truth. He wants you to join His family, no matter how weak it may appear.

Matthew 24:12 says, "Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold." You might be in a church that seems dead. We sing, "Standing on the Rock," while we are seated! People look like they were baptized in lemon juice. They have no plans to evangelize, and members appear like mannequins in a shop window.

A true story was once aired on the news about a school bus that slid into a ditch and got stuck, filled with children. The driver knew it would take hours to get help. The oldest child was 12. The driver left the engine running for warmth and

told the 12-year-old to be the leader. After a while, the engine stopped, and cold crept in. The young boy went around waking every child—because if they had slept in that cold, they might never have woken up. He even slapped some children to wake them out of fear they might freeze to death. Eventually, the driver returned with help, and all the children were rescued. That child received a bravery medal. He testified that by keeping others awake, he also stayed warm and awake.

Dear Leaders' Beloved Ones,

This is how God works with His church. One way to bring reformation and revival to a “dead” or sleeping church is by witnessing Christ. If you awaken others, you too won't sleep and will be on fire. Don't make the excuse that you lack experience, because you have just as much experience as the twelve apostles when they were first called—they were “unlearned”

When Jesus called the apostles, though they were not yet converted to testify about their faith, it was a vital part of their calling. So if you feel you're in a cold church, you can gain warmth from the coldness of others—just like an igloo made of ice provides warmth to Eskimos. To heal in such a church, start Bible studies in your home. Those who are shy to come to church may come to your home, and that will give you warmth to help others in church.

Listen to sermons on cassette tapes or DVDs and share them so others can hear. Make your Bible class at church enjoyable. Ask questions, and look for ways to make things appealing, bringing more light—not the heat of arguments. Pray for revival, like Lazarus was prayed for to be resurrected—that's how we must pray for a “dead” church.

Boring Sermons: Who's at Fault?

Boring sermons can be caused by both the preacher and the listener. A pastor or church leader must have a fresh relationship with Jesus every day when preaching. Peter preached at Pentecost without notes. Not to say notes are bad, but we need time for our words to come from the heart—a heart that has been forgiven and filled with the Holy Spirit. Prepare your sermon with care. In Acts 6:2-4, the apostles chose deacons to serve so they could devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Understand members' needs and passions when preparing to preach.

Sometimes the preacher struggles due to boring listeners. One preacher said he preached at two churches in one day. The first congregation sat silently, showing no emotion. He couldn't tell if his message landed. In the second church, the same sermon got smiles, "Amen," and "Hallelujahs." When he stumbled, an old man whispered, "Help our preacher, Lord." The preacher felt encouraged.

Often we think the preacher is boring, but we may be boring him! Show your preacher you're listening. Even if the preacher is young or untrained, you will still learn something. Pray for a teachable spirit. No one should say they don't attend church because of the preaching. And if you're often tempted to criticize the preacher, take your Bible, pray, and read attentively.

Church Is Not for Entertainment

Watching too much TV and drama has made many of us prefer to be entertained rather than transformed by sermons. Church should be a place we go to give, not only receive. As John F. Kennedy once said, "Ask not what your church can do for you, but what you can do for your church." You must have a big dream.

One politician said Christians have small dreams—raising tomatoes instead of raising Lazarus. A preacher may not be entertaining, but if we are filled with the Spirit, we'll hunger for the Word and thirst for righteousness. Focus on the big picture, not the pen that draws it. We need new, warm conversions to help us. That's why evangelism is crucial to keep us from spiritual boredom. Pray for revival in your church, starting with you.

Can You Thrive in a Large Church?

Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. You'll know you're in a large church if people don't know each other and gossip takes time to circle back to you.

A woman went to a large city church around 9:45 a.m. and found very few people. She was told that in city churches, people are busy and arrive late, and don't attend Bible school. When she spoke to a deacon, he was too busy welcoming people. She felt like she was in a stadium and needed binoculars to see the pulpit. The sermon was full of philosophy and quotes from Plato, CS Lewis, or Socrates, which she didn't fully understand. The choir was very artistic and professional; she knew she'd never be asked to sing there. The offerings were large, and she

thought, “They don’t need my small giving.” Everyone wore expensive clothes, unlike hers.

True, she found friendly people—but only on the Lord’s Day. In her small church, she would see fellow members during the week—at the post office, school, market, or stores—and build relationships. In the large church, she dragged herself in the morning, saying, “No one will miss me if I’m absent.” But in her small church, she was eager to arrive and chat with cheerful friends.

Large church members often lose direction and become mere spectators. It’s easy to hide in a large church, and those in pain or sin can cover it up. They cut others off, extinguishing potential help. Sometimes they seek warmth in smaller groups or leave altogether.

How to Survive in a Big Church:

Be proactive. Don’t complain about having no friends if you’re not being one (Proverbs 18:24). Greet visitors, sit with those who are lonely. Let people know your needs—Bible studies, counseling, etc. Large churches have staff to help. Take a bulletin and speak to a worker. For example, if you’re grieving, it may be hard for them to know unless you speak up.

Don’t be intimidated by the church’s size. Get to know individuals in your Bible class. Invite them to your home. Sit at the front to hear sermons well and be noticed! Football fans sit at the front—so as a fan of Christ, sit up front.

Get involved in worship—ask or answer questions, participate. Nothing revives your faith like helping bring others to Jesus. Don’t just warm the pews or “snore in church like someone who paid for a guesthouse to sleep!” Visit departments and ask where help is needed. If they don’t notice you, don’t give up—persist.

One woman said she invited fifty people to help teach children—only one responded. God’s work is abundant and voluntary, so it’s always in need of willing hands. Find others who want to pray, witness, and study the Word. Whatever helps you worship in spirit and truth is important.

What If You’re in a Small Church?

Don't be discouraged. Where two or three gather, He is present. You'll know you're in a small church if it has one entrance, the head of departments are the same person, and the whole board is from one family.

Small churches have challenges. One woman said a single family started their group and controlled everything. Mr. Kazimoto was the elder, Sabbath school leader, and preacher when the pastor was away (which was often). His wife was the church clerk, his daughter led Dorcas (community service) and the choir, and his son was the head deacon and Bible class teacher.

Mr. Kazimoto was kind but believed his way was the only right way. If someone missed church, they were called in for questioning unless critically ill. Once, he saw a man entering a woman member's house and suspected sin. Later, he found the man was her brother and was deeply embarrassed.

This is the problem with small churches—gossip thrives and everyone pokes into others' affairs. It's hard to appoint new leaders due to fear of losing control. Respect people's privacy and don't be nosy. If someone brings gossip, tell them to pray for the person.

Never fight for leadership—it's weakness, not strength. A man in a church once cried because he wasn't chosen for any role despite having many talents. He even said he'd call his prophet mother in Kenya to curse the board!

A true leader will rejoice when others are chosen. Serve God, not for praise. Avoid favoritism—Jesus treated Peter and Judas equally. Look out for hidden talents. Often, 20% of members do 80% of the work. You may find gifted Bible teachers or musicians hiding because one family does everything.

Small churches may fail to grow due to lack of new ideas or evangelism. Start witnessing to grow your church, even if others are lazy and building their own "kingdoms." Don't give up—Satan doesn't like growth. Pray for your church to awaken from spiritual slumber.

Are You a New Member?

New members often have strong faith—believing they can “move mountains.” They may feel pushed to make decisions or get baptized without fully understanding discipleship. Others are struggling with addictions or sinful habits.

Often, we make the mistake of abandoning them instead of nurturing them. If you're a new member, don't lose hope. Learn how to grow and thrive in church. You're in a good place. Old members are reminded to "remember their first love."

Build habits to withstand storms. Jude 24 says, "To Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before His presence with great joy." If Jesus promised, He will help you heal and grow. If you've strayed from God, Revelation 2:5 says, "Remember the height from which you've fallen and repent." Follow Christ again.

Don't fear rejection. He promised, "Whoever comes to me I will never drive away." Once we confess our sins, He's ready to forgive. We must die daily (1 Cor. 15:31) and be born again each day. If we only die without resurrection, that's a problem.

Dying and rising with Christ is key—but then comes the second step: living a new life with Him. Every morning, surrender your life to Christ. Say, "I am yours—lead me. I place my plans before you. Use me for your service today. Stay with me, and let everything I do be your will." Surrender fully each morning. Let Him mold your life daily to resemble Christ more and more.

Many die spiritually because they don't breathe. Prayer is breath, Bible reading is food. Spending time in God's Word is essential. Pray for the Holy Spirit to show you how to live victoriously. "When the Spirit comes, He will guide you into all truth..." (John 16:13). Keep your eyes on Christ—not people. Don't say people are hypocrites. Live a genuine Christian life so they may be convicted or follow your example.

When Peter asked Jesus about John's role in John 21:22, Jesus told him to focus on his own journey. We can pray and care for others, but our eyes must stay on Christ. Focus all your strategies and strength there. You can also buy books on prayer or how to pray. Psalm 55:17 says, "Evening, morning, and noon I cry out... and He hears my voice."

Another important issue is how to keep the Lord's Day holy and give Him glory. He gave us six days, but the seventh is His. Ask adult members of the church to give you advice. If you have children, ask those with kids how they engage their children on the Lord's Day. Evaluate their advice against the Bible, because some people invent ideas or follow man-made traditions. Many scriptures, such as

MaarifaMtandaoni.Com RohoYaUnabii.Net pg. 558

Exodus 20:8-11 and Nehemiah 10:31, speak on this matter. A new believer should remember that a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.

Remember that after Christ was baptized, He was tempted. If you stumble, ask Christ to help you return to the right path. When you meet critics, ask them to pray for you so you won't be shaken, but be like a tree planted by the riverside. Continue witnessing to others so you remain active, for the Christian life is like a beautiful rose—thorns included. Life may seem harder now than before baptism. The enemy wants to derail your purpose—pray according to God's promises. Don't focus on people or your surroundings, but on Christ.

How can you survive in a church filled with conflict and quarrels? 1 Corinthians 1:10. Many in churches quarrel over minor things: the color of the carpet, whether a woman should preach instead of a man, a preacher not wearing a tie, etc. It's like popcorn popping as everyone clashes.

Sometimes, conflicts arise from sensitive issues like sin or false teachings from laypeople or pastors. When such conflicts hinder our mission to “go forth,” it becomes dangerous. As Christians, Jesus taught us to love even our enemies—but many of us struggle to love our spouses, let alone fellow church members! John 13:35 tells us that people will know we are Christ's followers by our love for one another. The enemy knows that a loving church works in unity, so he divides it to conquer it.

A Belgian once said in a newspaper that “they divided the Tutsi and Hutu tribes in Rwanda to control them.” A body part like the lung, once removed from the body, has a very short lifespan. You are a part of your church body—don't leave. What should you do to heal in such a church?

First, prioritize rightly. Don't let small issues make you sweat. Many churches fight over what they think are big issues, but Heaven sees them as minor. Everyone encounters friction—learn how to handle it and move forward. Matthew 23:23 warns us against hypocrisy—emphasizing tithing small things while neglecting justice, mercy, and faith. Try not to take sides if it doesn't involve sin.

Read the story in Luke 12:12-13. Staying neutral doesn't mean doing nothing—it means praying for unity. Prayer isn't time wasted—it's a powerful, divine tool. In John 17:20-23, Christ prayed for unity. Read that prayer.

Your actions and words can remind others of the Christian priorities. It's vital to understand God's love and salvation and witness so others may know this love. Be a peacemaker (Matthew 5:9). Every church, like every family, experiences conflict. Sometimes we must agree to disagree but still speak with love. God can turn our troubles into blessings.

In Romans 8:28, we see Paul and Barnabas parting ways over disagreements. Each went their own way, and this helped spread the Gospel more widely. Sometimes church divisions lead to new churches being planted and more people becoming involved.

An idle mind is the devil's workshop. The Lord wants us to learn love. Life is too short to keep fighting—even if it runs in your family's bloodline, as Christians we must avoid constant arguments. Some church members even fight with fists! And when asked, everyone blames one region! Even people from that region acknowledge that it's their common behavior. Every culture has its own 'spirit,' but we must overcome evil with good. People see things differently. If you say, "All apples are red," that's not true—some are orange or green!

We should be open to others' perspectives—everyone has different experiences. God placed us in families to learn how to live with people here before we go to Heaven. When siblings fight, they don't say, "I'm leaving this house forever!" Our faith is tested when living with difficult people, and it grows our courage and Christ-like love.

You might wish you were one of Jesus' disciples, but remember, He also had Judas. Weeds and wheat grew together until harvest. As humans, we can't judge between weeds and wheat. Peter, James, and John wanted positions of power. In their disagreements, they learned to love, and on the day of Pentecost, they were able to kneel and pray together in one place—and God poured out His Holy Spirit on them.

We await our own Pentecost—let's be ready to sit, pray, and resolve our differences so we may be filled with the Spirit. Oppose sin, but be humble and peacemaking. This is only possible by seeking and doing God's will and witnessing to others.

Quarrels arise from pride, ego, selfishness, and feelings. Read Philippians 2 daily. Ask yourself—does all this arguing benefit me in the long run? In 10 years, will it

matter that I was right? Let each person self-reflect (Romans 14:5) and listen to others.

The best thing is to avoid arguments altogether. Seek counsel—Proverbs 11:14 says there's safety in counsel. It's easy to fall into sin—seek help from an experienced Christian and pray, because Christ is a Wonderful Counselor (Isaiah 9:6). Pray earnestly and hold onto God—He will bring resolution.

Continue to model reconciliation. When you err, admit and seek forgiveness. It takes two to quarrel—no one can fight alone. Don't add fuel to the fire. If you've been wronged, seek peace so you don't carry unforgiveness or anger in your heart (Matthew 6:14-15). Unforgiveness causes spiritual and even physical illness. If you're the one who sinned, go and apologize before the offended person confronts you and causes further chaos. If your disagreements are not sinful, agree to disagree and walk away with peace.

Healing in a family that has experienced conflict is also important. Many homes have disputes—even during prayer. One person may pray “at” the other, not to God. When you enter such homes, it won't take long to notice. One reads the Bible, another turns up the TV—everyone is on their own schedule.

Marrying a non-believer has caused many conflicts. Assuming you'll convert them is a big mistake—you're not their God. It's possible, by God's mercy, for a miracle to happen, but before marrying a non-believer, talk to those who've done it. Learn before jumping into that pit.

If you're already married to a non-believer, divorce should never be your option. You'll struggle to guide your spouse or children spiritually if you leave. Be a good example. If you haven't been, ask for forgiveness and start anew. Let your children see your faith benefits everyday life, including parenting. (Ephesians 6:4). Don't let your children pit you against your spouse over matters of faith. If you're a child, honor your parents. If your extended family (like grandparents) have different beliefs, have clear agreements on boundaries—for example, children should not eat harmful foods like pork or watch immoral TV shows when visiting. Pray before visits for harmony—and maybe even for witnessing opportunities.

If your family is doing well—praise the Lord. Some children don't oppose your faith but find religion boring—what then?

Youth and children can also heal in the church (Isaiah 49:25). Some kids have non-Christian friends, read inappropriate books, watch bad shows, or dress immodestly. Let them know they are loved. Many youth struggle to thrive in church—half leave and never return.

Youth are powerful in serving God and can do great things. There's no one-size-fits-all solution—keep praying for their joys and sorrows as you watch them grow spiritually. Pray that God helps them through their decisions and struggles—don't waste time in guilt. If you've wronged them, apologize and move forward. There's no greater human love than that between a parent and child. Enoch, after having a child, walked with God more deeply (Genesis 5:21). King David, even when Absalom rebelled, cried out, "Oh Absalom, Oh Absalom... I wish I had died instead of you!" (2 Samuel 18:33).

Just as we love our children, God loves them more and wants them to flourish in His church. Listen to them—they're in a season of insecurity and need your attention. They also watch your actions. Are we hypocrites?

My children have called me a Pharisee when I acted contrary to what I teach. Practice what you preach. Don't rebuke children for being late to church or drinking or not praying or reading the Word, if you do the same.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer, a missionary to Gambia, said there are three ways to teach children: first, by example; second, by example; and third, by example!

Some youth say they have nothing to do in church—encourage them to talk to leaders and get involved. Youth played a key role in the major church reformations of the 1400-1600s—like Martin Luther, Huss, Knox, Zwingli, Calvin, Wesley, Tyndale, and others.

Youth programs shouldn't only be about drama, choir, and sports! Involve them in decision-making—they'll surprise you. Some say they're forced to go to church—discuss such things during the week, including what you'll wear and do on Sabbath. After worship, invite another family over for fellowship and friendship—youth also need social time, just like adults.

Be an advocate for youth ministry in your church. Attending church unwillingly is better than staying home—church provides life-changing teaching. Keep praying

for your child—it's your responsibility to raise them well. Every family chooses its values; if yours chooses church, go together.

Some youth wonder why church even matters—it's likely they're not yet converted. Show them God's love, because your life is a better sermon than your words. They won't live a life we ourselves don't live. Church will become their priority if they see change in you.

The Iringo Musoma choir sings, "Jesus Transforms." You can't meet Him and stay the same. May God help us not live with nine toes in the world and one toe in the church. Let your children see you pray for them by name. Involve them in morning and evening prayers so they discover a personal relationship with God. Share answered prayers with them to inspire their faith

Youth life is full of challenges, but by God's grace, they can thrive. We believe their faith will grow as they do.

Healing in the church for unmarried adults is another important topic (1 Corinthians 7:32-34). Many churches lack ministries for single adults. I was 27, teaching in the countryside, and during camp meetings, the unmarried were grouped together—often I sat with my 14-18-year-old students! I didn't plan to marry and felt odd discussing adult challenges with kids—especially my students, who were like my children.

For those who are single and don't plan to marry—let's have plans for them. Many think marriage is mandatory for membership, but the Bible has examples of singles who served God well—like Daniel, Paul, Dorcas. Some people try to match-make singles with good intentions—but not everyone is called to marry.

Church Discipline and Love

The church should issue rebuke and follow church disciplinary procedures for such members. The truth is, the church does not delight in such situations. Continue in love toward these individuals, yet take action—Matthew 18:17. Pagans and sinners are to be loved and reached by the church. Make plans to reach the one who brought shame to the church.

Removing someone from fellowship is a way of showing love to reach them so they may change their behavior. We see this in Joshua 7 with Achan. The church must

continue reaching out to this person for repentance. The church should act like the sailors who threw Jonah overboard so that all would not perish. Let not another's fall become our fall—stand firm on the Solid Rock. Galatians 6:1 explains that before approaching a sinner, one should pray and ask God for forgiveness of their own sins—Matthew 7:3-5.

Wrongdoing in the church can pass if handled with a Christ-like attitude. A rebuke is needed with a redemptive spirit so the sinner is restored to Christ and gossip is avoided.

Gossip in the Church

How can you heal if you're in a gossip-filled church? We sing, "I love to tell the story of Jesus," yet prefer spreading gossip about others! James 3:5 reminds us the tongue is a small part of the body but sets a forest on fire! Gossip is speaking about others' matters without reason—even if true. We will give an account on judgment day for every idle word.

If you knew your words were being recorded, would you still say them? Angels follow us 24/7 and record all we say. Would you say those words to Jesus? People who enjoy gossip often feel inferior and want to tarnish others' reputations.

In gossip, three parties are involved: the gossip, the listener, and the one being gossiped about. All are affected. To the gossip—restrain your tongue from evil. Love your neighbor as yourself. What would you want others to say about you? Proverbs 10:19. Everyone likes "sweet" gossip, which is why negative news sells—because good news doesn't

Many enjoy listening to gossip but fear being the subject when they leave. It's said: Great minds talk about the future, average minds discuss current events, and small minds talk about people.

Listeners of gossip—either sit and absorb bombs or change the subject. A Christian woman at the post office stayed silent when others gossiped about her. They respected her silence. Another friend stopped gossipers by asking, "If I bring so-and-so here, will you say the same in their presence?" They never brought gossip again.

If you're being gossiped about, ask yourself: Is what they're saying true? If yes, don't get angry—seek forgiveness privately (if it's one person) or publicly (if many). If it's false, remember even Christ was gossiped about. Just keep living—liars will eventually be exposed. “A thief's days are forty.”

Remember Sanballat and Tobiah gossiped about Nehemiah, but he never gave them time—day or night, he continued God's work—Nehemiah 6:3. Don't lower yourself to gossipers' level; they won't see the difference. You can't drive out darkness with darkness. Many in churches are eager to gossip even about leaders. Avoid this evil.

False Doctrine and Spiritual Growth

How do we recover from false teachings? 2 Timothy 4:3-4. Many churches now teach partial truths. Some members heard sound doctrine but misinterpreted it, causing trouble in churches. How can you thrive in churches with a mix of little falsehood and much truth? (No denomination teaches only falsehood—it wouldn't attract followers.) The issue is deception—a little falsehood mixed with much truth.

John 17:17 and John 8:32 say, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth,” and “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Sound doctrine guards us from sin. Satan wants doctrine to become a debate. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Rejecting truth is rejecting Christ. That's why it's vital to know the truth—it's deeply tied to knowing God. He exalted His Word and His law above even His name—Psalm 138. Study the Word more and more so you become a workman unashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth—2 Timothy 2:15.

Many are confused because they follow human teachings. “Seek and you shall find.” If we lack wisdom to know God's Word, we should ask Him. When in doubt, study deeply. Often, we want to enjoy sin while claiming ignorance, failing to investigate the truth. Others say, “If I know it's a sin, then it becomes a sin”—James 4:17. We try to get as close to sin as possible, then wonder why we fall.

Know God thoroughly so you understand His will. Ask yourself, “What Would Jesus Do (WWJD)?” Would you watch dirty films or pornographic images? WWJD

John 7:17 says whoever desires to do God's will shall know the doctrine. Don't study the Word just to find excuses—study to build a relationship with Christ. Pray like Jesus, “Not my will, but Yours be done, Father.”

Many Christians understand doctrine but fail to act because it challenges them. Maybe it will cost them their job on the Sabbath. If we seek God daily with a repentant heart, we will joyfully do His will. Complaining will vanish, difficulties will be resolved, and every issue will be addressed. Doubts will always exist, but we won't focus on them—truth already revealed should be lived out, then more will be revealed.

Acts 19:2-6 shows that people who loved God but didn't know about Christ's coming gladly got baptized again and received the Holy Spirit. The key here is that they lived up to what little they knew, and more was revealed to them.

Healing from Church Hurt

Healing and thriving after being hurt or discouraged is crucial. Healing and forgiveness are different—healing takes time. Many have been deeply wounded in church by hurtful words.

One man returned home to find his wife gone and their six-month-old baby left behind. He told his pastor, who responded, “You must have done something—your wife is such a good woman, the problem must be you!” This hurt deeply, and he questioned whether the church could truly help—Jeremiah 8:22.

The saying, “Words don't break bones,” isn't true. Many have been emotionally broken and even died from hurtful words. Pray for those who hurt you so you don't hate them—hatred can make your sin worse than theirs. Hate is dangerous. Ask God to help you remove hatred and pray for those who offend you.

One Christian said when he realized he hated someone, he prayed for them for two weeks, asking God to bless them with everything he desired for himself. Soon, all hate left and he felt joy when God blessed that person. Often, we feel ashamed of the hate in our hearts and don't know how to remove it—pray and bless them.

Let's learn how to remove hate and sin from our hearts—we've all struggled with this and need healing. Job 42:10 says God blessed Job when he prayed for his

friends, and gave him double. This double portion may be spiritual wealth—seeing God bless your enemy and answering your prayer for both of you.

Church Expectations and Reality

Member Rehema resents the pastor for not visiting her home or telling her husband to stop drinking. Mama Saulo is upset because the pastor won't give her a ride to the market. A pastor's job isn't to be a judge or a taxi driver.

Some expect others to do things for them—unreasonable expectations. If someone does help, it's a gift, not a right. Leaders are also human—don't idolize them or expect perfection. A leader should not be a hypocrite but be a good example so even hypocrites feel ashamed. If others can't abandon hypocrisy, you must be the example.

You can't fight darkness with darkness—Romans 12:20-21. Hate and bitterness are like a chain around your neck. Seek others who are hurt—not to build an army, but to help them heal. Help them recover, and you'll heal too. Open your heart to the Savior who is compassionate. Claim God's promises and make it your mission to bless others, and that intent will remove evil from your heart.

When to Leave a Church

Is there ever a time to leave a church? Acts 27:30-32. Don't jump ship and endanger yourself. Stay in the church and be part of the fellowship—unless you face serious doctrinal error and are forbidden from witnessing about Christ. Then, you may need to leave. In the last days, many will worship in homes—this has started in countries like China. But the Lord will preserve us—Acts 2:42-47.

Persecution or government orders may force believers out of churches. We don't know when things will get worse, so let's prepare through prayer, study, and wearing the righteousness of Christ so we can withstand the storm. Trust not in the church but in Jesus' death, resurrection, and intercession. Live in obedience and faith—He will hold you.

As the ship sails, stay aboard—but don't be a tourist. Witness until it sinks, then wear your life jacket (Christ) and leave. Today's truth for our Laodicean church is: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock..."

Don't only think of how to survive in church, but also how to thrive and become a vessel to inspire others. Christ wants you to have life—and have it more abundantly—John 10:10. As a doer of the Word, God will help you build a survival kit. That survival kit is the Bible, because He is the Bread of Life. Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word from the mouth of God.

Prayer and Daily Living

Morning is the best time—before the day's battles, when your mind is fresh. God's Word is a lamp to our feet and light to our path. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will never walk in darkness"—John 8:12. He is also the Living Water—John 7:37. He is the breath of life.

Prayer is vital—avoid repeating others' prayers mindlessly. I once prayed for food while preparing for bed—out of habit!

"The 7 wonders of Christians," some say, "They pray more for food than for life!" Make a prayer list and record answered prayers. If you forget to pray, throw your shoes under the bed. In the morning, when you bend down to retrieve them, you'll remember to pray. Don't give up on prayer. Ask for the Holy Spirit—He is your helper. Keep casting the net—Matthew 1:8.

Don't think you have no talent. God will use you and help you bear fruit—Galatians 5:22-23—to overcome selfishness. Keep wearing Christ's robe—Revelation 7:14. The goal isn't just to heal, but to flourish. Fully commit to Jesus so your problems disappear. Daily be born again and carry your cross. Everyone will bear their load and face their judgment.

The church, the pastor, or other members are not responsible for your salvation—you are. You cannot blame others on judgment day. If you need the Holy Spirit, ask—Luke 11:13. If you need wisdom, ask—James 1:5.

Do you want to see revival and reform in your church? Then pray your Heavenly Father revives you, and your church will follow. Psalm 37:5 says, "Commit your way to the Lord, trust in Him, and He will do it."

At weddings, the bride and groom stand before the pastor and make lifelong vows. What gives them confidence to keep those promises? Their love and total commitment. So it is when we join God's church—we stay through pain or joy,

sickness or health, rain or sunshine. God's church is like our earthly families—if we love Jesus, we will love His people. Living with people is a treasure—but also a great test.

We limit what God can do through a converted and committed servant. Through Elijah's prayer, Israel returned to God. James 5:16 promises...

CHAPTER 44

FORGIVENESS (ALTAR,GUILT, FORGIVING OTHERS AND BEING FORGIVEN)

We thank Pastor Wankyo for collaborating with us to write this chapter. Truly, this is a lengthy topic, but we will discuss it briefly. Our salvation is rooted here, that is, in the ****Sacrifice of Christ****.

Hebrews 9:22: "And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission."

1) Forgiveness Between God and Us

In the Bible, the book of Genesis, chapter three, we learn how sin entered our world when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and followed the counsel of the serpent that Satan used in the Garden of Eden. God could have chosen to punish Adam and Eve by killing them on the spot after their rebellion. However, if God had killed them instantly, other creatures, including God's angels, would have obeyed their God out of fear instead of love and their own free will. Also, God's loving character would not have been understood throughout His entire kingdom of billions of planets (The whole Universe).

So, after Adam and Eve rebelled, God's plan, which had been in place before the creation of this world, began to be implemented (Luke 11:50; John 17:24; Revelation 13:8).

The Lord God made a promise and a covenant that was the ****first Gospel of hope for humanity****. "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." Genesis 3:15. Enmity between us and Satan was a blessing, for we would have loved Satan, and it would have been difficult to get rid of his roots.

Although the problems and consequences of sin would continue to trouble humanity (bruising the heel), the ****Seed of the woman**** (a prophecy indicating the coming of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the World (John 3:16)) would crush the serpent's head.

There in the Garden of Eden, the Lord God ****slaughtered a lamb****, showing that blood must be shed for the remission of sins and forgiveness to occur. He also showed that the ****Lamb of God**** would come years later to shed His blood and lay

down His life for the redemption of humanity (John 1:29). The Lord God took the skin of that lamb and clothed Adam and his wife Eve, symbolizing the ****righteousness and garment of Jesus Christ****.

Through this, Adam and Eve received forgiveness from God and were thus saved, and they were commanded to teach their children and succeeding generations about God's love, forgiveness, and salvation.

When the Children of Israel left Egyptian bondage, God commanded and gave instructions for the ****temple services and sacrifices**** to bring about reconciliation between humans and their God. The sacrifices offered were intended to teach the Israelites about ****Jesus Christ, who would come and offer His life as a sacrifice**** to reconcile humanity with God and bring complete forgiveness, opening the way to salvation and the hope of eternal life. Thus, when Jesus died on the cross that day, all the ****Old Testament sacrifices came to an end****, which is why "the veil of the temple was torn in two" (Matthew 27:51). Jesus was the fulfillment of all temple services.

So, reader, through ****Jesus Christ, we receive the forgiveness of our sins****. And beyond forgiveness, we are ****restored into the family of sons and daughters**** in the greater family of our God. We are told to approach boldly, and not to fear asking for forgiveness. We should have ****true repentance****. Let us pray the prayer of Psalm 139: "Search me, O Lord, and see if there is any wicked way in me..." Some sins we know, and others we don't. Some we remember, and others we don't. Some sins we commit by doing, and others by not doing (Omission/Commission). For example, we insult our neighbor (we commit), and we don't share the Good News with someone (we omit). We ask God to help us remember so that we may confess. Then we ask God to give us the strength to ****overcome the sins that easily entangle us****. We tell God all this with a broken and sincere heart, meditating without haste. ****Open sins, secret sins****, what we call small or great, are all sins. Our ear will hear us turn left or right. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We ask for forgiveness, regret our actions, and change our way. We continue to read His word more deeply so that He may give us the victory to obey. ****Obedience and faith are very important****. We abide in Him, and He in us (John 15:3). The Word cleanses us. Sin leaves our hearts, and Christ fills our hearts. We continue to read His word more deeply, for it is a mirror, and our sins are clearly seen (revealed). We ask God to give us strength, to understand the plan of salvation, and to overcome sin. He is the one who gives us the victory. We continue

to follow Him and build ourselves up, taking root in Him more deeply (Colossians 2:6). Read more deeply about the Day of Atonement between God and humanity once a year, its preparations in the book of Leviticus 16 and 27.

God commanded them to ****build an altar**** so that He might dwell among them, meaning His presence would be with them. David in Psalm 77:13 continues to say that ****God's way is in the sanctuary**** (altar). The altar is something every believer should learn about for our salvation. Christ is now our ****High Priest in that heavenly altar****, interceding for us (Hebrews 8:1).

The ****East Gate**** is where the sinner entered to offer sacrifice. While there, he saw a cloud by day or fire by night. There are ****three parts to the tabernacle/altar****: the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place.

Choose to forgive ,and God will give you strength (Philippians 2:13). If you choose Jesus, He will enable you. You cannot forgive yourself, especially those who have deeply wounded you. Go to His word, and know that He has power, and His word and promises are true. Even we ourselves sin against God in the same way. Don't think that "Lord, it is difficult for me to forgive; only You can do it." Go to the word of God, even when your flesh says no!

Let us see that we also sin against God. Don't think that you are the one sacrificing too much! The benefit is for us, and so is the blessing. We open doors of blessing for ourselves even if we are in the right. The one who is forgiven may not benefit. Our way to prayer to God opens up. It does not mean that you will now be side by side with this person who likes to trouble people. You can be distant from them, but pray for them to God. Do not break communication with God because of unforgiveness. Sometimes we are proud, thinking we are important and have suffered greatly. We forget even Christ, who is more important, suffered greatly and was even spat upon. Don't think you can do it yourself, but go to Jesus. Jesus, take away the hatred, wash away the hatred. I have chosen to forgive and obey the word of the Lord, forgive me. I know your strength has enabled me, even though my flesh resists. Satan can bring hatred and unforgiveness. "I reject that, I have chosen Jesus' side." He doesn't give up quickly to leave you. The flesh struggles to hate and hold grudges. Walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh. If your flesh pulls you, Natalia, go to Jesus by faith and spirit. Go to Jesus to take away any resentment. You cannot do it yourself. And do not say "I have forgiven, the

old things have passed quickly." You must clearly understand what you were wronged for and what you need to forgive.

The Columbia Union's Visitor magazine in the USA, January 2016, stated that more than four to eight million lawsuits are filed annually in the United States, many of which involve Christians suing each other. Ken Sande is one of the Christians who spoke about reconciling believers when they quarrel. Read more about these topics in "Peacemakers Ministries." When he conducted research, he discovered that many believers' cases could be resolved by believers, reducing costs, time, hatred, and embarrassment from exposing themselves to non-believers. Lawyers often benefited, and these believers lost much.

1. Outer Court:

The burnt offering altar is the first piece of furniture: The sinner comes here with his sins and his family, along with a lamb. Since the wages of sin are death, the sacrifice of the lamb takes the place of the sinner's death, serving as a **symbol of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world**. The lamb must be examined and be without blemish. After slaughtering the lamb or sacrifice, the sinner comes with his sins and the lamb. The lamb was costly; if a person was poor, they brought a dove, and if unable, they brought flour. The sinner lays his hands on the lamb and confesses his sins, and the sins are transferred from him to the lamb as a symbol of Christ taking our sins. Then he slaughters it. The priest takes the sacrifice and places it on the altar of burnt offering. The priest takes the blood and sprinkles it on the altar. He eats a portion of the lamb's meat, symbolizing the bearing of that sin.

The fire here also represents the Holy Spirit.

Laver of Water:

The priest goes to the laver of water and washes away all the dirt from his hands and feet, otherwise he will die if the dirt remains. This is a symbol of people's sins.

2. Holy Place:

Altar of Incense: Here there is an censer of smoke, representing our prayers. The bowl of blood, representing sin, is brought here and sprinkled. Here, on the Day of Atonement, this blood is carried into the Most Holy Place (transfer).

Seven lamps: They represent Christ our light, and the oil represents the Holy Spirit. The Word of God is a light to our path.

Showbread: Seven and seven. This represents Christ the bread of life, and the Word of God. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

If you read the Word of God, you will be filled with the Holy Spirit.

3. Most Holy Place:

The priest will enter with a censer of smoke, symbolizing prayers. He will take blood and sprinkle it on the mercy seat. The priest here represents the work of Christ. This work was done once a year on the Day of Atonement.

Here are the Ten Commandments of God, which show that the offender has broken the law, but the blood of Christ erases these.

Blood is placed on the mercy seat, symbolizing forgiveness, and Christ has borne our sins. The sinner continues to examine himself until the **scapegoat (Azazel)** takes the people's sins and is led outside the camp. This goat represents Satan, who is the father of all evil. The other goat represents Christ, who takes our sins.

Manna: Represents provision from God.

Cherubim on the Mercy Seat.

Shekinah Glory.

The Tabernacle of Meeting mentioned in Exodus 25, which Bezalel and Aholiab were told to build, is a visual representation of our salvation**. Our human minds have become weak in understanding after sin, so the tabernacle explained (pictorial form of salvation) in human terms and in ways we know so that we could understand. The book of Hebrews explains more about the heavenly tabernacle, which is the real one, because the Israelites' tabernacle was a copy or shadow of

the heavenly one. Read Hebrews 8 and 9 broadly to learn about the heavenly temple.

We have written briefly here, but we advise the reader to continue learning more about this topic in the Bible, and there are also several books written on this topic in English.

2) Forgiveness Among Ourselves (Humans)

One of the most difficult issues for us humans is to forgive each other when we offend one another. It becomes very difficult to forgive someone when they have done something very bad, especially if they did it intentionally. By human nature, feelings push a person to take revenge - "an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth." But the Bible warns us and teaches us that vengeance belongs to God alone (Deuteronomy 32:35; Hebrews 10:30). He, God, knows us humans well, and first, He begins by trying to help the offender repent. The goal is to restore reconciliation and a good relationship instead of rushing to punishment. Also, God decides the best way to deal with offenders than we humans do.

Advice: If someone offends us, it's good to let them know that they have wronged us. If we cannot tell them directly, we can seek the help of another person or people to convey the message. If they ask for forgiveness, then we have gained our brother. Read the guidance of God's Word on offenses and forgiveness among believers in Christ within God's church (Matthew 18:15-20).

During a camp meeting some years ago, a visiting Pastor shared a story with us. When he was a young man, just starting his pastoral work in a certain church, a man came to him and told him, "So-and-so wronged me in 1962, and that issue is still in my heart." The man asked the young pastor to reconcile them. The young Pastor told the member, "Your problem happened before I was born. How do you expect me, a young person, to resolve it?"

Brothers and sisters, if we hold anger or hatred in our hearts against the wrongs done to us, we are tormenting ourselves and carrying these burdens while we know that the journey to heaven is narrow. We must ask God to grant us forgiveness so that evil may leave our hearts, and by God's grace, we may continue on our journey to heaven.

I myself had a church leader who did terrible things that hurt me deeply. That leader moved to another place far from where I lived. Time passed before we met again. One day, we met at a camp meeting. I went to him, even though he was the one who wronged me, and I decided to humble myself by the grace of the Lord God. I told him, "I am sorry for what happened then and for breaking the good relationship we had in the church." I told him, "I wish it could have been different." Although he did not apologize to me, my few words helped bring our relationship closer again. The burdens that were in my heart and also in his heart were lifted. That leader took me that week of camp meeting to an Italian Restaurant, and we ate there. Another time, I took him to another Italian restaurant, and we ate there. Beyond that, we have collaborated in Gospel work and preaching, and we have become friends and have very close communication. Other people have been blessed by our sermons because our relationship has been strong, and the Lord has blessed us.

We must be people of prayer always so that the Holy Spirit of God may control and guide our hearts and minds. It is only through the Lord that we can forgive each other and continue on the great journey of faith in Christ, as the Lord prepares us for the Second Coming of Jesus.

There was a woman politician in Colombia. When she was running for election to be the country's Vice President, she was kidnapped by rebels and taken to the jungle, where she stayed for six years. The time came when the Colombian government forces raided those rebels and rescued the woman named Betancourt. When she returned home, she found many people had come to welcome her with joy and cheers, including her mother. Betancourt told her mother with pain, "Don't cry for me now. You don't have to cry for me anymore." When I read this news in the newspaper, I learned that this woman felt she had been rescued and was alive and safe, and she was ready to move forward with her new life. Recently, I learned that Betancourt went to England and is now at the University of Manchester, pursuing higher education. It is important to let go of the past's filth and move forward, for we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. When we cling to many carcasses and keep them in our hearts, we are the ones who suffer and become slaves or are imprisoned. But those who wronged us are unaware, and perhaps it is their habit to do evil. So, let us not remain their basket for the rest of our lives. **Forgiving them does not mean we are happy with their actions, or that we have healed from the wounds they inflicted**. No, not at all! This may

take time, but when we forgive them, we begin the journey of healing and freeing our minds. We will be overcome (attacked) by joy and peace that surpasses understanding, and later we will have compassion for those who hurt us, because many who hurt others are hurt themselves, and they carry many grudges in their hearts (hurt people hurt people).

Bob Shultz, speaking about forgiveness to young people, said it's like 'throwing away' or 'sending away'. He gave the example of ****disposable diapers**** that we throw away when babies soil them. We don't throw away the babies, but we throw away the dirt. He said one person walked everywhere picking up these diapers, even though they smelled. He said people have foul words, they don't control their words, thoughts, and actions (no control). They irritate you or bring dirt by speaking to you in anger, stealing your things, or lying to you. Don't pick up these soiled diapers or the dirt of these people everywhere and walk around showing them to people. Don't store those diapers and bring them out in the future and look at them; try to throw them away. If you remember and recite their evil, you will get sadness and resentment; you will lose your joy by revisiting that filth. ****Vengeance is God's to repay; it is not our human job****. The example of dirty diapers is a strong one, but sin is dirtier than these diapers. And if you remember that you have wronged someone, ask for forgiveness quickly and try not to repeat that mistake.

In families, it is very important for parents to forgive their children, and for children to forgive their parents when mistakes occur. Some of us were emotionally affected when we left, either our mother or father was lost; we must reach a point of forgiving them to continue our journey to heaven. Where will you live with someone in a long-term relationship without making mistakes against each other? The words we speak and our actions, sometimes unknowingly, unfortunately, hurt those we love. Will we keep these grudges forever? Family members must learn to forgive each other. We also need to learn to ask for forgiveness. Many times I can tell my children, "I'm sorry, I made a mistake or I was wrong." "Forgive me." It is a short word, but it has great meaning, and its results are very good. It is very sad for those humans who consider themselves perfect and without mistakes, and therefore the language of "I AM SORRY" is not in their hearts or on their tongues. We have heard stories of relatives, even husbands and wives, who did not speak for years because of hatred and unforgiveness. Another story I read was of a husband and wife who did not speak

for three years but wrote messages to each other. One day the husband wrote to his wife to wake him up at 11 AM to catch a train. He woke up at 12 PM and was angry, wanting to speak, but he realized they had decided not to speak but only to write. He woke up to write in anguish, "I missed the train, why didn't you wake me up, and I wrote to you, and you wrote that you would wake me up." He found that his wife had written, "11 AM wake up to catch the train." So the wife woke up to write, and he didn't read it? Can you imagine what it would be like to live in a house like this?

Many of us have abandoned friends who wronged us, only to find that everyone has wronged us, and we have no old friends left! If someone wrongs us a little, we remove them from our list of friends and put them on the list of enemies. That is why Jesus said in the Lord's Prayer that this is one of the important things to pray for: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Knowing God's principles, do you know what you have wronged God today? This week? This year? Or in your life? If He had not forgiven us, where would we be?

It is true that some people are difficult to have relationships with. For example, someone who keeps doing the same wrong to you year after year, what should you do with such a person? For example, they borrow money from you and don't return it, then they come again and again. When such a person comes to you with a problem, give them what you would give them, whether they return it or not. Help them with what you have as your brother in need, but do not expect repayment. For those who live in marriage or with relatives, what if our siblings or spouses repeat the same thing? For relatives, it is easier, if the matter is serious, it is good to make arrangements for them to be independent or to place them somewhere where you can support them. It is not God's plan to live with relatives. We see the life of Eden. Living with relatives is for a certain purpose, then a place should be found for them and they should be helped there. But if the one who is harming you is your spouse, perhaps adultery or other things, then these require spiritual counselors and following Matthew 18, continuing to pray and see what should be done. These notes are brief, but marriage counselors can help more with this. But in everything, let us learn to forgive, even if this month we will separate from them, or we will live with them, let us learn to forgive, then we too will be forgiven. It does not mean to condone evil, and the evil that is done to you, no! But forgive.

It is my prayer that God will help us in this matter and that we will be victorious by His grace and power.

3) Forgiveness for Ourselves

Another issue related to forgiveness is that which relates to ourselves, that is, for example, ****forgiving myself****. It can be easy to receive God's forgiveness for myself, and also to receive forgiveness from someone I have wronged and to forgive someone who has wronged me. But it can be difficult for me to forgive myself for a particularly bad mistake or action I have committed.

Sometimes, we hear news, for example, that a certain girl, upon discovering she was pregnant before marriage, committed suicide. This is great pain because when that sister decides to commit suicide, she did not see that she could be forgiven for that pregnancy by her family, and/or her church, and/or the community she lives in. Family and all of us, especially members of the Lord's Church, must show that we have a forgiving spirit. The sin of fornication or adultery is not the greatest sin of all. We must show in word and deed that God forgives us, and therefore we ourselves must forgive ourselves and forgive others.

I have been telling my children to feel free to tell me anything, whether good or bad. I want them to be free to talk to me as their parent about anything, knowing that I love them with the love I have learned from Jesus Christ in my own life. A psychiatrist in London told Billy Graham in the 70s that ****75% of patients in the mental ward there feel guilt****, and that is the reason for their illness. Many people feel guilty, and some even flee without being chased by anyone. Others have bad dreams, and their lives become full of sorrow. The English actor who starred in "Noël Coward" wrote anonymous letters to 10 people saying, "We know what you did; if you don't leave town, we will expose you to everyone." After six months, all ten people had moved out of town! This shows that many people feel guilty about something, whether it is something from the past, something they did, something they didn't do, or even something not very important. We all need to learn to ****cast our burdens upon God**** so that we do not carry such burdens. Burdens are laid down at Calvary, and if God has promised to bear them, and He is stronger than us, why don't we leave them to Him? We cannot both stay awake, Him and us. If He stays awake, it is enough. We must place ourselves in Him, and He will deliver us from any accusation we have, whether true or not. Psalm 32 and 51 tell us that God forgives all, as far as the east is from the west, and our sins,

though they be scarlet, will be as white as snow. They are buried very deep, deeper than the Mariana Trench in the Pacific, which is the deepest ocean at seven miles. God has thrown all our sins there, and He has told us not to go fishing for them again! (No fishing).

Perhaps it is difficult to forgive ourselves because even we find it hard to forgive others? So, ****forgiveness is not a gift we can have as humans****. Many times I have earnestly asked God to help me forgive someone, because it is hard to let go of hatred. And God has performed miracles. When I meet them, I have completely forgotten, and surprisingly, when others remind me, the memory is completely gone. ****Only God can help us get this miracle of forgiveness; don't think you can do it yourself!**** You will forgive someone and keep remembering and hating if you do it yourself (I have forgiven you, but I will not forget what you did to me). Our path to salvation is deeply related to forgiveness, that is, us being forgiven by God, and us forgiving others. Ask God to bless those who have wronged and upset you, with all His blessings. Then, if you see them blessed and you are truly happy, then you know you have truly forgiven completely and have no resentment or bitterness. Examples from Rwanda in 1994 during the killings of Tutsis and Hutus opened the eyes of many of us about forgiving serious and difficult things done to us as humans. For example: A mother who forgave the young man who killed her husband and all her children, to the point of making him her own son. ****Forgiveness comes only from God; we humans are helpless****. Let us not deceive ourselves or deceive God. Let us tell Him all the truth, for He knows our thoughts anyway. Let us tell Him that "I hate this person and I don't want to forgive them, but I ask you to help me so that I can help them." It is good to be truthful. God knows if our speeches or sweet words are true or not, so let us not hide from Him. He is ready to help us in this difficult matter.

A pastor's wife from Spain often told me that she felt guilty because when her husband was ill, she had gone that week to visit her son, who had just had a baby. When she returned to the airport, she was met by members who told her that her husband was seriously ill in the hospital, on oxygen and a ventilator. Although her husband was 80 years old, he had not been ill until he was suddenly struck by the illness. Even his heart and body, the doctors said, were like that of a 50-year-old man. God had granted him good health, and he lived a health-reform lifestyle. This pastor's wife complained for months and months that she felt guilty that if she hadn't left, the pastor would not have died. What saddened her most was when

she was told to sign a form to remove the breathing apparatus, as it was as if he had already passed away and only the machines were keeping him appearing to breathe. She was unable to sign, but the adult children advised and helped with the signing. This mother blamed herself, thinking perhaps she was the one who killed him by signing. Truly, in our world, many things happen that make us feel guilty. Feeling guilty is good; it enables us to ask for forgiveness for our wrongs and, by faith, to believe God has forgiven us and to continue walking the journey of faith. For if we do not do this, we will be weak and exhausted by guilt in our hearts. Read Psalm 32 and Psalm 51; they are very important in this topic. God forgives us when we have contrite hearts and true repentance. Let us also believe.

As I wrote above, this topic of forgiveness is serious and broad. Here we have written briefly, praying that the reader will continue to learn more, and also spread this message to others. Therefore, I ask you to continue learning and praying more, because where there is forgiveness, there is healing, hope, and salvation.

CHAPTER 45

MUSIC, WITCHCRAFT (words, beat, rhythm, melody, harmony)

We cannot remain silent about music in the environment we live in. Much foreign culture has entered and been imitated. Music has powerful forces to change conduct, emotions, and behavior. It can cause the brain's decision-making to be impaired, leading to actions that were not intended when music enters the mind. Businesses have used music to sell us things we didn't plan to buy or things that are completely meaningless! Music is like a certain language that anyone can sing, and the listener can receive a message, whether of joy, hatred, celebration, etc. We cannot allow ourselves or our children to listen to just anything and expect to have morals. Let us remember that Satan was a choir leader and a famous singer; and because he does not like to praise God, he wants us to enter into his songs. If we want purity of thought and heart, we must avoid certain types of songs. My 11-year-old child was with other children singing songs with explicit words praising Satan. Songs like these completely remove our decision-making and thinking! Even some songs that praise God make God appear like a boyfriend; these diminish God's glory. Other songs have brought pride to those who sing them, making them appear like little gods instead of glorifying God. Many say, "We invite a certain choir to entertain us 'Songs were originally meant to praise and worship God, but nowadays human beings have ventured into inventions. Many people think that good lyrics alone are what make music suitable for worship. This is not true! Music is more than just words—it includes rhythm and sound.(Words, Rhythm, Melody, Harmony)If you beat traditional drums for a sindimba dance while singing the song "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," everyone will perceive it as a dance tune rather than a song to glorify God, and they will start dancing. Words are only one part of a song! Even at a funeral, people sing certain kinds of songs; if you go there and sing just any kind of song, people will think you're insensitive to their grief or perhaps that you've lost your mind.

I know that African Americans and others have introduced worldly music into the church (like Christian Rock), and we've tried to imitate them to appeal to young people. Some believe that since these styles were part of their cultural background, they should continue using them. Music is like clothing—pray for God to give you discernment about what to listen to and sing to Him. We don't want to be hypocrites, but there are songs that show reverence for God, and others that should be immediately removed from our worship services. May God guide us so

we can hear His voice telling us to turn left or right. It is very easy to go off track. Talented singers like Whitney Houston, Bob Marley, Elvis Presley, or Michael Jackson started singing in church. Later, as people praised their vocal talent, they decided to sing for income—and that's when things became difficult. They ended up involved in drugs. This is because singing those kinds of songs is closely linked to the kingdom of the enemy. Serving the enemy brings many sorrows that may not be immediately visible on the surface.

Songs like rap have become common among us, especially among the youth. We love to imitate Western things even when they harm us. We advertise them like Coca-Cola, which is unhealthy—if you soak a tooth in it, it dissolves—yet the billboards say, “A billion reasons for Africa to drink Coca-Cola.” Why not “a million reasons to eat oranges?” We have plenty of fruit here in Africa. It's not necessary to import Cola and suffer the health consequences.

Public transport vehicles like matatus or dala dalas blast loud music, damaging our eardrums. When I once asked a conductor to reduce the volume, he said, “You're just an old woman, that's why you don't like our music.” What's surprising is that most of us don't even like that kind of noise, even when we're young. Research shows that many young people are going deaf early and that their morals are declining because of the strange music they listen to.

I repeat, songs are not just about words with poor morals; rhythms also matter. Don't be deceived—music isn't just about lyrics! Rhythms influence thoughts, emotions, and stir certain feelings—for better or worse.

In one study, 522 urban girls were found to attack their teachers three times more than others because they listened to rap music. Try checking websites about music, like Ivory Myers and Music or Battlefield Hollywood. Music can powerfully change how people think. It's said that a woman who listens to calm, beautiful music is more likely to give birth to an intelligent child with good social skills—like when listening to Mozart. On the other hand, one who listens to rap might give birth to a violent and antisocial child. Friends, the music we play in our homes and for our children must be carefully filtered. Strange styles are being introduced gradually. You've heard how metal musicians lived loud, chaotic lives.

Many globally famous musicians have gotten into drugs and committed suicide, as has been reported in newspapers—Elvis Presley, Bob Marley, Whitney Houston,

Michael Jackson, and others you know. They started by singing to God in church. It's no secret that much of today's music has led our youth into promiscuity, violence, robbery, drunkenness, fighting, and other bad behaviors in society.

The University of North Carolina studied the rapper Andre Adams and his album "Hell's Kitchen," and found that his lyrics clearly promote crime and drug use. Women, especially those without self-respect, are targeted and treated as objects for men's sexual gratification. This bad music has been shown to cause mental health issues like depression. All of us, as listeners, should campaign to have such songs removed from our community radios immediately.

Josephson Institute found that in big cities plagued with gangs and gun violence, there is a strong link with rap and hip-hop songs filled with negative lyrics promoting racism, abuse of women, violence, and rape. These songs have caused a breakdown of values. Magazines like Essence have started campaigns like "Take Back the Music," urging people to reclaim the music. Truly, everywhere you go, youth idolize musicians as role models, celebrities, and stars. Even though these musicians have terrible morals, we admire them.

Rap music often glorifies wealth gained through gangs, drugs, and illegal activities, sending a message that "crime pays better than legitimate jobs." Such a message leads young people to abandon self-denial and discipline and embrace selfishness. These promises of riches and luxury lure many youth to drop out of school and pursue music as a shortcut to a life no Christian should live. Girls are seen dancing next to luxury cars like Benzes, suggesting that such music leads to that lifestyle. Images of cigarettes, alcohol, and indecent clothing or immorality accompany this kind of music.

In history, the main purpose of composing or singing music was to glorify the Creator and praise Him. Some patriotic or national songs are not harmful. If you listen to their beats and lyrics, you can distinguish between songs of light and those of darkness. Some songs today are related to witchcraft, juju, voodoo, or dark powers, which have long been involved in many African and global traditions. The West is now copying our songs, which they once considered primitive, but now admire. Practices like piercing or putting studs all over the body, and tattooing like the Makonde, are now imitated in the West to glorify certain things that are not appealing to Christ! Africans were once seen as backward for doing these things, but now many—especially youth—want to imitate them. Even if the West

imitates us, we must be careful, because our standard is the Word of God, not what people from a certain country do.

Still, you've heard many say that it's time for African missionaries to go to Europe, just like Europeans once came here—because Europe has become like the 10/40 window. Rap and hip-hop music are filled with evil and should be entirely avoided by those raising children. Books and music like Harry Potter and those promoting witchcraft have spread widely and earned billions of dollars.

Many people don't realize that Satan is a real being, the prince of this world, deceiving people to join his side. Knowing your enemy is more than 90% of winning the battle. There are only two kingdoms to serve—God's or Satan's. Each of us serves one of these kingdoms. Ask yourself: in raising your children, which kingdom are you serving? Are you raising them morally with God's help—or Satan's?

Even when seeking medical treatment—do we go to traditional witch doctors for charms and cures using dark powers, or do we seek appropriate treatment? Often, there's a thin line between dark powers and the healing God wants us to receive. Try investigating when you see signs advertising witch doctors. I know some professional healthcare providers are negligent and go on frequent strikes, which discourages us—but at least they have tests to determine whether we have malaria, typhoid, or cancer. Do the witch doctors advertising things like “a doctor from Zanzibar who heals family issues, lost items, love problems, and barrenness” really help more than those with proper diagnostic tools? And even if they help—do you know the source of their power? Satan also has some power to help people temporarily! But in the end, he brings ruin. Remember, even the heavenly angels he led astray saw him as a noble being with bright ideas. Today, I wouldn't be surprised if Satan's angels are fighting among themselves, hating each other and doing all kinds of evil.

Witchcraft, especially targeting children, has greatly infiltrated the world. In Western countries, books like Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone are even used in schools as textbooks. This book was written by a woman in the UK and portrays witchcraft as something good and helpful. People have treated witchcraft as fantasy or entertainment, claiming it isn't real. It tells the story of Harry Potter, an orphan whose parents were killed by a wizard, and who uses witchcraft to fuel children's imagination and teach moral lessons. These fantasy teachings have

corrupted children and led many into witchcraft. They portray witchcraft as something kind, helpful, and community-oriented.

This book and many children's films are full of dragons that breathe fire, monsters, and witches flying on brooms. They involve playing Ouija boards, divination, spells, calling spirits, praying to the dead, and all kinds of similar things. Read what Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 18:10-14. Anyone who loves God should never be involved in witchcraft.

White magic or black magic—all come from Satan and should never be toyed with when raising children. Many children have been drawn into witchcraft by their parents or neighbors and subjected to cruel practices like being turned into zombies (misukule). Parents must avoid getting involved in anything that promotes these practices. Look at Western nations and the Wicca witchcraft religion. In Africa, people think it's just harmless fantasy! But really, they are playing with fire in raising children. Wicca is a witchcraft religion that casts curses and communicates with the dead—and it has captured many children.

I don't need to say much more about witchcraft. But some church members, laypeople, and even certain preachers have gotten involved in it, thinking they can serve two masters. Children from broken homes have often found guidance from these witches and had their pain numbed temporarily. Fans of books like Harry Potter and Wicca have started embracing witchcraft; they present certain moral lessons while secretly introducing witchcraft. These people promote the idea of "good witches" and "bad witches," which is false—all witches are evil, representing the power of the Devil. Witchcraft can never be good. Just as we pray to God for good things, witches pray to evil powers to harm others.

Many children involved in witchcraft say they feel powerful. Even many children's cartoons have secretly introduced witchcraft. They appear as innocent children's shows but include evil and adult-themed language! Many parents support them, thinking they are educational and offer good morals. But do a few good lessons outweigh the many evil teachings of the Devil, enough to make us feel comfortable giving them to our children? We are clearly told in God's Word that there was war in heaven (Revelation 12), and the Devil and a third of the angels were cast to earth—read that chapter. He's the one who has plagued the world ever since. Do you want to glorify him in your home? Read Exodus 22:18 and Leviticus 19:31. Do not bring music or content into your home that glorifies witchcraft or destroys

children's morals. Let us pray for God's help so that our relationship with music and media will be guided by wisdom in these last days of earth's history. This will help us redeem the time, for the days we live in are truly evil.

CHAPTER 46

MODERN COMMUNICATION AND OTHER INPUTS WE ENCOUNTER ON OUR JOURNEY

In the past, we did not have these things. We had a lot of time to talk and advise our children. These things are very important nowadays for doing God's work. People use **speakers, phones (texting, WhatsApp), television, books, magazines, computers (Skype), videos, cameras, the internet, Facebook, Twitter, email, Instagram, YouTube, Google, airplanes, programs, and many other things to spread the Word of the Lord**. There are many things evangelists must learn so they can help God's work progress quickly, including **airplanes, cars, trains, ships, and others**.

But they also have several drawbacks. It's important to understand that what we eat builds our bodies. If you eat healthy foods, you will build a healthy body. Likewise, the things we put into our minds build our minds. If you put in good (positive) thoughts, you will get good results. If you put bad, rotten, or dirty (negative) thoughts into your mind, you will also get bad results.

When we hold our weddings, we also thought about this because our children see us being hypocritical. At weddings, we tell them not to come, but then we play music or show films that do not align with our faith. So that children don't feel ashamed, we say the wedding is for adults only! This contradicts our faith and the Holy Scriptures.

Let's start with **music**. Nowadays, there are devices that allow us to listen to music everywhere, even while walking. Music is on phones and everywhere. Many songs do not build character at all. Their beats and lyrics incite crime, such as abortion, homosexuality, lesbianism, promiscuity, murder, poaching, theft, etc. If a young person hears these words for a long time, they memorize and believe them, and they affect their thoughts. They will want to try to do what the song says. Andrew Fletcher wrote long ago, in 1703, that "Let me write the songs of a nation, and I care not who makes its laws."

One songwriter praised how hell is a good place where people are happy and celebrate, and that you need to go there because all your friends will be there. If a child listens to the words of this song for a long time, they will desire to go and enjoy that beauty of hell. Other songs belittle Christianity and blaspheme God.

One singer composed a song telling young people not to obey their parents or elders, saying 'do what you want,' regardless of anyone. Another song says, "You've tried alcohol, it didn't help. You've tried drugs, they didn't help. You've tried sex, it didn't help. Why don't you try suicide?" Oh! Is it possible that this is why many young people are ending their lives these days?

But not all songs are bad. There are good songs. As parents, we should buy children good music (CDs/DVDs) from a young age. Good songs inspire and uplift a person spiritually and mentally.

Media Addiction and Television's Impact

****Media**** is a real thing; people who watch these things live in a completely different world! It's a strange addiction that requires ****media addiction rehabilitation****. Many people spend over 30 hours on these things per week without realizing it. By watching these things, we are changed to resemble them and thus become slaves.

****Television is a great trap of the devil to steal our families and our children****. Many homes have broken up because of television. The father wants to watch football or political debates and gets angry, even at his family, for the sake of people he doesn't know, or who don't know or appreciate him. The mother has her show, and the children want children's shows; and the television is only one! There's no ability to buy two or three. Even if there was, the family divides; God is not the ruler, but unknown actors are. Now, what do you think will happen if not daily arguments in that house? Those who can afford it have put TVs in every room, even the kitchen, but they have lost their children. Research has shown that children's behavior is greatly affected by what they see on television. Many parents cry. Many organizations, including religious ones, urge parents to ****monitor and control**** the programs their children watch on television. One parent said, 'The government should help us!' How will the government help? Is it buying people televisions or will it come and control how we watch it in our homes? Since there's no space to write much, someone who can should look more on YouTube for "captivated by media." What if we put our love for God this way? That is, all our hearts, all our strength, all our minds, and all our souls?! I have asked God to help me turn this desire for these things to Him, so that my brain may grow. TV or media loses 10 IQ points; the brain works less than even someone who uses marijuana. A person can amuse themselves to death, poor thing, without

knowing (amusing ourselves to death). Let the Holy Spirit sweep away all the filth of Media. Hebrews 12:1,2: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Television has some good news and good things, but many are bad, which we truly wouldn't want our children to witness. For example, **robbery, foul language, sex, bad clothing, and murder**. One study said that a child who watches television for four hours every day will have witnessed ten thousand murders a year! The study said that "This child's emotions will die, to the extent that they will pour tea and drink it while witnessing their mother dying!" A child who watches too much crime, in addition to becoming accustomed to it, will also become a criminal, and they will imitate that same language. As we said, children love to imitate the language and actions of adults.

Sometimes at school, a small child, from kindergarten, came to accuse another of wanting to kiss them. I asked where they saw people kissing, and they said on television. I asked where the mother was, and they said the mother comes at night, and I watch that show with 'auntie.' Through TV, many people have come to believe that **sex before marriage, or even within marriage, is not a problem**. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the sex shown on TV is between unmarried people, even if they are not young. This shows that extramarital sex is good and desirable. This is the message our children learn every day!

Alcohol, Time Wastage, and Mental Impact

Alcohol is also widely advertised on television. All actors, bad and good, are shown drinking alcohol. For example, they show that if you want to be happy, you must drink alcohol; if you have a difficult decision, drinking alcohol will open your mind; if you want your mind to calm down or forget your problems, alcohol will calm you. That is why many young people have started drinking alcohol!

TV also **wastes a lot of time**. Many people have become addicted to television. They need rehabilitation. If you watch too much TV, you become lazy or lose the desire to do meaningful things, like reading, especially the Bible. Books lose their

appeal. The mind also becomes dull (**frontal lobe bypass**); it does not think about a matter and analyze it in depth. The mind wants quick solutions, like those on TV. One child said he would rather watch TV all day than play outside, saying outside is boring. The bicycles are the same, the swings and slides are the same! Another 11-year-old child stopped doing schoolwork/homework because of TV. He said, 'I wouldn't get up from the TV; I even forgot my friends.' One mother said that children who watch too much TV lack creativity; "When asked to write an essay at school, they write things or stories they saw on TV. I asked a parent of a child I was teaching at school why their child wasn't doing homework, and this mother said, "Teacher, you'll have to help me; the child can't get up from the TV until you force them to go to bed!" I wondered how I would help, if the parent who bought the TV themselves couldn't control the child.

Because television engages the sensitive part of the brain responsible for thinking (**frontal lobe**), it **harms spiritual impulses, worship, truth, thinking, empathy, good manners, or law-keeping**. TV deals largely with the part of the brain called the **limbic system**. This is involved with things like fear, anxiety, desire, stress, positive thoughts, and cruelty. God gave us this part for good, so we could have fear and run from danger or similar things, but when misused, it doesn't help.

Mobile Devices and Parental Responsibility

Nowadays, **iPods and phones** have come into play, which can be worse than television if not used well, because a child can carry them everywhere and watch them all the time, even when parents are asleep. Some children have stopped listening to sermons or services when they have these devices; these devices are very addictive even for adults. Once we start using them, there's no end; they build a thirst to continue using them. No one who loves these things loves to read their Bible as they should.

Janet Page is Pastor Page's wife. They visited us in Nairobi for a large conference for pastors and their wives. They also oversee the prayer ministry at their church in Maryland. They taught us about prayer and how to raise children. During the question session, one mother asked, "It seems that we parents will go to heaven without our children. Please explain to us how to raise children so we can go to heaven with them." Mama Page answered briefly, "PRAY FOR THEM." But she also added, "When you pray, do your part. Do you have a TV in your home?" She read us our verse from Proverbs 22:6, that "Train up a child in the way he should go,

and when he is old he will not depart from it." She added that you, too, must walk in that 'way.' For example, if you want children to read the Bible, let them see you reading it. If you want them to be people of prayer, let them catch you praying. If you want them to go to church, go with them, and at the appropriate time. Don't take them to school and then go to church yourself! If you don't want them to watch television, then don't send them to bed and stay up watching yourself!

This mother surprised us when she told us that she decided as a young woman that she would not have a TV in her home. When she was being courted, she would give this condition to the boys. Finally, she found Pastor Page, who is her husband to this day. They said they raised their children without a TV in their home! We were very surprised because white people brought TV to us, and we thought they valued it greatly. So are we poor Africans just sitting back and indulging like this? Well, even ****mobile phones****, we need to start knowing how to control them, because they waste our time, and nowadays they have things to watch like or more than TV.

Practical Advice and Media's Global Impact

Perhaps it's impossible to completely discard TV in this century! I remember when our children were young, we decided we wouldn't buy a TV. The children would hide and go watch at the neighbors'. We had to search for them from one neighbor to another! Later, we decided to buy one, so we could control it ourselves at home, because you can't impose rules on a neighbor. Children are afraid of being laughed at and seen as 'different' if they don't have a TV at home. It's true that after a few weeks, they will seem 'different,' because they will be happier, livelier/funnier, calmer, more creative, more physically and spiritually responsible, and more lovable. This depends on the parent, but the advice given is this:

First, young children who have not reached the age of 6 (ages 1-6) should not watch at all.**

Second, children in second grade (age 7) and older should not watch TV on school days, Monday to Friday, but they can watch on weekends, but no more than three programs a day.** If you do this, you will see immediate changes in your child. A

big difference will be seen in their behavior between the days they watch TV and the days they don't.

Third, parents should sit down with their children and look at the schedule of programs offered on TV, according to their child's age.** They should agree on how many and which programs the child will watch per day or per week. They should write them down, and the child should be given the responsibility to check them off every time they watch. This is a good way to teach the child responsibility and self-control. It also helps the child learn to make meaningful decisions.

Fourth, buy a recording machine and record good programs that they can watch in the future.** There are also good DVD tapes that you can buy for children and the family as a whole.

As parents, we have a great responsibility to decide what our children will put into their minds. Remember, if we put good things into our minds, we will reap good things, but if we put bad things, there is nothing else but to reap bad things.

The presence of media makes it harder to instill good character in children. Globalization has caused things happening in one place to spread quickly everywhere. When the wedding of the Queen of England's grandchild was held, "the whole world" was watching. They showed they were living together even before becoming husband and wife. Events of wars, droughts, deaths, censuses, and others around the world are witnessed at the same time or within a few hours. The world is becoming like one village. **Media is good for children to a small extent and dangerous to a large extent.** Media spreads new cultures and changes the things that society values. Watching television for a long time makes a person lose the ability to distinguish between truth and fabricated stories or lies. Television spreads ideas of luxury and buying unnecessary things (extravagance). Laziness flourishes if we sit and watch these things all day. In the past, we told new Christians it was not good to go to movie theaters, as many of what was shown depicted lives of luxury and sin.

Media's Influence on Values and Children's Perception

We are governed by media extensively for bad and good purposes. Many of the values they want to bring to us are related to **money, sex, and power**. These three are what to pay close attention to, for they are what bring down a person of God. Media includes television, radio, cinema, the internet, newspapers, books,

or magazines. These media influence emotions, trends, opinions, and the inclination to love God. My children refused to eat ugali when they were young, saying "Dad, your African food, you'll eat it yourself, we want what's on TV." Many things on TV are junk food, and harmful to health. Are we just going to let our children stare at it?

It is true that there is important information that needs to be educated and inspired, such as science and certain events; however, these media also cross the line of inspiring and giving advice, encouraging and strengthening people's intentions for things that are not good; for example: certain conflicts or wars, or certain fashions that are completely inconsistent with values that help to fear God. Its benefit is very small compared to the harm, and it comes in one package, so you choose yourself! because its evil spreads rapidly.

Due to their age, children do not distinguish the reality of these images. For children under 3 years old, "they think that if the TV person looks at them, they would know what they are doing." Research shows that ****conflict and cruelty and other bad sexual morals have reduced good morals and feelings of empathy****. A child in Western countries, when an adult, can witness more than one hundred thousand murders by watching TV two hours a day.

When we see commercials, after a while we think we need that product. Let's not forget that this is also for adults; TV should be prohibited even for adults. And if it's Christian TV, set viewing hours. Don't sit and watch without reading the word yourself and having a relationship with Christ, just watching preachers all day. Your actions are the best example. Don't wait for the children to go to sleep, then start watching strange pictures, and wake up in the morning tired as if you were in a mine. They will find out!

TV's Cognitive and Spiritual Deterioration

Below two years, their attention and focus are scattered; after that, they make TV a part of play. Eventually, it builds an addiction, and the child thinks that it's an important part of life that they cannot live without. Many say they can manage all this at once (****multitask****); this is not true. It means that things pass quickly without thought, and they make a person not chew on them well in the head. This is a problem if we want to meditate on the word of God. No one should deceive

us that we can send a message (SMS) and at the same time read the Bible, and at the same time watch TV.

The harms of media are far more numerous than the benefits for character building. Children and adults have lost hours of learning work every day due to TV or iPods; they depend on others to cook for them, bring them food, and do all their tasks. In Japan, people have lost the **skill of talking to people and building friendships** because of these devices. If you spend a long time on these devices, you will reduce your attractiveness for fishing for people. Work builds character, not TV. The brain is a muscle; a child or adult who does not do activities and takes in everything the TV person says without thinking, their brain shrinks just as an arm muscle can shrink (Romans 12:1-2). Research showed that when a person starts reading the Bible daily for just 12 minutes a month, their brain expands just as muscles swell when used. What will your brain be like if you read your Bible for one hour a day?!

Some media news is not accurate; it praises humans too much and has bias and discrimination towards what the devil wants us to do. Stories of **promiscuous love, money, homosexuality, lesbianism, AIDS, robbery, illicit sex, quick wealth, broken relationships, inappropriate fashion, witchcraft, drunkenness, occultism, and smoking** are glorified. A person is seen as a hero if they do such evils, or "missed the bus" if they don't. Even if a person has good character, if you teach them bad things over and over that they didn't know and defile their heart, they will imitate. Among the seven films that sold over one billion dollars worldwide in the last 5 years, they involved witchcraft and occult matters. Glorifying witchcraft is rampant worldwide. Many think only Africans have witchcraft, but developed countries do too! They have found many movies that people enjoy talking about occult matters, or people are bored with ordinary things and talk about things that are not real in human life. They started with Superman and things like that, and now they are in pictures of strange faces, and even strange children's toys. Some, when you look at them, you would think they are some kind of demons. Glorifying evil happens without a person knowing! A person finds themselves singing bad commercial songs without thinking because it has a good sound, for example, "Drink Chibuku, good beer x2!". Come on, composers, compose good commercial songs to praise God, and put up billboards to uplift Jesus. I have seen many people put up billboards with the word of God in their homes, especially those living on the streets, and people passing by read them. Let's work; the night is not far off.

One doctor put up a billboard at his place "JESUS is coming soon, do you want to talk about this?". He got over 100 people who called him, and he studied the Bible with ten and they were baptized. Don't waste time reading other people's billboards or advertisements; put out your own to uplift Jesus, even on TV if you get money, put up ads to uplift Jesus.

TV's Harmful Content and Parental Control

Many TV programs lack educational content for children, especially here in Africa, and if they are shown, it's when children are at school or out of the house. For example, Tanzania's TBC thought entertainment and dramas were in prime time. A red romantic drama of betrayal, jealousy, and fake life was shown when children were at home.

****Images of murder strengthen the habit of killing and cruelty**.** Human life becomes worthless. The viewer can learn and be infected by these behaviors.
****Pornographic images (promiscuity) awaken a tendency towards cruel behaviors, including sexual cruelty.**** You cannot watch these images often and not change.

Young children develop a distorted view due to their immaturity. Conflict and cruelty take a large part, especially for those who already have that tendency. Movies, videos, and computers increase this emotional state and habit of violence. They become not lovers of solutions or peace. When they see an act of intercourse, they build within themselves the tendency to commit this act indiscriminately and become prostitutes or rapists. In general, ****television is not a friend of a person who loves God because its programs are centered on impure sex, conflict, drunkenness, cruelty, pornography, worldly pleasures, foul language, and bad behavior.****

People become very reluctant to read scriptures or anything good. The tendency to read academic books becomes low. They are only viewers and not doers. Curiosity, attention, or analysis becomes very low. People become lazy at work and waste a lot of time on useless things. Family time decreases between husband and wife or children; children are raised by the media.

Family members watching TV or computer games have no basic communication with each other; conversations cease, and our need to watch TV increases. TV becomes like a nanny for children. After a while, children prefer watching TV to talking to their father or mother. The family does not play together, does not

discuss. It breaks down the bridges of family closeness. Every human heart has holes and much sadness; watching TV or having things is not one of the things that will fill those holes, but rather a relationship with God by taking time to pray and consecrating oneself.

Advertising's Influence and Resisting Media's Grip

****Commercial advertisements**** feature products, artists, luxuries, competitions, festivals, and beauty with a "popular" culture, and a person is rewarded or praised for doing evil. They give the customer the feeling that it doesn't matter what you buy; happiness is found by buying the product they are promoting.

The harms of media include having many things that do not help to inspire the fear of God. After watching TV, or reading many books or magazines, a person finds no pleasure at all in reading the word of God or praying! Just try it, you will see for yourself! We can never be built to read the word of God by media! Moreover, if everyone is addicted to television, who will you reach with the word of the Lord as a layperson?

To protect oneself from media means ****prohibiting TV in your home**** unless you are a full-time police officer, or put a lock on it? I have seen children waking up in the middle of the night or parents leaving and watching TV, iPods, internet (computers). Some people have 900 channels! You cannot be like a prison guard to guard children, preach, and watch TV successfully with all your tasks, until you set your intention. However, nowadays in Africa, pictures of half-naked girls and cruelty are shown every day openly in commercial advertisements on public TV. Media has the power of a flood. Even laypeople have fallen into those traps. Wise things to watch are very rare, and so it's better to prohibit them. As a parent, if you want to leave your computer in the living room or TV, make sure you have a good understanding of what is needed so you can control it effectively. A parent should know the philosophy, effects, benefits, programs, and their timing, and also all the tapes that enter their home. But I don't know how you will avoid commercials? Because many poisons have started to be introduced there.

Also, address the media stakeholders with your opinions on things that lack morals because you are a customer by listening to or reading their businesses. It is important for a layperson to know the power of media on its participants and its

culture or spiritual life. Nowadays, even buses have radios with very foul words and songs. We must live on our knees!

All this I weighed and saw that I could not do it; for me, we turn off the TV, I have young children. We turn off the TV; we only put on educational tapes, sermons, or songs when I am present. We have removed ordinary channels, through sweat and detective work. What if you have guests in your home and they want to watch bad things, will you forbid them or respect them and let them continue watching at your place? You must discuss it before they come to visit! Nannies watch dirty pictures, and children are also present; this is a problem. I saw in Tanzania one day on TV, we were in the living room with someone and his in-law and small children. Everyone stared at the TV and shameful things! But no one wanted to turn it off! They felt ashamed in their hearts.

TV has become a small god. If your child curses with TV's obscenities, you get angry, but TV can say any garbage, and we continue to stare at it. Woe to us and TV!

Comprehensive Harms of TV and the Alternative

In general, TV **reduces academic interest, increases sadness, reduces creativity, increases anxiety and emotional illnesses, makes a person lazy, increases obesity, affects reading and speaking, increases addiction to bad things because of commercial advertisements, harms the brain; watching TV for one hour loses 22 minutes of life just as one cigarette loses ten minutes of life**. TV increases sadness, thoughts of suicide and killing people, increases divorce, reduces love, increases brain atrophy (Alzheimer's). In general, it **hinders a person's brain usage for evangelism**. In France, TV is prohibited by law for children under 3 years old. This is because it causes brain stagnation. Bertrand Russell said that Media (cinema) is more than communism has brainwashed people. Children or adults should use their thoughts deeply (**thoughtful thinkers**) and not reflect other people's words (**reflectors**). People give actors honor, their love, money, and time. Actors have become high priests of the new media religion. The head of this religion is the one who opposes Christ in the great battle of good and evil. A person's thoughts, tastes, and desires are controlled by people they have never seen. They become like someone who has been taken captive, because what Hollywood people value becomes theirs now. Satan has created a world where people live in their thoughts. This world is artificial and against God's plan

of salvation for us. In this world, there are artificial pleasures (**fantasy**), and against God's plan. Those artificial pleasures are channels for escaping from God. This addiction is not chemical, but of thoughts entering the head (**process**). Phones and media have become people's bread, and people have left the bread of life. Even those who confess God and Jesus as Lord have been serving this false bread to feed their minds. We should be close to what is holy (**pure holy pleasure**), meaning we should have joy in God's plan. This will give us true joy, meaning in life, purpose for living, and lasting peace that surpasses understanding. Psalm 119:103, Proverbs 27:7. Look more online for "Media on the brain - Mini seminar." Pray silently where you are; do not trust yourself, but claim the promise of 1 Corinthians 10:5,6: "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." Let us not think that if circumstances are good or peaceful, we will obey God and abandon the devil's traps! Adam and Eve had better circumstances than us; they spoke face to face with God, but they allowed the evil one to come with his traps or media. Start fasting from media; when you consecrate yourself, remove them completely, perhaps only when necessary on certain days, and on other days filter what you will engage with, and let it be for a short time only. Above all, implore God to trouble and disturb you with the message of Philippians 4:8 and those eight criteria! Ask yourself those criteria every time. And implore God to put enmity between you and evil "distracting media."

Raising Children and Modern Education

Then He will give us the strength to surrender to Him. Our children need people to talk to them. Help handicapped children personally as a parent to find ways. Talk to teachers and special institutes of help. **Discipline is not an exact science; no one will be able to say "I have devised a disciplinary system that will work anytime anywhere with any child." Communication is important in discipline.** Talk to your kids about why you feel strongly about what they have done in a calm voice; assure them you are sure you love them, but what they did was bad, not that they are bad. Spanking should be used rarely. Men tend to be tougher disciplinarians than women; women need to step aside if they have a loving and responsible husband. Travelling parents.

Today's **education** is also a matter to pay close attention to. The Prussian government once openly stated that the education provided in many places is to help a person become suitable for manual labor in that area and loses a person's individuality. Pay close attention to how you teach your children; do not deprive them of their creativity. Many children have good creativity before going to school, but when they go to school, they are lumped together and forced in one way or another to be the same. One community of people called the **Amish** can be looked up online. These people came from Germany and believe that technology like electricity and other things does not help them much in growing spiritually. This Amish community does not ride in cars, has no electricity, phones, or modern things. They ride horses, and their other services are like those of the 1800s before electricity. When these people start their businesses, 95% succeed, because they have not involved themselves in following people; while ordinary people only succeed 15%. In the past, people did not go to school all day and did many creative and wise things to help the community. They helped advise people in their communities and discovered tools and much of science when they were young. Nowadays, people go to school for many years but are not helpful to the nation or themselves. I think we have discussed this a bit in 'emotional intelligence.' People who don't just have academic intelligence, which is difficult to apply to real-life situations, but intelligence that helps their communities for good and peace. The farewell speech of the first President of the United States, George Washington, when analyzed, was said to be at a 19th-grade level, although he only went to fifth grade. Thomas Jefferson's speech, who helped write the constitution, when taken and analyzed, was said to be from a person who attended 25.8 grades, while President George Bush's farewell speech in 2008, when evaluated, showed his ability was like that of a fifth grader (Scott Ritsema: Unschooled - Belt of Truth Ministries). For a person to be happy, healthy, and have meaning in life, they must be given the opportunity to be creative.

TV's Erosion of Values and Childhood Toys

TV is more than just entertainment; it washes away everything in our brains and brings other things into the brain. **TV causes moral erosion.** If you must have it, don't put it in the bedroom; put it in the open. If you look at commercials critically, do they really deliver what they promise? Learn to read books instead of sitting and watching other people's thoughts. And if you must watch, watch things that are physically helpful, like health, or spiritually. Things that offer

meaningful teachings. If you have an addiction, stop completely. When people watch TV, it's as if they've been taken captive; they don't even see who is coming in or what they are saying. It's better to be wise about good things and ignorant about bad things. Start by taking TV away from your children when they are young; they will thank you for reading instead of being lured by other people's thoughts. Talk to those who have television programs about their programs and which ones to remove. Programs of violence, promiscuity, and others are poison to society and our children. A child who grows up believing that hitting a wife or husband is okay will have a lot of trouble, especially in today's life where people have no patience like marriages of old that endured much, and because many women had no jobs or ownership of any kind. One man loved a woman very much and wrote her 700 letters, but the girl did not want him; in the end, she married the postman who used to bring letters to her house.

We need to ask God to show us our sins, then give us the desire to change, and then give us the strength to surrender to Him.

"Turmoil in the Toybox" and Modern Toys

Turmoil in the Toybox - or the frustrations resulting from dolls: for children's health, parents must consider the dolls (toys and cartoons)** they buy for their children. Modern dolls such as He-Man, Barbie, Cabbage Patch, Care Bears, Dungeons and Dragons, Thundercats, and many others.

CHAPTER 47

PHYSICIANS AS EVANGELISTS

This section discusses the importance of health practitioners being evangelists, combining physical and spiritual services. It begins by defining the word "pharmakeia" as sorcery, emphasizing the fine line between true healing and witchcraft in many cultures, especially in Africa.

The author states that health practitioners should wear two hats: spiritual and physical. Healing services should not only address the body but also the mind, emotions, and spirit. They give the example of traditional healers' billboards in Africa that promise to treat "problems" instead of actual diseases, and explain that for lay medical practitioners, this is contrary to what they should be doing. The main goal of Christian healthcare workers is for people to know Christ and gain eternal life.

Being called to serve a human being suffering from illness is a high calling. This person should address the body, mind, emotions, and spirit of the patient. They can use modern technology or natural methods like herbs, water, or exercise. ****Compassion**** and ****caring for people**** are essential qualities for a health provider.

The author answers questions about whether a health provider needs a degree or should charge people money. They emphasize that a degree is good, but many without degrees also provide significant health assistance. The intention of healing service should be patient-focused, not self-focused. It's important to serve those who are broken in heart and body, rather than boasting about knowledge or wealth.

More than 60% of people have illnesses related to ****fear**** and ****anxiety****, which involve emotions and the mind. For these patients, it's good for the provider to speak to them with love and gentleness. It's important to show empathy and acknowledge their problems, and to direct them to God as a refuge and help.

The author emphasizes the importance of ****humbling oneself**** and helping the needs of others, without boasting because of education. Greatness in life is closely related to serving others. Examples of prophets and the Messiah show the importance of selfless dedication.

Research shows that 77% of patients are eager to be prayed for by those who care for them. While it might be difficult to pray for all 50 patients a day, it's important to interview the patient beyond just giving them medicine. Giving medicine without knowing the patient's real problems, beyond the physical illness, reduces the help. Questions like "How did this illness start?" or "Was there any sad event that caused this?" can help. Patients need to be reminded of their value and to have hope.

Physicians often have many patients and little time. The author advises assigning a nurse or another caregiver who can take time to talk to patients and get to know their lives. They give an example of a doctor who discovered the real reason for a mother's high blood pressure was her daughter's suicide.

1500 studies have shown that people recover faster by reading God's Word, Prayer, and attending church services. Not only patients need prayer, but doctors themselves do too. Prayer brings blessings to both sides.

When doctors leave school, they face the challenge of learning many diseases until they gain experience. Many don't learn nutrition well, and they're taught to give medicine for a commission. The intention of health practitioners should be to ****exalt Jesus**** in healing ministry. They are not gods, but they have a unique opportunity to exalt God, even more than pastors, because people confide their secrets in them and build hope in them.

A health provider should focus on ****prevention**** more than treatment, teaching healthy habits and the 10 health principles. The work of health providers should be done by those with a ****calling to serve people****, not just for employment or because there's no other job.

A health provider should be a person who cares about humanity, not someone who loves money. The author gives a terrifying example of a doctor who refused to help a child hit by a car because it was almost closing time for the clinic, and later discovered that child was his own son. This emphasizes the importance of ****compassion**** and ****dedication**** regardless of personal interests.

Health providers should pray daily for God to show them what to do, especially when they are tired and overwhelmed with work. It's important to know the limits of human endurance and to seek God's wisdom to protect oneself from exhaustion.

Diseases have increased due to the deviation from health laws, traditions, customs, and fashions that contradict natural creation. Many people seek to eliminate illness by taking medication without investigating the source of the problem. Many pharmaceutical drugs only calm symptoms; they don't remove the disease. God created the body to heal itself (80% of all diseases heal on their own). Providers should tell people to address the sources of diseases, such as alcohol, cigarettes, or coffee.

The author discusses in detail the harms of alcohol and drugs, giving the example of Kenya where the government collects taxes from alcohol but spends a much larger amount treating its effects. They quote the book of Proverbs explaining the harms of wine and emphasize that there is no reason for anyone to use alcohol or drugs and harm others. Physicians should talk to patients about all the harms of intoxicants and advise them to quit completely.

Physicians and other health providers should work with God, for He is the healer. They should not deceive people into thinking they have the power to heal. ****God is the Great Physician****, who heals physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. Health providers are God's agents. It's important not to be proud and to recognize that blessings come from God. Some diseases are caused by spiritual matters, so a provider should know how to differentiate. It's important not to be ashamed to pray with a patient, as it removes fear and shows that you care.

Sickness, pain, and death are the devil's work. God wants us to succeed spiritually and physically. Health providers should teach patients how to work with God and abandon habits that harm the body, mind, or spirit. ****Obeying God's commands is the greatest way to a healthy life.****

A health provider who wants to work effectively with their Creator will strive to increase knowledge and skills in every aspect of their work. Those who find this work unsuitable should choose another profession. Those with a calling but insufficient education should take on other healthcare service jobs while continuing to seek learning opportunities.

New physicians should do good work and gain experience. It's important for a health provider to read God's Word because they work with the Creator. The author urges providers to examine their hearts to see if they are only greedy for money or if they truly care for patients. They give a sad example of nurses who

don't care for patients, emphasizing the importance of **compassion** and **love** in service.

Illness should not just be treated with medicine; it's important to investigate its source. Medicine is poison and should be used rarely and only in emergencies. Illness is the body's way of telling you that something needs to be corrected. It's more of a friend than an enemy. Every human being should be educated about **simple remedies** and to abandon unhealthy habits

Health is not a matter of luck; it requires great **discipline** and preparation. The author uses the example of athletes who watch their diet. They emphasize that we must control our bodies and not let our bodies control us. Physicians should be examples in the community, living lives of self-control and purity.

The author encourages the use of simple remedies, using the example of Naaman and the Jordan River. They give an example of "Life Speaks" from the Australian Medical Association, a package used to treat people without pills or injections, which includes things like sleep, nutrition, quitting smoking, and spiritual support.

It is said that 90% of all diseases originate in the brain. Actual diseases like obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, or heart disease can originate from stresses that cause negative thoughts. The author encourages praying to God to help you be sensitive to people. Healing needs to address the body, mind, and spirit together, like the legs of a stool.

CHAPTER 48

HOME AND FAMILY WORSHIP

There are three important schools for teaching a child. The first and most important school is the ****home****. Besides teaching a child good manners like obedience, gentleness, love, respect, responsibility, etc., the most crucial lesson is to teach them to ****love and fear God****. The best time to impart this lesson is during ****home worship****. Home worship is very important. It is saddening that many homes, even Christian ones, do not practice worship or even prayer at home. One day, I asked my students if they had family prayers in the morning or evening. Only two out of twenty children said they prayed in the evening! Children, even those of church elders and deacons, said they don't have joint prayers, except during mealtime!

Many of us only offer perfunctory prayers during meals. Often, we don't even think about what we're saying, except for a few words we've memorized since childhood: "God, we know how to cook but we cannot bless; now we ask You to bless this food in Jesus' name, amen." This is the prayer we offer for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, Sunday to Saturday, January to December. Children imitate this prayer until they grow up and will pray the same way with their children, unless a spiritual awakening occurs in their lives.

****Why many Christians don't practice home worship and prayer, even powerful evangelists in their pulpits?**** Many reasons are given, such as the following: Firstly, ****lack of time for prayer****. Everyone is busy. There's no time to sit down, read the Bible, and pray as a family. Some don't even see the benefit of praying because they can do everything by their own strength.

Secondly, ****people's schedules are different****. It's impossible to gather the whole family at once to pray. Some arrive home very late at night; it's difficult to wait for everyone to have family worship. Thirdly, ****many don't see the need****. They lack the vision of the blessings and benefits of having family prayers. One person told me, "It's enough to go to church once a week and pray there." Fourthly, ****some don't know where to start or end****. They don't know how to lead this worship. These reasons might seem valid, but seriously, do we understand who God is in our lives? That He is the one who enables us to do these activities? He gives us health, strength, and the ability to go here and there. He says in John 15:5, "...Without me you can do nothing." If you depend on someone, say for food,

tuition, rent, and other needs, you will undoubtedly value that person greatly. You will obey them and do everything they ask.

"I don't have time!" You don't have time to do what God requires? That's a matter of ****priority****. Remember: ****THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO MAKE THE IMPORTANT THING IMPORTANT.**** Putting God first in everything is the most important thing in our lives. That's why we are powerless. I read a story about a man who was vacuuming a large meeting hall using a large electric machine. Unfortunately, this man was deaf, so he couldn't hear the machine roaring. He pushed the machine without knowing that the power was out! The poor man got tired for nothing! The difficulty of gathering people together for prayer is a ****scheduling problem****. Set a time for prayer and try very hard to keep it. God will help you. Where there's a will, there's a way. When planning prayer time, it's important to consider the following: ****The age of the children (if any), the age of other people you live with, their work, and the time they arrive home.****

****Lack of vision and mission**** is what causes us not to see the importance of having a meaningful time of fellowship with our God. If you have a partner, would you get tired of talking to them? Would you wait to see them only once a week, especially if they live near you? You would want to be with them always, and if they are far away, you would call them frequently. If your problem is not knowing how to lead prayer worship at home (technique), then read books, and ask your pastor; he will help you. Here are a few pieces of advice.

Practical Advice for Home Worship:

First, if you have young children, choose a time when they are not overwhelmed by sleep. When our children were young, we used to pray before dinner. Many people, even adults, get sleepy as soon as they are full. In truth, there are no specific rules; it's good for each family to plan their schedule according to what they see fit and prefer. Also, try to keep it brief if the children are young, but don't rush so you can watch TV or do something else. If you do that, you will teach the children that prayer is not very important.

Secondly, have ****variety****, and this requires great creativity and planning. Many people say their home worship is boring because the routine is the same every day. Change the routine, especially if you have young children; you need to be a teacher. Play Bible games, draw and color, compete in memorizing verses, learn

new songs, act out some Bible stories, etc. These are just a few examples. There are many children's books; buy them, they will help you.

Thirdly, ****involve the children (child-centered)****. Let the children recite memory verses, sing special songs, give testimonies, and also pray. Don't teach an adult lesson when you have children. Find your own time to read your lesson. Children have their own lessons, and they are very good. They teach step by step and have daily activities for children. Try at least to buy them their lessons according to their age.

****Divide the days according to needs:**** A day to pray for family needs, relatives, and friends; a day to pray for God's work, pastors, and missionaries. Pray for revival and reformation in your home. If we are revived at home, we will also have a church with an awakening. You can follow the following routine, although you can add or change it.

****Prayer:**** - time to talk to God. ****Bible:**** - In prayer, we talk to God, but God speaks to us through the Bible. Read the Bible according to the age of the children. Don't just read for the sake of it. Make it engaging and meaningful for children, even when they are young. As I said, this requires great creativity and preparation.

*** **Songs:**** - Our children today love songs with beats. It's important to teach them hymns of praise at home.

*** **Books:**** - Use devotional books; there are many, even for children. These simplify the work because they are written in understandable language and have good children's stories.

As much as you can, try very hard to have home worship at least once a day. If possible, twice: morning and evening will be very beneficial.

****The great benefit of joint family prayers**** is having a good time to talk, praise God, and discuss family matters together. Also, to thank Him for answered prayers. Children learn that God answers prayers. My friend had prayed with his children about a certain financial need. As soon as they finished, the phone rang, and they found a message saying that someone they didn't know had sent them the exact amount of money they needed! My friend was very surprised, and his young child asked him, "Dad, why are you so surprised, when we just finished praying now, didn't God answer our prayers?"

Worship is like answers according to how God has revealed Himself to you. God revealed Himself to us, and it is our duty to respond. My husband and I are still struggling with this, and REVIVED BY HIS WORD has helped us as we read the Bible together and the Blog every day. See where you can find a solution because we cannot serve God without knowing Him and telling people to worship and offer sacrifices of praise to God from Hebrews, and we are not doing so.

CHAPTER 49

PREPARATION TO RECEIVE THE LATTER RAIN

The book by Pastor Dennis Smith, which is available online to anyone, “40 Days Prayers and Devotions to Prepare for the Second Coming,” is one of the excellent 40-day prayer vigils for two laypeople to join together in praying for the baptism of the Holy Spirit as they prepare for the coming of Christ. Sister Eunice Mwavua from Kenya and Sister Rosa Serrano from Spain blessed me by joining in prayer and reflection for 40 days on the topic of Being Filled with the Holy Spirit, as we await Christ's return. For those who read English, read this book and take time with a companion to pray.

Jesus said in Matthew 18:19, “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

There is a place for private prayer, which is the secret to spiritual victory. However, united prayer brings strength and has its own unique blessings, just as Christ told us. Find a prayer partner and reflect on God's Word in the Bible or in a selected book such as Pastor Dennis Smith's 40-day devotional.

Iron sharpens iron. You help each other, advise one another, discuss, and pray together. In many prayers, we must labor for the souls of people to reach their hearts. It is Christ who brings conviction—not us.

The work of the Holy Spirit in us is to bring us to true repentance, to lead us to choose Christ and be baptized in water. Once we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we will be able to live the Christian life and do His work. Jesus said He would pray to the Father, and the Father would give us a Helper to live with us forever. This Helper will dwell within us (John 14:16-17).

Being filled with the Holy Spirit is a necessary gift for every believer today. Jesus was born of the Spirit of God, was led by the Spirit, and was baptized with the Spirit (Luke 4:1-15). Christ gives us hope that we, too, will do the works He did while on earth, led by the Spirit (John 14:12). Dear ones, have you been filled with the Holy Spirit and are you doing the works Christ sent us to do? If that is your desire, join me in this prayer:

“Father, I thank You for helping me accept Jesus as my Savior. I ask You to forgive my sins. I surrender 100% to Christ. I thank You for the promise to fill me with Your Spirit. I now claim the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Help me, Jesus, to dwell in my heart and have the character of Jesus. I claim Your promise to fill me with Your Spirit so that I may serve You, in the glorious name of Jesus; Amen.”

Jesus promised His disciples that they would be filled with His Spirit fifty days after His resurrection (Pentecost), or ten days after His ascension (Acts 2:1-4). The baptism of the Spirit was not only for the disciples at Pentecost but for every Christian throughout all ages. For believers who were not present during Pentecost, the Spirit continued to be poured out (Acts 10:44-47).

Baptism in the Holy Spirit and sanctification are essential for lay leaders and all believers so that we may live lives of spiritual growth by grace and bear the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we gain a deep desire to study the Word, live a life rich in prayer, experience genuine inner repentance, and abandon habits or activities that hinder our spiritual growth. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is vital for the believer to gain victory in Christ. It doesn't matter if we know Bible doctrines or serve in church ministry. What matters is knowing Christ intimately and being baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Christ would rise early in the morning to pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit each day. He prayed for His lips to be anointed and for God's grace so that He could serve others. After coming to know Christ, the next step is to know the Holy Spirit and be filled daily (2 Corinthians 4:16). When the Spirit of God reigns in our lives, He transforms us completely. Evil thoughts and deeds are replaced with thoughts of love, humility, and peace. Anger, jealousy, quarrels, unforgiveness, and complaining disappear, and the joy of Christ fills us. We are in Him and He in us—it is no longer we who live, but Christ in us. We become His hands, His feet, His mouth, and carry out His works—preaching, teaching, healing, and casting out demons. (John 14:16-17; Galatians 2:20; 1 John 3:2)

Another reason for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is to enable us to witness and obey God's commandments. This obedience comes from within the heart, not just

outwardly. Our thoughts, intentions, choices, will, goals, and everything we are must align with Him. Obedience is better than sacrifice. The Lord desires hearts that are broken and contrite, not mere lip-service worship. If we allow Christ to rule in our hearts, obedience will come naturally—it will be the impulse of our lives.

We can grieve the Spirit if we fail to ask to be filled daily and to follow His guidance. This will cause us to stagnate spiritually. Ephesians 4:24-32 and 1 Thessalonians 5:14-19 guide us to reflect on this. Where we have grieved or quenched the Spirit, we must confess.

Psalm 51:9-12 and Ephesians 3:16-19 speak of this:

“Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation.”

At all times, we must confess our sins with true repentance.

It is important to walk daily with the Spirit of God so that we may grow and be prepared to receive the latter rain described in the book of Joel. We must reform to receive the Spirit by confessing all sins of pride, selfishness, greed, and love of the world. It is said that we cannot receive the latter rain unless we have received the early rain—and the preparation is now. (Acts 2:16-18; Acts 3:19). We need the Spirit of God to grow in grace daily and to crucify the old self.

Christ is coming soon, and the signs are evident. These signs are not only earthquakes, wars, and famines but also the outpouring of God’s Spirit. Only those who are sealed will be able to stand at His coming (Revelation 7:1-3; Ephesians 4:20). Are you sealed? The Holy Spirit is the One who seals us. If we fully surrender our lives to Christ daily and continue to walk with His Spirit—who seals us—we will be ready for the second coming of Jesus.

Christ is Eagerly Waiting for His Character to Be Fully Revealed in Us

Christ is eagerly waiting for His character to be fully manifested in us. When this character of God is born in our hearts, He will come to take us. Being baptized with His Spirit is what enables this to happen in our lives. The Holy Spirit is the

one who prepares us for all the battles of the last days. Today, God invites us to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit so that we may have the strength and zeal to pray.

Many Christians have known the importance of prayer for many years and have prayed because of problems or emergencies. But when those emergencies or trials pass, we return to a life of self-sufficiency. We pray little, and we receive little. But when we are baptized with His Spirit, the intent of our prayers becomes His will, as described in Philippians 2. Jesus would wake up to pray—deep prayers and fellowship with His Father—until He could say, “I and the Father are one” (Luke 6:12-13; John 10:30; 14:10, 14). Take time to pray; we see the apostles also prayed. Prayer was the core of their ministry: “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word,” “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 6:4; 2:42; 16:3; 2 Thessalonians 3:10).

The ministry of prayer is vital in our fellowship. The Bible says, “My house shall be called a house of prayer,” not a place for preaching, cooking, or drama—though these are not sinful. Small groups should meet midweek in homes, inviting others to pray and seek the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Small groups are God’s own plan, for even Christ had 12 disciples as a small group, and the apostles continued meeting together to break bread and study the Scriptures.

Because the apostles were people of prayer, they were powerful in the Lord. They were given power by the Spirit of God to perform miracles and take the gospel to the whole world. The Lord calls all believers to fully dedicate themselves to being prayer warriors. Praying to be filled with the Holy Spirit and interceding for others is essential to the Christian life. Many things will not happen unless we pray. Prayer changes circumstances, changes us, and changes situations. Jesus gave us the command, “Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Matthew 9:36-38). He urged us to pray and not lose heart.

If prayer made no difference, we wouldn’t have been commanded repeatedly to pray (2 Thessalonians 3:1). Our prayers are crucial for God’s will to be done in our lives and in the lives of those we pray for. It is God’s plan to work with humanity—prayer allows us to speak with God and work with Him. We are advised to pray in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18), meaning to be guided by His Spirit.

Believers who gather in prayer fulfill an important Christian duty. They unite in one purpose—to pray for something specific. If they cannot be in the same place, they can pray together over the phone. Looking at James 5:14-16, we see that if someone is sick or in trouble, they should call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil. We were not created to always stand alone in battle against the devil. Group prayer breaks down the devil's strongholds. A cord of three is stronger than one. Five will chase a hundred, and a hundred will chase ten thousand. I thought the verse would say a hundred would chase two thousand! But the number increases exponentially when we are together—this is what the Westerners call “synergy.”

The Lord has done great things for me because of the warmth of others—had I been alone, the fruits would have been small (Ecclesiastes 4:12; Leviticus 26:8; 1 John 5:14-15). When we want to stand alone in battle against Satan, we can easily be defeated. There is great need for fellowship in prayer with others (Matthew 18:19-20).

Let us not grow weary but continue without giving up. Many times, we want instant results, but our patience is small. Jesus said, “We ought always to pray and not lose heart.” As we wait for Christ's return, we must learn perseverance and patience.

God has more than trillions of ways to solve our problems. Those who have surrendered to Him and trust in Him will not be disappointed. We grow weak in faith and strength when we lose heart in prayer; we let go of God's hand too quickly. We must continue praying, believing that we will receive what we ask. Elijah was a man like us, but he prayed fervently. His faith was tested, and he prevailed. He prayed seven times, and finally, he saw the cloud of rain. Let us ask the Spirit of God to help us persevere in prayer without giving up.

Interceding for others is vital—it is the ministry Jesus carried out and has given to us to continue (2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Hebrews 7:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-3). Jesus continues to pray for us in the prayer of John 17:20-21—that we may be one as He is with the Father. The apostles and prophets never stopped praying for people—we see Samuel praying for Saul, and Paul praying for all believers (Colossians 1:9; 1 Samuel 12:23). We learn that we must pray for one another, and it is a sin not to pray for others.

Let us not only pray for our relatives and close friends, but for all who are perishing or in trouble—those we know and even those we don't, such as people in the news. Prayer makes a huge difference. We must pray for those in darkness. The enemy convinces us that our prayers don't matter for those in darkness or trouble. Quick, casual prayers will not break down the thick walls of Satan. We must find time to pray.

Prayer is important because people are perishing without knowing, and they have no power to change their situation—they are bound by chains and covered in great darkness and blindness. They need to be set free first, then taught more. Let us pray that God draws them to Himself, gives them the desire to know Him, helps them believe in His Word, delivers them from blindness, and allows the Spirit to work in them so they may leave sin, believe in Christ, and then obey Him in order to be rooted and grow in the grace of Christ. There is a need to mingle with people, to show that we care, and to minister to their needs—this will build trust, and then we can invite them to follow Christ.

Everyone has some kind of pain or problem they are struggling with. Let us be willing to take time to connect with people, eat with them, work with them, and understand their tears. Then we will be able to reach them because they will have seen that we care and love them.

Abiding in Christ is a crucial teaching in Christianity that we must understand and teach to those we reach. Everything is rooted in our being in Him and He in us (John 15). Many have desired to walk faithfully with Christ, but sin has entangled them. They've read their Bibles but feel they are not experiencing victory. After many years, they grow weary and leave the faith.

The life of victory over sin has seemed impossible—just as we read in Romans 7 (please read the whole chapter). “The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so” (Romans 8:7). The good they want to do, they don't do; and the evil they don't want to do, they end up doing. Every Christian faces these battles daily. It's not new even to those we consider “saints.” Perhaps that will be the greatest reward in heaven—that the struggle of Romans 7 will finally be over.

But one day, they discovered the secret to victory: abiding in Christ. They began to walk in the Spirit and no longer fulfilled the desires of the flesh. When they

discovered this, they were amazed at how easy the journey became. Their joy in the Lord was deep and lasting. They found that if they let the Lord carry them, they didn't struggle so much anymore. Their old self was crucified, and they were no longer slaves to sin. These things became real when they lived by faith. Their anger, unforgiveness, wrong attitudes, evil desires, or lack of love died at the cross. They lived victorious lives because that burden had been lifted. They no longer saw ministry as a burden or worried about it.

Today, we must rediscover this secret, because Christ is at the door. When the truth is understood and discovered, every believer will shout with joy, "Christ has done all the wonders!" Man cannot gain victory over sin or temptation by his own power. All the glory goes to God—and this is the eternal trumpet that will ring forever.

We must understand that it is Christ who gives us victory, and not the works of the law (legalism). We need to have the mind of Christ as stated in Philippians chapter two. Let the layperson take time to deeply study what it means to be saved by faith (justified by faith) and sanctification. Martin Luther, the hero of the Reformation in Germany, began a journey of digging into these very words.

How shall we overcome temptations? Let us choose to quickly divert our thoughts from temptations, pray to the Holy Spirit, and not look back—Philippians 4:8. Let us believe that the power of the sinful nature and its desires has been broken. Let us believe that Jesus lives in us, and ask Him to reveal His character. Let us believe that He will manifest Himself to us and fight for us; let us be still and not focus our thoughts on struggling with the temptation—Hebrews 12:1,2. Let us thank Him for saving us and giving us victory over the temptation we have faced.

We are to return God's Word to Him in prayer, that is, to pray based on His promises. We should ask, believe, and claim—ABC: Ask, Believe, Claim. Examples are found in Matthew 7:7, Mark 11:24, and John 11:41-43. God is not a man that He should lie, for He has promised, and nothing is too hard for us when we pray according to His promises or His Word—He answers us. In 2 Chronicles 20:6-12, we see a good example of praying based on the Scriptures.

Jehoshaphat glorified God, then recalled how He had helped in the past, claimed God's promises, and laid out his problem before the Lord. He glorified God even before receiving the answer, knowing that since he prayed according to God's

Word, he would receive by faith before seeing it with his eyes. He did not dwell on the problem alone but on glorifying God, on victory, on the promises, then the problem, and again on praising God.

The work of God will be finished under the leadership of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 24:14; Acts 2:16-18; Joel 2:23). Christ told the apostles that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they would be His witnesses starting in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth—Acts 4:4-8. God will finish His work through believers filled with His Spirit, those who have completely surrendered to Christ and allowed Him to live in them so they can minister to or reach others. Many Christians have waited for the return of Jesus for many years. Why hasn't Jesus come? There are several answers to this question. I will mention a few: God's people are not ready, the gospel has not been preached to warn people, and God's character is not seen in us.

The outpouring of God's Spirit is very important to hasten the coming of Jesus. It is true we can preach, but the work is still very unripe—more than half of the world has not heard of the first coming of Jesus, let alone the second. One preacher said, “We have not fully utilized the power and blessings of asking to be filled with the Spirit so that Jesus may come.”

We are told that in the last days, the spirit of Elijah will be sent (Luke 1:17 and Revelation 14:6-12). John the Baptist was led by the Spirit and did a powerful work after being baptized with the Holy Spirit to prepare the way for Christ's first coming—Luke 1:15. The final Elijah message aims to prepare people for the second coming of Christ.

We see heroes of faith like Paul, who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands by Ananias, which gave him power to preach the gospel everywhere. The Bible says he increased in strength, meaning he was strengthened by the Spirit of God and testified—Acts 9:3-7, 17-18. Like the apostles, he continued to be a man of prayer. People of prayer are people who receive power. He continued to overcome temptation by learning to depend on Jesus and allowing Him to live in him and bring victory. He became a living letter that revealed the character of God.

Church plans, youth programs, community services, evangelistic methods, good choirs, good preachers, or satellite preaching alone are not enough to finish God's

work without the outpouring of His Spirit. We need to be filled with His Spirit more than we think or ask. In Luke 4:18-19, Christ says, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

In Revelation, we see seven churches representing different eras of history. Our time is the era of the Laodicean church, which is a proud church thinking, “I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and does not know it is “wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.”

We are counseled to buy gold refined in the fire. Our Laodicean church is advised to be either hot or cold, but not lukewarm—Revelation 3:14-21. We need the Holy Spirit to be ‘hot’ so we can reach others with the gospel. We are the salt of the earth and must be led by the Spirit to influence others. May the Lord help us realize the danger we are in and pray for His Spirit to bring us revival and reformation so we can be ready when He comes.

Revival is the state of rising from spiritual death, and reformation is the correction of errors in our teachings and practices. True spiritual revival is our greatest and most urgent need. Seeking this revival is our first duty. To receive this revival, we will be enabled by the Spirit of God alone, for Peter, after Pentecost, preached without many tools, and 3,000 people believed in a single day. Peter, who had been self-reliant and impulsive, was baptized with the Holy Spirit and became a man of power. Let us persist in praying for this Pentecostal Spirit so the work can go forward. In Luke 12:49 and 3:16, Jesus says, “I came to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!” What fire was He speaking of, if not His Spirit? John emphasized, “I baptize you with water, but One mightier than I is coming... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” Christ gave the assurance that whoever believes in Him, rivers of living water will flow from within them. This water is the Spirit of God—John 7:38-39. “Whoever” means everyone—both you and me.

Being saved by faith is looking to Jesus. Sanctification is Jesus in us—the hope of glory. Jesus clothing us with His righteousness.

Obedying God’s commandments and abiding in Him go hand in hand. The Ten Commandments will become part of our lives because the Holy Spirit writes them

on our hearts—2 Corinthians 3:3. The Ten Commandments are rooted in love. As we abide in Him, we will live as He lived, because we will continually grow to resemble Him day by day, and thus obey His commandments through the power of His Spirit.

Let us cast away fear, anxiety, and doubt by abiding in Him as we serve. The Word says, “There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” When we enter into God's rest, we cease from working in our own strength. We are baptized by the Holy Spirit and rest in Him all the days of our lives, rejoicing in the beauty of worship in our hearts.

The Relationship Between Small Group Fellowship and the Holy Spirit

There is a strong connection between small group fellowship and the Holy Spirit. When we receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit without being in fellowship—being spiritually and physically nourished—we cannot grow. We see that Christ had a small group of twelve people. He taught them and sent them out into all the world. They lived closely together for three and a half years. Many of us may join a church because of the truth we've learned, which is in our minds, but in Acts 2:42 we are told, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching.” We can have good doctrines and present truth, but if we don’t have fellowship with others in small groups during the week or in their homes, our spiritual fire will go out.

Often, we think we are strong and can stand alone. This has especially affected people in the West, but later, they grew weary, and their children left the faith altogether and never returned! A good example is the faithful believers from England and other countries.

Many people attend church once a week on the day of worship, the Lord’s Day. On this day, relationships and closeness with others are minimal. We greet each other, but we don’t have time to share our struggles or joys. Many grow tired of mid-week services, and even then, they are often sermons without discussions or time for building relationships.

The fellowship of the early apostolic church was spiritual and based on teachings that fostered relational group meetings beyond the worship day. In Acts 2:46-47 we read: “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising

God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Local churches help the larger church grow by adopting such a system. During times of persecution, many communist countries like China or Romania had churches like these. Believers received strength and comfort from each other due to the closeness they shared. Other references to such groups can be found in Acts 20:20 and 1:13, Romans 16:5, 1 Corinthians 16:19, and Colossians 4:15.

Although the disciples lived with Christ for over three years, in Luke 22:24 we see they were not fully converted—self had not died. “A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest.” Indeed, they were in fellowship, but still carried their old nature. However, when they received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, they were completely transformed. Self died and was buried; they were resurrected as new people. From the day of that baptism of the Holy Spirit, they pressed forward and never turned back. They were ready for anything—even death—as long as it pleased God. “We must obey God rather than men.”

One day of fellowship per week cannot match the effectiveness of how the apostolic church functioned. Only small groups can hold worship meetings that help members grow. It is said that a person needs seven friends in a church to grow and keep coming. Believers, led by the Spirit of God, recognized how much they needed each other.

Here in Africa, it's easy to find people to fellowship with since we live interdependently. Even though we form small groups, the local church leader (MKK) should examine and study more on how to develop and bring success to small groups, for it is a vision dear to God's heart.

Small groups minister to each other like the heart, hands, stomach, and other organs working together. Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-12; Ephesians 4:11-16 and 5:18:

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of

healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He distributes them to each one, just as He determines.”

Small groups are like logs in a fire—one log that separates from the rest goes out faster than when it’s with others. They say, “If you want to go fast, go alone; but if you want to go far, go with others.” Do you want to go fast or far?

The word church in Greek is ekklesia, meaning "called out ones." Brothers and sisters, when they respond to the call of the Holy Spirit to accept Christ as their Savior, they join the church. These brothers and sisters in fellowship share their hopes, dreams, struggles, and sorrows. Fellowship (koinonia) in the New Testament meant more than it does today—it meant receiving, communicating, giving, serving, and sharing. This fellowship was a congregation called out by God from the world to become a community of shared faith—giving to one another, serving each other, and communicating.

In an ordinary family, everyone is there to encourage one another through words and actions. If a family met only once a week and said, “Goodbye, go in peace,” until the next week—what would you think of that family? Many Christians believe that one day a week is enough for spiritual fellowship. This is a mistake.

God’s family has many supportive elements, including the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. We minister to one another and benefit from each other’s gifts. The Holy Spirit enables members to support each other, and the likelihood of this happening increases in small groups. It is through people that God shows His love to us. So it will be through Spirit-filled Christians that we experience God’s love. Whether we are Christians or not, it becomes easier to bear each other’s burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).

CHAPTER 50

PROMOTING THE BOY TO BE A PRIEST TO MANAGE HIS HOME (promote the son to be married to male and parents)

Many authors have written books focused on nurturing male children in the faith. Raising boys and raising girls are equally important, though their paths may differ because God has assigned distinct roles to each. God is the perfect Father, and the Bible is the ultimate manual of love and guidance—its teachings remain ever relevant. One of the greatest gifts we can give our children is preparing them to live responsibly and independently, relying on God, contributing to their communities, fulfilling their duties at work, engaging in fellowship, and building strong families.

Today, boys face struggles that are different from those of girls. In the past, much emphasis was placed on uplifting girls—helping them pursue education, support their families, and grow holistically. That investment was important. However, now we must ensure that boys also receive intentional support. When boys are neglected, it creates a dangerous imbalance. Forgotten boys have become vulnerable, and this neglect has become a real concern.

Not long ago, I read a book by a Christian author titled “How to Raise Children Like Cain.” In it, the writer lamented the modern neglect of male children, which has led many to fall into destructive habits like addiction to violent media, drug and alcohol abuse, idleness, lack of ambition, and disinterest in careers. As parents, we must humble ourselves before God and plead for the healing and restoration of our sons—so that they may return to the church and find their place in God’s plan.

Let us not raise boys who follow the path of Cain. Although Cain knew what God desired in a sacrifice, he chose instead to offer produce like cucumbers, pineapples, sesame, and millet—gifts of convenience, not of obedience. We must entrust our sons to God, that He may shape them into young men like Abel, who pleased the Lord and whose offering was accepted. Abel became the first martyr, a man of faith and obedience. Today, we long for boys like Cornelius, the Roman centurion, of whom it was said: “Your prayers and gifts have been accepted by God.”

The calling of a man goes beyond outward appearance. Ezekiel 22:30 shows us that God looks for a man who will stand in the gap, who will repair what is broken. Being a true man according to Scripture involves more than just growing up—it means developing spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically.

To nurture this growth, the boy must be supported and trained through every sphere of his life: in the home, in the neighborhood, in the school, and in the church.

After having children, we must have plans because God has entrusted us with them as stewards. They are our garden to cultivate until they grow and mature. We cannot just sit and assume things will take care of themselves. Food and clothing are not enough to complete the upbringing of children.

Our sons will become leaders in their communities, priests in their homes, and one day, our brothers in heaven. We are preparing our sons to be husbands, fathers, and believers in God's household. This is a journey that requires much time and is rooted in the foundation of God's Word. Our sons will support God's work by opposing abuse of women, female genital mutilation, violence, rape, dowry killings like those in India, gender-based violence, and other such evils.

God's Word is the beginning and the end in parenting (Alpha and Omega). The Word of God is our only safety—both for us as parents and for our children. May you reap the fruit of your labor and your faithfulness to God; may you help your children become heroes who take responsibility and bear much fruit of righteousness. Luke 2:52 says, "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." The teenage years do not have to be years of rebellion and trouble; they can be productive years for the son, the parents, and the community. Let us not grow weary in doing good. For one day, "your father and mother will rejoice, and she who gave you birth will be glad." As parents, we should take our children to gospel or lay seminars; let us not leave them behind. Bring them along to the activities we do for the LORD so they can learn through action and grow to love His work.

Raising a boy who loves God requires commitment. Our sons today face the challenge of lacking diligence—in academics and even manual work. About 90% of farms in Africa are cultivated by adult women. Around 80% of believers in churches are female, and they're the ones often eager to attend school and read books in

many countries. In the past, subjects like math and physics were seen as male domains, and boys would score higher. However, a study by Dr. Nedley in the United States suggests these scores are now evening out with those of girls. He added that many boys today do not feel the need to strive because finding a wife is easy, and there is no longer the same requirement for dowry.

Some girls today are actively seeking men to marry. This has caused many boys to become irresponsible or feel no challenge or drive to pursue goals. The doctor also noted that many boys can live their entire lives depending on their parents or wives until old age. If the wife eventually wakes up and leaves him, she will take the children with her, and the man will return to live off his parents.

Strange things are now happening—even boys undergoing surgeries to change their gender. We know such actions do not solve emotional struggles—it's like putting a bandage on deep emotional wounds. Worse still, the surgery is irreversible. We lack enough information to address these issues adequately, and we know God does not want us to do this. These are human inventions, but if new believers come with such struggles, we must receive them with love and respect, knowing that God wants them to be saved and follow His way. We should not pressure them but wait for God's wisdom or for them to desire help. Also, we cannot deny them fellowship because of this. Let the elders of the church discuss such matters, as they are new and should not be handled through mere human reasoning. We must first be informed and led by the Holy Spirit before we respond to this challenge. This also applies to issues like homosexuality, which we know is sin, clearly stated in the Scriptures. What should we do if someone comes seeking baptism and fellowship? What if such a person is a child in our own home?

A boy is created in the image of God, and he was made before the woman. His purpose was not initially to multiply and fill the earth, but to rule and subdue it. Our sons must first understand this. The boy was given work in the garden even before humanity's fall. Work has been a help to man in curbing his appetites and passions. Without something to do, a person is at great risk. One of Solomon's downfalls was having too much wealth and freedom; this led him to indulge in excessive marriages and pleasures. Where people ate twice a day, he added a third meal, losing self-control and the discipline of manual labor. Work helps one deny self, exercise discipline, and provide for the family. In traditional African culture, it was the son who cared for the parents and was depended on by sisters

and younger siblings—as the provider, advisor, and leader. This practice has declined somewhat.

Though this is a statistic from America, when you see your neighbor's head being shaved, start wetting your own. America often sets trends—even negative ones like same-sex marriage—and other nations easily imitate them. Much of what children see today in media, especially television, is copied, and these media outlets have become surrogate parents. This is dangerous because many media platforms lack spiritual direction—even in their advertisements, speech, and dressing.

When I was a child, it was an insult to call a boy a "girl"; but nowadays even strong and intelligent boys are falling into evil practices like homosexuality—something that was once taboo even among the ungodly. Countries like the Philippines are said to lead in the number of gender-reassignment surgeries for men wanting to become women to make life "easier." This is a result of ignorance about creation. The man was created first and is the head—he is to be honored by the woman. Besides, the woman was the first sinner, and I don't think that's something anyone should find appealing.

Herod killed baby boys. Pharaoh did the same, knowing that eliminating the boys would destroy the nation. Balaam caused the death of 24,000 Israelite men, knowing that if he brought down the men, he'd destroy the nation. God has given boys and men gifts and responsibilities that were not given to girls. So, in raising boys, we must be mindful of this. Fathers should spend time with their sons and teach them through action. It is said that most fathers spend less than four minutes a day talking with their children.

There must be intentional choices in many areas—such as friendships, music, the books we read, the education we pursue, the church we attend, the clothes we wear, and more. As parents, let us read God's Word to find answers and proper standards. Let us also strive to be mature believers and serve together. Even laid-back parents can raise children who love God. Consider Timothy, with his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice, who helped him become a great minister—first as a layman, then as a pastor.

You must have goals and a one-year plan. You can't do everything at once. Create a small roadmap for what you want your children to achieve before they leave

home. When children are young, they are like sponges—absorbing so much. They retain scientific knowledge and memorize a lot. Use this time to teach them from books of creation and the natural world. The teachings of 1 Corinthians 13 on love are crucial for children and us.

Always teach your children about God's creation, not evolution. This must be a priority—1 Corinthians 3:19. Use the help of grandparents to assist the children. Evolution is a religion, but not one for a believer who trusts in the God of heaven—of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Children should be taught to build houses, sew, cook, farm, and other practical skills. Teach them public speaking, how to manage their time, and how to assess their progress. Celebrate their achievements. Teach them about biblical heroes like David, Noah, or Abraham. Ask your child—who are their heroes? Are they film characters or video game figures? How can they become a lamp or light in their home?

Read books like 10 Boys Who Changed the World by Irene Howard. Does your son admire people who don't love God, like Samson? What kinds of books is he reading?

A man's life is full of decisions and actions based on those decisions. Prepare our young men to take responsibility by helping them learn how to make right decisions. Prepare them well, then give them room to decide, and when they make mistakes, teach them how to correct them. Even learn from insects like the ant, and from people like young Joseph, Jethro, Abigail, the Good Samaritan, Boaz, and others.

If you're not around, does he do good things? Does he greet others? Does he do house chores? Observe if he uses his time well, keeps his belongings organized and clean. Does he know how to solve problems, or does he forget his responsibilities? Does he understand that time is valuable and not say, "I'll do it tomorrow"?

Take him to the police or court according to his age, then discuss real-life cases. Read stories like Achan and Samson and talk them over. Does he love making excuses or exaggerating and making promises he doesn't keep? Does he take things without permission? Is he fond of gossip or bearing false witness? Let's not shield our children too much from pain or failure. Sometimes they must fail in order to

learn, but let them not fear trying again. Read about David's 30 mighty men (1 Chronicles 11), and also about Reformation heroes like Luther, Zwingli, Tyndale, Knox, and Huss. Can he accept correction and learn from it? Does he have the courage to admit sin, repent, and forsake it? Can he confess he is wrong? Does he fear people more than God?

A man is the head of the family, just as Christ is the head of the church. Look at the character of men like Noah, Job, Abraham, Moses, and David. Abraham was praised as a hero: "For I have known him, that he will command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice." A boy must know the fundamental doctrines of faith clearly and be able to distinguish truth from false doctrines—because he will be a priest in his city and even in his place of worship. Let him question pastors and spiritual leaders about what they believe. What is the gospel? How does it affect their lives? Deuteronomy 6:7-8 teaches that children must be taught and made to recite God's word. Parents should help their sons become teachers.

Leadership training is essential. 1 Kings 3:9 says: "Give your servant an understanding heart to judge your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" Here, Solomon asked for wisdom and leadership. We model for our sons what it means to be fair judges. When we discipline them, we uplift God's law and help them grow in the instruction of the Lord. We teach them to reconcile with friends when wronged, so they may help their own children when they err against God's law. Ensure your discipline is balanced with love—if punishment exceeds love, something is wrong. We say this knowing we are all human and flawed in parenting. But let punishment be loving correction, not anger. Never punish in anger—wait until you calm down, then speak and discipline.

Can your son lead others humbly, delegate tasks, correct and evaluate them? See resources like "Brother Offender Checklist" and "21 Rules of This House" online. Have a "home coat" to decide what needs discipline and what needs a warning. Refer to the Bible for examples of prophetic, civil, and apostolic discipline. List the sins your child is struggling with, plan the discipline, and the outcome if warnings are ignored. What is the purpose of authority, and how should we relate to it? Can your son accept the responsibility of teaching others, like in a children's class or youth group in church?

Train the boy not to covet others' things and to be thankful for what he has. Godliness with contentment is great gain—we came with nothing and will leave with nothing. When he errs, teach him to ask for forgiveness. Since he will become a leader, train him to use authority and responsibility wisely. Examples of misused authority include the Pharisees; good examples are Noah, Job, Elijah, etc. Let him know that leadership is service, not dictatorship or oppression. Teach him to work with his hands so he can provide for himself and others. He should begin fasting and praying from around age twelve, since many things cannot be achieved without prayer and fasting. Let him know that his future wife and children will need clothing, food, and shelter—this is reason enough to learn to pray and fast.

Straying starts slowly, like a rising thermometer—he must recognize when he's drifting. Let him learn from wise, upright men—men who have experienced victory and failure—so he avoids certain mistakes. Temptations often look good but don't reveal the whole truth. Teach him not to fight temptation but to ask God for strength to obey and flee from evil invitations, because the battle is the Lord's once you choose obedience.

Why should a young man avoid listening to a lot of Rock or dance music? Because much of it is evil. Many of the artists promote lawlessness, engage in idolatry, intoxication, and spread spiritual darkness unknowingly, weakening spirituality, increasing anxiety and restlessness.

Education is good, but start reading early before things go wrong. Let the boy know—don't read about a good marriage after divorcing your wife, but before. Being educated and being literate are two different things. You can earn a degree and still lack wisdom. Also, earning money and working are two separate issues. God's word is proven in all situations to be useful for teaching, correcting, guiding, and disciplining in righteousness, so that the person may be complete and ready for every good work.

A boy should learn to obey authority, because he may be a leader one day. You can't lead if you've never followed. Scripture tells us to respect and obey our leaders so that their work is not difficult or sorrowful, because they will give account for what they do. Look at what governments usually do to help citizens. Yes, there are corrupt leaders, but generally, leadership is necessary—we can't live without it. If as parents we make leadership difficult or disrespect it, our children will imitate us.

Forgiveness is essential for boys. Not forgiving is like drinking poison and expecting someone else to die. Remember, we too have wronged others and they've forgiven us. A boy must be free from the person who wronged him—not a slave to them. We are forgiven as we forgive.

A boy must learn to forgive and tell God honestly what's hurting him. Ask God to take away the bitterness—don't lie but tell the truth from the heart. God has the power to remove all bitterness and hatred. He'll be surprised how light his heart will feel. His wife, children, and even parents may wrong him—but we must know how to resolve conflicts, for they are fragile vessels. We need wisdom to live with them. Teach him to surrender that issue to God, and whenever it resurfaces, surrender it again until it completely leaves.

Holding grudges and hatred is destructive. How do we overcome impure thoughts? They come to all humans. How do we remove them? Many fail to deny self and end up saying, thinking, or doing whatever comes. Does he struggle with anger or bad thoughts? Psalm 119:110 says we should hide God's word in our hearts to avoid evil thoughts. Like Joshua, we must choose whom we'll serve daily. Choose to serve the Lord and He will cleanse our thoughts. We must cast down every argument and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). And finally, let us think on whatever is good, of good report, and honorable.

A boy's curiosity should be nurtured to help him create and invent. Give him tools and time. Don't be too concerned that he'll spoil things or waste time. Great inventors needed time, trust, and freedom from pressure. For a child to invent, he needs knowledge in many subjects. God is the greatest inventor—don't waste your creativity inventing evil like those who made nuclear bombs!

The key to invention is persistence. Thomas Edison failed 1,000 times before inventing the lightbulb and more. He discovered 1,000 ways that don't work. Don't give up when you fail—learn and move forward; you'll find the answers.

A boy is made to invent songs, programs, tools, methods, art, books, and devices. Be an inventor as God designed you—to serve the world and live a meaningful life. But don't forget your physical health—exercise so you don't become frail sitting in a lab all day without sunlight and fresh air!

A boy must learn perseverance and how to maintain friendships. He shouldn't get angry easily or fail to repair broken relationships. As humans, we fail in many things, but courage and repeated effort are vital. Even God didn't abandon us after our failure in Eden (Genesis 3)—He still repairs our brokenness.

Where Do I Belong?

Sometimes, you may feel like you don't belong somewhere. Truly, heaven is our real home—there, we will find our perfect dwelling. Don't waste too much time wondering whether you fit in here, because the Almighty has gone to prepare a place for us. That's why we often feel like strangers here. Instead, let us set our hearts and goals on that land of Paradise. It is far better to live as a stranger here while preparing for heaven, than to feel completely at home here and end up weeping and gnashing your teeth. When we aim for heaven, even the things of this world become easier to face. But if we aim only for the world, we will miss out on so much.

Doing what is right is essential; otherwise, a young man becomes a slave to his own desires and fails to deny himself. Treating all people justly is important, along with having love for others. We see King Solomon judged with justice, but when he stopped denying himself and took many wives, he lost his sense of justice for the people and ruined his relationship with God. Sometimes young men think such things can't happen to them. But if we think this way, we're claiming to be wiser than Solomon, stronger than Samson, and more devoted to God than David.

Life is about working, studying, building, and investing. Don't be lazy, just sitting idly. Don't hang around jobless corners until your clothes tear at the seams—that is not God's plan for a young man. A girl may marry someone who is already established, but as a young man, you are the one expected to seek and provide. It is shameful to sneak after a rich girl just to have an easy life. If it is God's plan for it to happen that way, fine, but still, make sure you're hardworking and a seeker so that your wife or in-laws do not look down on you. If you want to be an engineer, start studying math and science today. If you want to be a priest, start planning now. God created us to be doers, not spectators.

Learn to read God's Word as soon as you wake up. The goal is not how many pages you read, but your relationship with God. He wants to speak about things that concern you personally—He wants to know your dreams. God has enough power to wake up even a weak man or boy and get him into His Word. Ask Him to help you wake up and read. The Creator wants to be close to you—let Him in.

Many times in life, people won't understand us. When you're misunderstood or falsely accused, learn to hold your tongue and speak only the truth until the accusations pass. Being falsely accused is often a chance for God to teach us patience, humility, and forgiveness. Even the Lord was falsely accused and spoken against. Instead of getting angry or surprised, calm down and ask the LORD for strength. Keep peace in your heart, knowing God understands and sees your true

intentions. Doing good is a powerful weapon. The Almighty uses it to strike down the lies and accusations spoken against us.

Sometimes, you won't understand what's happening, and you'll grow tired of being misunderstood, but remember we are in a great battle between good and evil. Satan falsely accused God of being unjust, and many believed him—but one day soon, God's character will be cleared of all stains.

Strive not to have the attitude of working just so you can play. Many men see work only as a way to get money for pleasure on their days off. Some men have expensive adult toys—costly cars, motorcycles, boats, and the like. Remember that work is meant for provision—but also for serving others, like widows, the poor, and orphans. That kind of work is also important; it brings healing to others. Use your gifts and skills to make the world a better place.

To meet your needs in the best way, your parents work hard. A good son does not wish to take their work or wealth and use it for his own indulgence. When you inherit wealth, be careful to help the next generation. We are saved by grace, not by our deeds—so let's think about others, especially the next generation.

Does the boy fear the dark, dogs, tall mountains, or spiders? Overcoming fear is part of growing up and becoming a man. You may not eliminate all fear, but you will thrive and overcome your environment, even with some fears. Moses had such fear—see Exodus 3-4. Joshua was told, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." You overcome fear by knowing the Almighty is with you and that He is able. He knows what you need and will give you courage and confidence—not arrogance. Victory is sweet when you've fought for it. "I write to you, young men, because you are strong and have overcome the evil one."

Every man experiences fear at some point—you can't win if you have no enemies to fight. Every man has challenges. The key is to overcome the small, daily battles within your own heart. There will be days when you don't feel like working, but you must do it anyway. Victory comes when you treat anger, greed, and lust as your enemies.

Ninety percent of our fears are things that will never happen. The remaining ten percent you will face—and though you may lose some battles, if you keep fighting with strength, you will win.

Selfishness must be rejected. If you struggle with selfishness, that doesn't mean you must stay that way your whole life. A young man will become the leader of

his home and even his nation. If he is selfish or self-centered, he will hurt many. Most of the people who help meet the national needs in social development are men—so a boy must learn to overcome selfishness. Women often give generously from what little they have at home, but men often handle larger-scale plans to help the community or even the whole country, especially during disasters or crises. We must teach our boys not to live with an "all-about-me" mindset.

A young man should pray and be open: "Almighty God, I am selfish. I think about myself more than others. I know you don't want me to be like this. Open my eyes to see the needs of others so I can be a blessing. Please give me a heart like Yours."

Picture your father coming home—can you help him with something? Can you ease your mother's fatigue? When you visit someone, look for ways to help instead of sitting in a corner waiting to be noticed. Spend your time in service—it helps you overcome fear and selfish self-focus. Don't be ashamed of your pain or sadness—start helping others.

Every leader with a vision must think about serving people. Selfish people lack courage. Courageous people don't wait for grand moments to be heroes or rescuers—they take small, everyday opportunities. Those moments allow you to become either brave or cowardly.

Learn to love certain things. Many boys complain: "I don't like the rain, I don't like the work I was given, I don't like the hot sun, I don't like living in this town, I don't like this village, I don't like, don't like, don't like!" If you want to enjoy the greatness and goodness of God, learn to love what He has clearly set before you to love. You have a choice: to complain and grumble with a sulky face, or to appreciate what you've been given. But there's no need to carry a bad face all day long.

A man once said that when he was a child, he didn't like tomatoes, but after he got married, his wife used to cook with tomatoes. He said, "What are these tomatoes doing in my food?" But his wife didn't change anything; he eventually began to like them, and even today, he loves tomatoes and misses them when they're not there. However, we say—do not love evil or unhealthy things—but there are many things you can learn to tolerate and even grow to like.

Many people have come to enjoy mushrooms or avocados, even though they couldn't eat them as children—simply by changing their attitudes. Maturity and growth involve embracing both the bitter and the sweet. Don't just force yourself to "eat tomatoes," but learn to like them. God has many good things in His

kingdom; let's not keep turning our noses up, saying, "I don't like its taste," since God has allowed us to eat them.

To become a man, every boy must learn to endure pain. It's part of life—it brings wisdom, strength, and skill. A child who doesn't deny himself cries loudly over small pains; he thinks more of his happiness than his responsibilities. Instead of working on the farm, he thinks about how hot the sun is or how tired he is. Instead of giving up his seat for an elderly mother, he thinks of his own comfort or entertainment. If he gets a small scratch on his hand, he refuses to wash the dishes. Life contains pains much greater than little scratches. All of creation groans with pain—be it spiritual, physical, or mental. Many even suffer from the pain of someone speaking unkind words—it's not only you who is targeted! So don't pity yourself too much when you're hurting, because every creature suffers some pain. A man must learn how to cope with pain—he cannot run from it. Often, there is no fruit or growth without pain.

Pain is universal and often temporary. But in heaven, there is no pain. What hurts us today may be gone tomorrow—so don't dwell on your pain. Pain also has an end, even though sometimes we feel we can't bear it. Pain doesn't have the freedom to do whatever it wants to us, because the Almighty knows the limits of our endurance. He only allows what we can bear. God knows every depth and weight of each pain, and He permits it to reach us; 1 Corinthians 10:13. As with Job's story, God did not allow him to go beyond what he could endure. Pain has a certain beauty—God never sends it without purpose.

When someone close to us hurts our hearts by misunderstanding us or not meeting our expectations, it wounds us more than usual. David said: "If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were rising against me, I could hide. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship at the house of God, as we walked about among the worshipers."

How you respond to people who annoy you or say hurtful words shows whether you're maturing into a man of God—or just thinking about yourself and your pain. Cry out to God for comfort, but don't cry loudly for long over minor pains or get angry when things don't go your way.

Many people want to avoid pain, but few among them are fit for the kingdom of God. If you have physical pain or wounds, go to the hospital and get stitched up or have a bone realigned, but don't go around showing your wound to everyone.

A man must be courageous and not seek pity from everyone. Instead of constantly looking at your own wound, look for people to serve—take your focus off yourself and your pain. For wounds of the heart, don't be like a dog that licks its wounds all day—rather “overcome evil with good.” Even the Lord, “for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

There is a time to cry, and a time to laugh. I don't believe in the saying “a man doesn't cry,” because even the Lord wept—not for His own sorrows, but for others'. Crying eases the pain of the heart. So there is a time to hold back, and a time to cry—and the Lord will help His sons to know the difference, so they're not constantly weeping or emotionally unstable.

How can you prepare now to live well with a wife? You might think you're still too young, and laugh at the idea—and indeed, it may not be time to marry yet—but you can start preparing your mind now so that in the future, you'll be a happy man with a joyful marriage. It's not about rushing to marry, but it's good to be ready, even if you never marry or are called to celibacy.

Learn the tasks that men use to help their sisters or mothers—like changing a tire, fixing a house, unblocking a toilet, applying fertilizer, beekeeping, herding livestock, removing tree stumps, using a hammer and chisel, building an animal pen, selecting seeds to plant, killing rats, or trimming branches from fruit trees.

How you treat your sisters and mother now is the biggest lesson for marriage. Your younger siblings should be glad to have you as their big brother—love them, and let them love you. The way you build relationships with your sister or mother now is the same way you'll build a relationship with your wife. Don't be harsh so that your sisters fear you and can't open their hearts to you. Be gentle, so they can trust you, and when they share their problems with you, take that challenge and help them solve it without boasting or broadcasting it.

What do they like or dislike? Do you know their dreams, fears, or doubts? What hopes do they have for today or tomorrow? If you are harsh and cruel, they'll hide things from you. If your sister wants a musical instrument to learn, take that challenge and help her get it.

Your sister is your training ground for how to provide for your family in the future.

David's courage to defeat Goliath didn't come that same day—he first fought lions and bears before he faced the Philistine giant. Serve your sisters and your mother. Don't mock them, belittle them, or compete with them as if to prove you're

stronger. Be on the same team. When it comes to food, let them have the bigger portion and you take the smaller. Give them the better place to sit.

Have you thought of inviting your sisters or younger siblings to read the Word of God together? Do you pray with them? Praise them when they do good, and when they do wrong, forgive them, help them do better, and cover their faults. You have the opportunity to help them become beautiful inside and out. One day they will say, “My brother gave me the opportunity to reach my dreams. I love and respect him.”

If your younger sibling, sister, or mother is self-centered and stingy, help them. Pray for God to help you—and make it your mission to restore good relationships. Be an example to your younger siblings, sister, and mother. The Lord made millions who didn’t love Him come to love Him—you can do the same. A mature boy doesn’t care who loves or doesn’t love him—he just does good no matter how others treat him. Don’t assume your younger siblings, sisters, or mother don’t want your love or help—many times they’ll change. Girls can be moody at times, but look for ways to please your sisters—ask your mother, she can help you. It’s a boy’s and a man’s duty to please his sisters, and ultimately, his wife.

When choosing a wife, give God the chance to choose for you. Pray and wait for His timing. People choose by what they see on the outside, but the LORD sees the heart. Look for someone who loves spiritual things. Avoid flirtatious behavior with girls. It should be forbidden for you to dance with girls—it stirs up bad desires. Many boarding schools organize dances and they have drawn youth into temptation and sin. Every day we face battles in our minds and with the kingdom of darkness. Wear the full armor of God in Ephesians 6, and don’t expose yourself to temptation.

Dancing is a tool of the devil himself. Ask any man if he would allow someone to dance while embracing his wife, and he will tell you no! During the colonial days, people were forbidden from dancing traditional dances because they were considered primitive, yet surprisingly, in those dances, people kept their distance — a man and a girl would not be close together. Nowadays, sin is done openly — embracing a girl who is not your wife in a close dance.

Many are taught about using condoms, but for someone who honors God, sex is meant only for marriage; outside of that, it is sin or rebellion against God’s laws. Even so, a condom does not erase sin, does not silence a guilty conscience, does not fully prevent pregnancy or HIV, nor does it take away sorrow.

A boy must always know that it is only God who helps in avoiding sexual sin. Many men, especially in today's world of pornography, have fallen or entered into sin because of three things: women, money, and the pride of power. If a boy or a man thinks he cannot fall into these traps, then he must have strength greater than Samson, wisdom surpassing Solomon, and love for God exceeding that of David.

“He who finds a wife finds a good thing and receives favor from the Lord.” A boy should distinguish between the adulterous woman in Proverbs 7 — the harlot — and the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31. Does she have the full character of a godly girl? Does he know what place sex has in God's Word? Teach him about physical changes like puberty, and continue discussing with him at every stage.

Many parents speak to their children at age thirteen and stop there, then are shocked when things go wrong at seventeen! They only gave one sex talk and left it at that! Sexual temptations, including masturbation, affect many. A child should be continuously taught to avoid these. Keep your children from sleeping over at others' homes; sleepovers and pajama parties should be off-limits.

A boy must remain pure in word, thought, and body until he marries. Does he plan to approach the girl's father before opening a marriage, and not just live together without marriage plans? (come-we-stay). Is he ready to tell you when he wants to marry? Is he ready to remain single if God has called him to be celibate, and not live a double life?

The Bible is not just a book of good advice or opinions, but the thoughts of God Himself — the ultimate authority in heaven and on earth. The Word of the Lord tells us how to treat and please everyone we meet — whether friend, sister, brother, parent, employer, girl, elder, enemy, or child. It gives people warnings about traps, tells you how to work, how to invest money, what and how to eat, and even when to sleep. It has principles for every area of your life. It gives us deep understanding of how God works and how to hear His voice. It helps us understand life, nature, and even other planets. From Genesis to Revelation, it tells us how to receive the LORD who gave Himself for us and grants us eternal life.

You are not an animal, as the theory of evolution misleads — you were created for a special purpose. Every boy should ask himself why he is here, where he came from, and what will happen when he dies. God's Word explains why all this pain exists. No other book can explain all these things. One hour with another book can never compare to one hour with His Word.

There is no book more thrilling than this one – and none that changes a person's life like it. Math or chemistry can't transform your life like this book. Yet the Bible is not for information but for transformation. If you follow its counsel, you will see things become real and your life transformed. Don't waste time reading fictional stories or novels that dull your appetite for God's Word. Imaginary tales make the Bible lose its taste.

Your mind will expand as you read this Word, and you'll even perform better in class. Read and share with friends what you learned from that chapter. Sometimes be quiet and still and behold His Glory. Memorize many verses, sing songs. Mark 1:35 says, "He went out alone to pray;" so you too, rise and pray.

Listen to the counsel of elders – you will not be like your peers but will have wisdom beyond your age. This advice may seem outdated, but you'll chew on matters and reflect with wisdom your peers do not possess. We see that when Solomon died, his son Rehoboam sought advice from his peers – they misled him, and he lost his kingdom.

Wise elders do not speak their thoughts quickly – they weigh things first. They know what a boy's or a child's life will be like, even if they didn't go to school; their years of experience guide them. Many have had their advice rejected, so they've gone quiet, fearing to make enemies with the youth. Thus, it's the responsibility of boys and young men to sit with elders and ask questions – about good career paths, useful skills to gain, best investment options, etc.

Probe the elder with questions like: What should someone do to build good relationships? What destroys relationships? How has society changed today? Has it changed for better or worse? What mistakes did you make that ruined things? What part of your life went really well? What can you teach me about marriage and having children? If you were an employer, what kind of person would you hire in your company? When you were young, do you remember any advice your father gave you? Did you follow it? What is most important in your life now? Are you ready to die at any time? If yes, why? If no, why not?

There is a time to kill and a time to heal (Ecclesiastes 3), and this is the challenge of growing up or becoming a man. Many people get confused and kill when they shouldn't, and don't kill when they should. So how will a boy know? A man or boy is not just another animal in God's domain. He was given authority and dominion. He should respect creatures and be a good steward – not destroy animals or cut trees without reason, just because they're within his possession. He should use these things for his needs, but not wastefully; when he cuts a tree, he should plant another. He must not be cruel; he should know how to conserve – and what to

conserve. For example, mice in your house eating your maize — should you kill them? What about safari ants in the wild — should you kill them? A cat crossing the road — should you kill it? If you live near a game park and are hungry, should you kill an antelope without a permit? Do not ignore the work God gave you — to care for and preserve creatures. Even animals can tell who fears the LORD by the compassion and care that person shows them. Are your livestock given enough feed or food to be satisfied? Or do you keep a dog without feeding it until its ribs show? Remember Noah was told to put animals in the ark. God could have created new ones, but He loved those animals. The Bible says God remembered Noah and the animals.

To meet the needs of his family, a person sometimes must kill — but not God's creatures out of anger or excitement, only for sustenance or protection. In times of war, we clearly know that many who love the LORD have fought in wars to bring freedom and defend our countries or communities. Others, depending on conscience and calling, have refused to kill in war and instead helped the wounded — and that is valid according to a person's understanding. But all men must know how to protect their families and how to provide.

Man has a duty to care for the environment around him and not be destructive. Some boys shoot birds with slingshots and laugh for no good reason. A man must preserve what God has entrusted to him — including the environment. We live in a time when people even kill their own children through abortion or other means. People are ready to kill their children but fear killing a cockroach in their cupboard. We must know the value of human life, and at the same time, have the courage to kill things like cockroaches or rats.

Home worship is important. Do not slouch or act lazy during prayer or worship. The Israelites spent much time in worship and offering sacrifices, yet they were self-centered and greedy. Every day is a day of worship, and the way we live is also an act of worship. We may be good singers, yet our lives give off a bad odor. We need our hearts to be transformed so we are not people with heads full of God's Word but hearts full of sin.

If you want to be a true man whom God will use, learn to worship Him as He desires to be worshipped. Worship Him daily in the beauty of His holiness. Relationships and communication matter. Learn to write letters that encourage others. Start with simple letters, and as you continue writing, you will gain skill and produce beautiful letters. Many people receive complaint letters, so when they receive a thank-you letter, they will be surprised, uplifted, and they may cherish your letter forever.

Where I live, many people are afraid to receive gifts because they feel indebted, proud, or don't want to be associated with "social welfare." Others fear writing thank-you letters. Giving and receiving gifts fosters good relationships. If you refuse to accept gifts, people may think you value your things too much or are unwilling to give. This closes the door for connection. Giving is more blessed than receiving, so don't cause others to lose their blessing by refusing their sincere gifts.

For our children, we give them exercises in both giving and receiving. Still, write a thank-you letter, and be specific about what you're thankful for, for example: "Thank you for the money—it greatly helped me this season with cucumber farming." Many students write letters to ask for things while at boarding school, but as adults, when they don't need anything, they don't write at all; this is wrong. Communication isn't just about receiving things—it is a service of love.

How do we prepare to be good fathers while still young?

Answer: By doing what we would want our children to do! Don't just think about how you will raise your children—think about how God wants you to become like Him. If your children were your age now, what kind of character would you want them to have? Because they will want to be like you. Are you honest? Are you hardworking? Do you constantly complain? Know that your example will shape them.

God is merciful even when we've messed up. He doesn't always give us what we deserve. Not all your bad traits will pass to your children, but remember: "the fruit doesn't fall far from the tree." The children you raise will resemble you. Your son at twelve will be like you were at twelve. If you are a thankful and diligent young man, he will likely be too. But if you're lazy, he'll inherit that bad habit. If you are diligent in practicing a musical instrument, he'll grow up like that too. Whatever subject you study seriously, he will likely do the same. What you enjoy, they will enjoy. Your example teaches them deeply.

Today's habits will shape tomorrow's man, and that man will affect your children. You may think, "I'm just a kid—I'll handle this when I grow up." But you'll be surprised when adulthood arrives, and you're still doing what you did as a child! So start today to change your conduct—you'll have fewer chances tomorrow.

Have a vision to do things like a man. Wise and knowledgeable dreams will help you build meaningful relationships and attain true wealth. Every day you lay bricks of character that harden like cement—if they are bad, they'll be hard to break for the next generation.

Good character is like making savings in your children's account. If you grasp this truth, you'll avoid many pitfalls. Boys can change more easily than older men. Examine your life honestly. Ask your friends or parents about your strengths and weaknesses. Pray to God to make you the man you ought to be, and begin to change your behavior today.

Can a boy lead prayers, read the Word of God, and benefit from it? Can he delegate authority even to his siblings? There must be a chore schedule for all children in the home.

Helping the disabled and not mocking or laughing at them is crucial. Where I live, one man and his wife used to laugh at people with big heads and hydrocephalus while they worked. When they got married and had their first child, he was born with a severe disability—no urinary passage—and they had to live in the hospital. People said, “Now they have something to laugh at—right at home!” They humbled themselves and became compassionate. It's true, sometimes we suffer disabilities even if we never mocked anyone—because we don't fully understand God's will and glory—but when we laugh at others' struggles, our conscience convicts us. (www.truthforyourfamily.org by Joel Beeke)

If you want to be a cheerful and hardworking person, your children will be the same. They'll love work like their father and be cheerful. You may say, “But I'm still a boy—they don't see me now!” But God's plan for life is that a good tree bears good fruit—not by chance, but by heaven's law.

Does your child know what sin is? Does he know the Ten Commandments are the standard of righteousness? Does he understand God's mercy and the need to treat others fairly, or is he partial? God wants us to walk in justice, mercy, and humility. Can he correct his siblings? Does he get angry and hold grudges against them? Does he hate being corrected? He must learn to manage his home well. Children should be given age-appropriate chores like washing the car, cutting grass, or farming.

Self-denial is vital, for Eden was lost due to uncontrolled appetite and gluttony. Children should be taught to avoid this. Teach them to guard their hearts and minds by not watching harmful TV or computer programs.

They should avoid getting into debt. Discuss with them how to handle debt and avoid it, especially with the rise of credit cards. They should pay back what they owe and learn to give offerings and tithe. They shouldn't be hot-tempered. “He who has no control over his spirit is like a city broken down, without walls” (Proverbs 25:28). Even a small child should be taught to wait patiently when playing with others.

Uncontrolled anger can hurt a wife, children, or the boy himself. If he struggles with temper, teach him not to be anxious about anything, but to present his requests to God through prayer and thanksgiving—and God’s peace will guard his heart and mind. Let him focus on things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy—and think on such things.

Let him learn how to serve his family and have good manners, because they don’t come naturally—they need practice. He should learn to say sorry, thank you, please, excuse me, forgive me, and may I. He should avoid mistreating those under him, for many children abused by their parents carry on that abuse—but he should go before God to break those forces so they don’t pass down to the third or fourth generation.

(Healthfactswithhope.org)

Does he waste much time watching TV? Is he learning to be diligent? Can he be trusted to do a task without getting distracted by technology? Do his close friends love God or does he hang around corrupt people like Delilah? Does he know how to have a healthy friendship with girls without getting into a sinful relationship? What friend traits should he avoid?

Does he make excuses to miss worship? Is he constantly leaving for water or the toilet during worship? Does he trust God or always complain when things go wrong? Can he finish a task you assign him like Noah or Nehemiah? Can he fulfill promises like Elkanah and his wife? Or is his mind constantly wandering? Does he leave his things all over the place? Even when he removes his clothes, does his pair of trousers stand where he left them on the floor?

Sometimes parents are busy taking care of other people, and the child receives attention that the parents do not know about. I learned this from the preacher Billy Graham, who was very famous; his children used to sit near the gate of the house, and before visitors came to see the preacher, those children would ask them to give money or items. The guests felt embarrassed because of their father and gave those children things without reporting it to him. This behavior was also seen in Gehazi, the servant of Elisha! He asked for two garments and some money and then smeared mud on the great prophet’s work. This preacher later discovered that if you, as a parent, are famous or involved in certain matters where many people come to you, watch how your children interact with people, to protect them from certain evils.

Can he be generous like Abraham, welcoming strangers he does not know and receiving blessings? Read about generosity and hospitality. Does he also know how to be generous to his family? Is he afraid to answer phone calls, reply to letters,

or open the door to visitors? (Look at the gatekeeper. It is possible Jesus Himself was a gatekeeper.) Nowadays, maybe we don't often get visitors at home, but even our phones sometimes receive calls from people needing advice or help from us. I have often learned that these are people who bless me, not the other way around, just like Abraham—he was blessed by that stranger, not the stranger being blessed by Abraham! A child should learn to be a servant, not avoid visitors.

So a young man who does not know how to seek provision is worse than an unbeliever. Although women nowadays provide for themselves, this is the man's primary responsibility. This requires the man not to be selfish, and as parents, we must help our sons to become legitimate providers. Help them assist their younger siblings, grandparents, and also family projects. Discuss the family budget and how they can find small jobs.

Can he provide his own bride price? Does he understand the responsibility of caring for elderly parents? Does he honestly help with house chores? Does he have generosity in helping those in need and showing them how to do things? Let him learn to be a good listener and not to interrupt other people's conversations.

Does he remember to pray for others or does he only think about himself and bring his problems before God? (Intercessory prayer) Does he know how to repent when he sins? Does he know how to share the story of salvation in a few minutes, explaining its key points?

What kind of girl does he want to marry? Does he respect girls as future wives of other men and thus protect them from evil and impurity so that they remain virgins for their future husbands?

Often we try as much as we can, then leave the rest to God who is able. We cannot always know why something happened to us, but many events we can understand later what reward they carry.

A boy who lives according to God's judgment and laws will reap the fruits of children who love God in the future. Proverbs 22:6. So when tempted to do evil or foolish things, such as breaking the law, think about your decisions and how they will repeat in the next generation, even the third and fourth. Therefore, do not refuse to live on a good foundation for the next generations. You will live without regret, and it will be a stronghold for your children and grandchildren when God blesses you. Let us remember God is patient, full of mercy, and He forgives evil.

What kind of relationship should a child have with alcohol? The answer is: “He should not try to put even a drop of alcohol in his mouth; he should not wear T-shirts with alcohol or beer advertisements or listen to advertisements of that kind. He should not go to places where alcohol is sold or laugh at someone who is drunk, because sin is a sorrowful thing. Reject excuses like ‘I have to drink,’ even if you don’t plan to drink, because it is a temptation that can come to you, and many did not think they would become drunkards. Tell your friends lovingly that you won’t drink because you respect the Almighty God.” Proverbs 23:32 says, “Stay away from it as you would from a snake.” Forty percent of drinkers cannot quit (alcoholics). If you had a dog that bit two out of five people who come to you, would you keep it?

Let a child understand why he receives punishment or correction so he can be guided on the good path of wisdom. A child who loves his parents will thank them when they help him. Let him avoid being corrupted by peer pressure—that was what trapped Samson. Loving God, walking in His ways, and serving Him with all our heart, mind, strength, and spirit is wisdom. Let his words be seasoned with salt so he knows how to respond to people, because words reveal character and what fills the heart. Cleanliness of thoughts, words, and actions (purity) is important. Therefore, nurture children’s gifts of thankfulness, serving others, contentment, and obedience. Look at how to raise children who will be the remnant in the last days (raising the remnant by belts of truth ministries). Things do not bring happiness or build character; make your gifts small, the heart has many holes, but teach the child that these holes can only be filled by the Creator. He created us to be happy when we rely on and value HIM. Help the child to be a person of prayer and fasting when he reaches an appropriate age; this will teach him to give God his joys, plans, and troubles, and God will reveal to him (Proverbs 3:3-)

CHAPTER 51

RAISING A GIRL TO BE A PROVERBS 31 WOMAN – Lessons for Mothers and Daughters

David, the psalmist, speaks words of blessing in Psalm 144:11-15: “May our sons be like plants grown up in their youth, and our daughters like corner pillars, fashioned as for a palace...”

Indeed, raising our daughters to maturity while they still please God is a great blessing. Many parents, being busy with many responsibilities, are tempted to let their children raise themselves. Yet God did not give us children so we can neglect them. Parenting is a weighty responsibility, more than many realize. Mothers, we cannot leave our children—even those in secondary school—alone at home while we are always busy or traveling.

Some of us work shifts, others are constantly out and about, leaving children alone; this is a mistake. A child’s mind easily wanders. They may go to the neighbors or view inappropriate things, among others. The life of Dinah, Jacob’s daughter, is an example. Children may begin to do wrong, but do not be the one who left the cracks open. Some have taken their little children abroad and left them alone there without being present themselves. Many failed to complete school, but what is even more tragic is that many left the faith. They entered strange marriages for work permits, quarreled with the locals, and others became physically and emotionally drained. Solomon says that a child harbors a kind of folly deeply embedded in their heart.

University education or going abroad has become like a god in these last days. Godly living is a steep path. Do not leave your child with someone else unless it's an emergency, because you may end up blaming that person. Children are curious and try things to see what will happen; even if the person is kind, how much concern do they really have for your child compared to you, the parent?

We met a high school girl raised far from her parents who wouldn’t greet people, never said thank you when helped, and remained silent when greeted or asked simple questions. We thought she was mute or deaf, but we realized it was how she was raised—without manners or due to ignorance. Some claimed she was “just shy.” But shyness and lack of manners are two different things.

Our daughters need training because they will become mothers and will need to communicate effectively with their husbands and in-laws. Can one step on

another's foot and not even say sorry? Anyone who desires to be a citizen of the Kingdom must learn to share the good news! Will she remain silent out of shyness, yet at the market, she can confidently bargain for cheaper tomatoes to get a better deal?

Proverbs 31 has much to say about how a woman ought to be. I believe it all starts in early nurturing, not in adulthood. Many say the Proverbs 31 woman is a blend of many women! We see she has helpers, but it is her duty to organize the plans and direct the work. As parents, especially mothers, we need to learn more about the Proverbs 31 woman in depth.

These questions and answers are meant for discussion with our daughters. Let us continue to guide and assess them—and in doing so, we ourselves will grow in our journey toward heaven.

Pam Foster from doorpost.org has written extensively about this woman. We have borrowed her questions so you can take time daily to discuss them with your daughter and teach her the truths behind Proverbs 31. It is good to read together the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Psalms. Take time to read the entire Word of God every evening for three years, reading one chapter a day, reflecting on it, asking questions—you will learn much about raising a child with good character. There is no better book for raising a child than the Word of God. God is the perfect Parent. A human parent is a sinner striving to raise another sinner.

Does she understand that creation in six days and rest on the seventh is a pillar in the teachings of God's Word? These days, theories of evolution have led many girls to undervalue themselves, forgetting they were created by God! The days of Genesis 1 are literal 24-hour days, not millions of years.

The first lesson for our children is obedience. We repeat: "Obedience is the first lesson!" Obedience to God's instructions and to parents. Let us remember that these words were spoken by Solomon's mother, instructing her son on what kind of woman to look for! The opposite of a virtuous woman is the woman of Proverbs 7—the "strange woman" or woman of the streets.

As women, we must be prayerful, watchful, and have clear plans/goals for parenting—and write them down. If we want our daughters to be Proverbs 31 women, they must see our example. So let us ask God for strength, gird ourselves, and support our daughters. They must learn obedience, organization, self-denial, skill, cleanliness, and hard work. We all desire daughters who are mature spiritually, mentally, socially, economically, and physically.

This woman is described in great detail. We see her preparing food, sewing clothes for her family, engaging in entrepreneurship, buying fields and planting, purchasing property, growing vineyards, and helping those in need. She is an admirable woman.

Men also desire to have a sister, mother, daughter, or wife like her. Even an unbelieving husband may be transformed by such a woman. Women have a great role in raising children. We see that Timothy, the great preacher, received faith from his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Let us not tire in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not lose heart.

Some women have given up due to hardships; one said, “I have drunk the cup.” Indeed, some have faced great difficulties, but let us not give up. Even if people and those closest to us do not praise, appreciate, or love us, our calling—by the grace of God—is to live the life of a Proverbs 31 woman and to say, “I will go into all the world and make disciples of all nations.”

These are things to do as our daughters grow. Perhaps we should have fewer possessions so we can invest in our children—our treasure in heaven, not on earth. Let us not focus only on formal education but also on home learning. It is good to have a schedule to help children with both character and academics, for even the worldly wisdom we emphasize can be foolishness to God (1 Corinthians 3:19). You can bring the topic into prayer, interview others, engage in practical activities, discussions, memory verses related to the topic, ask questions, and read other books that align with the character traits you're focusing on, and conclude with an assessment to foster spiritual growth in that area.

“Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. A wife of noble character, who can find? Her value is far above rubies” (Proverbs 31:10). This verse tells us to pray for our daughters to have humble and gentle spirits before God, ready to hear and obey His Word.

Let them interview a grandmother or godly woman who loves God and seek her counsel. Allow daughters to talk to their father or uncles and ask what qualities attracted them to marry their wives. Who are the women like this in the Bible? Give examples like Deborah, Esther, Huldah, Elizabeth, Job's wife, Ruth, Lot's daughters, Tamar, Sapphira, Gomer, Priscilla, Abigail, Jezebel, Bathsheba, Rachel, and Rebekah.

Read Titus 2 and write down the characteristics of a woman who fears God. Read 1 Timothy 5:3-10, which outlines the kind of widow worthy of honor and support. Ask yourself questions about your daughter: Does she love God, and is her salvation

important to her? Does she enjoy reading the Bible or being read to if she's young? Does she understand God's Word? Does she desire to obey God? Does she have a relationship with God? When she makes a mistake, does she feel remorse, repent, and ask forgiveness from God and those she wronged?

Does she want to be like worldly girls in dress, games, and mindset? Does she have a particular character weakness? What is she doing to overcome it? Is the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23 evident in her life? How can you help her grow in these areas of fruit? Is she growing in alignment with Proverbs 31 and Titus 2? Does she have goals to glorify God and serve Him and her family, or is she selfish and pursuing her own pleasures?

"The heart of her husband safely trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain," verse 11. Her husband sees her as a woman who handles her responsibilities faithfully. We must prepare our daughters for this by teaching them. A daughter's education is important and it begins at home. She should learn household chores and be taken to visit a diligent woman and ask her why she works faithfully. Why should one be faithful in their duties? Discuss biblical examples of faithfulness from childhood such as Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, Naaman's servant girl, Delilah, Michal, Potiphar's wife, Haman's wife, Herodias, Eve, or Tabitha. The time of traditional initiation schools is gone; now you, along with fellow believers, must teach your daughter. Don't say "the auntie" or sister-in-law should teach this.

Often, girls are tempted to speak ill of others or flatter excessively. As parents, we must avoid exaggeration, lies, gossip, grumbling, envy, anger, pride, and hypocrisy in our words, actions, and attitudes. Take her to ask someone at church: "Why do you trust so-and-so and not another?" Can your daughter be trusted when she speaks, or does she mix truth and lies with excuses? Does she lie through her actions, make up stories, or withhold the full truth? Does she return borrowed items? Is she faithful in relationships, goals, and plans or is she deceiving even herself? Does she resort to bribery or flattery to get what she wants? Does she say she was "just joking" when caught doing wrong? Does she sometimes speak without thinking, criticize without care or gentleness? Is she open with you, able to discuss delicate matters?

Discuss with her questions like: "Why is it wrong for a wife to speak badly about her husband, parents, or peers to others? Why shouldn't a student talk badly about their teacher?" Faithfulness is important in childhood and adulthood. Discuss the dangers of divorce and let her write an essay.

Is she willing to lovingly and humbly correct a friend who has done wrong, or does she just gossip and let them continue in error? Does she get angry easily and break

friendships suddenly? Does she demand her friends not be friends with someone she has rejected? Does she forgive quickly when wronged? Does she value the thoughts of friends or younger ones and support them and offer sound advice? Is she jealous or resentful if a friend or sibling succeeds? Does she want her friends to be hers only, not shared? Does she mock, belittle, or demean others around her friends? Does she value parental leadership and family goals? Does she disrespect her parents in front of her friends? Is she faithful to her future husband by keeping herself pure, or is she already engaging in romantic relationships with boys or men? Does she know that marriage is a lifetime commitment?

As a girl, being a good listener is important, even to her future husband. She must learn to listen without interrupting, arguing, or yelling. She must understand that a wife listens to her husband as the family leader, especially when he assigns responsibilities or discusses family matters. Her children will also need to be listened to—this is a skill she must learn. Many women need to listen more than they speak.

Sins that easily ensnare us like gossip, criticism, and nagging stem from excessive talking rather than listening. We must teach our daughters to listen. The books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Psalms, and Paul's letters say much on this. Observe people you consider wise, then watch how they interact. How do they speak? How do they listen? How do they ask questions? What can you learn from them? Gossip and poor listening are related. Why is it important for a wife to listen to her husband or child before reacting? Ask her to write an essay on listening to a husband or child. Take a commercial advertisement or write one, then have her point out its flaws.

Questions to Ask Yourself as a Parent:

- Does she listen to the voice of God and obey the Holy Spirit when He speaks to her heart?
- Does she listen to sermons in the house of worship?
- Can she recall what was preached, or does she simply say the sermon was good but can't remember anything?
- Does she listen to you or her father when speaking to her?
- Does she show respect when you speak to her?
- Does she pretend not to hear?
- Does her mind wander off when people are talking to her?
- Is she impatient when you speak to her, wanting to carry on with her own activities, sometimes even walking away while you're still talking?
- Does she listen carefully to what you say and do it properly?
- Does she remember what she was told?

- Does she tend to interrupt conversations, thinking about what she wants to say instead of listening?
- Does she quickly give her opinion while the other person is still explaining their issue?
- Does she like to dominate every conversation?

A girl should have the quality of love and not be self-centered; she should memorize 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, and within two weeks be able to recite it all.

If she loves people, what kind of actions will she show?

If she loves God and desires to do His will, what deeds will be evident in her life? How can she demonstrate love to her siblings, father and mother, grandparents, uncles, and aunts?

How should she treat her “enemies” according to the Word of God?

Titus chapter 2 encourages older widowed women to teach younger women to love their husbands. Love is something that can be taught, and we ought to teach our daughters, especially in today’s self-centered world (“me, myself, and I”). Many say, “I’m doing this for myself,” or “I always do things for others, I’m tired now, I want to do something for myself!”

Widows often deeply appreciate their husbands, especially in remembrance, saying, “If only I had known.”

Read and discuss together the three kinds of love: Phileo (brotherly love), Agape (God’s love), and Eros (romantic love between husband and wife).

How do these types of love differ?

Is she patient with others when they make mistakes, or does she get angry quickly?

Does she show God’s love to others even when she disagrees with them?

Is she willing to overlook minor faults committed against her?

Does she get along and cooperate with others, and do people enjoy having her as a friend?

Does she help others with their needs before satisfying her own, or does she put herself first before her siblings or friends?

Does she rush for the best seat, the biggest snack, or the nicest toy so others miss out?

Does she focus too much on the weaknesses and flaws of others?

Does she criticize her friends publicly?

Does she enjoy building others up or is she always boasting and drawing attention to herself?

Does she constantly bring up others’ past mistakes?

Does she laugh and feel pleased when others are punished?
Does she seek to serve others, or does she expect to be served all the time?
Does she show love to those who seek to harm or bring her down?

Obedience and respect are very important for a girl.

Let's prepare our daughters to obey God. To live a peaceful and joyful life, she must also be ready to obey her husband if God calls her into marriage. Arguing, frowning all the time, murmuring, sulking, or trying to control others is not good behavior. We have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory, but we must rise up.

Our mother Eve, by not obeying and staying close to her husband, became the first sinner on earth. Often we think men commit the greater sins like murder, theft, lying, etc., but we must remember that it was a woman's disobedience that brought us here!

Men, on the other hand, are commanded to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. This is perhaps a greater task than the woman's, if each fulfills their role properly.

I once heard a woman say that men are more generous than women, and I was surprised—until I noticed it's true! Most aid plans by governments or humanitarian efforts are spearheaded by men. So, mothers, let's teach our daughters generosity, understanding the differences in gender roles and gifts—this teaching will even reach our grandchildren!

On the other hand, women often quarrel with neighbors or others nearby, while men go to war and fight many. A Proverbs 31 woman should understand all this so she can help guide all her children.

It is said that Barbara, the wife of the elder President Bush, once said when her son became president of the United States, the most powerful nation in the world, "I have ruled the world twice—first when my husband was president, and now my son!" This mother understood the role of a woman. It's not the same as the man's, but it is significant.

In God's design, it is not hard to obey a husband—he has the bigger responsibility in the marriage, and we are the helpers. Obeying a husband is a great joy and a command from God. If you don't believe it, ask a mother whose daughter-in-law does not respect her husband, and she will tell you how sad that 'government' is.

A girl must know God's command in Ephesians 6: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

What ways can a daughter show obedience to her parents?

What other authorities besides parents must she obey? Church, government, work, etc.

Read God's Word about those who obeyed and those who did not, like Achan, Cain, Noah, or Jacob. Read Deuteronomy 28. Why is God's name brought to shame by a disobedient child or wife? Does she obey without delay, arguing, or complaining? Does she do what she's told with joy or with a grumpy face?

Does her expression reflect a humble spirit before God and the authorities He has placed in her life? Do her actions reflect obedience? Does she obey other authorities you have placed, such as a nanny, aunt, or teacher?

Does she know that God is the ultimate authority? Does she value your decisions even if they don't make sense to her at the time? Does she know how to respectfully appeal if she wants to be heard again? Does she show respect to the police, teachers, and government authorities? Does she spend time studying God's Word and obeying it? Does she obey when you are near or even when you are far away? Does she obey cheerfully or grudgingly?

Maintaining peace at home is essential for a girl.

Girlhood is a laboratory for how she will live in the world. Good relationships are a gift from God, and keeping and nurturing them is a responsibility. Let's prevent our daughters from harboring resentment, holding grudges against parents, or bitterness toward siblings.

Hatred or deceit is not a good thing. We must forgive to bring healing and spiritual maturity.

Read about reconciliation, arguments, correction, and the quarrelsome woman in the book of Proverbs. How should one treat an enemy? Let your daughter write about forgiving others and being forgiven. Read God's Word for examples of forgiveness. We may know the Bible, but without learning forgiveness, we will suffer broken relationships, pain, and may even end up in hell if we are not careful.

A girl's relationships in her family while young prepare her for good relationships in adulthood.

Are the parents peacemakers? Do they forgive people, or do they love conflict?

You as a mother, examine where you need correction. Discuss the quarrelsome woman in Proverbs.

Read about women who quarreled in the Bible, such as Sarah/Hagar, Rachel/Leah/Jacob, Peninnah/Hannah, Michal/David, Miriam/Moses, Job/his wife, Euodia/Syntyche. What were they quarreling about? What were the outcomes? What can we learn?

Read Hebrews 12:15-16 and discuss with your daughter.

Talk about anger, revenge, forgiveness, and patience.

Does she get along well with her siblings or does she always argue, claiming she is protecting her rights?

Is she quick to speak or does she listen when being corrected?

When she quarrels, does she examine her own heart to see if she's at fault?

Does she forgive others knowing that she too makes mistakes?

Is she willing to go to the person she wronged and ask for forgiveness? Does she desire reconciliation or hold grudges? Does she know how to seek a peaceful solution without causing conflict? Does she pray first before seeking reconciliation? Is she willing to reconcile even if it means doing so more than once with the same person? Does she try to make peace early or stay angry for a long time? Does she believe God will fight for her, or does she prefer taking revenge herself? Does she focus on people's good qualities or only on their faults?

Is she quick to criticize and harbor hatred? Does she forgive and move on, or does she keep bringing up old wrongs?

These are important because when she has her own household, she will be hurt by her husband or children, and she will hurt them too. She must start learning now to preserve peace in relationships.

She must understand that humility is crucial.

To submit to God's leadership so that her self-will decreases and the Holy Spirit may help shape her character. Is she ready to be corrected without arguing? Is she willing to admit her mistakes without hiding? Do her words reflect pride, and does she always think she is right? Does she give up when she sins, or does she sincerely ask for forgiveness—not to avoid punishment, but because she loves God? Does she understand that she cannot do well without God's guidance? Does she recognize that God is the Ruler who gave you, her parent, to help guide her life? Does she know that God's laws are for our good?

Living a pure life is important for a girl now and in the future when she has her own family. Purity in thoughts, words, and actions. Teach her to pray daily so she may obey God and avoid temptation.

What are temptations? Why do we sin? What are the consequences of sin?

Read together what the Bible says about sin and life in darkness. Who has sinned? What is the wage of sin?

Who overcame temptation, and who escaped it? Read Proverbs 7 and how to avoid the path of the immoral woman. Does she know there's a battle between Satan and God and that she's involved? Does she know where Satan came from? Does she know that when she has a problem, she should go to godly people, not witches or sorcerers? Does she know why she is here on earth? Does she know how to gain victory? Does she know how to use the Word of God to overcome temptation? Does she avoid places of temptation, or does she deliberately go there? Does she choose friends who love God or those who lead her astray? Does she know how to flee

temptation? Does she accept advice about bad friends? Does she obey you in all matters, such as curfew and activities?

Does she flirt with boys or say suspicious things that make others doubt her morals? Does she pray for help to avoid sin? Does she avoid having a boyfriend, understanding that “dating” is not pure but courtship is? Does she spend her time wisely, or does she read inappropriate books or watch immoral content? Does she spend time daydreaming uselessly? Does she come to you with sensitive, age-appropriate questions about courtship, bad friends, etc., or does she fear you?

It is important to teach our daughters patience and to cultivate a heavenly character. We should teach them while they are still young, before they mature. They must be patient in many things, for example, not starting romantic relationships with boys early, but rather following the path of courtship. We do not encourage starting courtship until maturity, around age 18, but it is also important that she can be self-reliant and not become a burden. General friendships (non-romantic) are often the kind that lead to marriage.

She should avoid secretive conversations with boys that give false hope or imply inappropriate relationships. It is good for her to be transparent about what is going on, as parents have experience—especially in today’s world—to help daughters avoid entering painful marriages. Mother, be ready to talk; your daughter will not learn the same from someone else as she will from you. A mother should help her daughter set standards for the kind of man she would want to marry, someone she is willing to respect and obey. Look at the examples of Isaac/Rebekah, David/Michal, Esau, Samson, Solomon.

Read books like “I Kissed Dating Goodbye” by Joshua Harris and discuss the dangers of dating (casual romantic friendships) versus the beauty of courtship (intentional and godly relationship). Is she willing to listen to your counsel about choosing a life partner? Does she believe that God will guide her to the right suitor or is she in a rush? Is she prepared to grow spiritually to build a godly home, or is she in a hurry just to get married? Does she read romance novels that often teach false ideas about love and marriage?

Is she ready to guard herself from sexual temptations that are present in music, books, images, friends, and films? Has she come to you to ask about God’s plan for sex and purity? Does she know God’s plan for sexuality? Has she learned to grow up as a young woman by rejecting lies and learning to take care of herself? Take time to talk to her—not just once but from time to time. Is she ready to live her whole life single if that is the calling God has placed on her?

Total commitment is essential for a girl. We see how Ruth fully committed to her husband and his family and was blessed. A daughter should respect her parents while she is still at home. She should honor her relatives such as brothers, sisters, mother, father, grandparents, uncles, and aunts. Watch her and teach her carefully, then ask yourself: Does she respect her elders? Does she mock or ignore them? Does she expect grandparents to help her but is unwilling to help them? Does she respectfully listen to her uncles or aunts? Does she call her grandparents and ask for advice? Does she regularly communicate with them? Parents must lead by example in showing love and respect to their own parents. Does she joyfully help the elderly in her village? Does she thank relatives when they help her or does she feel entitled?

“She seeks wool and flax and works with eager hands.” (Proverbs 31:13) We must teach our daughters to be hardworking and entrepreneurial. “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.” They must work whether they feel like it or not! Let them learn to work cheerfully. Work is a command from God, even before the fall of man. Whether a supervisor is present or not, a girl should know how to do all kinds of work and do it.

She should handle chores, schoolwork, and have a daily task list. For example: feeding chickens, making her bed, washing clothes, sweeping, mopping, and feeding other animals. We can learn from bees, ants, and other animals about diligence. Observe these creatures with your daughter. Let her watch how you work and do likewise, not lazily. Give her occasional paid tasks, if you can, to motivate her. If possible, she can open a savings account and learn to manage money wisely. Study about the dangers of oversleeping. Examine the lives of Joseph, Nehemiah, Daniel, Ruth, and Tabitha. Look at how Rachel and Rebekah were working before they were engaged. Give her a small garden to manage. Observe how athletes, scientists, writers, and inventors spent their time. Look at hardworking women around you. What kind of work do they do? What are the consequences of laziness?

Ask yourself: Is she doing her best? Does she only work when someone is watching? Does she complain or frown, expecting a reward or payment? Does she wait for others to do the work while grumbling or making excuses? Does she ask questions as a way to avoid doing the task or due to genuine confusion? Does she do her daily duties without being reminded? Does she complete her work or get distracted? Can you explain how a task should be done and she performs it correctly? Does she do half-hearted work? Does she take care of her belongings? Does she return things after using them? Does she check her work before reporting or is it carelessly done? Does she waste time or keep postponing tasks? Does she give up when the work gets hard?

“She is like merchant ships, bringing her food from afar. She gets up while it is still night...” (Proverbs 31:14) The character of industry, productivity, and good stewardship is very important. A girl should be taught how to work with her hands, manage money, make a budget, and shop wisely in the market or stores. If possible, she should compare prices from different vendors before buying. She must learn the dangers of wastefulness. She should know how to buy nutritious yet affordable food. Teach her about bargaining, determining value, and bulk purchasing.

Does she know that buying in bulk can reduce the cost? If she cooks in large portions and stores for later use, does it help save money? Teach her how to buy and save. She can be trained to grow a vegetable garden to reduce costs. Does she know how to find good quality second-hand clothes and improve them for her or her siblings? Many families spend a lot on entertainment. Does she know inexpensive yet wholesome ways to enjoy leisure?

In Dar es Salaam, I saw Indian families going to the beach to relax and eat cassava chips or coconut water at affordable prices. Meanwhile, other families go to expensive venues eating fried chicken in big hotels, drinking sodas, pizza, and ice cream—unhealthy and costly. All this is essential for our children to learn.

Does she know how to store and reuse leftover food wisely? Could she make soup from leftover vegetables or beans? If visitors come unexpectedly, does she know how to stretch a meal? Can she keep chickens for eggs or cows for milk, if possible? She should learn to preserve food for dry seasons. In the past, many communities dried leafy vegetables and sweet potatoes, but today we’ve forgotten such practices. During rainy seasons, vegetables are plenty, but in the dry season, we struggle. Watch if she buys unnecessary items without thinking. Is she easily swayed by advertisements? Is she willing to wait for prices to drop? Is she learning to sew, knit, or develop skills that reduce spending? If you send her to the market, can she compare prices and bring back affordable, quality items? If you give her a shopping list, does she stick to it or buy unlisted items? Does she understand the difference between nutritious food and junk? Can she follow a budget? Does she neglect her belongings and let them go to waste?

A girl must be taught to manage time well. Time is an amazing talent given to everyone. Teach your child to master time and redeem it, so she can help her husband, children, community, and church. Teach her how to schedule time for housework. Assign her projects with deadlines. Create a list with her of tasks that can be done in 5, 10, or 15 minutes. Time is of great value.

Let her carry a book when waiting for a bus, knit, or do something useful. Use books that teach life skills (lifelong learning). See how important time was in the creation story in Genesis 1. Create a daily schedule with her—waking up, brushing, bathing, reading God’s Word. Let her ask older people what they would do differently if they could go back to their youth.

What regrets do they have about wasting time or missing opportunities? What shortcuts can be taken while cooking, cleaning, or sewing? How can one budget their time? How did David, Josiah, Christ, Daniel, Miriam, Joseph, Moses, and Samuel use their time wisely? List activities that are time-specific in a girl’s life—education, childbearing, marriage, aging. Ask her if she is doing what she should at this time.

Buy a planner and monthly calendar to review weekly. Ask if she’s using her time well to plan her future or is just daydreaming. Is she investing in eternity through reading the Word and prayer? Does she have a daily schedule or is she just idle? Does she use her break time wisely? Does she waste time on the phone, TV, or computer? When given a task, does she delay or manage time well? Does she spend too much time grooming? Does she have a bedtime schedule? Is she punctual for church, school, or appointments? Does she procrastinate or wait until the last minute? Can she multitask, like cooking greens while waiting for beans to boil? Is she looking for productive ways to use time wisely?

As a girl and future wife and mother, she should know how to wash clothes, maintain feminine hygiene, cook, manage, and handle all household responsibilities. Can she delegate tasks to younger siblings or, later, guide a house help without wasting time? Watch how you work and delegate tasks to others, and teach her to do the same. Educate her about the tools she needs—sewing machine, needles, hoe, pots—and let her start purchasing them bit by bit when she earns some money.

Does she know how to use a sewing machine and even mend her own clothes? Does she know how to use a needle, repair clothes, sew on buttons, or knit fabrics? Can she read a pattern for a sweater, knitting fabric, or a sewing design?

Take on a project together with your daughter—such as decorating a wedding hall—and write down how you will carry out the task step by step until completion. Look at the lives of Joseph, Deborah, and Daniel. How did God prepare them to become leaders? God is preparing our daughters to take on responsibilities for their families and beyond. Observe if she completes the tasks you assign her. Can she break down a big project into smaller parts and delegate to others? Does she teach her younger siblings with patience? When given a group task, does she want

to do everything by herself? Can she understand instructions when you give them? Can she evaluate the work of others under her leadership? Does she lead others with humility, or does she dominate and show off her authority? Does she work alongside her younger siblings or just watch them? Do others enjoy working with her or avoid her?

A woman can prepare up to 1,000 meals a year, and many remember the meals their mothers made. It's important to teach our children how to cook well. Learn recipes from other cultures and plan meals based on what you grow and what's affordable in the current season. Does she know how much food each family member needs? In today's globalized world, she can find recipes from books, websites, and other sources. Can you and she write your own simple recipe book for your church?

Experts say that recipes with more than seven ingredients are not healthy. Teach her to cook not for heavy flavoring, but for health—then focus on taste and appearance. Some meals are quick to prepare, others are inexpensive. Ask friends, church members, and relatives for new recipes and write them down together. You could volunteer to start a monthly three-hour cooking class at your church. What tools are needed for a recipe? Can you both learn how to bake bread, make jam, or peanut butter? Check cooking magazines. Ask mothers, “Why is mealtime important?” Does she know how to bake, fry, boil? Can she use kitchen appliances safely, skillfully, and maintain them well? Can she follow a recipe? Can she cook for a crowd twice the usual size (e.g., ugali for six instead of three)? Can she cook on time and serve meals at the table? How does she tell when food is ready? Does she clean the dishes she used after cooking?

If the mother is sick, can the girl manage everything herself? Can she prepare tasty and attractive food? Does she value the people she cooks for more than the food itself? Does she prefer expensive, decorative meals over nutritious and budget-friendly ones? Can she budget food for the whole month? Does she collect good recipes and learn the feasible ones? Does she know how to cook for people with special health needs like diabetes, allergies, heart conditions, or high blood pressure? Does she enjoy developing her cooking talent and selling food? As a mother, are you ready to help her start a small restaurant business? What other food-related matters are important besides nutrition and good taste?

Another area to consider is organization. Proverbs 31:15 speaks of planning the home well, which brings peace of mind and reflects the character of God, who is orderly and beautiful. Guests enjoy returning to a peaceful and orderly home. A girl who learns organization early will be a great help in her future home and workplace.

Some people are naturally gifted in organization, like many women from the Far East, who can arrange flowers beautifully with ease. But most of us need to be taught and encouraged repeatedly. If you as a mother are not a good organizer like me, seek help through reading and learning from others.

The first law in heaven is order. 1 Corinthians 14:40 says everything should be done in order. Young girls should return their toys after play. They should learn to make their beds. Plan your day in the morning, even writing it down, or the day may pass without doing some things. Learn to organize your plans in a calendar or notebook. Teach children to organize their books, drawings, toys, study tables, letters, schoolwork, etc. Teach them to plan both short- and long-term goals.

Organize the kitchen, their cupboards, bookshelves. Do it together and teach them how to prioritize. When planning a trip, plan with your child—what to pack, routes, hotel bookings, necessary calls, dates, stops, and activities. Plan with your child a guest day or a small party. Set a budget and how to stick to it. Plan games, decorations, and how to raise the money needed. If possible, read Don Aslet's books *Clutter's Last Stand* or *Clutter-Free*.

Visit homes of well-organized women and, with permission, observe how they organize their kitchen, cabinets, or living rooms. Together, organize your household health records like vaccinations, first aid, and doctor appointments. Also organize certificates like birth certificates, school reports—keep them in a specific place.

Take a new file and divide sections with contact numbers and addresses, calendar appointments like games/events, instructions for babysitters, clothing sizes of kids at home—each on its own page. Keep this book in an easily accessible place for reference. Identify a cluttered area at home and work together to plan what to do about it.

Assign your daughter to arrange photos neatly and label them in an album. Organize receipts, insurance documents, or church teaching visuals. Help your daughter organize her room and decorate it affordably. Check out www.Titus2.com, which has resources on managing a home. Ask your daughter to write an essay titled “The Value of an Organized Home.”

Does she put everything in its place, even when changing clothes at night, or leaves them on the floor? Does she pile things instead of organizing? Are her closet, purse, schoolbag tidy? Can she pack her suitcase properly when going on holiday? Does she toss things everywhere? Does she struggle to find items like needles, thread, homework, or shoes? Can she tidy a messy area? Can she prioritize tasks?

Does she hoard meaningless “junk” and refuse to let go? Can she keep appointments, contacts, and phone numbers without losing them? Is she too obsessed with plans such that she gets angry when they change? Can you trust her with the house for a day? Does she write her long-term goals?

“She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.” Proverbs 31:16.

This verse shows planning—buying, saving seeds, and planning the farm for maximum yield and productivity. Even as a young girl, she can start with small tasks like washing dishes, laundry, house cleaning, babysitting, shopping, changing diapers. Working helps build capacity for larger responsibilities.

Many focus solely on school—which is good—but children go to school to eventually work. Everything they do should bring glory to the King of Heaven and build the character they’ll take to heaven. Don’t despise small beginnings. They are shaping our daughters into capable and courageous women. Start her off with small chores before playtime. Assign her age-appropriate tasks and plan them together as she grows.

She can start setting small personal goals, even entrepreneurial ones, once she’s about 14. Does she have spiritual goals, like showing God’s love? A woman’s goals should align with her husband’s—discuss why this matters. Is there a hard thing God is calling her to do in life? Does she desire to please God and bring Him glory, aiming for eternal values instead of temporary ones? Do her future goals align with God’s Word or are they selfish desires? Does she plan her daily tasks and long-term goals—and write them down? Does she support your family’s goals emotionally and financially? Is she willing to forgo short-term pleasures for her goals (e.g., studying for exams instead of playing)? Does she have a desire to learn new things and use this diligence? Does she know Jesus is coming and that we must prepare for that great event?

We see that gardening is very beneficial in a woman’s life. It blesses the one who tends it and others too.

A garden can bring beauty, exercise, and a place to relax. It doesn’t have to be big. Many of our friends in the city have grown flowers or tomatoes in tins, eaten them, and even shared. There is great joy in planting seeds and watching them grow. Every girl should learn to plant vegetables and flowers! Let her learn how to tend a garden effectively—this is a great ministry for those in need.

Many of us with gardens have given produce to the needy and been blessed in return. It is good for your daughter to write an essay on the benefits of having a garden. Does she know the difference between weeds and crops? Do you work with her in the garden? Does she know how to prepare the soil for planting and where to learn agricultural knowledge? Does she know how to deal with crop pests? Does she seek farming advice from others? Have you given her a small plot to cultivate? Can she plan and manage a garden for one season?

This Proverbs 31 woman, in her planning for buying and farming, is an entrepreneur and understands how to manage money wisely. Since our daughters will grow up to manage their own finances, their husbands' and their children's, teaching financial planning is crucial. A child should be taught to divide any money she receives into tithing, which should go into a separate envelope or location, then savings, and finally spending. It is good to read stories such as: Mark 12 - The widow with two mites. Matthew 25 - The parable of the talents. Luke 12 - The rich man with abundant wealth.

Teach Her to Be a Proverbs 31 Woman - A Guide for Mothers and Daughters (Translated)

Let her ask different people and even her parents to tell her about God's blessings upon those who faithfully return their tithe. Lessons on the love of money, trust in wealth, borrowing, and wasteful spending are important. A child should be taught both short-term and long-term financial goals. How will she get the money to buy something she wants? Let parents discuss this, and if there's a way to help her start a small business, it's good to pursue it. Teach her that it is better to give than to receive, and that God blesses us when we give cheerfully. If possible, help her open a bank account.

What principles should we use when borrowing items? Can she compare prices before buying? Look at the examples of Abraham, Job, Solomon, Zacchaeus, Sapphira, and Hezekiah. Keep a monthly expense record together. Make a yearly clothing budget. Examine sound principles on lending money. Let her interview a few women on how they save or manage money.

What is the difference between tithe and offerings? Does she give cheerfully? How can a wife help her husband be a faithful steward of their possessions? When budgeting for the home, involve her so she understands the monthly household expenses. What are our recurring costs that we can cut or reduce? Is there any benefit to a wife staying home versus working outside? Does she know that all she has is given by the Heavenly Father? Is she thankful to the God who gave it?

Does she know how to save or does she spend carelessly? Is she stingy or generous with what God has blessed her with? Does she spend recklessly? Does she love to borrow or live beyond her means? Does she prefer spending on short-term pleasures instead of saving? Can she budget based on what she has?

“She girds herself with strength and strengthens her arms,” Proverbs 31:17. Just like a soldier going to war (Ephesians 6:17), so our daughters must be equipped. For them to understand the Word well, we must study with them systematically so they grasp core doctrines of faith.

Each child should have their own Bible. From around age seven, they should have their own Bible study time, even if it's just ten minutes. Perhaps a version with simpler language will help them begin. We've used the Clear Word Bible or International Children's Bible. However, there are no good Kiswahili Bibles for children. We have started writing Bible stories for children—please pray that we may finish this project.

We cannot know or love God without reading His Word. Eternal life is to know God, to trust, depend on Him, and walk with Him daily (John 17:3). Prayer is us speaking to God; reading the Word is God speaking to us.

As a mother, you must be an example. Do your children see you reading the Bible daily? The child should begin memorizing the 66 books of the Bible in order, maybe even through a song. Let her copy and memorize Bible verses. You could read one chapter of Proverbs together each day. Reading the Word should be daily, just like eating food. If you're too busy, don't eat until you've read the Bible—you'll feel hungry and be reminded to read it. As soon as the child learns to read, let her read the Bible.

Make a reading chart—perhaps one page or chapter per day. Learn together the history of how the Bible came to us—the languages it was written in, the Torah, the poetry and Psalms. The Bible was first printed in 1456 by Gutenberg's press. It changed many lives. It was written over 1,700 years by about 40 authors. It has 1,189 chapters. It's not just a book of good advice, but the voice of God and the highest authority in heaven and on earth.

Let your daughter read 1 Corinthians 13 and insert her name wherever “love” is mentioned, first using “God,” then her own name. Memorize the main theme of each book of the Bible. Take her to Bible study at church. Read and discuss Psalm 119. Learn different methods of studying the Bible and pray for grace to apply what's written. Enroll her in Bible correspondence or online Bible studies like

those from Amazing Discoveries, Amazing Facts, Secrets Unsealed, or Voice of Prophecy. After reading a verse, let her answer:

What does this verse say?

What does it mean?

How can it be applied in my life?

What should I do about this verse?

After a week, let her reflect—has anything in her life changed because of that verse?

Does she read the Bible daily without being reminded? Does she have a desire to read it? Does it transform her life and give meaning? Can she give examples of how God's Word applies to her life? Does she ask questions as she reads? Does she share with others? Does she search for answers in the Bible? Can she easily locate verses? Does she at least know some Bible history? Does she know how to use Bible study tools—like a dictionary, commentary, concordance, or cross-references?

It is extremely helpful to memorize the Word. In trials, you defeat the enemy through the promises you remember—"It is written." Hiding God's Word in our hearts is our greatest weapon against sin (Psalm 119:11). The Holy Spirit will remind us when to use the sword of the Word in any trial. Start by memorizing one verse per week. Children have great memory, and because their minds are less cluttered, this will help. Nothing expands the mind and increases knowledge like memorizing God's Word. Discuss the meaning of verses as she memorizes. Good chapters to begin with include Psalm 23, 91, 1 Corinthians 13, the Ten Commandments, or even the book of Ephesians which discusses relationships. You could record her recitations. Have a notebook for what you read together. Can she memorize 20 verses?

Teaching your daughter to pray daily is vital. It will help her turn to God when she's older and facing family challenges. Always teach those you counsel to bring their problems to God. Pray together morning and evening. Let her also pray alone. Discuss the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6. Whenever she's tempted to speak badly about someone, she should pray. Let her keep a prayer journal with dates—this will help her look back and thank God. Teach her to pray for the needy, government, family, school, church, the hopeless, and the sick. Let her also learn

to pray for those who offend her. Praise, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication should be part of every prayer.

Let her interview people of faith—missionaries or preachers—on how prayer opened doors, or how God answered their prayers. Which women went to Christ with requests? Write down God's promises and how to pray them (there are over 3,500). Let her start praying for her future husband, even if she is only ten years old.

Read stories of faith like Hannah, Moses, Solomon, Nehemiah, and David. Read about Augustine, John Newton, and others whose lives were changed through their mothers' prayers. Learn the principles of fasting prayer as the girl grows. Does she close her eyes while praying? Is prayer real to her, actual communication with God, or just routine? Does she ask for God's guidance before making decisions? Does she pray when in trouble? Does she show reverence during prayer, or does she joke around? Does she believe that God answers prayer? Do you share answered prayers with her? Does she thank God in her prayers, or only ask for things?

It's vital to teach our daughters self-control—over their bodies and emotions. Denial is key: sleeping and waking on time, reading the Bible and praying upon waking, eating at regular times, and learning personal hygiene (brushing teeth, combing hair, cutting nails, bathing, washing clothes) without being reminded.

She should eat only when hungry, not just because she's idle and food is available. Let her fast for 4-5 hours between meals. Laziness, gluttony, immodest dressing, sinful living, and bad company must be denied.

What kind of music does she listen to? Let her ask others what habits of hers annoy them and seek God's grace to change. Does she know about healthy food and exercise, or just eat anything she enjoys? Does she know God's Word instructs us to return to Eden's diet?

Study the lives of self-denying individuals who achieved great things—Daniel, Esther, Joseph. Let her write an essay on Gluttony.

Sit together and observe people walking by on the street. Their walk, eyes, and clothing communicate something. Can she tell who is confident, self-denying, or lazy? What does God's Word say about our bodies? What are the effects of overeating or under-eating? What are the effects of junk food or foods God has forbidden?

Some sins affect our bodies, like anger—discuss these. Study the health and dietary laws in the Old Testament, even from Noah’s time before the Jews. Observe if she tries to live a clean, healthy life without reminders—does she brush her teeth, wash her underwear daily, bathe daily? Does she exercise and practice self-control in her eating? Does she know her body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?

Does her appearance reflect self-denial and self-respect? Does she discipline her body so she doesn’t offend others? Does she often appear tired or frequently fall ill? Does she sit properly? Are there things that could help her be healthier and stronger? Does she have nervous habits like biting her nails? Does she care how she appears to others? Is she too obsessed with her looks?

It’s important to teach our daughters to seek proper counsel. God is the greatest counselor, but He has placed people to help us too. She can ask older godly women. As an adult, she’ll need advice often. It’s better to be humble and ask for guidance than to ruin things when confused. God’s Word in James 1 says if any lacks wisdom, let them ask and it will be given. Ask parents about times they sought counsel and succeeded.

Proverbs is a good book for this. It often says, “My son, listen to my instructions...” How can she identify a good counselor for spiritual matters, family, community, or finances? Titus 2 says older women should be mentors. Study people who received good or bad advice in Scripture.

What is wisdom? Read and discuss Ephesians 5:22-24: What does it mean to submit to your husband when it comes to receiving advice from others? How should a wife respond if her husband gives poor counsel, like Abigail?

I remember advice my mother gave me after finishing grade 12, when suitors started coming. Even at seminary, being the only girl, or in the chemistry department, boys would approach. My mother advised: “Don’t respond rudely or arrogantly, even if you’re not interested in marriage right now. Respond politely, even to those with bad behavior. Ask for time to think, and after a few days tell them you’re still studying or have goals to accomplish, so it’s not possible now.” She said, maybe in a few years your view will change. If you answered them kindly, they might return or speak well of you to others.

The world changes fast. Today they want to marry, you’re not ready. Tomorrow you’ll be ready, they’ll no longer be interested because of your rude response. She also said it’s not the girl’s role to chase after a man like Potiphar’s wife. Let the man pursue you. From those who pursue you, you can choose one. It’s shameful to chase after a man, even if you like him. Let him pursue you.

Nowadays, girls are the ones chasing! But a man was created to seek. He feels good knowing he put in the effort. Above all, pray for a good husband more than three times a day—it's important because only God knows who is truly suitable. Those who seemed worthless turned out to be great husbands, and those who seemed nice became cruel. The heart is deceitful and full of hidden sickness—who can know it? Only God. So let every girl know that a good husband is given by the Lord—not found through her own wisdom.

People change—those who married seemingly stable partners ended up with spouses who became harmful to them, while those we thought had chosen poorly turned out well. A spouse can influence their partner's behavior by giving them the space to grow. Look more closely in the Bible at the advice parents gave.

Does your daughter come to you for advice on everyday and sensitive matters? Does she accept your counsel about her friends, or does she argue? Does she always think she's right? Does she seek spiritual counsel? Does she look to know God's will by reading His Word? Does she enjoy the counsel of God and those who love Him, or does she only want her own way?

Since we are part of the community of believers, it is good to strengthen one another with those who share our faith. Involve your daughters in church and discuss sermons and the Word of God together. Let our daughters see the value of serving in church activities. They can help deacons clean the church. Let them thank their church teachers and leaders.

Our daughters should learn how to sit quietly in church and keep the Sabbath day according to the biblical plan. What roles did women in the Old and New Testaments play in the church?

Does she complain about going to church and try to avoid it? Does she keep leaving during services to go to the bathroom or drink water? Does she apply what she learned in church? Does she only pray for food but not for her life? Are her close friends from church? Does she enjoy being in the house of the Lord? Can she recount what was taught that day? Does she serve others using her God-given talents? Does she listen attentively? Does she pray for the needs of the body of Christ? Does she know her spiritual gifts? Does she admire women in her church or leaders, or does she look up to worldly celebrities?

“She perceives that her merchandise is profitable; her lamp does not go out at night.” (Proverbs 31:18). This woman has perseverance. As parents, we must avoid the temptation to shield our children from all difficulty. Let us not make them feel that God is treating them unfairly. Help them turn to God and His Word. Don't

deny your children the chance to see God's greatness and faithfulness in their troubles so they may grow and be refined like precious stones. Books like Pilgrim's Progress are helpful for this. Let them ask elders of the faith about God's faithfulness in their lives. Hebrews 11 is a chapter to read and discuss—how these people overcame their trials with God's help. When we face hard times, what's the worst that can happen? Who is truly in control of everything? How do obedience and faith help show others that God is Almighty?

Study the lives of notable people who didn't give up during great distress or failure. Read the Psalms, and publications like Voice of the Martyrs to learn about people who recently died for their faith. Read Isaiah 53. Who in the Bible endured to the end? How can we be thankful in all things? Discuss God's greatness and power together. Why does God allow trials and suffering? (See 1 Peter.) How can a wife be patient and submissive to a difficult husband? What does the Bible say about divorce? How do divorce and perseverance relate?

Does she give up quickly and refuse to try again if she fails? Does she complain and feel sorry for herself when things don't go her way or when someone offends her? Does she focus only on problems? Can she control her emotions during trouble or hardship without harboring bitterness? Does she act like she's the only one with problems in the world? Does she find comfort in Scripture during trials? Does she examine herself for sin during hardship, to see if perhaps the Lord is disciplining her? Does she understand that God wants her to learn through her trials? Does she glorify God in how she handles difficulty? Does she trust God and see trials as helping her mature?

"She sets her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle. She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy." (Proverbs 31:19-20). God has been generous to us and calls us to be generous to strangers and show them love. A woman learns generosity while she is still young. A home that welcomes those in need of comfort, fellowship, help, and love is a model home. The mother brings joy through sharing and serving others. Many have entertained angels without knowing it (Hebrews 13).

Teach children to be generous—take food to the sick, help those in need such as the elderly and ill, and invite people to your home. Teach children how to greet a guest, introduce them, take their luggage, talk to them, serve them food, and help them feel at ease. Discuss what the host should do. How can she help the family when an unexpected guest arrives? How can she help the visiting children and their mother? Think of someone who warmly welcomes you when you visit and try to imitate them.

How can she welcome guests who come to church so they feel loved? Study examples in Scripture of those who welcomed guests. Who welcomed angels? Look at the stories of Martha and Mary in Luke 10 and John 12. Can she cook a simple meal quickly and serve guests? Does she know what children like to eat? Can she help with overnight guests? What's the difference between how a man and woman host guests? Does she stay with guests or isolate herself?

Is she willing for guests to use her belongings? Does she politely join adult conversations? Does she make an effort to initiate conversations with guests? Does she try to be kind even to guests not her age? Does she help guests feel at home? When her friends visit, does she take the responsibility to welcome and serve them? Is she polite when sitting at the table with guests? Does she serve and greet church visitors? Does she resent having guests because of the extra work? Does she know that her hospitality is service to God? Does she see her home as a hub for reaching people with the knowledge of God?

On the other hand, she should know how to be a good guest when visiting others—with joy and respect. Dress modestly even at bedtime. Know how to respond and act wisely. For example, if the hosts are arguing, what should she do? What activities can she help the host with?

Being a compassionate woman is important. Helping the poor and offering hope spiritually and physically is crucial. He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and the Lord repays fully. God's children are not stingy but generous. Teach her to share her toys, clothes, etc.

Plan how to help widows, the sick, the disabled, the lonely, orphans, or elderly people in your church. Teach how to set aside money to help those in need—e.g., prisoners, missionaries, caregivers, expectant mothers, people with mental illness, the abused, etc. How can you help them? What Bible verses would comfort them? Visit www.persecution.com.

Read the Gospels and observe how Christ helped those in need. How did He care for the poor, sick, widows, or orphans? Read the newspaper or listen to the news and think of how to help victims of disasters. Can you help poor neighbors who don't want charity but need jobs? What does mercy mean?

Does she notice when others are suffering or in need? Does she feel compassion for them? Does she feel sorrow and show mercy to those in need? Can she offer comforting words to the hurting? Does she give her time and possessions out of love for God, or for show? Is she eager to follow Christ by serving others? Does she enjoy serving? Does she volunteer for service?

We should also help meet people's spiritual needs. As women, we are involved in these daily. We are commanded to go into all the world and preach the Good News. She should understand briefly how to share her testimony. What was she like before Christ? How has God changed her life? She should know the message of the cross, even briefly: that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). We are saved by grace through faith alone. We must confess our sins, repent sincerely, believe in Christ as our Savior, and have assurance of salvation.

Can she explain to a friend what salvation means? Can she pray with someone and lead them in a prayer of true repentance? Can she run a Bible club for neighborhood kids? People met physical needs to help meet spiritual needs. Can she fundraise for a project to meet church needs like building?

Does she believe Jesus died and rose again to pay for her sins? Has she accepted Christ as her Savior and Lord? Does she grieve for those lost without knowing God? Does she pray for the unsaved? Does she know Bible verses to lead someone to faith in God? Is she ashamed to confess Christ before others? Does she love to obey God? Do her actions align with the Word? Does she pray for and encourage those who serve God? Does she give to support God's work, or is she only focused on this earthly life?

Being righteous is one of the traits of a noble woman. She should know the laws of the land. Voting and respecting leaders. She should understand that leaders are appointed by God and that justice matters. Whom should she vote for? There are many issues a Christian should consider: abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, homosexuality, pornography, taxation, fornication, or lying. How should a God-loving person engage with these? When voting, should she vote for leaders who support such things? Are there God-fearing leaders who have brought blessing to people? Read the lives of Daniel, Noah, or Rehoboam.

Does she know her leaders and understand what authority means? Can she express her opinions and present them to leaders at both lower and higher levels? Does she understand how a bill becomes a law? Is she aware of what is currently happening in the country? Can she discern misleading words—"human reasoning"—in the media? Does she show the proper respect due to government leaders, even those who are selfish or corrupt? Is she making efforts where she is to change unjust laws by speaking with local leaders? Does she help victims of injustice? Does she understand that all authority is established by God?

“She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household is clothed with scarlet.” —Proverbs 31:21.

A virtuous woman prepares for the future. It’s good for a girl to know emergency numbers—such as those of trusted family members, police, or the fire department. Joseph prepared Egypt for hard times (Genesis 41). Let’s also teach our children to do the same. Teach them what to do in case of fire—where to run, how to help their younger siblings. Let her know where the torch, matches, or candles are.

If she is left to take care of young children, teach her well how to care for them and respond to possible dangers. Are there poisonous plants or flowers nearby? What if a child drinks paraffin or drowns in a river—what should she do? Ask a mother who has faced such dangers in her home what she did. Teach your daughter the dangers of water, electricity, and gas, and how to switch them off properly.

First aid is essential—every child should be taught according to their age. If a child suddenly falls ill, does she know what to do, whom to ask, and how to take the child to the hospital? What risks exist in your area, and what should be done if you live there? Can she recognize spoiled food and dispose of it before it causes food poisoning? Should leftovers be kept or discarded? How should meat, eggs, or fish be preserved?

Which way should pot handles face? When handing someone a knife, which side should she hold? Does she know how to use a pressure cooker safely? Teach her how to preserve vegetables safely, by drying or bottling. Let her learn a few safety tips for using transportation tools like bicycles, motorcycles, or cars. Can she change a tire? Does she know how to get vaccinated safely? Encourage her to research all sides.

A book like *Where There Is No Doctor* is very useful to keep. When does home first aid no longer help and one must be taken to the hospital? Learn together with your daughter about alternative medicine and growing medicinal herbs like echinacea, ginger, and garlic. Take classes in water rescue and self-defense. Learn about the safety of having or not having weapons at home, such as arrows, clubs, rat traps or poisons, or even guns.

Does she know what to do when no warning is given? Can she swim? Can she anticipate danger? Is she careful not to cause harm to herself or others—for instance, leaving wet floors or throwing objects around? If the means of transport breaks down, can she be of help? Does she know how to handle household emergencies? Does she handle food hygienically and safely? Does she know what to do in case of an earthquake or storm? Can she use tools safely? Does she know

how to protect herself from illness? Does she know how to defend herself against someone trying to harm her (self-defense moves)? Does she trust God as her ultimate protector and provider?

“She makes for herself tapestry; her clothing is fine linen and purple.” —Proverbs 31:22

A God-fearing woman appreciates beauty as well. She makes efforts to sew and develop skills. She strives to dress well even at home—not like one who only dresses up to chase birds from the field. Let her learn to make her bed and leave her room tidy in the morning. A room completely changes just by making the bed! She can help make table and chair covers. She can grow flowers to decorate the house and help mend buttons for her siblings. God has created us to love craftsmanship and beauty. Teach her to sew and repair clothes—if you can’t, find someone to help her. Let her learn how to attach a zipper, sew a bag, handkerchief, child’s garment, skirt, or apron. She can even sew for and assist the needy. Attending sewing, decorating, and knitting classes will help her gain more knowledge. Mothers can teach these skills to girls in places of worship or community groups. Books like *Simple Secrets to a Beautiful Home* by Emilie Barnes are excellent for our girls to read.

Is her room organized? Does she try to make her room clean and attractive? Are her table, chairs, clothes, and bedding arranged neatly? Does she take time to learn how to decorate using simple things like flowers—for her room, the house, or even helping decorate the house of God? Are her wall decorations of celebrities and worldly magazines, or are they uplifting materials?

It appears this woman wears fine linen and purple—these are royal garments; she is a daughter of the King! If possible, let’s have a few beautiful clothes and also help those in need. Being a child of the King includes having royal character. Our daughters should learn royal manners—being courteous and gentle. Saying thank you, please, sorry, and excuse me—these are golden or royal words. They should know how to behave in church and elsewhere—not being loud or argumentative. They should know how to call or talk to people. They should understand etiquette when visiting others.

Gary and Cathy Maldaner wrote a book titled *Visiting Other Families in Polite Moments*. Explore what to teach children about visiting someone else’s home. What about when going to a hotel or restaurant? (Etiquette and modesty)—how to serve food, how to request a menu, how to use a spoon or fork, or napkin. Write these rules somewhere and study them together. For example, who begins to serve

food when you are guests? Books like *Manners Made Easy* by June Hines Moore are helpful.

How to answer a phone and introduce yourself when meeting someone. How to give compliments or encouragement. How to welcome a guest at your door, how to say thank you when praised, how to show gratitude after being hosted, how to excuse yourself to use the bathroom, how to set a table and serve others, how to get someone's attention politely (interrupting), how to be a good guest, how not to be selfish, or how to write thank-you notes after a visit.

How can a girl learn to do things gracefully? (*A Girl's Guide to Etiquette*) Read the Gospels. What can you learn about Christ as a guest, a friend, a teacher? How did He greet people, talk to them, say goodbye? Read about Nabal (1 Samuel 25) and Hanun (2 Samuel 10), who had poor manners. What does Philippians 2:2-4 teach us about relationships?

Write a list of behaviors that annoy others or show bad manners. Write down how a girl can change those bad habits. List the kind of people you admire—what polite habits do they have? Do they honor others more than themselves? Compare this with your behavior. Observe a woman known for good manners—ask her how she does these things (graciousness and etiquette). How does the fruit of the Spirit relate to our behavior (Galatians 5:22-23)?

Invite a guest and have your daughter set the table, arrange flowers, cook, and host (be a gracious hostess). Look into God's Word to see people who displayed good manners—what did they do? Where does the Bible instruct us to be gentle and kind—such as caring for the elderly or serving others before ourselves? Why is it improper to talk while chewing food?

Does she treat others the way she wants to be treated? Does she have good table manners? Does she speak politely? Does she know how to excuse herself when necessary? Does she love people and display good manners—following the rules humbly and lovingly? Do others enjoy speaking with or visiting her? Do you often feel embarrassed by her behavior when guests are around? Does she show courtesy to the elderly? Does she express gratitude and respect other people's belongings?

It is important to teach children to be modest. We should teach them that the way they dress or speak can offend others. We must tell them their responsibility to be wise in dressing and speaking. They need to know they are children of the King and should be trained from an early age. Let us dress them in appropriate styles from childhood.

Many little girls are dressed in revealing clothes like short shorts, and when they turn twelve we begin to say such clothes are inappropriate—yet they’ve worn them since they were young! It’s best for little girls to wear shorts under their dresses because while playing, their underwear can be exposed. A child should not spend the day in a leso tied around her chest with shoulders exposed—add another one to cover her shoulders and chest.

We must also teach them to be humble, moderate, and not to feel more important than others. 1 Timothy 2 describes a woman who loves God. What kinds of clothing or fashion are immodest? There should be a dress code. What kinds of trousers do they wear? Are they tight, especially around private areas? Do the clothes reveal the chest and breasts? Are the dresses above the knees? Let your daughter talk with her father about which clothes may be a stumbling block to boys or even grown men.

Pick up a catalog of women’s clothing with pictures and discuss it together. Sit in a public place and observe how people dress—discuss which outfits are modest and which are not. What standards do you use to judge? Write down a dress code for a girl who represents God, and how to do her hair, nails, or face in a way that honors God. Does outer appearance matter, or is a clean heart enough? Why did God give clothes to Adam and Eve in Eden? Why didn’t He leave them with the fig leaves they had made that covered only part of their bodies and left other parts exposed? If God gave them garments to cover the body—not fig leaves—what does that mean for us?

Look at fashion trends from various countries, then look at how people dressed fifty or even a hundred years ago. Do these fashions reflect values and culture? Let the girl discuss with her parents: What is her goal in how she dresses? Is she dressing to please God or people? Does she want to be seen or to bring glory to God?

Many countries now have places where families go without clothes (nude beaches or recreation). Why is this wrong? Why did Noah curse his son who saw his nakedness? When Christ was on earth, how did people dress? What is nakedness? Is it the complete lack of clothes, or wearing partial clothes with some parts exposed?

Raising a Daughter to Be a Proverbs 31 Woman - Lessons for Mother and Daughter

God’s Word is clear about which parts of the body should remain covered and which can be exposed. Tell your daughter to go shopping for clothes with her father, and let the father give input during the selection. He should explain why

he approves of a certain outfit. Ask the father to examine her wardrobe at home, evaluate each piece of clothing, and give reasons why they are appropriate or not.

Read about the strange woman in Proverbs 7. What does she do to attract men? Compare the two women in Revelation: the one clothed with the sun and moon, and the one who deceived the nations. What are the differences between them? What kind of men are drawn to immoral women? Ask the father to explain to his daughter how young men perceive a woman dressed in tight or revealing clothing, and how it causes them to give her the wrong kind of attention (flirtatious). Read the book *For Young Women Only* by Shaunti Feldhahn and discuss it as a family.

Read Matthew 5:27-28. When a daughter dresses, she should consider the thoughts she may provoke in the men who see her. Think about a woman with modesty in spirit and dress—observe her behavior, actions, speech with men, and how she dresses. Study women in the Bible who lacked modesty and how they dressed. What did they do, and what were the consequences? How can immodesty in dress be a sign of unfaithfulness to one's future husband? How might it cause other men to be unfaithful to their future wives?

Prepare your daughter for courtship when she's around age 18. Discuss how not to become legalistic about dressing modestly—do it from a heart of reverence for God, not just as a set of rules. It's said that men are tempted to lust after women, and women are tempted to desire being lusted after. Discuss this together.

Does your daughter dress to please God, or to glorify herself and attract attention? Does she accept counsel on how she dresses, or does she simply wear what makes her happy? Does she know how men perceive certain clothing? Is she protecting men from sinful thoughts through her modesty? Does she prefer to expose her body? Does she dress like a girl or prefer dressing like a boy? Is her goal to attract men through her clothing, behavior, or words?

Does she overdo modesty to the point of appearing unfeminine? Is she proud of her modesty and judgmental of others who dress immodestly? Has she become legalistic—focused on outward appearance while her heart harbors rebellion? Does she impose her modesty standards on others?

“Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.” - Proverbs 31:23. A man who is respected in public must also be respected at home. Proverbs 12:4 says a wise woman who honors her husband helps him grow in leadership and responsibility. Respecting a husband starts with a girl respecting her father from a young age. She should avoid nagging and learn to respect and recognize the authority of her parents as God-given.

She should respond respectfully when her father calls her, help him at the door, carry his coat, cook his food, and serve him. She should thank him and learn what pleases him—like a newspaper, music, or books. Write a list of things that please and displease your father. Read Proverbs to understand the relationship between parent and child, and also Ephesians 5:33.

What shows respect for your father? How does your mother show respect to him? As women, we must model this so our children learn. How do we support our husbands as helpers? How can she show respect to her grandfather or brothers? Can you write a list of things that show disrespect? If a girl struggles to respect her parents, have her write down the reasons why and compare with what the Bible says about those reasons.

Study the wives of Job, Michal, and Vashti—how did they dishonor their husbands? Read about Sarah and Esther—how did they honor theirs? Examine women or children who show disrespect—what kind of example do they set? What role does male authority play in the home? What about God's authority?

Let the daughter discuss with her father the importance of honoring her future husband. How should an employee, citizen, child, or wife respond when those in authority are unworthy of respect? Is she free to obey even when authority does wrong?

Does she speak to you and her father with respect? Does she use polite language with parents and other authorities? When you call her, does she respond and look you in the eye? Do her facial expressions, tone, and posture show obedience? Does she respect you both in public and in private? Does she mock your weaknesses in front of others? Does she correct you publicly? Does she respect elders, police, and government leaders? Does she try to please you? Does she see you as God-given authority in her life? Does she respect your opinions? Does she know how to express disagreement respectfully? Does she act ashamed of you as her parent? Does she like mocking or ridiculing you?

Supporting a husband is very important—daughters should be taught this. It enables our husbands to fulfill their God-given leadership roles more effectively. A wife is a helper to her husband; she should honor and dedicate her time and energy to supporting him. If she does this well, she can become a crown to him. Sometimes she may need to set aside her own desires to serve her husband—this is learned from a young age.

Some women don't think this way because they married unbelievers—but even such husbands deserve respect. Matthew 20:28 says even the Son of Man came to serve. Teach your daughter to serve her siblings. Let her ask her mother or other women, “What are your goals today?” She'll see that many of their goals involve serving their households.

She should learn how to please her siblings for a day and pray for her parents. Discuss ways to support her father's work. Can she put aside her interests to help others? Let her observe how her mother supports her father. She should ask her father how her mother has encouraged his God-given calling and helped him in life. Look at daughters who support their fathers. Interview two men on how their wives helped them succeed—how did their encouragement and support help them mature in leadership?

Study great people and historical leaders—what roles did their wives or mothers play in their success? 1 Timothy 3:1-13. What role does a wife play in helping her husband? 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 show how a man needs his wife's support in many areas. Look at Jesus' example as a servant—how did He serve others?

Observe women like Sarah and Priscilla and how they supported their husbands. Study wives like Lot's, Haman's, Jezebel, or Herodias—how did they influence their husbands? What happens in homes where wives don't support their husbands? For wives who pursue careers over supporting their husbands—how does this affect the children and husbands?

Can a family sin as a team? How can a wife support her husband with her words—by praising his good qualities, being humble, respectful, or through prayer? Write 15 ways to honor a husband. How can your role as a wife reflect the Church's role in supporting Christ?

Verse 24 highlights the entrepreneurial skills our daughters should learn. Teach them how to start small home businesses to earn income and build skills. A father or mother can initiate a project like selling small items—water, crafts, or baked goods. If she can do paid work, let her. Women like the one in Acts 16:14-15 show that women can sell valuable items. Discuss the benefits of earning income from home rather than working outside. Learn about business licenses and taxes. Interview women with their own businesses—what do they do? Think of a small capital business to start. How should a woman use her earnings?

Does she work with excellence? Does she want God to be pleased with her work? Is she improving her skills? Is she skilled enough to earn income? Do others know she's a good worker? Do people like her products or services? Does she have

entrepreneurial ideas? Does she enjoy working both at home and outdoors? When she sees a need, does she try to solve it? Does she want money only for herself or also to support her family and others?

“Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come.” - Verse 25. This woman lives by faith, contentment, and gratitude. She knows God controls the future. We must help our daughters be content with what God—and we as parents—have given them. Discuss and write down together what you're thankful for. What does your daughter thank her parents for? What's the difference between asking and giving thanks? Philippians 4:6-7 and 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Does she struggle with jealousy or resentment?

Read about discontented people in the Bible. Every time she is tempted to complain, let her read Philippians 2 and Isaiah 53. Should a daughter of the King live in discontent? Talk to an older woman about being content. Discuss the meaning of covet. Write a list of things you're discontent with—appearance, living situation, family—then identify the root of that discontent in your heart. Confess it to God. Look at Hebrews 11 and how every person listed lived by faith and contentment.

Does she thank God for what she has? Does she demand to be bought things at the store? Does she care if someone else gets a bigger share? Does she want everything others have? Can she endure hardship and see God's lessons in it? Does she trust God as her Provider? Is she focused on temporary things or eternal ones? Is she content with what she has or always wants more? Does she have a thankful heart toward her parents and your love? Does she express gratitude for service or what's done for her? Does she like to complain and whine? Does she compete with others to get what she wants? Is she always defending her rights? Does she indulge in self-pity? Does she envy others' blessings or success? Do those blessings make her bitter?

God Provides for Our Present and Future Needs

Who gave Adam his wife? What kind of people does God want us to be? (Micah 6:6-8). Look at all the women who helped in Jesus' ministry or met His needs—how many of them were unmarried? Identify single women in your church and visit them. Can a girl make her single years fruitful through school, Bible study, ministry, Scripture memorization, and skill-building?

Does she understand the sin of women marrying women and men marrying men? Discuss this with her.

The Bible mentions individuals such as Miriam, Rahab, Delilah, Mary, Martha, Esther, Anna, the widow of Zarephath, and the daughters of Zelophehad. How did their singleness help them serve in their respective roles? How did God provide for them? What mistakes did they make, and what were the consequences? (1 Corinthians 7:34-35).

Write about how an unmarried woman, not occupied with pleasing a husband, can serve God effectively. Consider how her freedom enables her for ministry. What can she do to help the church now while single? If God calls her to remain single, can she trust Him?

Talk with your parents about being called to serve God without marriage. Why does God sometimes call people who remain unmarried? How do such people support themselves? If you don't get married, will you live in your own home? Where will you seek counsel when single?

Read about the call to live a single life. Read the book *Did I Kiss Marriage Goodbye?* by Carolyn McCulley. Can a single life be good and complete? Discuss loneliness.

Does she trust God in all things and find fulfillment in her relationship with Him? Does she recognize that the enemy attacks in many ways beyond sin—such as discouragement, hypocrisy, bad friendships, and weariness? Has she committed to serving others, starting at home?

Is she learning how to be a wife and mother at home? Does she trust God to choose the right husband at the right time, if that is His plan? Does she value your opinion on the boys who approach her? Does she care more about marriage than obedience to God?

Does she daydream about marriage? Does she entertain inappropriate romantic thoughts? What matters more to her—being a mature God-fearing woman or just getting married to anyone? Does she envy her peers who are getting married? Is she afraid she might never get married?

Does she understand that God may have called her to singleness to serve Him? Does she know that whether or not she marries, God has a special plan for her? Is she using her single years to prepare for God's greater calling? Does she speak to unmarried women in the church with kindness and love? Does she desire to help meet the needs of the lonely?

Let us teach our daughters not to live in fear, but with strength and courage. Let them know prayer is essential. When they are afraid, they should depend on Him.

Read about God's promises and His protection. See how these women trusted God—Noah's wife, Lot's wife, Sarah, Esther, Jochabed, Deborah, or Ruth. Choose Psalms to read when afraid. Look at when the Israelites were afraid in the book of Exodus. How did those in Hebrews 11 show courage?

Interview women who were once fearful—what happened when they were afraid, and what happened when they trusted God? Study Sarah's life—what were her strengths and weaknesses? How did she respond when tested? Why is she given as an example for those with faith?

Is she afraid to trust God for provision? Does she have the faith of Romans 8:28? Does she know which verses to read when afraid? Does she pray when fearful? Is she afraid to try new things? Is she afraid of people's opinions? Is she afraid of making mistakes? Is she afraid of the future? Can she say "no" when pressured to do evil? Is she afraid of being hurt? Is she afraid to talk to people? Does she worry and always see failure and problems?

Does she have the courage to resolve conflicts or misunderstandings with friends, relatives, teachers, or parents? Can she admit when she is wrong? Is she ready to apologize when she offends someone? Does she fear God more than people? Can she rebuke a friend in sin? Does she despair when she sins? Does she respond positively to correction and rebuke? Is she afraid to express her thoughts? Is she afraid to witness for Christ publicly? Is she afraid to express her emotions?

"She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the law of kindness is on her tongue." The tongue cannot be tamed—it is restless evil, full of deadly poison. As parents, we must help our children "bridle" their tongues early so they may be a blessing to their husbands, children, the church, and the community. David prayed that God would set a guard over his mouth. We should point out to our daughters when their speech is improper, and their friends can help monitor them too. We must not repay evil with evil. How can we do this? Tell your daughter to ask someone to monitor her for all idle words (Matthew 12:36-37).

Read James 3 and discuss it. Study people who were uplifted by good words and those who were ruined by bad speech. Look at words such as arguments, complaints, gossip, lies, exaggeration, false witness, and blasphemy. How can a woman control her speech? Read the story of Abigail or Pilate's wife. How can a woman speak encouraging and wise words? How can we control our spirit in conversation? How can our speech be a blessing?

Does she like to label people with nicknames? Does she speak foolishly or with an irritating tone? Does she mock others? Does she like to cry and complain? Does she

enjoy gossiping? Is her tone always harsh? Does she shout when arguing with siblings? Does she enjoy reporting others' faults? Does she speak unkindly to her siblings? Does she enjoy provoking others with her words? Does she love to criticize and mock others sarcastically?

Does she use God's name in vain? Does she show respect to you and her father with her words? Do her words build up others or tear them down? Does she say whatever comes to mind, or does she filter her words? Does she correct others with humility? Does she offer wise counsel to others?

Speaking with wisdom is essential for a mother or wife. Children must be trained to obey. She should not be lazy in work. We must teach our daughters how to possess inner beauty that surpasses external appearance.

LIST 70 DESIRES OF YOUR HEART SO WE CAN PRAY FOR THEM!

Psalm 37:3-5

Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.

Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.

Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will act.

Seventy desires in my life here on earth by God's grace

Please list yours too! (My list - Bucket list)

70. To ask for help in writing a Swahili Bible commentary

69. To sing 220 songs!

68. To write 10 books to help the community, e.g., for children, women, men, pastors, or health workers

67. To take one week for a solo retreat

66. To obtain a certificate in Naturopathy

65. To travel to New Zealand and India

64. To walk 3 miles every day

63. To serve in a foodbank/soup kitchen for the hungry

62. To keep a cat

61. To organize the house well, declutter, and give items to the needy

60. To learn healthy cooking

59. To translate 50 books
58. To create videos
57. To make soap and Tie Dye clothes
56. To learn to sew simple things like underwear and patches
55. To meet with classmates from Primary and Secondary school (Reunion)
54. To take a computer class
53. To hold public health and spiritual meetings and do simple health screenings like blood pressure and sugar
52. To send a container of clothes to help the poor
51. To inspire 5 people to help orphans, widows, and the poor
50. To visit the headquarters of my church, and Battle Creek, Michigan
49. To lead at least 1,000 people to JESUS
48. To defend someone who has been mistreated
47. To memorize at least one chapter of the Bible
46. To join a choir and sing for at least one year
45. To study a particular skill and earn a certificate
44. To go on a mission trip
43. To help at least 100 orphans go to school
42. To help at least 20 widows
41. To help at least one poor person
40. To host my fellowship group at home and cook for them

39. To get out of all my debts
42. To know my spiritual gift and use it
41. To learn how to pray
- 38 To volunteer to help my neighbors (community service)
- 37.To seek out those I've wronged and ask for forgiveness
36. To volunteer for 3 years in service to further God's work
35. To learn to laugh, smile, and be joyful
- 34.To visit hospitals and check on those without relatives and visit them
33. To read 2 books every month
- 32.To learn to play the guitar
- 31.To volunteer in a children's hospital to talk and play with them
30. To tell those I love that I love them
29. To learn how to renovate a house
28. To plant trees and flowers, and improve my garden/farm
27. To visit an elderly person, help with chores, and chat with them
26. To go to a hospital and ask if there's a family of a critical patient who needs comfort and talk with them
25. To write a will
- 24.To write another list of things I want to do (Redo list)
23. To finish reading all 1,189 chapters of Scripture
22. To help 20 poor pastors buy suits and shoes
21. To take 20 children to school

- 20 To build one simple bush church
- 21 To sponsor several youths to attend a youth conference
20. To learn how to use one tech device
- 19.To deeply study one book of the Bible, e.g., Ephesians or Romans
- 18.To write the story of my life and what I have learned
17. To journal my daily life events and reflections
16. To have a BLOG
- 15.To write a play
- 14.. To read a book with the testimony of someone who served God and the challenges and successes they experienced
- 13.To invite my neighborhood and share a meal with them at my home (picnic)
12. To visit my former school and give gifts like pens, notebooks, charts, jerseys, crayons
- 11.To learn healthy lifestyle habits—proper nutrition, exercise, fresh air, drinking 8 glasses of water, moderation, forgiveness, wearing healthy clothes, depending on GOD, sunbathing, sleeping early before 10 p.m., and taking Sabbath day for rest and reflection on God's greatness
10. To write a book to help the community, e.g., for children, women, men, pastors, or health workers
9. To find someone who made a difference in my life or my family's and show them kindness
- 8.To forgive someone who wronged me
- 7.. To take my family on a wildlife safari and walk around
- 6.To pray three times every day—morning, noon, and evening

- 5.To write a play in Swahili that helps address social and spiritual issues and have school children act it out
- 4 To go camping for one week with youth or peers
- 3.To have a small business that also serves as a ministry (please help me pray for this)
- 2.To be saved, believe in GOD, confess, and repent of my sins
- 1.To prepare for the judgment, so it doesn't catch me off guard like the five foolish virgins

CHAPTER 52

UNION AND THE ETERNAL GIFT

God's love is boundless. Our Heavenly Father is the source of all goodness, joy, wisdom, and life. He provides daily sustenance to all His creations. The adversary has clouded our vision, making us doubt God's love. Yet, God is LOVE.

Many express a desire to see and embrace Jesus upon reaching heaven. But why don't we express the same yearning to see and embrace God the Father? Perhaps it's because we haven't truly known Him. Jesus came to reveal the Father to us. When asked to show the Father, He responded, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know Me? He who has seen Me has seen the Father."

Jesus was filled with love, never speaking harshly or rudely. He spoke the truth with love. The more we delve into the story of the Cross, the more we perceive this love and God's mercy and forgiveness. Truly, God has prepared heaven for us out of His love. He doesn't desire to be alone, even though He is self-sufficient. He longs to dwell with those He loves—us—forever and ever. Eternity is an incredibly long time!

As current events unfold, it seems we are in the last days, marked by the outpouring of God's Spirit and the preaching of the gospel. People worldwide are engaging in communal and personal prayers, seeking the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to aid in reformation and spiritual revival.

Moses, Abraham, and Paul are no longer with us. We are now the ones carrying the baton. Let us run with perseverance and comfort. The apostles labored until around 100 AD. Subsequently, others continued preaching. The Catholic Church began in 321 AD, followed by reformers in the 1400s, such as the Moravians, Martin Luther, Zwingli, Wesley, Tyndale, Huss, Jerome, and many others who initiated reformation and revival. Today, we are called to engage in reformation and revival. Revival is awakening from the darkness of Satan, and reformation is repairing what has been damaged in our ways. Do not be content with your spiritual awakening! Read the Scriptures and implement them. "Do not follow so-and-so, no matter how close they are to you! Follow God and His Word, and you will not be lost—that is eternal life. Do not follow people, traditions, elders, customs, or practices."

Often, we have focused on signs, as described in Matthew 24 (earthquakes, false prophets, tribulations, famines, wars, rebellion, waning love, abomination of

desolation, the moon turning dark, moral decay, the rise of terrorism), among others. These signs are significant, but let us not forget the essential aspects to receive His Spirit in these last days. Let us remain vigilant in prayer, for we are on the brink of world history. Our refuge is in reading the Scriptures and sitting at Jesus' feet. I believe no one possesses the strength to withstand the signs of the end times! Our sole refuge is the strength from GOD and HIS SCRIPTURES.

Let us not be troubled as in the past, like in the year 2000 (Y2K), when people feared the world would end and stored large amounts of food! Many stored food, and even a friend told me last week that they just discarded food that had been stored for 13 years. Our preparations should be more spiritual than physical. It's possible to store a lot of food, but if your neighbor lacks food and comes to take it by force, what then? Even so, if we have plenty, we should share with our neighbors. How can you live with a three-year food supply while your neighbor starves? Remember, they are also God's child, and you are siblings!

Preparations for the end times involve aligning our character with Christ so that God's Spirit may be poured upon us. Like Elisha or the widow of Zarephath, even though they had no food, God fed them. He will provide all our needs. I reiterate, our end-time reformation is not about storing things or striving to have your own electricity, farm, and possessions! While having these is good, they are not the core of preparing for the end times. I have seen many in the West preparing to meet their needs without relying on the government or their community to prepare for the end times (to be off-grid). True reformation is rooted in the WORD and HE who said, "I AM," WHO IS! Not who was or who will be. No! WHO IS!

Heaven is a real place, not just a state of being! The Scriptures are clear on this. There won't be spirits floating on clouds playing harps. Absolutely not! Face to face, truly, there will be joy! You will be able to recognize that this is the Father, this is Amina, or this is Joseph! In heaven. Would it be a true gift if it were just a state? Absolutely not!

We know the battle is intense between God and Satan, between good and evil, but one day it will end, and we will go to heaven. Satan wanted to be part of the Holy Trinity; he wanted to speak a word and have things come into existence. To be the fourth in the Trinity, or to be called the Holy Four. This was rebellion. The rebellion continues to this day. We must choose Christ daily and pray for His Spirit to help us in reformation and revival so that we may be in heaven, a real place. The eternal fire was not intended for humans! But for Satan and his evil angels. The saints and all who go to heaven will be judges. They will judge Satan and his evil angels. It is our hope, all of us laypeople, to be in heaven. Perhaps we have feared being materialistic to the point of being afraid to describe the beauty of

heaven and the things that will be there. We are told that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. I think we have often imagined certain things when reading a particular book, even though we haven't been there, we see skyscrapers, trees, and other things; we are told that what has been prepared for us has not even entered into the imagination of man! These are amazing and beautiful things beyond human language to express! Even if you know ten different languages, we cannot explain. The mystery will be revealed that day! Today, my seven-year-old child asked me, "Will there be grapes or what kind of fruits in heaven?" I told him that perhaps grapes are there because Jesus said He would not eat until He is with us again, but I told him that perhaps there are even millions of other fruits we don't know! Because God is the Creator and just by speaking, things come into existence, my thoughts go here and there, imagining how beautiful heaven will be. One story described that when people first arrived in heaven, they grabbed gold and hid it so others wouldn't steal it, but they discovered that it was just the pavement or gravel of the road! They quickly threw it down because it had no value, and there is no place for hoarding there, as everything is always available, and you don't need a reserve!

A few years ago, a con artist claimed to be selling plots on the moon. Six dollars per acre! A million people bought them. This is a true story! People have wanted to go to the moon for years. Even space scientists are planning to take millionaires who want to pay and make it a business. They say one rocket trip to the moon and back costs 80 million dollars. And sometimes the rocket can't be reused. No one can afford this. Even though many of us would like to go and explore these places. But let us have peace in our hearts. When we get there, we will tour extensively, starting with stars like Sirius, Orion, and we won't need rockets; we will go ourselves with the gift God has given us. Behold, what manner of love is this, that we should be called the children of God forever! Many have made promises by God's grace to meet at the tree of life! What about you?

Revelation 20 speaks of the punishment of Satan and those who serve him. Revelation 21 and 22 describe heaven. It concludes by saying, COME! And the Spirit and the Bride say, come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who thirsts come; whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely! Behold, the dwelling of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. And God Himself will be with them. And they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them. And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said to me, Write, for these words are true and faithful. And He said to me, It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will

give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be My son.

Indeed, the book of Revelation has been unveiled, and it is the fifth gospel or Good News. The Good News of the Lamb who died for us and God's gift of heaven. Isn't this good news for you, layperson? You should proclaim it with a loud trumpet sound so that everyone hears! "Sound the trumpet loudly, Jesus is coming again!" Now, in this final sentence, kneel down and pray—for yourself and for all lay people—for the power to spread the Good News. Let us pray to be there; that is the greatest and ultimate gift: to see Jesus face to face and to enter heaven, truly face to face—right there, joy! Tears of joy will fall. It has been said that in heaven, people will try to remember their struggles, sufferings, and hardships on earth—but they will fail. They'll try again, and still fail. Because of the beauty of heaven, their hardships will seem like nothing—like whispers. They'll shout, "Heaven is not expensive—compared to all this glory, heaven was actually cheap when we consider the pain we went through on earth." This is the truth. Today, through His Sacrifice, Love, and Grace, God intends for you and me to be there!

This book does not end here. Rather, it begins to stir up passion for our journey—the calling to serve God—which will end with us seeing Him face to face. Keep growing, keep praying, study deeply, seek wisdom, ask for forgiveness, seek His face, and keep doing this work until that glorious morning comes.

ETERNAL UNION

The purpose of Christ's sacrifice is for us to be with Him forever. Without meeting and living with Him forever, the sacrifice would be in vain. Isaiah 53:11 says so. John 17 records the final prayer of Jesus before He went to Gethsemane. He had already met with His disciples in the upper room, washed their feet, and shown them the marks of His sacrifice. He reminded them that He had to go, but also told them of His plan to return so that they could live with Him forever. In verse 24 He offered a profound prayer—one that we lay people should reflect on today: "Father, I want those You have given Me to be with Me where I am." These words were not only for the apostles but for all of us—even today. His eyes looked ahead and saw us. He saw our sorrows and our burdens and prayed for all of us: "I am not praying only for these, but also for all who will believe in Me through the Word." Yes! That prayer of Jesus is still at work today.

Among all human beings, there is no one like you. He doesn't want to lose you—or me. He would have come to save even just one person who would exist on earth. He came for me. He loves me. He wants me to be His friend in a close

relationship. He wants me to follow Him. He wants me to be His child. He wants to dwell with me and counsel me. He delights in knowing what I think. He delights when I rejoice and trust Him. I need not be troubled—for in my Father's house, the Creator's house, are many mansions. If it were not so, He would have told us. Love desires to be with those it loves.

Jesus left the garden to go pray for His disciples. Finally came the cross, then the resurrection. "Son of God, come forth—your Father is calling you," said the angel who opened the tomb. He went to heaven to His Father that very day, and when He reached Him, He said, "Father, I have a request: those You have given Me—I want them to be with Me where I am." The Father granted His Son's request and assured Him that He could bring you and me into His presence. Christ then returned to earth and, after 40 days, ascended again. He was welcomed into heaven with celebration: "Open the gates, that the King of Glory may come in..." He longed to see His Father, and His request remained the same: "Father, those You have given Me—I want them to be with Me where I am."

Jesus could not accept the throne of all the planets until He was sure—personally, from the Father—that He could bring you and me into His Kingdom. Jesus wants me to be there more than I want to be there. He wants those He loves to be there even more than I do. He began His priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, as the book of Hebrews tells us.

Read this book well, especially about the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary. Psalm 77 says, "Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary." It is important that we understand this path by studying the sanctuary in Exodus 25 and throughout the Word. Have you ever thought about what He is praying for you and me at the altar now? Yes! "Father, those You have given Me—I want them to be with Me where I am."

Even in all human suffering and hardship, let us look upward to heaven, where our salvation comes from. Pastor Alejandro Bullon of Argentina likes to say that we human beings are the most precious things the Creator possesses—because how else would He have died for us? It's almost shocking to realize that even though we crawl in the dust down here, we are the most valuable things to Him! We are the most precious things for HIM!

Christ's prayer in Gethsemane gave Him the strength to go to the sacrifice. He saw the future vision—us, rejoicing with Him in heaven—and for that joy, He endured the cross.

It was the prayer of Christ in His darkest moment on earth, and it remains His prayer today. He wants us to be with Him. If you are ready, do you think He will leave you behind after such a great sacrifice? He cannot leave you—or those you bring to Him. He wants us to be where He is. A place where no one will come and slap you or steal from you. A place where there are no quarrels. The peace of the soul and the joy of the heart will be astounding. Everything will be calm and lovely—and when you look at the person next to you, all you'll see is a smile.

The purpose of Christ's sacrifice is for us to be with Him forever. Without meeting and living with Him forever, the sacrifice would be in vain. (We are the most precious things for HIM!)

Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane gave Him the strength to face the sacrifice. He saw the future—a vision of us rejoicing with Him in heaven. Because of that joy, He endured the cross. This has always been Christ's prayer in His darkest moments on earth—that we may be with Him. And it remains His prayer even now. He desires that we be with Him. If you are willing, do you think He would leave you behind—after offering such a great sacrifice? He cannot leave you behind—you and those you bring to the Lord—because “where He is, He wants us to be also.”

It is a place where no one will come to slap you or steal your belongings. A place with no quarrels. That peace of the soul and joy of the heart will be astonishing. Everything will be sweet and serene. When you look at the person next to you, all you will see is a smile. The reason for Christ's sacrifice is that we may be with Him forever. Without meeting and living with Him eternally, the sacrifice would be in vain.

Isaiah 53:11 says,

"He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge, My righteous Servant shall justify many."

This verse gives us hope that He is working out our salvation day and night so that we may be with Him. He has told us this many times in His Word:

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

Let us respond to this call and work out our salvation and the salvation of others with fear and trembling. Let us tell God, “Your will be done,” and not wait for Him to say, “Your will be done.”

The final prayer of Jesus in John 17, before going to Gethsemane, continues to express this deep love of God. Christ had already met with His disciples in the

upper room, washed their feet, and showed them signs of His sacrifice—the bread and the wine, representing His body and blood. He reminded them that He had to go, and shared His plan to return again so they might live with Him forever. In verse 24, He prayed these profound words that lay people must reflect on today: "Father, I want those You have given Me to be with Me where I am."

He prayed these words not only for His disciples, but also for us—me and you—even today. His eyes looked into the future and He saw us. He saw our sorrows and our burdens and prayed for us all:

"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word." Hallelujah!

This prayer of Jesus is still active for you and me even today.

Among all human beings, there is no one like you. He does not want to lose you or me. He would have come to save even just one person if only one would exist on earth. He came for me. He loves me. He wants me to be His friend and to have a close relationship with Him. He wants me to follow HIM. He wants me to be His child, and He wants to dwell with me and counsel me. He cares about what I think. He wants me to rejoice and trust in Him.

Let not our hearts be troubled. In our Father's house—He who is the Creator—there are many rooms. If it were not so, He would have told us. Love longs to dwell with those it loves.

Jesus left the garden and went to pray for His disciples. Then came the cross and the resurrection.

"Son of God, come out! Your Father is calling you," said the angel who opened the tomb.

He went to heaven to the FATHER that same day. When He reached His Father, He said,

"Father, I have a request to make: Those You have given Me, I want them to be with Me where I am."

The Father accepted the request of His Son and assured Him that He could bring you and me.

Christ returned to earth. After 40 days, He ascended again.

He was welcomed in heaven with rejoicing:

"Open the gates, that the King of glory may come in..."

He wanted to see His Father, and His request remained the same:

"Father, those You have given Me, I want them to be with Me where I am."

Jesus could not accept the throne of all the worlds until He had confirmation from God Himself that He would bring you and me into His kingdom.
Jesus wants me to be there more than I even want to be there.
Jesus wants those He loves to be there even more than we do.

Jesus began His high priestly work in the heavenly sanctuary, just as the book of Hebrews tells us.
Read this book carefully—it explains the Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary.
In Psalm 77 it says, “Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary.”
It is good to understand this path by studying the sanctuary in Exodus 25 and throughout the whole Word.

Have you ever considered what Jesus is praying for you and me at the altar now?
Yes—
“Father, those You have given Me, I want them to be with Me where I am.”

Even in all the human suffering and trials we face, let us look up—where our salvation comes from.

Pastor Alejandro Bullón of Argentina likes to say that we human beings are the most precious things the Creator possesses. Because how else could it be—He died for us?!

It’s amazing that even while we’re struggling in this world, we are His most precious treasure.
(We are the most precious things for HIM!)

I repeat, the prayer of Christ during the hardest moments of His life on earth was that we may be with Him. That remains His prayer today.
He wants us with Him. Let us surrender completely—total surrender—and abide in Him as He abides in us. Let us give Him all our choices.

He will not abandon us—you and those you bring to the Lord—“where He is, He wants us to be, or to be with Him forever.”

Hallelujah! Glory and thanksgiving be to Him forever and ever. Amen.

"I've read the end of the book—OUR SIDE WINS!" sang the choir in Texas.

Layperson, when you feel like giving up, or when troubles and struggles press in on you, read the last four chapters of the Bible—you’ll see God’s side wins, and Satan’s side is defeated forever.

TESTIMONY

I advise every layperson to write their testimony in a book—we have no reason to fear the future unless we forget how God has led us in the past, His teachings, and our history.

MY TESTIMONY AS A LAYPERSON

The Bible says they overcame the devil by the Blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. —Revelation 12:11.

I will write my story here.

This is the testimony of layperson Grace Momadi-Masaka shared on Thanksgiving Day.

Revelation 12:11 says that they overcame Satan by the Blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. This shows that testimony is a powerful tool in defeating the evil one and it goes hand in hand with the Blood of JESUS. Testimonies encourage and build others to see that the God we serve is good to us. If all we do is constantly complain and murmur, we make God appear to be a liar. Yes, there are many troubles in this world—many hardships indeed. But let us take heart, for if all we ever tell people is how bad things are, we deny God His glory and portray Him as unjust in the eyes of others, as if He delights in our suffering.

I believe that each one of us has something good, even if small, for which we can thank God. The Lord inhabits the praises of His people. Praising God goes beyond giving thanks. We thank Him for what He gives or does for us, but we praise Him for who He is—His greatness, His love, power, or wisdom.

Often, many of us—including myself—feel shy or afraid to share our testimonies with those who know us. It's easier to share with strangers because they won't judge, ridicule, or envy us. Sometimes when we testify, we feel like we are boasting, and that scares us. One day, a woman said, "My cow gave so much milk today," and another replied, "Take back those words—if you say that, the milk will dry up." Such cultural notions have trained us to grumble and complain even when God blesses us, and that's not right. It's a good thing to thank God and proclaim His Name in song. Singing praises to God and speaking of His greatness is wonderful. Who deserves praise more than God? We praise many people and often boast about ourselves—so who is more worthy of praise than God?

When applying for jobs, we boast in our CVs or resumes, claiming to be the best at this or that. In today's world, self-praise is completely normal. This has made

us forget to praise God. So much could go wrong in our lives—millions of things—but God keeps everything running smoothly: from the orbit of the sun to the thousands of blood vessels in our bodies, the hundreds of muscles, and the billions of living cells we have.

Psalm 116:12-14 says, “What shall I render to the LORD for all His benefits toward me?” What shall I, a mere wretch, offer the LORD for His kindness, if not to testify to others about His great deeds? David answered himself: there are only three things he could do as his best effort—receive salvation, testify of the LORD’s great works, and fulfill all the vows he had made.

LET GOD BE CALLED GOD. HE HAS DONE WONDERS I CANNOT EXPLAIN.

Thanksgiving Day in the U.S. was established for those who came to America from Europe on ships like the Mayflower. Many came to face harsh conditions—cold, hunger, lack of shelter, etc.

Squanto, a Native American, helped these people, and other Native Americans gave them seeds of pumpkins, corn, cranberries, etc.

Since we have no relatives nearby, we were invited by our pastor, and everyone shared a testimony. Typically, this is a family day where families and clans gather. (You can read more online about Thanksgiving Day.)

Most Americans don’t cook at all—except on this day. If one isn’t careful, it becomes a day of gluttony with turkeys as large as goats.

Often, when I begin to complain, I go back to the great testimonies of the things God has done for me.

Especially for us living in a land full of food and basic needs—it is easy to complain and become discontent. That’s why I like visiting developing countries—to reduce my grumbling. It’s very easy to murmur and become like the children of Israel in the wilderness.

God has brought us from far—different villages. Some of the places we came from are truly frightening. Just think of where you came from, what you now have, and how God has brought us to where we are. We are who we are today by His grace. Many of us have been blessed by God: after our parents received Jesus, they gained education, and that education brought wealth.

It is said that 80% of the world’s wealth is in the hands of the heavenly believers—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!

But why did God give this wealth? So we can hoard it and squander it? No! Absolutely not!

Money only has three purposes: to meet our needs, to help meet others' needs, and to support the spreading of the gospel. Even if we have great wealth, we cannot wear two pairs of shoes at once, or eat gold—we still eat vegetables and ugali.

Workers in the LORD's vineyard fall into just three categories:

1. Those who are employed as pastors
2. Volunteers who farm or do menial jobs while witnessing for Jesus and spreading the gospel—like Paul making tents
3. Those with professional skills and financial capacity, like Abraham, Cornelius, or King David.

Which group do you belong to here?

It is easy to forget, just like King Josiah began to forget and assume he had been born a king. He didn't realize it was the priest Jehoiada and his wife who rescued him from being killed by his grandmother Athaliah. He reached the point of killing the prophet Zechariah, who was like a brother to him, even though he had been raised by Zechariah's parents. Zechariah was actually his cousin, as their parents were siblings. Let us look back from where we were born to today, and reflect on the many hurdles we've crossed by the grace of God. The positions we hold today—others have also passed through them. We're not the first under the sun to attain them; we are merely baton carriers, passing it on.

As for me, I gave my testimony and remembered that this 50th year of my life is a great blessing. The average life expectancy in the country I was born in is around 40 years, so I cannot take this lightly.

Even being cared for by my parents—I remembered how my late father loved me deeply, even though I was his stepchild. And my mother, who was generous to me and others—it was amazing. I remember when I was going to Baraton University, the fees were 2000 USD a year, and she gave me 4000 USD in the 1980s. I had gone to Baraton for a work-study program and didn't even need the money, so I returned with it. Even people with greater financial ability came to borrow from me (which itself was a miracle).

My parents taught me generosity. They bought land in Mbezi in 1977 when it was still a wilderness. My father said he planted 1000 banana trees, 1000 coconut trees, 300 orange trees, 100 tangerine trees, lime, mangoes, and more. I saw them distributing baskets and sacks of produce to people. I don't think they were business-minded; they rarely sold anything. Back then, there weren't even markets—fruits were everywhere.

Another lesson I learned from my parents was not to despise or mistreat others. My older brother used to mistreat drivers, guards, and house workers (he has since changed and is saved). We were scolded many times for that. One day, a man we used to call Uncle Elkana came from Majita—he walked with crutches due to polio. My brother started mocking him. We were still young, about eight years old, and we were all whipped, including those who hadn't participated. My younger brother and I hadn't mocked him and hadn't even thought of doing so.

But I'm grateful my mother gave us a lesson I'll never forget. She told us, "Don't laugh at disabled people—you are laughing at their Creator." She gave an example that in her culture, it's believed that those who mock the afflicted may themselves or their children end up the same way, so you laugh "close by" not far away. Most of the time, our behavior should reflect not the person we see, but the unseen God Himself. I reflect on this a lot when someone with a condition approaches me, even if I'm busy.

I know in some careers people get hounded a lot, but when people don't know us, we want to be known and become famous. Yet when we become famous, we avoid people—we ignore their calls, screen numbers, and hang up. Being a public figure is easy, but if you behave like that, ask yourself—would Jesus do the same? Sometimes it's necessary to avoid people to pray, study, or handle personal matters. But you should explain kindly, not just sneak away.

I remember God helped me a lot with school. For secondary school, I got a free education. In class seven, only a few students passed. Out of about 120 at Oysterbay Primary, only about 15 were selected for secondary school. And even for Form 6, only a few were chosen—perhaps those in Division One and a few others. I went to university for free and even received government allowances.

The United Nations says that out of every 100 people globally, only 1 has a university degree. So if you have one, don't take it lightly just because God brought you there and you now think it's your right or that it was easy. Many fail due to economic hardship, academic struggles, or family issues. Be thankful for the little you have.

Remember, the apostles didn't go back to university after Jesus died. Yet within 50 years, they had taken the gospel to the entire known world. People who heard them asked, "Where did they get this knowledge? Aren't these men uneducated?" They realized they had been with Jesus. Being with Jesus is greater than a PhD. They wrote writings that we're still reading 2000 years later—because they had been with Jesus.

Don't despise your small role as a layperson. With Jesus, you will surpass those with great education. They may have high degrees but poor decisions. They may be dragged down by pride or ruined lives through alcoholism or strife. Your wisdom will be remarkable, and the rich and educated will seek your counsel. Serve God before night falls, when no one can work.

Don't compare yourself with businesspeople, other laypeople, or salaried workers—they are not your employers. Remember, when Jesus came to earth, He chose poor laypeople. He walked on foot while the Sadducees' chariots passed Him and dusted Him. Yet He didn't mind, even though they used money from His own temple. He continued His work. The apostles weren't paid either, but they persevered.

Don't look at wealthy laypeople—their calling may be different. Pray for your daily bread, not for yearly wealth—just move forward. They say if you have even seven dollars in your account, you are better off than about 95% of the world.

We don't need to fear the future—unless we forget how God led us in the past. Maybe the issue is that I worry about the future, yet right now I have food, clothing, and shelter. God says, "I AM"—not "I was" or "I will be," but "I AM"—that is, the present. I thank Him for what I have today. I don't know about tomorrow, but when God gives, we must be ready to give. As laypeople, when we see the wealthy, we often feel envious or think they should share. But when we get wealth, we think it's ours, stretch our spending, and forget how we used to complain about others not helping—and how others once carried us.

The apostles went to the whole world because they shared their resources and worked together. This wasn't socialism—it was a system from God Himself. Today, any wealth we have is for our needs, others' needs, and God's work.

I thank God I went to school at Andrews University in Michigan. A lay family, Dr. and Mrs. Trickett, who were spreading the gospel, hosted me for two years. We were international students—some from Japan, Croatia, the Netherlands, etc. Each paid \$200 a month for food and room—very affordable. But they told me,

“You don’t have to pay.” That was a miracle. I stayed with them for nearly three years.

They even picked me up from the airport from Tanzania. In their letter, they had written: “Don’t bring anything—give all your clothes and belongings to the poor.” They had Dorcas-community services, where I would get all I needed. I was thankful—I came with a small basket and two outfits. After a month, I had filled suitcases and was giving clothes away, even sending some back home. Praise the Lord!

These elders wore second-hand clothes, saved small things to give to the poor—even plane food headed to India—they preserved and shared it with people on the streets there. Their principles were helpful. For example, if you drop one shoe on the train, throw the other one too, so a poor person finds both.

One day, walking around Andrews University near where the Tricketts lived, just after I’d arrived in the USA, I met my former biology teacher from Africa—Dr. Smith. He was excited: “Grace, is that you? What are you doing here? Do you have a scholarship?” He said, “Let me take you to the department chair, Dr. Stout. Other students from your college in Africa came here with B averages and did well—I’m sure you’ll do even better.” At that time, I didn’t even have admission to Andrews, only to Lake Michigan Community College.

Right then and there, I was registered, and I thought to myself, who am I? An African with nothing, and these people don’t know me from Adam. Still, I studied there and finished, and I got the opportunity to sell Bible books in Sweden. That company did not usually take girls for more than ten years, but I wrote to the publishing house, and they accepted me. They told me to choose another girl, and I did. There were 132 men and only 2 women, and we sold books and covered the gap in school fees.

When we went with the teacher to the chairman, I kept quiet. Dr. Stout gave me an interview and brought up my past performance, my previous report. Right then he said, “I will give you a \$5000 scholarship; your tuition will be paid.” He asked, “Do you have a place to stay?” I told him I had good, kind people. He asked who they were. I said the Tricketts. He said, “You’re blessed. Those people love others so much, and they help poor students.” Truly, they were extraordinary people. Many are ready to pay school fees for others but don’t want to live with anyone. We’ve reached a time when relationships are broken and patience is lost. We love people when we need them, but if we don’t, that’s the end. This is true even in marriage—divorce here is at 50%. People want a spouse to help them with certain things, but in their hearts, they would rather live alone.

I prayed to God, “If You help me finish school, I will give 25% of every salary I earn as an offering and to help the needy.” I had very humble jobs. In one, I was paid only one dollar an hour, when the minimum wage was five dollars an hour. But God helped me, and I finished school.

The Tricketts taught me a lot about helping. I saw them doing it with my own eyes. They were millionaires, both university professors who retired in 1970, but they took me to thrift stores and also bought second-hand items themselves. I saw they lived modestly. Back then, when I visited them, they owned 33 houses in Michigan, USA.

I also remember Mama Trickett’s brothers—whom I called my American parents—were all millionaires. One of them owned a company called Worthington Foods, which sold vegetarian foods. They would visit their sister often, and I saw them. Even though they came from well-off families, they lived simple lives so they could help others.

Today I’ve realized that a true Christian or an African can never truly be rich—even if they are, they have many poor relatives and church members. Why drive a \$100,000 car while your aunts and uncles live in poverty? Yet we’ve seen in Matthew 25 that the passport to heaven is a heart of true compassion—not that we just went to church. He says He will separate the sheep from the goats, left and right. He will say, “I was hungry, in prison, naked, sick, or thirsty—and you helped me.” They will try to remember but won’t be able to. Then He will say, “When you did it to the least of these, you did it to Me.”

These white people taught me to help people I wasn’t related to. Our African weakness is to only help our relatives. Others, if we help, it’s just small change. Ron Sider wrote a book, “Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger.” We should all read it.

Sometimes, when we have positions at work—like helping someone get a job or giving someone a connection—we don’t want to use our own money. That’s ours. But if it’s something through our position, we’re okay. The Tricketts taught me both—using their positions as university professors and their own money. These are two different things.

Another thing they taught me was not to become arrogant when given a position. I’ve seen this is a weakness in all of us humans—no one is righteous. When we’re in power, we forget and become rude. Even when people visit our offices, we are harsh, scornful, or we mock them silently. Maybe we think we’re doing them a

favor by helping or serving them. We ignore their letters. We don't respond when they seek appointments—we're "busy." But many who are "busy" eventually retire or grow old and look for someone just to talk to.

We are not doing people a "favor" when we help with compassion. Let us remember that we are all "unprofitable servants." Am I doing God a favor—or is He the One doing me a favor? Or have I forgotten? If He blows gently for a second, the candle of my life will be snuffed out. I must remind myself that even if people come to me and I think they are wasting my time or have nothing important to say, or they are foolish—God is doing me a favor by letting me meet them. I shouldn't wait for people to beg or kneel before I help, or tell them, "Come back... tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow..." That is not the way to bless myself if I have the power to help now. Life on earth is short, but heaven is eternal. Small things—store up treasure to enjoy forever, far greater than what you have now.

If it's honorable to serve the Queen of England, how much more a privilege to serve the KING OF KINGS, as Dr. David Livingstone said. We cannot touch heaven without touching people. Sometimes I forget I am poor, and that how I treat the least among us is how I treat Him.

A friend of mine went to Canada and met an 80-year-old lady whom God revealed many things about the people in her local church. People despised her saying she was uneducated, but when she shared what she had seen, it struck fear—realizing God lifts the humble and brings down the proud. Let us pray that when He comes to us, He helps us to humble ourselves, so we are not put to shame. It's time for revival and reformation—to wake up spiritually from slumber and change the deeds of darkness. Have we grown horns so much that our angels don't know how to help us anymore?

I finished school in 1992 and earned \$3000 per month. I felt as though I was underpaid, having taught high school in Kenya for \$300 per month. Now, in just two years, I earned ten times more. But after a few months of hard work, I felt underpaid again and as though I was doing them a favor! I had even knelt and given a thanksgiving offering when I first got the job. (It's easy to forget and later complain and see God as unfair.)

Even the grace to serve God as a layperson, the miracles He performed—I cannot explain them. The miracles in lay ministry—I think I can't even describe them, because God has done great things I could never have done. There were many obstacles, and wherever we went, people—laypersons or church workers—would say, "It's impossible," or doors would be shut. But the LORD performed wonders I cannot explain.

Truly, right now I have several challenges, but for all He did in the past, I must praise Him. I cannot dream of a cake in the sky when God is already blessing me with so much here.

I remember little things—like in Kilwa Masoko/Kilwa Kivinje while walking, we met a layperson who came to thank us for helping with school. After his testimony, eight more appeared whom we had helped with school through what the FATHER in heaven had provided.

Another day, regarding a tax refund in the U.S., there was an audit going back seven years. They pulled up data from the past three years and claimed we owed \$4000! We were shocked and wondered where we would get that money. Some of our church friends laughed and said, “Don’t worry—we have a prison ministry, we’ll come visit you in jail!” In this country, if you donate to certain ministries, the government reduces your taxes. That year, we had donated \$42,000. They asked for the receipts. Perhaps, seeing our salary, they thought we were lying. Honestly, I’m not good at keeping files and papers. I couldn’t find any receipts from those three years! I remembered two white friends from ministries—Mama Twing from Washington and Barry from Minnesota—and begged them to check if they had records. They had everything—even copies of checks! When we submitted them to the tax office, they discovered the government owed us \$6000! We escaped through the eye of a needle. Let God be God!

Dear laypeople, I’ve shared my story so you can also refresh me with yours, because every time I share my testimony, I receive ten from others in return!

I was called to lay ministry after I accepted Christ as my Savior and confessed Him in 1978. That’s when I was baptized. A layperson, New Filipo from Nyasa, who served as the German ambassador in Dar es Salaam, Malawi, preached to me and taught me the Bible through several studies such as: “Where did the Bible come from? Why do we believe the Bible? Who is Jesus? What is salvation? What is God’s grace? Why is Jesus coming back?” and other foundational Christian teachings.

I started teaching fellow students about Christ and worked with others in those days in UKWATA and sold Bibles and books of salvation, supported by a layperson named Rose Mwakipunda. Later, when I went abroad to Europe, I continued lay ministry by preaching through books and helping build small churches.

The ministry expanded when we met evangelists, laypeople, and pastors in the U.S. who had formed lay associations. They told us that even sponsoring students is ministry. We began sponsoring those who would support the ministry—pastors,

laypeople, and teachers. We met other laypeople who helped us organize public preaching meetings and evangelism.

My husband and I discovered that a Christian or someone who loves God has no borders. The LORD wants us to do what is near us—if it will glorify Him—even if it's just giving people life-building books. We cannot touch heaven without touching people. Many laypeople have blessed us with their ministries, testimonies, and ideas.

Please write to us at: hudumazawaleikiswahili@gmail.com or visit our website: www.hudumazawaleikiswahili.com

What then shall I say? For there is so much to recount when we look back, and it helps me not to remain lost in gloomy thoughts all the time. Be blessed as you reflect on your own great experiences too!

Please send your testimonies so we can post them on the website, and may we also be blessed and comforted during this difficult period in the world's history.

HALLELUJAH

Grace Momadi-Masaka

The 21 Rules Of This House by Gregg Harris

The 21 Rules of This House,

- May 11, 2012 - 3:53 am
- Posted in Uncategorized

These 21 rules, says Gregg Harris, cover just about every situation common to young children and teens. They were developed over 30 years ago to help my wife and me be more consistent in what we required of our children as members of our household. It is so easy to allow our own moods to change the boundaries of what we will tolerate from one day to the next.

In far too many homes the only real rule is to stay out of Mom or Dad's way when they are in a bad mood. Otherwise, when they are in a good mood, the kids can get away with almost anything.

The goal in the use of the 21 Rules is to clarify what is pleasing and displeasing to parents, regardless of their moods, and to administer discipline without anger, and then only in response to willful defiance of what the child knows to be right.

The 21 Rules Of This House

by Gregg Harris

1. We obey God.

2. We love, honor and pray for one another.
3. We tell the truth.
4. We consider one another's interests ahead of our own.
5. We speak quietly and respectfully with one another.
6. We do not hurt one another with unkind words or deeds.
7. When someone needs correction, we correct him in love.
8. When someone is sorry, we forgive him.
9. When someone is sad, we comfort him.
10. When someone is happy, we rejoice with him.
11. When we have something nice to share, we share it.
12. When we have work to do, we do it without complaining.
13. We take good care of everything that God has given us.
14. We do not create unnecessary work for others.
15. When we open something, we close it.
16. When we take something out, we put it away.
17. When we turn something on, we turn it off.
18. When we make a mess, we clean it up.
19. When we do not know what to do, we ask.
20. When we go out, we act just as if we were in this house.
21. When we disobey or forget any of the 21 Rules of This House, we accept the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Instructions: Post the list on your refrigerator door or other prominent location in your home. When misbehavior occurs, draw attention to which House Rule has been violated and repeat the rule a few times and explain what it means. Once the meaning becomes clear, discipline your child for any expressions of willful defiance. Over time, the rules will be internalized by each child as a general statement of the behavioral boundaries. Remember that these rules follow you and your child wherever they go. Discipline should only be administered in private, in love for the child, never in anger or in any way that would ever do harm. The challenge is to be consistent so that such discipline is eventually no longer needed.

Vitabu vilivyotumika (REFERENCE BOOKS)

-Biblia. 1997. Bible Society of Tanzania. Dodoma, Tanzania.

-Herry Mhando. The Man and His Methods of Evangelism and Church Growth. 2000 Berrien Springs MI. Nkosiyo Zwandasara

- Joana Weaver. Having Mary Heart in a Martha's World. 2000 Water Brook. Colorado , USA.
-
- Robert Olson 1970. Dhiki kuu Inakuja, Lakina kuna Tumaini. Robert Olson 1970. Korea.
- Gloria Lindsey Trout. What No One Tells the Pastor's Wife. 2009. Silver Springs MD. USA.
- Daudi Makoye Nusuru Ndoa yako. 2010. TAP. Morogoro.
- Elisha Okeyo. Usiogope. 2010. TAP. Morogoro.
- Livingstone Kingu. Changamoto za Tiba.. 2012. Kongamano la Wakina Mama. University of Dodoma Tanzania.
- Dr Leah Manongi, Dr Clifford Majani, Dr Dorcas Ayayo. Articles Za Vipodozi na Afya ya Mwanamke. East Africa.
- No Excuses: Power of selfdiscipline. Brian Tracy. 2008. Canada.
- Enroll Stanford. How to Kill Your Family and Get Away With it. 2002. Seaburn Publishing, USA.
- Dr Ruth Eyembe-Kijuzuu cha Kansa ya Matiti. 2012, Morogoro, Tanzania.
- Susan Hunt. Spiritual Mothering, The Titus 2 Model. Crossway Books. Wheaton IL. 1992.
- Wanted a Good Pastor. Jonas Arrais. 2012, Silver Springs, MD, USA.
- Ellen White. Steps to Christ, Child guidance, Counsels on Health, Ministry of Healing, na Adventist Home. Review and Herald. Hagerstown. Maryland.
- Robert Pierson. So You Want to be a Leader. Silverspring. MD USA.
- Dennis Smith. 40 days Prayers and Devotions to Prepare for the Second coming. Review and Herald. 2010. Hagerstown- Maryland, USA.
- Ron Gladen. Planting Churches Planting Future. North Pacific Union, USA.

-Doug Batchelor. How to survive in Church and Thrive. Sacramento, California, USA.

-WD Frazee. Ransom and Reunion and Another Ark to build. 1980, Wildwood Medical Missionary institute. Georgia, USA.

-Edward Reid. It is Your Money Isn't. Review and Herald. Hagerstown Maryland. USA.

-Theophilus Izungu. Vijuzuu vya Uwakili. 2012, Arusha, Tanzania.

-Dr Mbenna. Mstakabali wa Mtoto. Mkuki na Nyota Publishing 2010, Arusha, Tanzania.

-Mwalimu Nyantika. Raising Godly Generation. 1999, Kendu Bay, Kenya.

-Dobson James. Parenting isn't for Cowards. 1987. Word Publishing. Texas. USA.

-Raymond and Dorothy Moore. Home built Discipline- Developing Initiative, Self-Control, and Responsibility in Your Child. Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1987. Nashville, TN. USA.

Warren Sears Testomony of 52 stories from Maryland.

Tamyra Horst. Seminars of How to manage our time in Pennsylvania USA.

-Kay Kuzma. Living With God's Kids. Parent Scene. 1983. California, USA.

- Pr Alphayo Laizer, Mlyangaka, Paul, Pr George Mweli. Vijuzuu vya Mahubiri kwa Walei. Kahama, Bukoba na Muheza- Tanzania.

Tamyra Horst. Time : For All That's IMPORTANT. How to keep your life in balance when you can't tell which end is up. Pacific Press Publishing Association. Nampa Idaho. 2000.

Qackery and YOU. 1983. William T Jarvis. Review and Herald. Hagerstown, Maryland, USA,

INDEX

=====

Twelve Rules for Raising Delinquent Children
How to Ruin Your Children - Guaranteed 100% Infallible
Originally from The Mighty Atom

Begin in infancy to give the child everything he wants. In this way, he will grow up to believe that the world owes him a living.

When he picks up bad words, laugh at him. This will make him think he is cute. It will also encourage him to pick up cuter phrases.

Never give him any spiritual training. Wait until he's 21 and then let him decide for himself.

Avoid use of the word "wrong". It may develop into a guilt complex. Later, when he is arrested, he can conclude that society is against him and that he is being persecuted.

Pick up everything he leaves lying around: books, shoes, clothes. Do everything for him, so that he will be experienced in throwing all responsibility upon others.

Let him read any printed matter that he can get his hands on. Be careful that the silverware and drinking glasses are sterilized, but let his mind feast on garbage.

Quarrel frequently in the presence of your children. In this way, they will not be too shocked when their home is broken up later.

Give a child all the spending money he wants. Never let him earn his own. Why should he have things as tough as you had them?

Satisfy his every craving for food, drink and comfort. See that every sensual desire is gratified. Denial may lead to harmful frustration.

Take his part against neighbors, teachers, and police officers. They are all prejudiced against your child.

When he gets into trouble, apologize to yourself by saying, "I never could do anything with him."

Prepare for a life of grief. You will be likely to have it.
Houston Police

=====

THE BIBLE IS A MAP - The Bible says it, I believe it, and that settles it.

This book contains the mind of God, the condition of man, the way of salvation, the fate of sinners, and the joy of the righteous. Its teachings are holy, its principles are eternal, its history is true, and its solutions are trustworthy. Read it to gain wisdom, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.

It provides light to guide you, food to sustain you, and comfort to fill you with joy. It is a map for the traveler, a staff for the pilgrim, a compass for the pilot, a sword for the soldier, and a covenant for the Christian. In it, Paradise is restored, Heaven is revealed, and the gates of hell are shut. Christ is its grand subject: our good, its design; the glory of God, its end. This book must fill the mind, rule the heart, and guide our steps.

Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given to you in life, will be opened at judgment, and will be remembered forever. It sets the highest standard of responsibility,

promises a reward for every faithful worker, and condemns all who treat sacred things lightly. There is no other book that so elevates the mind and enhances thinking like the Bible.

Believe it to gain wisdom, read it to be secure, practice it to be holy. The Bible is not a book of information but a book of transformation. It is the voice of God speaking, with supreme authority in Heaven and on Earth. The Lord has exalted His Word above His Name. Heaven and earth will pass away, but not the Bible. The Bible has triumphed over every kind of challenge throughout all ages.

=====

Satan Called A Worldwide Meeting
Do you sense the busyness of the world today.

Recently, I came across a compelling story that I want to share with you in its short form.

Satan called a worldwide meeting. The huge crowd hushed as he stepped up to speak. “We can’t keep Christians from going to church. We can’t keep them from reading their Bibles and knowing the truth. We can’t keep them from conservative values, but we can do something else.” He paused. Everyone listened.

“We can keep them from forming an intimate, abiding experience in Christ. If they gain that connection with Jesus, our power over them is broken. So let them go to church, let them have their conservative lifestyles, but steal their time so they can’t gain that experience in Jesus. This is what I want you to do. Distract them from gaining hold of their Savior and maintaining a vital connection through their day!”

“How shall we do this?” shouted his angels. “Simple. Keep them busy, busy, busy in the nonessentials of life and invent unnumbered schemes to occupy their minds,” he answered.

Tempt them to spend and spend, then borrow and borrow.

“Keep them from their children. Convince the wives to go to work and the husbands to work six and seven days a week, 10 to 12 hours a day, so they can afford their lifestyles. Tell them they are doing it FOR their children. Hah! That one works well. As their families fragment, their homes won’t offer an escape from the pressures of work.

“Overstimulate their minds so that they cannot hear ‘the still small voice.’ Entice them to play the radio or DVD player whenever they drive, to keep the TV, DVDs, MP3s, iPods, cell phones, text messages, and CDs going constantly in their homes. This will jam their minds and break that union with Christ.

“Fill their homes with magazines and newspapers. Pound their minds with news 24 hours a day. Invade their driving moments with billboards. Flood their mailboxes with junk mail, sweepstakes, catalogs, and every kind of newsletter and promotions with free products, services, and false hopes.

“Even in their recreation, let them be excessive. Have them return from their recreation exhausted, disquieted, and unprepared for the coming week. Don’t let them go out in nature. Send them to amusement parks, sporting events, concerts, and movies instead.

“When they meet for spiritual fellowship, involve them in gossip and small talk so that they leave with troubled consciences and unsettled emotion. Don’t let them encourage or uplift each other; keep those who are gifted encouragers especially busy and worn out.

“And above all, when they get together keep them from praying for one another. Let them be involved in soul winning. But crowd their lives with so many good causes they have no time to seek power from Christ. Soon they will be working in their own strength, sacrificing their health and family unity for the good of the cause.”

It was quite a convention in the end. And the evil angels went eagerly to their assignments trying to cause Christians everywhere to get busy, busy, busy.

Author Unknown

Do you sense the busyness of the world today? I know I do. This story so accurately portrays the temptations Satan uses to keep us from developing an intimate connection with Jesus. Yet as my wife, Janet, and I look back over God’s leading in our lives, ministry, and family, we’ve found God’s Word true: “In your presence is fullness of joy; At your right hand are pleasures forever more” (Psalms 16:11, NKJV).

Just before my ordination, Elder H. M. S. Richards, Sr., told me, “Jerry, never lose your time with Jesus!” That has proven a major key to God’s best for us.

When we stay connected to Jesus, our marriage, ministries, and children do so much better! When we separate ourselves, even for a short time, things go downhill in a hurry. We’ve learned that without Him we just can’t do anything of lasting value.

I pray that the words of John will be true in your life today: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. . . . If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. . . . These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:5, 7, 8, 11, NKJV).

Your brother in Christ, =====

"ACRONYM"

"B.U.S.Y." is "B-eing U-nder S-atan's Y-oke"?

(To be under Satan's yoke?)

THE 7 WONDERS OF BELIEVERS IN THE WORLD

They always watch TV, stay online and on their phones more than they pray, fast, or consecrate themselves.

They pray over their food more than they pray over their lives.

They are more committed to meetings, jobs, and festivities than to worship or preaching Christ.

They give gifts and donations to their friends more than to orphans, widows, the poor, the needy, or the work of the LORD.

They say they are pilgrims and sojourners, claiming this world is not their home, yet they invest more on earth than in heaven — their time, wealth, passions, health, and talents.

Many say the Bible is the most important book in their lives, yet it gathers dust.

They are entertained and concerned more with choir styles and songs than the message in the music meant to glorify God.

Which of these speaks to you the most?

=====

PRAYER IS THE ANSWER

“Prayer is the answer to every problem in life. It puts us in tune with divine wisdom which knows how to adjust everything perfectly. So often we do not pray in certain situations because from our standpoint the outlook is hopeless. But nothing is impossible with God (Matthew 19:26). Nothing is so entangled that it cannot be remedied. No human relation is too strained for God to bring out reconciliation and understanding. No habit is too deep-rooted that it cannot be overcome. No one is so weak that he cannot be made strong. No one is so ill that He cannot be healed. No mind is so dull, that it cannot be made brilliant. Whatever we need or desire, if we trust God, He will supply it. If anything is causing worry and anxiety, let us stop rehearsing the difficulty and trust God for healing, love, and power.”

— EGW, Review and Herald, Oct 7, 1865

If you want to do something for God, create a committee; but if you want God to do something for you — pray...

=====

PRAYER IS THE ANSWER

“Prayer is the answer to every problem in life. It puts us in tune with divine wisdom which knows how to adjust everything perfectly. So often we do not pray in certain situations because from our stand point the outlook is hopeless. But nothing is impossible with God (Matthew 19:26). Nothing is so entangled that it cannot be remedied. No human relation is too strained for God to bring out reconciliation and understanding. No habit is too deep-rooted that it cannot be overcome. No one is so weak that he cannot be made strong. No one is so ill that He cannot be healed. No mind is so dull, that it cannot be made brilliant. Whatever we need or desire, if we trust God, He will supply it. If anything is causing worry and anxiety, let us stop rehearsing the difficulty and trust God for healing, love, and power.” “EGW Review and Herald OCT 7, 1865.

If you need to do something for God, form a committee; but if you need God to do something for you – pray...

=====

SUGGESTION FOR THE BEST WAY TO KEEP THE LORD'S DAY

READ THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT FOR MORE CLARITY.

Exodus 20:8-11. It is the longest of all the commandments and the only one that begins with the word “Remember...” not because we are to forget the others, for all the commandments are equally important and of equal value. It is important to understand that our actions, however significant, should not be prioritized above our thoughts, intentions, and character. These we must guard carefully with the help of God, and then our actions will follow. By saying this, we should not think that “we keep the Lord’s Day just because our consciences are clear and we feel no guilt about it.”

That would be a wrong approach. Still, many are young in the faith, and we become stumbling blocks when we send the wrong message, even if we have attended religious institutions or studied a lot of theology.

Jews often say, “You Christians keep the Sabbath, but we Jews celebrate the Sabbath.” So how can we find true joy on the Lord’s Day while at the same time glorifying God?

WAYS TO HELP IN PROPERLY KEEPING THE LORD'S DAY

1. The Lord’s Day begins at sunset and ends the next sunset. Therefore, cooking, house cleaning, doing laundry, ironing clothes, and other regular tasks

should be completed before the beginning of the Lord's Day. The change of day at midnight was introduced by the Romans, but God's day begins at sunset and ends at the next sunset—study more about this. Make the Sabbath special by preparing special food and activities for your family. Read more and ask others to share their ideas, so that the Sabbath doesn't become something you can't wait to be over just so you can “relax.” Pray for God's revelation because it doesn't come easily! Just like you can joyfully plan other family events, the Lord's Day requires preparation and reflection. This day is called the Sabbath in the Holy Scriptures and in more than a hundred languages across the world.

2. It is acceptable to warm the food that was cooked on Friday on the Lord's Day.
3. It would be best to avoid all secular books, journals, newspapers, internet browsing, iPhones, radios, TV programs, or anything related to technology, etc., until the Lord's Day ends.
4. Business transactions like banking, paying bills, going to restaurants, buying gas, newspapers, selling milk or soft drinks, etc., should all wait until the hours of the Lord's Day are over—that is, Saturday evening after sunset. Try not to “stand at the gate” like in the days of Nehemiah, waiting for the Lord's Day to end so you can sell your goods. In short, do not steal a single day from God when He has given you six days for your work.
5. Parties, social gatherings, and all other worldly activities like football, swimming, tennis, etc., should never be allowed during the sacred hours.
6. The Lord's Day during the day is a good time for youth and adults to explore nature and learn about plants and animal life. It is not appropriate to substitute the church service with leisure or nature trips. The sacred hours of the Lord's Day are also a good time to visit the sick, the grieving, or prisoners in hospitals or confinement. Visiting the sick or grieving during worship time should be done rarely, unless it's an emergency or very special circumstance. It's easy to find spiritual revival during fellowship with fellow believers, and you can build deeper fellowship with those people afterward. I think, based on the biblical examples, JESUS never skipped worship to visit the sick. He continued that ministry after the synagogue services. Without a doubt, “He didn't borrow time from Church.”
7. The Lord's Day afternoon is a great time to go through your Bible study guide every week as a family, and if possible, participate in games that enhance your relationship with God (Bible games).

8. God is pleased when we separate ourselves not only from work but also from speaking our own words and thinking our own thoughts on His Day. This is difficult, but pray—it's something the Pharisees struggled with. Their actions were right, but their intentions, thoughts, and character were far from godly. I often find myself wiping the bathroom tap or removing spider webs without realizing it's Sabbath.

9. We show dishonor to God when we choose to sleep through the whole Sabbath and miss fellowship in God's house (although it's not wrong to rest for an hour or two on Sabbath afternoon, sleeping all day just so you can stay up all night or gain strength for your own affairs after the Lord's Day is not the right path).

10. We honor God by gathering our family together, singing with a spirit of worship when opening and closing the Lord's Day.

=====

Principles Related to AUTHORITY in Our Family...

1. We love and obey our Lord, Almighty God, with humility and all our hearts.
2. We read the Bible and pray about everything with sincerity of heart.
3. We care for and obey our parents in the Lord without showing any form of disrespect.
4. We accept correction and rebuke with a humble heart.

Concerning RELATIONSHIPS in Our Family...

1. We love one another, bearing with each other in kindness, dignity, and respect.
2. We help one another, gently prioritizing the needs of others above our own.
3. We encourage one another, using only words that build good character and bless others.
4. We forgive each other, covering wrongs with love when we are offended or offend others.

Regarding OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY in Our Family...

1. We thank God for what we have, whether little or much.
2. We are content with what we have and do not covet what others possess.
3. We are generous with what we have, sharing openly with others.
4. We take care of what we have, using it wisely and responsibly.

Concerning WORK in Our Family...

1. We are diligent to complete tasks faithfully and carefully when asked.
2. We take personal initiative to do all our duties without needing to be told.
3. We work in a spirit of cooperation, openly giving and receiving help.
4. We make personal efforts to ensure our home environment remains clean at all times.

Concerning CONDUCT in Our Family...

1. We choose to be joyful, even when we feel like complaining.
2. We choose to be peacemakers, even when we feel misunderstood.
3. We choose to be calm, even when we feel like we are losing control.
4. We choose to be gentle, even when we feel we have no reason to be.

Concerning DECISIONS in Our Lives...

1. We do what we know is right, regardless of what others may say.
2. We ask before acting when we do not know what is right to do.

3. We strive to exercise self-control always and in every situation.
4. We always speak the truth and never try to tell any kind of lie.

10 Principles of Strong, Happy Families

PRINCIPLE 1: COMMITMENT

The most important trait in strong, happy families is commitment. Commitment to the team—putting the family first—and commitment to each individual on the family in helping him or her become everything he or she can....With commitment comes the desire to help family members reach their potential. A winning attitude is "I'll forgo my own immediate gratification to help a family member succeed, because I know the personal joy that I experience when I help another family member."

PRINCIPLE 2: APPRECIATION

Do you let your family members know that they are appreciated? Do you give them positive attention?...Strong families focus on the strengths of each other—not the faults.

If you think your family needs improvement in this area, try serving a compliment at each practice..."I really like the way that you..." "One of the things I like best about you is..." "You make me happy when you..." "You have real talent when it comes to..." "You make me proud when you..."

PRINCIPLE 3: TIME TOGETHER

Healthy families enjoy being together. They work together, play together, and enjoy leisure times together. They may be very busy, but they...plan time together.

PRINCIPLE 4: COMMUNICATION

To understand each other, a family has to be willing to invest the time necessary to share their feelings and opinions. Because you are a product of your experiences, each day you are a new person. Without talking and listening to each other, family members can soon become strangers.

PRINCIPLE 5: SHORT AND LONG TERM COMMON GOALS

Agreeing on working on common goals is very encouraging to create a strong sense of belonging and satisfaction. Strong families enjoy achieving short term goals as

find a common learning and bonding ground as each member contributes their unique skills and talents to long term common goals. It is very important that the family have agreed from the beginning on the outcome of their goals and what the benefit will be for each individually and as a group.

PRINCIPLE 6: SENSE OF HUMOR

Happy families have fun together; they play together; they laugh together. Having a sense of humor during tense, troublesome moments...defuses the tension and has an immediate calming effect.

PRINCIPLE 7: SHARE RESPONSIBILITY

Flexibility is an important trait in strong families, especially when it comes to sharing responsibility and roles. If family members will do whatever is necessary to meet each other's needs, even if the task does not happen to be on their list, everyone is happier.

Together

Everyone

Accomplishes

More!

=====

HOW TO BE UNHAPPY IN LIFE=====

Think about yourself

Talk about yourself all the time

Use the pronoun "I" as often as possible

Constantly measure yourself using other people's thoughts and opinions

Listen eagerly to what others say about you

Be full of doubt

Expect people to accept and validate you

Be envious and greedy

Get angry at anyone who insults you

Never forget to criticize others

Trust no one except yourself

Insist that people remember and respect you

Force your opinions to be respected in everything

Get upset if people don't remember you or show you gratitude

Never forget any service you once gave

Always expect good times just for yourself

Try to avoid your responsibilities if you can

Care about others as little as possible

Love yourself excessively

Be selfish

These principles will guarantee you an unhappy life.

Rules, rules, rules. Your kids don't like them, but what they don't realize is they need them! Kids need structure. They need to know what's expected and what will happen if those expectations aren't met. Their world is full of rules—rules at school, at their future jobs and out in society. As their parents, you are helping them develop into responsible law-abiding citizens if they understand a few basic, fair rules at home. Here are some suggestions for a list of family house rules—and yes, they are for everyone, even Mom and Dad!

- Respect one another. This rule covers quite a bit, such as the importance of using kind words. No insulting or putting each other down. Use manners and be kind. Also, family members should respect each other's property, personal space and privacy. This helps your son remember he cannot borrow his older brother's toy without asking. And if he is given permission, he should take care of it and return it. Kids like having their own space and time to themselves. This should be respected as well.
- A family is a team. This means you have each other's backs. You help each other out. Your kids go to their siblings' baseball games and piano recitals. They root each other on. Your older kids help hold their younger siblings' hands while crossing the street. They know they need to set a good example. This rule also encompasses the difference between ratting a sibling out just to see him get into trouble and telling Mom and Dad something important they need to know. A family works together to keep one another safe.
- Everyone pitches in. Mom's not the maid. Put your dirty laundry in the hamper, shoes away and homework back into backpacks, and help with the dishes. Clean up your toys after playing. And help Mom and Dad rake the leaves and shovel snow. If you make a mess, clean it up. It's that simple. No one plays or goes out with friends until the chores are done.
- Tell the truth. This one is often tougher for Mom and Dad than it is for kids. It's so important that your kids know from a very early age that they need to tell the truth, even if it's scary—even if it means they might get into trouble. Because if Mom and Dad know the truth, and have all of the information, they are more equipped to keep the kid safe. Mom and Dad need to promise the kids they, too, will be truthful, even if it's scary!
- Safety first. Make your family's safety rules applicable to the type of family you have and ages of your kids. Don't run down the stairs. Wear seat belts. No texting and driving. Don't hang stuff from the ceiling fan and turn it on. If you have a kindergartener, obviously this category of rules will evolve and change as she grows up and has more freedom.

- Go to work every day and do your best. Whether your “job” is going to fifth grade every day or going to an office from 8:00 to 5:00, every family member has work to do. Everyone shows up ready, prepared, homework done. And everyone tries hard.
 - Everyone has a say. Mom and Dad are the bosses, but everyone has a say in the house rules. If your kids want something changed like having a later curfew, let them know they can come talk to you and explain their case. You, of course, have the final say, but it’s important that kids know they will be heard. This also applies to family decisions like what movie to watch or where to get takeout. If you do a fair rotation where everyone gets a chance to decide, your kids feel like their voices matter.
 - Commit to family time. Whatever time you set aside to reconnect as a family, whether it be Sundays after church or Friday movie nights, make sure everyone is present, physically and mentally. No friends over. Put phones down. Just enjoy each other. Play a board game, look at old photo albums or go out and get ice cream. Ask your kids about their day, their friends, the toughest math problem on yesterday’s test. Just talk to each other and connect.
- It’s a good idea to brainstorm and establish your family rules together. Make it a family activity, and once you’ve decided the best rules for your family, write them down—a simple list on notebook paper or a painted mural. Either way, write them down and hang them up so you can all be reminded of the guidelines that will help your family. Create a family motto to write across the top. Ours is “Johnsons aren’t quitters!” Make sure everyone knows what consequences occur if they don’t follow the rules—and remember to follow through!

Quiz: True or False?

- Mom and Dad should make the rules and print them out, without their kids’ having a say. (FALSE)
- The family list of rules is only applicable to the kids. (FALSE)
- Your list of rules may evolve over time as your kids get older. (TRUE)
- The world is full of rules, and it’s important that kids learn to respect them at home. (TRUE)
- Kids should only have to do chores if they are going to get paid. (FALSE)
- Having a rule about respect encompasses many things, such as speaking kindly, respecting privacy and not taking another person’s property without asking. (TRUE)
- Teaching your kids that they have a “job” to do every day, starting at a young age, is beneficial. (TRUE)
- Rules about safety aren’t necessary, as they will change when kids get older. (FALSE)

=====

36.11 Rules for Our Children's Friends

1. Parents decide when, where, and with whom their children may play.
2. Friends are not allowed to go to anyone's house or go anywhere unless their parents have permitted them to do so.
3. Friends must always respect the house rules and standards of others wherever they are.
4. Friends must be kind to all members of each other's families.
5. Friends may only play with each other's toys if they ask first, are careful with them, and return them to their place before leaving.
6. Friends may only share or lend items if they have received permission from each other's parents beforehand.
7. Friends may not distract each other from completing family responsibilities or schoolwork with joy and satisfaction.
8. Friends should not cause their peers to miss church services or other important family activities.
9. Family members are our most important friends. Therefore, brothers and sisters must be loyal to one another.
10. Children who cause or say things that lead their friends to disobey will not be allowed to play together again until they have apologized to each other's parents.
11. Friends may be included in each other's special activities if they have shown they can play well together in other settings.

By Greg and Josh Harris

AMAZING FACTS BIBLE STUDY

AMAZING FACTS BIBLE STUDIES FOR EVERY HUMAN BEING BIBLE STUDIES

In These Morally Challenged Times

Lesson 1

In these morally challenged times - when billions are embezzled through corporate fraud when trusted, spiritual leaders prove false when lying in politics seems to be the norm when those you depend on the most often hurt you the deepest - is there anything left you can trust? Yes! You can fully trust the Bible! Why? Just take a look at the evidence...

The Bible is not a collection of men's ideas. Its writers were guided by the Holy Ghost.

1. What does the Bible claim about itself?

The Bible says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." 2 Timothy 3:16. "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1:21. "The scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35.

Answer: It claims to be inspired. It was written by men who were guided by the Holy Ghost. It cannot be broken or proved untrue.

Jesus quoted the Bible and stated that it was true.

2. How did Jesus demonstrate His confidence and belief in Scripture?

Jesus said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone." "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord

thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Matthew 4:4, 7, 10. "Thy word is truth." John 17:17.

Answer: Jesus quoted Scripture when meeting the temptations of Satan. He also stated that the Bible is truth John 17:17. Jesus often quoted Scripture as authority for the truth He was teaching.

Before Cyrus was born, God's Bible prophet named him as the general who would overthrow Babylon.

3. Do Bible prophecies confirm inspiration?

The Bible says, "I am the Lord . . . new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them." Isaiah 42:8, 9. "I am God . . . Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done." Isaiah 46:9, 10. Answer: Bible predictions of things to happen in the future confirm the inspiration of Scripture as they come to pass. Notice the following examples of fulfilled Bible prophecies:

Four world empires to arise: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome Daniel chapters 2, 7, 8. Cyrus to be the warrior to capture Babylon Isaiah 45:1-3.

After Babylon's destruction, it would never be inhabited again Isaiah 13:19, 20 Jeremiah 51:37.

Egypt would never again have a commanding position among the nations Ezekiel 29:14, 15 30:12, 13. Earth-shaking calamities and fear toward the end of time Luke 21:25, 26.

Moral degeneracy and decline of spirituality in the last days 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

4. Can we expect scientific statements made in the Bible to be accurate?

The Bible says, "Thy word is true from the beginning." Psalms 119:160. "The Spirit . . . will guide you into all truth." John 16:13.

Answer: Yes, the Bible is true. The Holy Spirit, who guided the Bible writers, always speaks the truth. Here are a few Bible statements that have been confirmed by science:

"He . . . hangeth the earth upon nothing." Job 26:7. This scientific fact is from Job, the Bible's oldest book.

"He . . . sitteth upon the circle of the earth." Isaiah 40:22. The Bible said the earth is round centuries before man found out.

"To make the weight for the winds." Job 28:25. Long before scientists knew, God said air has weight. "By Him [Jesus] all things consist." Colossians 1:17. The word "consist" here literally means "hold together" or "cohere." Many Bible translations put it "hold together." This is the answer to the nuclear physicists' worrisome question about the atom. The real mystery of the atom does not involve its benumbing mega-power, but rather, "Why doesn't the atom fly apart?" Scientific knowledge says it should, but it doesn't. Some scientists are wondering what puzzling power, completely unknown to them, is holding it together. The Bible says that mysterious power is the Creator, God Himself.

Many diseases would not exist if God's ancient laws regarding morality were obeyed.

5. Are biblical health principles tuned to the twenty-first century mind?
Answer: Cover body waste with dirt Deuteronomy 23:12, 13.

The Bible provision of Moses' day that body waste should be buried was 3,500 years ahead of its time and saved countless thousands of Jewish lives. Major problems still arise when sanitation is not properly handled.

"Neither let us commit fornication." 1 Corinthians 10:8.

The word "fornication" denotes all kinds of immoral sexual conduct. There would be no AIDS epidemic if this up-to-date Bible counsel were obeyed, nor would abortion be the international scandal that it now is.

Leave alcoholic beverages alone Proverbs 23:29-32.

If this extremely effective Bible solution were implemented, just think what it would mean: Millions of alcoholics becoming sober, respectable citizens.

Millions of families reunited. Millions of broken homes mended.

Multiplied thousands of lives saved by sober driving.

Thousands of government, business, and professional leaders making clear-minded decisions. Billions of dollars available for humanitarian use.

The use of alcohol has brought untold woe to many people.

Note: God not only tells us how to succeed with joy amid today's harrowing problems, but He also gives us the miraculous power to do it (1 Corinthians 15:57, Philippians 4:13, Romans 1:16). Bible health principles are relevant and desperately needed, but few are listening. For more on health, see Study Guide 13.

Ancient artifacts unearthed by archaeologists repeatedly confirm the accuracy and truth of the Bible.

6. Are the historical statements of the Bible accurate?

The Bible says, "I the Lord speak the truth, I declare what is right." Isaiah 45:19, RSV.*

Answer: Yes, Bible historical statements are accurate. What God says in His book is true. Sometimes, temporarily, evidence may not be found to substantiate certain historical facts from the Bible, but in time the evidence surfaces. Note the following:

For years skeptics said the Bible was unreliable because it mentions the Hittite nation Deuteronomy 7:1 and cities like Nineveh Jonah 1:1, 2 and Sodom Genesis 19:1, which they denied ever existed. But now modern archaeology has confirmed that all three did, indeed, exist.

Critics also said that Bible-mentioned kings Belshazzar Daniel 5:1 and Sargon Isaiah 20:1 never existed. Once again, it has now been confirmed they did exist.

Skeptics also said the Bible record of Moses was not reliable because it mentions writing Exodus 24:4 and wheeled vehicles Exodus 14:25, neither of which they said existed at the time. They, of course, know better today.

At one time the 39 kings of ancient Israel and Judah who reigned during the divided kingdom were authenticated only from the Bible record, so critics charged fabrication. But then archaeologists found cuneiform records that mentioned many of these kings and, once again, the Bible record was proved accurate. Critics have repeatedly been proved wrong as new discoveries confirm biblical people, places, and events. It will always be so.

*The Revised Standard Version of the Bible C 1946, 1952, 1971 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission.

7. One of the greatest miracles of the Bible is its unity. Please ponder the following amazing facts: Answer:

A. The 66 books of the Bible were written:

On three continents. In three languages.

By about 40 different people kings, shepherds, scientists, attorneys, an army general, fishermen, priests, and a physician.

Over a period of about 1,500 years. On the most controversial subjects.

By people who, in most cases, had never met.

By authors whose education and background varied greatly.

B. Yet, though it seems totally inconceivable,

The 66 books maintain harmony with each other.

Often new concepts on a subject are expressed, but these concepts do not undermine what other Bible writers say on the same subject.

C. Talk about astounding!

Ask people who have viewed an identical event to each give a report of what happened. They will differ widely and will virtually always contradict each other in some way. Yet the Bible, penned by 40 writers over a 1,500-year period, reads as if written by one great mind. And, indeed, it was: "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1:21. The Holy Ghost "moved" them all. He is the real Bible Author. The four Gospels do sometimes differ in the way they report the same event, but they complement each other.

Accepting Christ and obeying Scripture changes a drunken, immoral, profane, sinner into a loving, sober, pure Christian. Skeptics cannot explain this fact.

8. What evidence of Bible inspiration is found in the lives of people?

The Bible says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away behold, all things are become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Christians have an inner joy and peace that others do not possess.

Answer: The changed lives of those who follow Jesus and obey Scripture constitute the most heartwarming proof of Bible inspiration. The drunkard becomes sober; the immoral, pure; the addicted, free; the profane, reverent; the fearful, courageous; and the rude, kind.

An American skeptic was visiting an island whose natives were originally cannibals. When he spotted an old man reading the Bible, he ridiculed him for reading a book "full of myths which had already been exposed." The native smiled at him and said, "My friend, be grateful we do believe this book. Otherwise, we would be serving you for dinner." The Bible really does change people, and this amazing fact confirms its inspiration.

9. What evidence for Bible inspiration emerges when we compare Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah with New Testament happenings in the life of Jesus?

The Bible says, "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He [Jesus] expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Luke 24:27. "For he [Apollus] vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ." Acts 18:28, NKJV.*

Jesus fulfilled more than 125 Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah.

Answer: The Old Testament predictions of the Messiah to come were so specific and so clearly fulfilled by Jesus of Nazareth that both Jesus and Apollus used these prophecies to prove to the Jews that Jesus was, indeed, the Messiah. There are more than 125 of these prophecies. Let's review just 12 of them:

Prophecy	Old Testament Scripture	New Testament Fulfillment

1.	Born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2

Matthew 2:1

2.	Born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14

Matthew 1:18-23

3. Of David's lineage Jeremiah 23:5

Revelation 22:16

4. Attempted murder by Herod Jeremiah 31:15

Matthew 2:16-18

5. Betrayal by a friend Psalms 41:9

John 13:18, 19, 26

6. Sold for 30 silver coins Zechariah 11:12

Matthew 26:14-16

7. Crucified Zechariah 12:10

John 19:16-18, 37

8. Lots cast for His clothes Psalms 22:18

Matthew 27:35

9. No bones broken Psalms 34:20 Exodus 12:46

John 19:31-36

10. Buried in rich man's tomb Isaiah 53:9

Matthew 27:57-60

11. Year, day, hour of His death Daniel 9:26, 27 Exodus 12:6

Matthew 27:45-50

12. Raised the third day Hosea 6:2

Acts 10:38-40

Dr. Peter Stoner, former chairman of the departments of mathematics, astronomy, and engineering at Pasadena College California, worked with 600 students for several years applying the "principle of probability" to the prophecies of the Messiah's coming. They chose just eight from the many available and finally decided the chances of all eight being fulfilled in one man in a lifetime is one in 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000. What would the odds be on the more than 125 prophecies of the Messiah? It couldn't just happen!

*The Holy Bible, New King James Version, C 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.

The Bible teaches that the earth was created in six literal days.

10. What great advantage does a person have who accepts the Bible as God's inspired word?

The Bible says, "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts." Psalms 119:100. "Thou . . . hast made me wiser than mine enemies." Psalms 119:98. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are . . . my thoughts [higher] than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:9.

The Bible account of the Flood provides the answers secular scholars are searching for. Answer: A person who accepts the Word of God will soon know the answers to

many complex challenges that secular scholars will never figure out. For example, the Bible teaches:

God created the earth and all living organisms in six literal, 24-hour days Exodus 20:11 Psalms 33:6, 9. A worldwide flood destroyed every living thing except the sea life and what was inside Noah's ark Genesis chapters 6, 7, 8.

The different languages of the world began at the Tower of Babel Genesis 11:1-9.

God, who has always existed and knows everything, shares the above three truths with us, recognizing that we could never figure them out on our own. We know only "in part" now 1 Corinthians 13:9. And God's knowledge is "past finding out." Romans 11:33. Evolutionists will never know the age of the earth because it was created with apparent age, as were Adam and Eve.

The couple were only one day old on their second day of life, but they appeared to be mature. Man's measuring instruments cannot allow for apparent age. In such cases, they are not trustworthy.

Believe the Bible, and you will always be ahead of the speculation of secular scholars and the worldly- wise.

11. What crucial world happenings have brought the power and appeal of the Bible into sharp focus?

Answer: The failure and collapse of communism and the weakening and inconsistency of the theory of evolution have spotlighted the Bible.

True science is always in harmony with the Bible because God is the author of both.

Note: The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics tried communism, atheism, and also evolution, which is Marxism's number one tenet. They all failed. The resultant new democracies realize that only one thing will work, and they are almost with one voice crying out to Christendom: "Bring us the Bible and Christian preaching and teaching. We must now build on the unshakable foundation of prayer and the

Christian faith. Nothing else compares. Nor will anything else answer life's great questions and bring peace to the hearts of our people. Please don't keep us waiting! We desperately want and need the Bible, God, and Christianity now." Once again, God's Word triumphs.

Evolution, like communism, is losing its grip and credibility. We must remember that it is nothing more than an unproved, shaky theory. We will mention three items only:

Robert Gentry's book *Creation's Tiny Mystery* has unsettled many evolutionists with its apparent, clear evidence of instant creation. *Mystery in the Rocks*, an easy-to-understand book based on his research, may be purchased from Amazing Facts.

Molecular biology's recent demonstration that the single cell is vastly complex makes the accidental origin of life in a single cell a mathematical absurdity.

The widely different ages now being assigned to the Grand Canyon layers by current scientific measurements, as opposed to those assigned previously, make evolutionists and their prior measurements seem reckless and irresponsible. The atheistic theory of evolution that humans and apes came from common ancestors scorns the concept that people were created in the image of God. It denies the existence of God, totally disavows Jesus as Saviour, negates the Bible, and ridicules the truth of an eternal home in heaven. Satan loves the evolution theory because it destroys the credibility of salvation. Communists are learning. Will we?

The Bible has universal appeal because it provides clear answers to life's most perplexing questions.

12. Why does the Bible have such universal appeal?

The Bible says, "Thy word is a . . . light unto my path." Psalms 119:105. "These things have I spoken unto you . . . that your joy might be full." John 15:11. "In the image of God . . . created he them." Genesis 1:27. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify

your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:16. "I will come again, and receive you unto myself that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:3.

Answer: Because it answers life's most puzzling questions:

Where did I come from? God created us in His image. We did not accidentally emerge as nondescript globs from some primeval slime. We are sons and daughters of God, the Mighty King Galatians 3:26. We are so precious to God that when Adam and Eve sinned, He gave His Son to die and pay the penalty for our sins so we could be free. He wants to restore us to His image and then, shortly, take us back to Eden, the home Adam and Eve lost.

Why am I here? Our aims for life today should be to discover the Bible's wonderful answers to life's puzzling problems and to accept Jesus' offer to restore us to His image Romans 8:29.

What does the future hold for me? There is no guesswork about the future. Jesus will come very soon to take His people to the fabulous home He has prepared for them in heaven. There, with supreme joy and happiness, people will live forever John 14:1-3 Revelation 21:3, 4.

13. I am thankful to God for giving me positive answers to life's most puzzling questions. Answer:

Thought Questions

1. I'm offended that the Bible gives such repugnant, graphic descriptions of sin in recording the lives of some Bible characters. Is this really necessary? Romans 15:4

Yes. It is one of the great facts that give credibility to the Bible. Most biographies skip or soften the bad and often overstate the good. Telling it like it is gives people confidence the Bible can be trusted it doesn't cover up. Further, Satan's strategy is to convince people they are such great sinners God cannot or will not save them. What joy sweeps over such people when they are shown Bible cases of people like them and worse whom God delivered from sin and justified Romans 15:4!

2. Is all of the Bible inspired? Many believe only parts of it are. 2 Timothy 3:16

The Bible has the answer: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." 2 Timothy 3:16. The Bible does not simply contain the word of God. Rather, it is the Word of God. The Bible is the information and operations manual for a human life. Ignore any of it and you will have unnecessary difficulties and problems.

3. The Bible is an ancient book with old-fashioned wording and concepts. Don't you feel it is unsafe to rely on something so far removed from our enlightened day? 1 Peter 1:25

No. Its age is in its favor. That is, in fact, one of the proofs of its inspiration. The Bible says, "The word of the Lord endureth for ever." 1 Peter 1:25. The Bible stands as a rock. It is God's book, His Word. It cannot be destroyed. Men and even entire nations have burned, banned, and tried to discredit and destroy the Bible, but instead, they discredited themselves. They are gone, and their attacks on the Bible are forgotten. Yet the Bible remains a best-seller, in constant demand. Millions would die for it, if necessary. Its message is God-given and 100 percent up-to-date. Before you study it, pray and ask God to open your heart as you read.

4. Some of the most brilliant people in the world, who have carefully studied the Bible, believe no one can understand it. If the Bible is truly God's book, shouldn't everyone be able to understand it? Bright people who can understand and explain virtually anything are often quickly stopped in their tracks when they read the Bible. The reason is that spiritual things "are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:13, 14. The deep things of the Word will never be understood by a secular mind, no matter how brilliant. Unless one honestly seeks an experience with God, he cannot understand the things of God. The Holy Spirit, who explains the Bible John 16:13 14:26, is not understood by the carnal, secular mind. On the other hand, the humble, even uneducated Christian who studies the Bible receives amazing understanding from the Holy Spirit Matthew 11:25 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10.

5. The Bible is full of errors. How can you believe it is inspired? Isaiah 28 The overwhelming majority of so-called errors in the Bible have been demonstrated to be simply errors of judgment or lack of understanding on the part of those who

make the complaint. They are not errors at all, but simply truth misunderstood. The inspired Bible:

Will always tell you the truth. Will never mislead you.

Can be fully trusted.

Is reliable and authoritative, not only in spiritual matters but also in other matters it addresses, including history and science.

Satan is always digging up some supposed flaw in Scripture, which is not surprising. He found fault even with God and heaven. Copyists may have miscopied in some cases, but no such supposed happening or any other alleged error affects the truth of God's Word. Doctrine is built not upon one Bible passage, but upon the total of God's comments on any subject. We are unaware of any alleged error of any kind that would affect the truthfulness of the content of Scripture. Some things in Scripture are yet difficult to reconcile. There will always be room for doubt to those who prefer to doubt. We believe that even alleged errors, not yet fully explained, will as in the past soon be exposed as false alarms. The harder people work to undermine the Bible, the brighter its light shines.

Quiz Questions

1. Which fulfilled prophecies confirm the Bible's inspiration? (4)

Cyrus would capture Babylon

Ronald Reagan would become president of the United States.

Egypt would never again be a strong, leading nation.

Morals would degenerate in the last days.

Germany would have a 20-year drought.

Babylon, once destroyed, would never be inhabited again.

2. Jesus showed His belief in Bible inspiration by:

Talking loudly on the subject.

Quoting from it as He taught.

Calling fire down on those who doubted.

Announcing it from the temple steps.

3. Which scientific facts from the list below does the Bible mention? (3)

The earth is round.

Air has weight.

God keeps the atom from flying apart.

The formula for water is 'H₂O'.

Seawater is salty.

4. Which of the following health rules appear in the Bible? (2)

Drink four gallons of water daily.

Leave alcoholic beverages alone.

Run every morning and night.

Abstain from immoral sexual conduct.

5. The following statements about the Bible are true: (3)

About 40 people helped write the Bible The Bible was written over a period of 10,000 years.

Only parts of the Bible are inspired.

The real Bible author is the Holy Spirit.

The Bible is a best-seller.

6. Which of the following did the Bible predict about the Messiah's life? (3)

Would be born in Nazareth.

Would fly to heaven often.

Would be sold for 30 pieces of silver.

Herod would try to kill Him.

Would be crucified.

Would be raised to life after seven years.

7. What Bible rule, if followed, would best prevent AIDS?

Do not be sexually immoral.

Do not worship graven images.

Eat meals regularly.

8. Which statements below are true about evolution? (3)

It is an unproved theory.

It undermines Christianity.

It is a proved fact.

It proves that human beings and apes have common ancestors.

It is a strong tenet of communism.

9. Which statements below help prove Bible inspiration? (5)

Its biographies include bad as well as good.

It changes the lives of its followers.

Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah were fulfilled by Jesus.

It predicted the rise of the four world kingdoms.

Its unity.

It tells the day and hour of the second coming of Jesus.

10. God created the earth in six literal, 24-hour days.

True

False

11. In Noah's day, a worldwide flood destroyed every living thing except the sea life and what was inside the ark.

True

False

12. The different languages of the world originated at the Tower of Babel.

True

False

Did God Create Satan

Most people in the world are being deceived by an evil genius bent on destroying their lives - a brilliant mastermind called the devil, or Satan. But this dark prince is much more than what you might think... many say he's just a devious mythical figure, but the Bible says he's very real, and he's deceiving families, churches, and even nations to increase sorrow and pain. Here are

the Bible's amazing facts about this prince of darkness and how you can overcome him!

Sin originated with Satan, who is also called the devil.

1. With whom did sin originate?

"The devil sinneth from the beginning." 1 John 3:8. "That old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan." Revelation 12:9.

Answer: Satan, also called the devil, is the originator of sin. Without the Scriptures, the origin of evil would remain unexplained.

Satan was living in heaven when he sinned. His name was Lucifer, which means "Day Star."

2. What was Satan's name before he sinned? Where was he living at that time?

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" Isaiah 14:12. Jesus said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Luke 10:18. "Thou wast upon the holy mountain of God." Ezekiel 28:14.

Answer: His name was Lucifer, and he was living in heaven. Lucifer is symbolized by the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14 and as the king of Tyrus in Ezekiel 28.

Lucifer was a heavenly angel created by God. He was perfect in wisdom and beauty and stood next to God's throne.

3. What was the origin of Lucifer? What responsible position did he hold? How does the Bible describe him?

"Thou wast created." Ezekiel 28:13, 15. "Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth." Ezekiel 28:14. "Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty ... every precious stone was thy covering ... the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created
Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that

thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee." Ezekiel 28:12-15.

Answer: Lucifer was created by God, as were all other angels (Ephesians 3:9). Lucifer was a "covering" cherub, or angel. One great angel stands on the left side of God's throne and another on the right (Psalms 99:1). Lucifer was one of those highly exalted angel leaders. Lucifer's beauty was flawless and breathtaking. His wisdom was perfect. His brightness was awe-inspiring.

Ezekiel 28:13 seems to indicate that his throat was specially prepared to make him an outstanding musician. Some think he led the angelic choir.

Satan wants people to worship him. He even tried to persuade Jesus to worship him.

4. What happened in Lucifer's life that led him to sin? What blasphemous sin did he then commit?

"Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness." Ezekiel 28:17. "For thou hast said in thine heart, ... I will exalt my throne above the stars of God I will be like the most High." Isaiah 14:13, 14.

Answer: Pride, jealousy, discontent, and self-exaltation arose in his life. Lucifer decided to attempt to unseat God and then demand that all worship him. It was treason of the worst kind.

Note: Why is worship such a big thing? Worship is the key factor in the ongoing warfare between God and Satan. People were created to be happy and fulfilled only when they worship God solely. Not even unfallen angels of heaven are to be worshiped (Revelation 22:8, 9). Satan sought worship in the beginning. Centuries later, when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness, worship was still the central issue (Matthew 4:8-11). In these last days, God is calling upon all people to worship Him (Revelation 14:6,7). This so infuriates Satan that he will try to force people to worship him or else be killed (Revelation 13:15).

Everybody worships somebody or something:

power, prestige, food, pleasure, possessions, one's own opinion, etc. God says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Exodus 20:3. And unless we worship Him only, He counts us against Him (Matthew 12:30). This news is shocking, but true. If anything or anyone other than God receives first place in my life, I am innocently perhaps worshiping and supporting Satan. Does God have first place in my life, or am I unconsciously elevating Satan? It is a sobering question, isn't it?

Lucifer's discontent became open rebellion against God. One-third of heaven's angels joined him in an attempt to overthrow God. As a result, Lucifer and his followers were cast out of heaven.

5. What happened in heaven as a consequence of Lucifer's rebellion?

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Revelation 12:7-9.

Answer: Lucifer won the support of one-third of the angels (Revelation 12:3, 4) and caused an insurrection in heaven. God had no choice but to oust Lucifer and his angels. This was the greatest battle, by far, ever fought.

Lucifer's aim was to usurp God's throne, even if it might eventually lead to murder (John 8:44). After his expulsion from heaven, Lucifer was called Satan (adversary) and devil (slanderer), and his angels were called demons. Satan's headquarters is the earth. He hates human beings and aims to hurt God by destroying you.

6. Where is Satan's present headquarters? How does he feel about people?

"The Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." Job 2:2. "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." Revelation 12:12. "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8.

Answer: Contrary to popular opinion, Satan's headquarters is the earth, not hell. God gave Adam and Eve dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:26). When they sinned, they lost it to Satan (Romans 6:16), who then became ruler, or prince, of the earth (John 12:31). Satan bitterly hates humans, who were created in God's image. He can't touch God. So, instead, his venom is directed against people who are God's children. He's a hateful, vicious murderer whose aim is to destroy you and thus hurt God.

Adam and Eve were not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, under the penalty of death.

7. When God created Adam and Eve, what one thing did He forbid them to do? What was to be the penalty for disobedience?

"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Genesis 2:17.

Answer: They were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The penalty for eating of the tree was to be death.

Satan took the form of a talking serpent and convinced Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit.

8. What medium did Satan use to deceive Eve? What lies did Satan tell her?

"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:1, 4, 5, emphasis added.

Answer: Satan used a serpent--the wisest, most appealing animal God made--to deceive Eve. Some think the serpent originally had wings and flew (Isaiah 14:29; 30:6). Remember, it did not crawl until God cursed it (Genesis 3:14). Satan's lies were: (1) you won't die, and (2) eating the fruit will make you wise. Satan, who invented lying (John 8:44), mixed truth with the lies he told Eve. Lies that include

some truth are the most effective of all. It was true they would "know evil" after sinning. In love, God had withheld from them the knowledge of heartache, grief, suffering, pain, and death. Satan, as he does today, made the knowledge of evil appear attractive.

Satan told lies to misrepresent God's character because he knew that no one would ever turn away from such a loving God unless he misunderstood His character.

Eating the forbidden fruit allied Adam and Eve with Satan, God's bitter enemy.

9. Was eating a piece of fruit such a bad thing? Why were Adam and Eve removed from the garden?

"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James 4:17. "Sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:4. "He that committeth sin is of the devil." 1 John 3:8. "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever." "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." Genesis 3:22, 24.

Answer: Yes, eating of the fruit was a sin because it was a direct rejection of one of God's few requirements. It was open rebellion against God's law and authority. By rejecting one of God's commands, Adam and Eve allied themselves with Satan, God's enemy, and thus brought separation between themselves and God (Isaiah 59:2). Satan hoped the couple would sin and then eat of the tree of life, and thus become immortal sinners. But God removed them from the garden to prevent such a tragedy.

10. What amazing facts does the Bible reveal regarding Satan's methods to hurt, deceive, discourage, and destroy people?

Answer: Satan uses every conceivable approach to deceive and destroy people. His demons can appear and pose as righteous people, even clergymen. And Satan will appear as a glorious angel of light with power to call fire down from heaven. He will impersonate Jesus. But you have been warned, so don't fall for it. When Jesus comes, every eye will see Him (Revelation 1:7). He will remain in the clouds and not even touch the earth (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

The Bible Says Satan:

Deceives / persecutes (Revelation 12:9, 13)

Quotes/misquotes Bible (Matthew 4:5, 6)

Falsely accuses / murders (Revelation 12:10 John 8:44)

Traps / ensnares (2 Timothy 2:26 1

Peter 5:8)

Makes war against God's people (Revelation 12:17)

Binds / prompts betrayal (Luke 13:16 John 13:2, 21)

Imprisons (Revelation 2:10)

Possesses / hinders (Luke 22:3-5 1

Thessalonians 2:18)

Works miracles / lies (Revelation 16:13, 14 John 8:44)

Appears as angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)

Brings disease / afflicts (Job 2:7)

His demons impersonate pastors (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)

Slanders ("Devil" means "slanderer") Calls fire from heaven (Revelation 13:13)

Satan's end-time deceptive power will be so great that almost the entire world will follow him.

11. How powerful and effective are Satan's temptations and strategies?

He convinced: one-third of the angels (Revelation 12:3-9); Adam and Eve (Genesis 3); all but eight people in Noah's day (1 Peter 3:20). He will make the lost feel saved (Matthew 7:21-23). Almost the entire world will follow him (Revelation 13:3). Few will be saved (Matthew 7:14; 22:14).

Answer: Satan's success rate is so astoundingly high that it seems almost unbelievable. He deceived a third of the angels. In Noah's day, all but eight people were deceived. Before Jesus comes the second time, Satan will appear as an angelic being, posing as Christ. His deceptive power will be so great that our only safety will lie in refusing to go to see him (Matthew 24:23-26). If you absolutely refuse to look and listen, Jesus will protect you from deception (John 10:29).

At the end of the world, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire, which will turn him into ashes and end his existence for eternity.

12. When and where will the devil receive his punishment? What will that punishment be?

"So shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire." Matthew 13:40-42.

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and

brimstone." Revelation 20:10. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matthew 25:41. "Therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes

upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee ... and never shalt thou be any more." Ezekiel 28:18,19.

Answer: The devil will be cast into the lake of fire on this earth at the end of the world. The fire will devour Satan, turn him into ashes, and end his existence for eternity. This fire also will destroy all sinners. In this final showdown, not one being on God's side will die and not one being on Satan's side will survive.

Note: It is not possible to adequately describe the sadness and anguish the Father and Son will feel at Satan's destruction. He was closer to them than any other being--a warm, personal friend. To destroy him and the millions who have followed him will pain the Father and the Son more than the burning will hurt anyone in the fire.

God's people in heaven will be safe from sin forever. It will never rise again.

13. What is it that forever settles the horrible problem of sin? Will sin ever rise up again?

"As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." Romans 14:11. (See also Philippians 2:10,11; Isaiah 45:23.)
"Affliction shall not rise up the second time." Nahum 1:9.

Answer: Two crucial happenings will settle the sin problem:

First, all beings in heaven and earth, including the devil and his angels, will of their own free choice kneel and publicly confess that God is truthful, fair, and righteous. No questions will remain unanswered. All sinners will openly admit that they are lost because of their determined refusal to accept God's love and

salvation. They will admit that justice demands they must die. All will confess that they deserve eternal death.

Second, sin will be purged from the universe by the total and final destruction of sin, sinners, the devil, and his angels. God is positive on this point: Sin will never again arise to mar God's universe.

Jesus made the destruction of sin possible.

14. Who makes the final, complete eradication of sin from the universe a certainty?

"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3:8. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Hebrews 2:14.

Answer: Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus made the eradication of sin a certainty.

God, our Father, loves us more than any earthly father could ever love his children. He can hardly wait to receive us into His new kingdom.

15. How does God the Father feel about people?

"The Father himself loveth you." John 16:27. (See also John 3:16; 17:22, 23.)

Answer: The Father loves people as much as the Son does. Jesus' key aim in life was to demonstrate His Father's character in His own life so people would know how loving, warm, and caring the Father really is (John 5:19).

Satan Misrepresents the Father

Satan misrepresents the Father as unfeeling, aloof, exacting, stern, and unapproachable (the devil's own traits). He even labels his own ugly calamitous acts as "acts of God." Jesus came to wipe this slander off His Father's name and demonstrate that our heavenly Father loves us more than a mother loves her child (Isaiah 49:15). Jesus' favorite theme was God's patience, tenderness, and abundant mercy.

The Father Can Hardly Wait

In order to make people supremely happy, our heavenly Father has prepared a fabulous eternal home for them. Our dreams here are no match for what He has waiting! He can hardly wait to welcome His people on the glad homecoming day just ahead. Let's get the word out! And let's be ready. The countdown has already begun.

16. I am pleased to know that God the Father loves me as much as Jesus does.

Answer:

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Was the fruit that Adam and Eve ate an apple?

We do not know. The Bible does not say.

2. Where did the concept originate that portrays the devil as a red, half-man and half-beast with horns and tail?

It came from pagan mythology and pleases the devil. He knows thinking people reject monsters as fable and so will be led to deny his existence. Those who do not believe in a devil are the first to be captured by his wiles.

3. God said to Adam and Eve, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Genesis 2:17. Why didn't they die that day?

The Bible speaks of two deaths:

- (1) The "first" death we all die (Hebrews 9:27).
- (2) The "second" death the wicked die in hellfire at the end of time (Revelation 21:8).

The difference is that there is no resurrection from the second death. It is eternal.

Jesus Died the Second Death for Every Person

When Adam and Eve sinned, they immediately would have died the second death except for the fact that Jesus stepped forward and offered to die the second death on Calvary for every person. His supreme sacrifice spared them (Hebrews 2:9).

When Adam Sinned, His "Undying" Nature Became a "Dying" Nature Regarding the first death, the literal rendition of the word "die" in Genesis 2:17 is "dying thou

shalt die," which is noted in the margin of most Bibles. It means that Adam and Eve would enter into the process of dying. Before sinning, the couple possessed an undying, sinless nature. This nature was perpetuated by eating of the tree of life. At the moment of sin, their natures changed to dying, sinful natures. This is what God had predicted. Because they were barred from the tree of life, decay and deterioration, leading ultimately to death, began immediately. The grave became a certainty. The Lord stressed this later when He said to them, "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Genesis 3:19.

4. But since God created Lucifer, isn't He really responsible for his sin?

Not at all. God created Lucifer a perfect, sinless angel. Lucifer made a devil of himself. Freedom to choose is a cornerstone principle of God's government.

God knew Lucifer would sin when He created him. If at that point God had refused to create him, He would have been repudiating that prime principle of free choice.

"Freedom to Choose" is God's Way

So, knowing full well what Lucifer would do, God still created him. The same facts apply to the creation of Adam and Eve. And, closer to home, these facts apply to you and me. God knows before we are born how we will live, but even so, He permits us to live and choose whether to endorse His government or Satan's. God is willing to be misunderstood and falsely accused and blamed for ages, while taking the time to allow every person to freely choose whom he will follow.

Only a Loving God Would Risk Granting Full Freedom for All

This glorious, crucial gift of freedom could come only from a just, open, loving God. It is an honor and joy to serve such a Lord and friend.

Choose to Serve God

The sin problem will soon end. In the beginning, everything was "very good." Genesis 1:31. Now "the whole world lieth in wickedness." 1 John 5:19. People everywhere are choosing to serve God or Satan. Use your fantastic, God-given freedom to choose to serve the Lord.

5. Why didn't God destroy the devil when he sinned, and thus end the sin problem?

Because sin was something completely new in God's universe, and its inhabitants did not understand it. Probably even Lucifer himself did not fully comprehend it at first. Lucifer was a brilliant, highly respected angelic leader. His approach was doubtless one of great concern for heaven and the angels. It possibly ran something like this: "Heaven is good, but it would be improved with more angel input. Too much unchallenged authority (as the Father and Son have) tends to blind leaders to real life. Angels should not be required to take orders. We should give orders. God knows my suggestions are correct, and He is feeling threatened. We must not permit our noble leaders who are out of touch to jeopardize the very existence of heaven. They will listen if we move in unison. We must not be weak we must act. Otherwise, we will all be ruined by a government that doesn't appreciate us. One-Third of the Angels Joined Lucifer

Lucifer's arguments convinced many angels, and one-third joined him. If God had destroyed Lucifer immediately, some angelic beings who did not fully understand God's character may have begun to worship God through fear, saying, "Lucifer may have been correct. Be careful. If you differ with God, He may kill you." So nothing would have been settled. Instead, the problem would have been heightened.

God Accepts Only Loving, Voluntary Service

The only service acceptable to God is cheerful, voluntary service prompted by love. Obedience for any other reason is unacceptable.

Is Giving Satan Time to Demonstrate His Principles God

Satan claimed he had a better plan for the government of the universe. God is giving him time to demonstrate its principles. The Lord will abolish sin only after every soul in the universe is convinced that Satan's government is unfair, hateful, ruthless, lying, and destructive.

The Universe Is Watching This World

The Bible says, "We are made a spectacle [margin says "theatre"] unto the world, and to angels, and to men." 1 Corinthians 4:9. The entire universe is watching as we each play a part in the controversy between Christ and Satan. As the controversy ends, every soul will fully understand the principles of both kingdoms and will have chosen to follow either Christ or Satan. Those who have chosen to ally with sin and Satan will be destroyed with him, and God's people will be taken to the eternal safety of their heavenly home.

QUIZ QUESTIONS

1. With whom did sin originate? (1)

Michael.

Lucifer.

Gabriel.

2. Where was Lucifer living when he first sinned? (1)

On the earth.

In heaven.

On the North Star.

3. Check the items that once described Lucifer: (6)

Created angel.

Full of wisdom.

Rode a heavenly white horse.

Perfect in his ways.

Keeper of heaven's gate.

Outstanding musician.

Perfect in beauty.

Covering cherub.

4. Mark the items that tell the truth about Lucifer's rebellion: (5)

He was cast out of heaven.

He repented and stayed in heaven.

He hid inside a palace.

His name became Satan.

He was the first sinner.

Jesus saw him being cast out.

One-third of the angels fell with him.

5. What did Lucifer want? (2)

To be worshiped.

To unseat God and take His place.

To fly across the entire universe.

6. Check the items that are true about the devil, Satan: (4)

He is red with horns and hooves.

His home is in hell.

He loves people.

He can appear as a heavenly angel.

He cannot work miracles.

He's a liar and a murderer.

He can call down fire from heaven.

Most people will follow him and be lost.

7. Which of the items below are true about the fall of Adam and Eve? (3)

Satan was disguised as an angel.

Satan called God a liar.

We know Satan gave them apples.

Satan came to Adam first.

Satan hoped they would become immortal sinners.

In tempting them, Satan mixed lies and truth.

8. What is true about Satan's final punishment? (4)

He will be turned to ashes in the fire.

His angels will escape.

The fire will be in heaven.

Satan and his angels will admit they were wrong.

The fire will also destroy sin and sinners.

Satan will confess God's justice.

9. Why didn't God kill Lucifer when he sinned? (4)

Angels might misunderstand.

Some might be afraid of God.

Lucifer was too strong for God.

The good angels would not let Him.

Time was needed to demonstrate Lucifer's plan.

Time was needed to vindicate God's plan.

10. What one thing will finally vindicate God's government? (1)

God will work some miracles.

Every soul in the universe will kneel, confessing God's love and justice.

The angels of heaven will ask everyone to serve God.

11. What facts below are true about sin? (5)

Jesus has made sin's destruction certain.

Sin is breaking God's law.

Sin separates us from God.

Sin is easy to overcome.

Satan invented the sin of lying.

Once destroyed, sin will not rise up again.

12. Which items below are true? (5)

Satan attributes his traits to God.

God loves us more than our parents do.

So-called "acts of God" are acts of Satan.

Jesus' life revealed God's character.

God the Father is stern.

Most people misunderstand God.

Rescue from Above

Scripture: Jeremiah 31:3, 1 John 4:9-10, Romans 5:8

Picture the horror of being stranded in an ocean with hungry, deadly sharks closing in! Then imagine how grateful and

relieved you'd feel to be plucked to safety. The truth is, every person on the planet is lost in an ocean fraught with danger. We urgently need rescue, not from a boat or helicopter, but from our Heavenly Father. God loves you, so much that He sent His Son to save you. You've undoubtedly heard all this before, but are you sure you really understand what it's all about? What does it really mean to you, and can it really change your life? Read on and find out!

God cares about you personally. What a fantastic cause for rejoicing!

1. Does God really care about me?

This is what He says: "Thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." Isaiah 43:4. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Jeremiah 31:3.

Answer: God's never-ending love for you and me is far beyond our understanding. He loves you as though you were the only lost soul in the universe. He would have given His life for you or me even if there had been no other sinner to redeem. Try never to forget this fact. You are precious in His sight. He loves you.

Never has there been another demonstration of love so great as the cross.

2. How has God demonstrated His love for us?"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:9, 10.

Answer: Because He loved us so deeply, He was willing to see His only Son suffer and die rather than be separated from you and me for eternity. We will not be able to understand it, but He did it--just for you, just for me!

No one has ever lived whom Jesus did not love.

3. How could He love someone like me?

"But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8.

Answer: Certainly not because I earned it or deserved it. Not one of us has earned anything except the wages of sin, which is death (Romans 6:23). But God's love is unconditional. He loves the thieves, adulterers, and murderers. He also loves the selfish, the hypocritical, and the profane blasphemer. But, greatest of all, He loves me! And because He knows that my sins can lead only to misery and death, He wants to save me from my sins. That's why He died.

Jesus' death was payment in full for every sin you could ever commit. When you accept this fabulous gift, you become part of Jesus' personal family.

4. What does His death do for me?

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." 1 John 3:1. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." John 1:12.

Answer: Christ died to satisfy the death penalty against me. He was born as a man so He could suffer the kind of death I deserve. Then He offered to give me the credit for what He did. In other words, His sinless life is credited to my account so I can be counted as righteous. His death is accepted by God as full payment for all my past wrongs, and by accepting what He did, as a gift, I am taken into God's own family as His child. It staggers the mind!

Ponder these simple facts for a moment:

- Because of my sins, I am sentenced to death.
- I cannot pay that penalty without losing eternal life, because if I died for my sins, I could not resurrect myself. I would be dead forever.
- I owe something I cannot pay! But a friend comes along, in the person of Jesus, and says, "I will pay. I will die in your place and give you credit for it. You will not have to die for your sins."
- I must accept the offer! Simple, isn't it? I openly acknowledge and accept His death for my sins. The moment I do this, I have become a son or daughter of God!

Jesus gave His life to settle the debt you cannot pay.

5. How do I receive Him and pass from death to life?

Just admit three things:

1. I am a sinner. "All have sinned." Romans 3:23.
2. I am doomed to die. "The wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23.
3. I cannot save myself. "Without me ye can do nothing." John 15:5.

Then, believe three things:

1. He died for me. "That he ... should taste death for every man." Hebrews 2:9.
2. He forgives me. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." 1 John 1:9.
3. He saves me. "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." John 6:47.

Answer: By asking for, believing in, and accepting the great gift of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Are you drowning in sin? Jesus will rescue you at once if you will ask Him.

6. What must I do in order to obtain this gift of salvation?

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Romans 3:24. "A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Romans 3:28.

Answer: The only thing I can do is to accept it as a pure gift. My works of obedience will not help me one bit in the justification experience. All who ask for salvation in faith will receive it. The worst reprobate sinner will be accepted on the same basis as the most moral do-gooder. The past does not count. Remember, God loves everyone alike, and forgiveness is for the asking. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Ephesians 2:8, 9.

Jesus' power changes a repulsive sinner into a loving saint.

7. When I join His family through faith, what change does Jesus make in my life?

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Answer: As Christ is received into my heart, He destroys the old sinful self and actually changes me into a new spiritual creation. The old life of sin now becomes repulsive and undesirable. Joyfully I begin to experience, for the first time, glorious freedom from guilt and condemnation. I begin to see how empty my life has been without Christ. Rather than feeding on husks under the table, I now feast at the banquet of the King. One minute with God provides more happiness than does a lifetime of serving the devil. What an exchange! Why did I wait so long to accept it?

The most valuable gift parents can give their children is to become Christians.

8. Will this changed life really be happier than the pleasures of the old life?

Jesus said: "These things have I spoken unto you ... that your joy might be full."
John 15:11. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."
John 8:36. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10.

Answer: Many feel that the Christian life will not be a happy one because of restrictions and self-denial. The exact opposite is true. When you accept the love of Jesus, a fantastic exuberance springs up from within. Unbelievable peace and joy permeate your life. Talk about excitement! There is no comparison to the old life of selfishness and failure. Like a bad dream, the painful past fades away, and you experience life "more abundantly," the way God intended it should be.

When Jesus enters your life, His miraculous power transforms obedience from a burden to a supreme joy.

9. But can I make myself do all the things a Christian should do?

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."
Galatians 2:20. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."
Philippians 4:13.

Answer: Here is where the greatest miracle of the Christian life is revealed. There is no forcing yourself to be good! What you do as a Christian is the spontaneous outflowing of another Person's life within you. Obedience is the natural response of love in your life. Being born of God, as a new creature, you want to obey Him because His life has become a part of your life. To please someone you love is not a burden, but a delight. "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." Psalms 40:8.

It is not hard to please someone you truly love.

10. Do you mean that even the Ten Commandments would not be hard to obey?

"If ye love me, keep my commandments." John 14:15. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5:3. "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." 1 John 2:5.

Answer: The Bible always ties obedience to a love relationship. Born-again Christians find it no wearying struggle to keep the Ten Commandments. With all past sins covered by His atoning death, my present and future obedience is rooted in His victorious life within me. In fact, because I love Him so deeply for changing my life, I go beyond the requirements of the Ten Commandments. Daily I search the Bible for indications of His will, trying to find more little ways of expressing my love to Him. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." 1 John 3:22, emphasis added.

Keeping the Ten Commandments in an attempt to earn salvation will result only in sorrow and despair. But the person who has experienced the gift of salvation delights in walking the path of obedience to God's laws.

11. How can I be certain that the commandment-keeping mentioned of God's people in the Bible is not legalism?

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12. "And they [the saints] overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Revelation 12:11.

Answer: Do not mistake obedience for legalism. Legalism is trying to earn salvation by good works. The saints are identified in the Bible as having four characteristics: (1) keeping the commandments, (2) trusting the blood of the Lamb, (3) sharing their faith with others, and (4) choosing to die rather than to sin. These are the true marks of the person who is in love with Christ and who has made a life commitment to follow Him.

Baptism is the marriage ceremony that weds me to Christ.

12. What significant act seals the love relationship with Christ, and what does it symbolize?

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." "That the body of sin might be destroyed." Romans 6:4, 6. "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." 2 Corinthians 11:2.

Answer:

Baptism symbolizes three significant events in the life of the true believer: (1) death to sin, (2) birth to a new life in Christ, and (3) marriage to Christ for eternity. This spiritual union will grow stronger and sweeter with time, as long as love continues to grow. As in any marriage, the loss of love can turn a paradise into hell. When love disappears, the home is held together only by the mechanical, forced duty of the marriage law. Likewise, when the Christian ceases to love Christ supremely, his religion exists only as restrictive compliance to a set of rules.

My love for Jesus deepens as I share it with others.

13. How can I be certain that the faith and love of my marriage to Christ will continue to increase?

"Search the scriptures." John 5:39. "Pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." Colossians 2:6. "I die daily." 1 Corinthians 15:31.

Answer: No love affair can prosper without communication. Prayer and Bible study are absolutely essential to keep this relationship growing. His Word constitutes a love letter that I must read daily to nourish the spiritual life. Conversing with Him in prayer deepens the devotion and opens my mind to a more thrilling and intimate knowledge of His concern for me. Daily I am amazed to discover details of His incredible provision for my happiness.

God Seals Our Spiritual Marriage

To seal our spiritual marriage for eternity, He has promised never to forsake me (Psalms 55:22 Matthew 28:20 Hebrews 13:5), to take care of me in sickness or in health (Psalms 41:3 Isaiah 41:10), and to provide for every need that could possibly develop in my life (Matthew 6:25-34). Just as I received Him by faith and found His promises all-sufficient, I keep on trusting Him for every future need, and He never lets me down.

14. It is my desire to invite Jesus into my life and experience the new birth.

Answer:

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. How could one Man's death pay the penalty for the sins of all mankind? I have lived a terrible life of sin. I am afraid God would have to do something very special to atone for someone so evil.

Romans 3:23 tells us that "all have sinned." Because "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23) and since "all have sinned," therefore "something special" is required for every person who has been born. Only One whose life is equal to all mankind could die for the sins of the race. Because Jesus is the Creator and Author of all life, the life He laid down was equivalent to the lives of all people who would ever live.

Not only did atonement have to be made by One whose life could stand for all other created beings, but the One who died the atoning death had to be able to rise from that death. Why? In order to administer the benefits of the atonement to all who would apply for it in faith. "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:25.

2. If I accept Christ and His forgiveness and then fall again, will He forgive me again? We can trust God to forgive us again if we are sorry for our sin and confess it. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9.

3. How can I approach God in my sinful condition? Wouldn't it be better for me to have a priest or minister pray for me?

Since Jesus Christ lived in the flesh and was "tempted like as we are" (Hebrews 4:15), we have a God who can understand and who desires to be merciful to us. Hebrews 4:16 tells us we can "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy." We may approach God directly through Jesus Christ, without an intermediary; and trusting in His mercy, we may "boldly" come to Him in Jesus' name (John 14:14). 1 Timothy 2:5 reads: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

4. Is there anything I can do to help God save me?

No. His plan is wholly of grace (Romans 3:24; 4:5); it is "the gift of God." Ephesians 2:8. It is true that as God grants us grace through faith, He also gives us the desire and strength to obey Him. This results in compliance with His laws. So, even this obedience results from God's free grace. Obedience--the service and allegiance of love--is the true test of discipleship and a natural fruit of faith in Jesus Christ.

5. If God forgives my sin and restores me to His family, will that eliminate any future punishment for my sins, or will I still be required to do some kind of penance?

The Scriptures say, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1. Christ paid the full penalty for our transgressions, and those who accept Him in faith owe no works of penance for cleansing, but are already considered "washed" in the blood of the Lamb! Isaiah 43:25 contains a beautiful promise of forgiveness: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Micah 7:18, 19 shows the beautiful attitude of the Redeemer-God toward His people: "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

QUIZ QUESTIONS

1. God poured out all heaven in what great gift to man? (1)

The Bible.

His church.

Jesus Christ.

The law.

2. The greatest demonstration of love the world has ever seen was (1)

The loaves and fishes.

Jesus' death on the cross.

Pentecost.

Peter's confession.

3. Christ's sacrifice on the cross was for (1)

Everyone.

Only the righteous.

Only the evil.

Those predestined for salvation.

4. What kind of person does God love the most? (1)

Church members.

Prostitutes and thieves.

Everybody alike.

Born-again Christians.

5. Christ was born into the human family in order to (1)

Pay the penalty for sin.

Know how weak we are.

Become a good carpenter.

6. In order to obtain salvation, a person must (1)

Take a Bible course.

Belong to the church.

Speak in tongues.

Accept it as a gift.

7. We are saved by (1)

Good works Grace.

Desire.

8. Forgiveness and acceptance lead us to feel (2)

That we can begin to sin again.

Regret for pleasures denied.

Joy and peace.

Assurance of eternal life.

9. Obedience should be based upon (1)

Fear of hell.

Desire for approval of friends.

Love for Jesus.

10. Christian conduct, or keeping the commandments, is (1)

Legalism.

One of the fruits of true conversion.

Unimportant.

11. Marriage to Christ is symbolized by (1)

Joining a convent or monastery.

Baptism.

A wedding ring worn on the right hand.

Making a vow of celibacy.

12. The two greatest ways to stay in love with Christ are (2)

Daily Bible study.

Giving a liberal offering.

Abstaining from pork.

Constant attitude of prayer.

Lesson 4

Colossal City

Talk about a great city! New York, Tokyo, and London are nothing in comparison! Just wait until you grasp the amazing facts about this gigantic city that can travel through space. It's all fact, not science fiction! The information in this Study Guide will thrill your soul and give you hope for the future.

God is the architect and builder of the holy city.

1. Who is the architect and builder of this space city?

"Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." Hebrews 11:16.

Answer: The Bible declares that God is building a great city for His people. And this city is as real and literal as any you have ever known.

God's amazing city is located in heaven, His dwelling place.

2. Where is this amazing city that God is preparing?

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven." Revelation 21:2. "O Lord my God ... hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place." 1 Kings 8:28-30.

Answer: This great city that is being constructed is, at this moment, in far outer space in God's dwelling place, which is called heaven.

Notice the city's size compared to several states.

3. How do the Scriptures describe this amazing space city?

Answer:

(A) SIZE

"The city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs." Revelation 21:16. The city is perfectly square. Its perimeter is 12,000 furlongs, or 1,500 miles (a furlong is 1/8 mile). It is 375 miles long on each side.

(B) NAME

The city is called "new Jerusalem" in Revelation 21:2.

(C) WALLS

"And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits And the building of the

wall of it was of jasper." Revelation 21:17, 18. A wall 144 cubits, or 216 feet high (a cubit is 18 inches), surrounds the city. The wall is made of solid jasper, with radiance and beauty beyond description.

Think of it! Nearly 20 stories high and solid jasper!

(D) GATES

"And had twelve gates On the east three gates on the north three gates on the south three gates

and on the west three gates." And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl." Revelation 21:12, 13, 21. The city has 12 gates-three on each side - each one made of a single pearl.

(E) FOUNDATIONS

"The wall of the city had twelve foundations garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first

foundation was jasper the second, sapphire the third, a chalcedony the fourth, an emerald The fifth, sardonyx the sixth, sardius the seventh, chrysolyte the eighth, beryl the ninth, a topaz the tenth, a chrysoprasus the eleventh, a jacinth the twelfth, an amethyst." Revelation 21:14-20. The city has 12 full, complete foundations each one made of precious stone. Every color of the rainbow will be represented, so at a distance the city will no doubt appear to be resting upon a rainbow.

(F) STREETS "The street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." Revelation 21:21.

(G) APPEARANCE

"The holy city, ... prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." "Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." "The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal [proportionate]." Revelation 21:2, 11, 16. The city, with all of its precious stones, gold, and shimmering beauty, will be lighted with the glory of God. In its breathtaking majesty and purity it is compared to "a bride adorned for her husband."

Heaven's fantastic tree of life brings unending life and youth to all who eat of it.

4. What phenomenal feature of this majestic city assures every citizen eternal vigor and youth? "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Revelation 22:2. "Take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever." Genesis 3:22.

Answer: The tree of life, which bears 12 kinds of fruit (and is in the middle of the city--Revelation 2:7), brings unending life and youth to all who partake of it. Even its leaves will contain marvelous sustaining qualities. This tree will yield a new crop of fruit each month.

The holy city will descend to earth and become its capital.

5. Is it true that this amazing city will descend to this earth?

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Revelation 21:2. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Matthew 5:5. "The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth." Proverbs 11:31.

Answer: Yes, the majestic holy city will come down to this earth to become the capital of the earth made new. All the righteous will have a home in this city.

Sin and sinners will be eradicated by fire from God.

6. What will happen to sin and sinners?

"All the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up." Malachi 4:1. "Fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." Revelation 20:9. "The elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." 2 Peter 3:10. "Ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet." Malachi 4:3. "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." 2 Peter 3:13.

Answer: God will destroy all sin and sinners with fire. This fire will melt the earth and turn everything into ashes. Then God will make a perfect new earth, and the holy city will be its capital. Here the righteous will live in joy, peace, and holiness throughout eternity. God promises that sin will not rise up again. See Nahum 1:9.

In His new kingdom the Lord will personally live among His people.

7. What refreshing, thrilling promises does God make to the people who enter His new kingdom? Answer:

A. The Lord, in person, will live with them (Revelation 21:3).

B. They will never become bored. There will be pleasures forevermore (Psalms 16:11).

C. There will be no more death, pain, tears, sorrow, sickness, hospitals, operations, tragedy, disappointment, trouble, hunger, or thirst (Revelation 21:4 Isaiah 33:24 Revelation 22:3 Isaiah 65:23

Revelation 7:16).

D. They will not get tired (Isaiah 40:31).

E. Every saved person will be physically whole in every way. The deaf will hear, the blind will see, the dumb will sing, and the lame will be able to run (Isaiah 35:5, 6 Philippians 3:21).

F. Jealousy, fear, hatred, falsehood, envy, impurity, cynicism, filth, worry, and all evil will be forever shut out of God's kingdom (Revelation 21:8, 27 22:15). People will no longer be burdened with the worries and the cares that drive them to distraction. There will be no more nervous breakdowns. Time will become eternity, and the pressures and deadlines of earth will be gone forever.

Today's mammoth oceans will not exist in God's new kingdom.

8. How will the new earth differ from our earth today? Answer:

A. Vast seas as we know them today will be gone (Revelation 21:1). The oceans and seas cover three- fourths of the earth's surface today. This will not be the

case in God's new kingdom. The whole world will be one huge garden of unsurpassed beauty, interspersed with lakes, rivers, and mountains (Revelation 22:1 Acts 3:20, 21).

B. The deserts will become gardens (Isaiah 35:1, 2).

C. The animals will all be tame. None will prey upon others, and a little child will lead them (Isaiah 11:6-9 65:25).

D. There will be no more curse (Revelation 22:3).

E. There will be no more violence of any kind (Isaiah 60:18). This precludes crime, storms, floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, injury, etc.

F. Nothing defiling will be found in the new earth (Revelation 21:27). There will be no cigarette butts, tobacco juice, drunkards, taverns, alcoholic beverages, brothels, lewd pictures, or any other wickedness or impurity of any kind.

Children, playing together, will fill the streets of the new Jerusalem.

9. Will there be children in God's kingdom? If so, will they grow up?

"And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." Zechariah 8:5. "And ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." Malachi 4:2.

Answer: Yes, there will be many boys and girls in the holy city (Isaiah 11:6-9), and these youngsters will grow up (Malachi 4:2). We have degenerated much in stature, intellect, and vitality since Adam, but all of this will be restored (Acts 3:20, 21).

10. When reunited with loved ones in heaven, will the saved know each other?

Then shall I know even as also I am known." 1 Corinthians 13:12.

Answer: The Bible clearly teaches that righteous loved ones who have died will be raised to join the righteous living in God's kingdom (Isaiah 26:19; Jeremiah 31:15-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-55; Thessalonians 4:13-18). And the Scriptures also teach that people in God's new kingdom will know each other, just as people recognize each other on the earth today.

In heaven real people will experience real joys. The fondest hopes of the human heart will be realized.

11. Will people in heaven be real, with flesh and bones?

"Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." "And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them." "And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and ... while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." Luke 24:36-39, 41-43, 50, 51. "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:11. "The Lord Jesus Christ ... shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Philippians 3:20, 21. Answer: After His resurrection, Jesus proved to His disciples that He was flesh and bones by having them feel Him and by eating food. This same Jesus of flesh and bones ascended to His Father and will come again to the earth. The righteous will be given bodies just like the body of Christ and will be real people with flesh and bones throughout eternity. The difference will be that the heavenly body will not be subject to death, decay, or deterioration. The teaching that the saved in heaven will be ghosts who float on mist clouds and do nothing but play harps has no foundation in the Scriptures. Jesus did not die on the cross to provide any such trivial and foolish future for those who accept His love and nobly follow His way of life. Most people have no interest in such an ethereal existence and, therefore, have little or no desire to

enter God's heavenly kingdom--often preferring it only because they fear hell. If only all people everywhere could learn the truth about God's holy city and new earth, millions would begin to understand His love and would turn to Him with all their hearts. A person who misses out on God's kingdom has made the supreme blunder of a lifetime.

No human tongue can describe the glory and delight of the pure music of heaven.

12. How will the righteous spend their time in the heavenly kingdom?

"They shall build houses, and inhabit them and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit they shall not plant, and another eat: ... mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." Isaiah 65:21, 22.

Answer: The righteous will build their own homes in the new earth. (Each will also have a city mansion built by Christ--John 14:1-3.) They will plant vineyards and eat the fruit from them. The Bible is plain. Real people do real things in heaven, and they will thoroughly enjoy it all.

Heaven will bring us the privilege of becoming friends with Bible patriarchs and prophets.

13. In what other thrilling activities will the redeemed participate in?

Answer: A. Sing and play heavenly music (Isaiah 35:10 51:11 Psalms 87:7 Revelation 14:2, 3).

B. Worship before God's throne every Sabbath (Isaiah 66:22, 23).

- C. Enjoy never-fading flowers and trees (Ezekiel 47:12 Isaiah 35:1, 2).
- D. Visit with loved ones, patriarchs, prophets, etc. (Matthew 8:11 Revelation 7:9-17).
- E. Study the animals of heaven (Isaiah 11:6-9 65:25).
- F. Travel and explore without ever becoming weary (Isaiah 40:31).
- G. Listen to God sing (Zephaniah 3:17).
- H. Realize fondest ambitions (Psalms 37:3, 4 Isaiah 65:24).
- I. Greatest joy of all the privilege of being like Jesus, traveling with Him, and seeing Him face to face (Revelation 14:4 22:4 21:3 1 John 3:2).

Heaven will be far more glorious and rewarding than anything we can possibly imagine.

14. Can feeble human language really describe the glories of the heavenly home?

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." 1 Corinthians 2:9.

Answer: Not even in its wildest dreams can the heart of man begin to comprehend the marvels of God's eternal kingdom. All that Adam lost will be restored (Acts 3:20, 21).

Jesus is preparing heaven for you personally. You matter to Him.

15. Is this kingdom being prepared for me personally?

"Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17. "To an inheritance incorruptible ... reserved in heaven for you." 1 Peter 1:4. "I go to prepare a place for you." John 14:2. Answer: It is prepared for you personally. The invitation from the Lord is to you personally. If rejected, friend, you will have no one to blame but yourself.

When Jesus lives in our hearts and abides in our homes, we are assured of a place in His heavenly kingdom.

16. How can I be assured of a place in that great and glorious kingdom?

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in." Revelation 3:20. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Revelation 22:14. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 7:21. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." John 1:12. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Answer: The Bible makes it plain. It is simple. Give your life to Christ for cleansing from sin. When you do this, He also gives you power to do His will and keep His commandments. This means, of course, that you will begin to live as Christ lived and will overcome all sin. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." Revelation 21:7. In short, a person is prepared for heaven when he has heaven in his heart.

17. I have decided to accept Jesus' offer to live with Him forever in His heavenly kingdom. Answer:

Thought Questions

1. How can heaven be a happy place when the saved think of loved ones who are lost?

The Bible says that God will "wipe away all tears from their eyes." Revelation 21:4. Surrounded by the beauty and joys of the new earth, God's redeemed people will forget the tragedies and heartaches of the past; "the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." Isaiah 65:17.

2. The Bible says, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Corinthians 15:50. How, then, can the redeemed be flesh and bones?

Here the Bible uses the term "flesh" to describe the unconverted person. A similar thought is expressed in Romans 8:8, 9: "They that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." John 3:6 says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The term "flesh" here again refers to the unconverted person, while the term "spirit" refers to the converted or "born again" person. So the Bible is simply saying in 1 Corinthians 15:50 that no one can enter God's kingdom unless conversion first takes place and flesh becomes spirit. Christ, in His resurrected body, declared that He was truly "flesh and bones." Luke 24:39. We shall have a body like His, according to Philippians 3:21.

3. Is the apostle Peter in charge of the gate of the holy city?

No! The Bible says in Revelation 21:12 that the new Jerusalem--the holy city of God--has 12 gates, and at the gates are 12 angels. No reference is made in the Bible to any of the apostles as guardians of the gates.

4. Is the holy city really big enough to hold all the saved people of all ages?

If the city were to be crowded and each saved person given only 100 square feet of ground space, there would be room for 39 billion people in the city, which is many times the present population of the world. Many statisticians believe that if all the people who have ever lived were saved, there would be plenty of room for them in the city. The Scriptures make it clear, however, that only a few will be saved (Matthew 7:14). So there will be more than enough room in the great city.

5. Sometimes I wonder if the reward is worth the sacrifice. It seems that Satan is about to overwhelm me at times. Does the Bible offer me any encouragement?

Yes. In fact, the apostle Paul must have been thinking of someone like you when he wrote, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Romans 8:18. Just one glimpse of that eternal kingdom will cause the worst trials and persecutions of earth to pale into insignificance, and the redeemed will cry out: "Hallelujah, heaven is cheap enough!"

6. Will little babies who die be saved in God's kingdom?

We do not have a specific Bible answer to this question, but many choose to believe that infants will be saved on the basis of Matthew 2:16-18. There the Bible tells of wicked king Herod slaying all the male babies in Bethlehem who were two years old or younger. The Old Testament foretold this tragic, cruel incident, and God told the mothers to stop crying because their children would one day be restored to them. "Refrain thy voice from weeping, ... they [the slain children] shall come again from the land of the enemy. Thy children shall come again to their own border." Jeremiah 31:16, 17. This

is an obvious reference to the resurrection.

7. Do I understand correctly that heaven, the home of the saved, will be right here on this earth?

That is correct. Although the holy city is now in God's dwelling place, He is going to move it to this earth. Sin and sinners will be destroyed with fire, and the earth will be made new and given to the righteous in all of its Edenic glory and beauty. The holy city will be the capital of the new earth, and God will move His throne here (Revelation 21:2, 3; 22:1, 3) and live with the righteous right here on this earth throughout eternity. And where the Lord abides, that is heaven. God's plan is to restore to man what Adam lost: the glories of a perfect life on a perfect planet. Satan and sin interrupted God's plan, but the plan will be carried out. We can all share in this new kingdom--and we must! It's too much to miss.

8. Why do so many teach and believe that the home of the saved is a misty place with ghostlike inhabitants who float on clouds and do nothing but play harps?

This teaching originated with the devil, the father of lies (John 8:44). He is anxious to distort God's loving plan and present heaven as an unreal, "spooky" place so people will lose interest or become skeptical of God's Word altogether. Satan well knows that when men and women fully understand the Bible truth regarding the home of the saved, his power over them is broken, because they will begin making plans to enter that kingdom. This is why he works so hard to becloud the issue and spread falsehood regarding that heavenly home.

Quiz Questions

1. The holy city in space (1)

Is not literal, but simply an allegory.

Is a literal city being prepared now by God in His dwelling place.

Does not exist except in the minds of some people.

2. This holy city (1)

Will be destroyed by a nuclear explosion.

Will be captured by Satan and his host.

Will descend to this earth and become the capital for the earth made new.

3. In the following list, check the true Bible facts regarding the holy city: (7)

It is called the new Jerusalem.

It is about the size of London.

Its walls are of topaz.

The city is as long as it is wide.

The streets are of pure gold.

The city has 14 foundations.

The apostle Peter stands at its gate.

Each of its 12 gates is made of one pearl.

Its perimeter is 1,500 miles.

Its foundations are all made of precious stones.

The city will be in perfect proportion.

4. The tree of life (1)

Is a real tree that will impart eternal vigor and youth to God's people.

Is a figure of speech and means only that God will give His people strength.

Existed in the beginning but will not be included in the new-earth kingdom.

5. In the following list, check all items that are true Bible promises to people in God's new kingdom: (5)

The Lord will perform marriages daily.

The tree of life bears 20 kinds of fruit.

The Lord Himself will live with His people.

After a million years, the saints will become bored.

There will be no more death or sorrow.

People will never get tired.

The lame will be carried around by angels.

Angels will be the doctors and perform all operations.

The blind will receive sight.

Jealousy, fear, hatred, falsehood, envy, impurity, etc. will be gone forever.

Babies will not grow up.

6. Check the statements below that tell the truth about the new earth: (6)

The seas of today will be no more.

The deserts will be larger.

Animals will be kept in lovely heavenly cages.

Tornadoes, earthquakes, and floods will not be known.

Cigarette butts will be carefully removed from the streets daily by the angels.

Flowers and trees will not wilt or fade.

Heaven will be right here on earth.

Sin will not arise a second time.

The glories of it all cannot be described.

7. The righteous in the heavenly kingdom (1)

Will be ghosts who play harps and float on clouds.

Will not know other loved ones and friends who may be there.

Will have real bodies of flesh and bones and will know each other.

8. We know that people in heaven will be real and will do real things because (1)

Science has proved this conclusively.

The Bible says we will be like Christ, who was real (had flesh and bones) after His resurrection and did real things

Many preachers say this is so.

9. I can be sure of a place in that heavenly kingdom if I (1)

Say daily that I love the Lord.

Am fearful enough of hell.

Accept and follow Christ and keep His commandments.

10. What will the saved do in the heavenly kingdom? Check the true Bible facts listed below: (5)

Build houses and live in them.

Plant vineyards.

Kill animals and eat them.

Play heavenly instruments and sing praises to God.

Worship before God's throne.

Fly past hell and taunt the lost.

Eat of the tree of life.

Keys for a Happy Marriage

As you've probably heard, nearly half of all marriages now end in divorce, leaving bitter spouses and confused children in their wake.

Don't let this happen to you! Whether your marriage is going through tough times or is experiencing marital bliss, or even if you're not yet married but considering it, here's some free but proven advice to help your marriage last. It's straight from God, the one who created and ordained marriage! If you've tried everything else, why not give God a chance? Follow the keys in this guide, and you can secure your home.

Seventeen Rules for a Happy Marriage From God's Great Book

Establish your own home, even if it must be a one-room apartment.

1. Establish your own private home.

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Genesis 2:24.

Answer: God's rule is specific. A married couple must leave father and mother and establish their own home, even if finances require that it be a one-room

apartment. Husband and wife should decide together on such policies as these. Then she should inform her relatives and he, his. They must remain firm no matter who opposes.

Thousands of divorces would be avoided if this rule were carefully followed.

Never forget that God Himself joined you in marriage.

2. Continue your courtship.

"Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins." 1 Peter 4:8, RSV.* "Her husband ... praiseth her." Proverbs 31:28. "She that is married careth ... how she may please her husband." 1 Corinthians 7:34. "Be kindly affectioned one to another ... in honour preferring one another." Romans 12:10.

Answer: Continue (or perhaps revive) the courtesies of courtship in your married life. Successful marriages do not just happen they must be developed. Don't take each other for granted, or the monotony that results will destroy your marriage. Keep love growing by expressing love for one another or it will die, and you will drift apart. Love and happiness are not found by seeking them for yourself, but rather by giving them to others. So spend as much time as possible doing things together if you would get along well. Learn to greet each other with enthusiasm. Relax, visit, shop, sightsee, eat together. Don't overlook the little courtesies, encouragements, and affectionate acts. Surprise each other with little gifts or favors. Try to "outlove" each other. Don't take more out of marriage than you put into it. Divorce itself is not the greatest destroyer of marriage, but rather, lack of love. Given a chance, love always wins.

*The Revised Standard Version of the Bible, (C) 1946, 1952, 1971 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission.

Surprise each other with little gifts.

3. Remember that God joined you together in marriage.

"For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife. ... Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Matthew 19:5, 6.

Answer: Has love almost disappeared from your home? The devil (that notorious home-breaker) is responsible for this. Don't forget that God Himself joined you together in marriage, and He intends for you to stay together and be happy. He will bring happiness and love into your lives if you will obey His divine rules (commandments). "With God all things are possible." Matthew 19:26. Don't despair. God, who places love in the heart of a missionary for a leprous savage, can easily give you love for each other if you will let Him.

The wrong kind of thinking can destroy your marriage.

4. Guard your thoughts--don't let your senses trap you.

"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 23:7. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife." Exodus 20:17. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Proverbs 4:23. "Whatsoever things are true, ... honest, ... just, ... pure, ... lovely, ... of good report; ... think on these things." Philippians 4:8.

Answer: The wrong kind of thinking will destroy your marriage. The devil will trap you with thoughts like these: "Our marriage was a mistake." "She doesn't understand me." "I can't take much more of this." "We can always divorce if necessary." "I'll go home to mother." "He smiled at that woman." Stop thinking thoughts like these or your marriage is gone, because your thoughts and senses govern your actions. Avoid seeing, saying, reading, or hearing anything that (or associating with anyone who) suggests impurity or unfaithfulness. Thoughts uncontrolled are like an automobile in neutral on a hill. Anything can happen, and the result is always disaster.

5. Never retire for the night angry with each other.

"Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Ephesians 4:26. "Confess your faults one to another." James 5:16. "Forgetting those things which are behind." Philippians 3:13. "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Ephesians 4:32.

Answer: To remain angry and upset over hurts and grievances (big or little) is exceedingly dangerous. Unless quickly solved, even little problems become set in your mind as convictions and attitudes adversely affecting your whole philosophy of life. This is why God says to let anger cool before retiring at night. Be big enough to forgive and to say with sincerity, "I'm sorry." After all, no one is perfect, and you are both on the same team, so be sportsmanlike enough to honestly admit a mistake when you make it. Besides, making up is a very pleasant experience, with unusual powers to draw marriage partners closer together. God suggests it! It works!

With Christ in your hearts and home, marriage will be successful.

6. Keep Christ in the center of your home.

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." Psalms 127:1.
"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3:6.
"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7.

Answer: This is the greatest rule. It really covers all the others. Put Christ first! The real secret of true happiness in the home is not diplomacy, strategy, and untiring effort to overcome problems, but rather, union with Christ. Hearts filled with Christ's love can never be very far apart. With Christ in the home, marriage will be successful. The gospel is the cure for all marriages that are filled with hatred, bitterness, and disappointment. It prevents thousands of divorces by miraculously restoring love

and happiness. It will save your marriage, too, if you are willing.

Pray aloud for each other.

7. Pray together.

"Pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Matthew 26:41. "Pray one for another." James 5:16. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally." James 1:5.

Answer: Pray aloud for each other! This is a wonderful rule that succeeds beyond the wildest dream. Kneel before God and ask Him for true love for one another, for forgiveness, for strength, for wisdom--for the solution to problems. God has given a personal guarantee that He will answer. The praying person is not automatically cured of all of his faults, but he will have a heart that wants to do right. No family ever breaks up while sincerely praying together for God's help.

Forgiveness is always better than divorce.

8. Agree that divorce is not the answer.

"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Matthew 19:6. "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." Matthew 19:9. "The woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth." Romans 7:2.

Answer: The Bible is clear. The ties of marriage are meant to be indissoluble and indestructible. Divorce is permissible only in the case of adultery. But even then it is not demanded, only permitted. Forgiveness is always better than divorce, even in the case of a moral fall. Marriage is for life. God so ordained it when He performed

the first wedding in Eden. Thoughts of divorce as a solution will destroy any marriage. This is one reason Jesus ruled it out. Divorce is always destructive and almost never a solution to the problem. Instead, it creates much greater problems, so it should

never be considered. Torn, frustrated, unhappy, twisted lives almost inevitably follow divorce, and even success in life itself is often thwarted. God instituted marriage to guard people's purity and happiness, to provide for their social needs, and to elevate their physical, mental, and moral nature. Its vows are among the most solemn and binding obligations that human beings can assume. To lightly set them aside results in removing one's self from God's favor and blessing.

9. Keep the family circle closed tightly.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery." Exodus 20:14. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life."

Proverbs 31:11, 12. "The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously." Malachi 2:14. "Keep thee from the evil woman Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent." Proverbs 6:24-29.

Answer: Family intimacies must never be shared with others--not even with parents. It is a great sin and a tragedy to break this God-given rule. A third person to sympathize or listen to complaints is a tool of the devil to estrange the hearts of husband and wife. Solve your home problems privately. No one else (except your minister or marriage counselor) should ever be involved. Always be truthful with each other, and never keep secrets from each other. Tell no jokes at the expense of your spouse's feelings. Vigorously defend each other, and strictly exclude all intruders. And as for adultery (in spite of what some marriage counselors say), it always hurts you and everyone else involved. God, who knows our mind, body, and emotional structure (and knows what helps or hurts us) says, "Thou shalt not." And when He says, "Don't," we had better not. Those who ignore His rule will pay the supreme penalty. So if flirtations have begun, break them off at once, or shadows may settle over your life that cannot be lifted.

With true love, your marriage cannot fail.

10. God describes love make it your daily goal to measure up.

"Love is forbearing and kind. Love knows no jealousy. Love does not brag is not conceited. She is not unmannerly, nor selfish, nor irritable, nor mindful of wrongs. She does not rejoice in injustice, but joyfully sides with the truth. She can overlook faults. She is full of trust, full of hope, full of endurance." 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Weymouth.*

Answer: Please reread the above Scripture passage carefully. This is God's true description of love. How do you measure up? Love is not a sentimental impulse, but a holy principle that involves every phase and action of life. With true love, your marriage cannot fail. Without it, it cannot succeed.

*Weymouth's New Testament in Modern Speech by Richard Francis Weymouth. Special arrangement with James Clarke & Company Ltd.

Try to make your partner happy, rather than good.

11. Remember that criticism and nagging destroy love.

"Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." Colossians 3:19. "It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman." Proverbs 21:19. "A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike." Proverbs 27:15. "Why beholdest thou the mote [splinter] that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam [whole board] that is in thine own eye?" Matthew 7:3. "Love ... looks for a way of being constructive." 1 Corinthians 13:4, Phillips.*

Answer: Stop criticizing, nagging, and faultfinding. Your husband or wife may lack much, but nagging won't help. Don't expect perfection, or bitterness will result.

Overlook faults, and hunt for the good things. Don't try to reform, control, or compel your partner you will destroy love. Only God can change people. A sense of humor, a cheerful heart, kindness, patience, and affection will banish two-

thirds of your marriage problems. Try to make your spouse happy rather than good, and the good will take care of itself. The secret of a successful marriage lies not in having the right partner, but rather in being the right partner. Learn to laugh and enjoy wholesome times together.

12. Do not overdo in anything be temperate.

"Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." 1 Corinthians 9:25. "Love ... does not pursue selfish advantage." 1 Corinthians 13:5, Phillips.* "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31. "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." 1 Corinthians 9:27. "If any would not work, neither should he eat." 2 Thessalonians 3:10. "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled." Hebrews 13:4. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."

Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin." Romans 6:12, 13.

Answer: Overdoing will ruin your marriage. So will underdoing. Work, love, rest, exercise, play, worship, meals, and social contacts must be carefully balanced in your marriage, or something will snap. Overwork and the lack of sleep, proper food, or exercise make a person critical, intolerant, and negative. Constant overeating is a great evil that strengthens the lower nature and dulls the conscience.

Sexual abuses destroy a love for holy things and weaken vitality. Marriage gives no license to sexual excesses. Degrading, twisted, or intemperate sex acts destroy love and respect for one another. A temperate sex life is recommended by the Bible (1 Corinthians 7:3-7). Social contacts with others are absolutely essential. True happiness cannot be found in isolation. We must learn to laugh and enjoy wholesome, good times. To be overly serious is dangerous. Overdoing or

underdoing in anything weakens the mind, body, conscience, and the ability to love and respect one another. Don't let intemperance wreck your marriage.

Do not tamper with each other's wallet or other personal property without permission.

13. Respect each other's personal rights and privacies.

"Love is forbearing. ... Love knows no jealousy She is not unmannerly, nor selfish. ... She does not rejoice in injustice. She is full of trust." 1 Corinthians 13:4-7,

Weymouth.* "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." Romans 12:10.

Answer: Each spouse has a God-given right to certain personal privacies without explanation. Do not tamper with each other's wallets or purses, personal mail, and other private property unless given permission. The right to privacy and quietude when preoccupied should be respected. Your husband or wife even has a right to be wrong part of the time and is entitled to an "off-day" without being given the third degree. Marriage partners do not own each other and should never try to force personality changes.

Only God can make such changes, and we shall all answer personally to Him on this matter (Romans 14:12). Perfect confidence and trust in one another, no checking up on each other, is absolutely essential for happiness. Spend less time trying to "figure out" your spouse and more time trying to please her or him. This works wonders.

A clean, orderly home solves many family problems.

14. Be clean, modest, orderly, and dutiful.

"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel." 1 Timothy 2:9. "She works with willing hands." "She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household." "She looks well to the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness." Proverbs 31:13, 15, 27, RSV.* "Be ye clean." Isaiah 52:11. "Let all things be done decently and in order." 1 Corinthians 14:40. "If any provide not for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an

infidel." 1 Timothy 5:8. "Be not slothful." Hebrews 6:12.

Answer: Laziness, disorder, dirt, and slovenliness are the devil's weapons to destroy your respect and affection for one another, and thus ruin your marriage. Neat, modest attire and clean, well-groomed bodies are essential for both husband and wife. The meals should be wholesome, attractive, and served on time. The home should be clean and orderly, because this brings peace, calmness, and satisfaction to all. A lazy, shiftless husband who does not provide for his household is a curse to his family and an insult to God. Carelessness in some of these seemingly small matters is destroying homes by the thousands.

Harsh, angry words crush your spouse's desire to please you.

15. Determine to speak softly and kindly.

"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." Proverbs 15:1. "Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest." Ecclesiastes 9:9. "When I became a man, I put away childish things." 1 Corinthians 13:11.

Answer: Force yourself to speak softly and kindly to your spouse. Silence, when one is attacked, is often the best method to cool wrath. Decisions made when angry, tired, or discouraged are unreliable anyway, so it's best to relax and let anger cool.

And when you do speak, let it always be quietly and lovingly. Harsh, angry words crush your spouse's desire to please you.

Discuss and agree in money matters.

16. Be reasonable in money matters.

"It [love] is not possessive Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage." 1 Corinthians 13:4, 5, Phillips.* "God loveth a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7.

Answer: All possessions and income in marriage should be "ours," not "yours" and "mine." Wives who don't work outside the home should receive a regular amount for groceries, clothing, and other budgeted items. It should be cheerfully provided instead of grudgingly released under protest. Wife and husband both should have small, equal sums (whenever possible) to spend as desired without giving account. A miserly husband usually angers his wife into being a spender, just as a wasteful husband makes a wife stingy. Showing confidence in your companion's managing ability will usually make him or her more businesslike.

Talking things over together will avoid many blunders that could destroy your marriage.

17. Talk things over and counsel together freely.

"It [love] is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. It is not touchy." 1 Corinthians 13:4, 5, Phillips.* "He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul." Proverbs 15:32. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him." Proverbs 26:12.

Answer: Few things will strengthen your marriage more than counseling together on all major decisions. Changing a job or purchasing a home, an automobile, a boat, furniture, clothing (major items at least), and all other items that require money involve both husband and wife, and the opinions of both should be considered.

Talking things over together will avoid many blunders that could ruin your marriage. If, after much discussion and earnest prayer, opinions still differ, the wife should submit to her husband's decision. Scripture is clear on this. (See Ephesians 5:22-24.)

18. I want my home to be a place the angels of heaven enjoy visiting.

Answer:

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Which marriage partner should be the first to confess after a quarrel?

The one who was in the right!

2. Could you suggest a rule for a meddlesome mother-in-law?

Yes! Be quiet and mind your own business! (See 1 Thessalonians 4:11.) In fact, this rule applies to all in-laws. Many a marriage that might have been a little heaven on earth has been changed into hell by in-laws. The duty of all in-laws is to leave the newly established home strictly alone.

3. My husband is a godless man, and I am trying to be a Christian. His influence is terrible. Should I divorce him?

No! Read 1 Corinthians 7:12-14 and 1 Peter 3:1, 2. God gives a specific answer.

4. When my husband displeases me, I won't sleep with him. He says I am wrong. Am I?

Yes! God gives a definite answer to this question in 1 Corinthians 7:4, 5.

5. My wife ran off with another man. Now repentant, she wants to return home. My pastor says I should take her back, but God forbids this, doesn't He?

No. No, indeed! God permits divorce for adultery, but does not command it. Forgiveness is always better and is always in order. (See Matthew 6:14, 15.) Divorce will seriously mar your life and the lives of your children. Give her another chance! The golden rule (Matthew 7:12) applies here. If you and your wife will turn your lives over to Christ, He will make your marriage supremely happy. It is not too late.

6. What can I do? Men are always attempting familiarities with me.

Be very careful of your conduct. God says, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." 1 Thessalonians 5:22. Perhaps your conduct around men--a suggestive smile, immodest clothing, off-color jokes, or a "too relaxed" and comfortable attitude--

encourages their advances. There is something about Christian reserve and dignity that keeps a man in his place. Christ said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:16. When Christ really shines from your life, you will have little trouble with evil men and their advances.

7. Can you tell me simply and plainly what God's counsel is to one who has fallen but is truly repentant?

Long ago Christ gave a pointed and comforting answer to one who had fallen intimmorality but was repentant. He said, "Go, and sin no more." John 8:11. His counsel still applies today.

8. Isn't the "innocent party" in a divorce sometimes partially guilty also? Certainly. Sometimes the "innocent party," by lovelessness, inattentiveness, self-righteousness, unkindness, selfishness, nagging, and downright coldness, can encourage evil thoughts and actions in his or her spouse. Sometimes the "innocent party" may be equally as guilty before God as the "guilty" one. God looks upon our motives and judges accordingly. "For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7.

9. Does God expect me to live with a physically abusive spouse?

Physical abuse can be life threatening and is a serious problem that demands immediate attention. The spouse and family members who have been physically

abused must find a safe environment in which to live. Both husband and wife need to seek professional help through a qualified Christian marriage counselor.

QUIZ QUESTIONS

1. Marriage is (1)

The joining of a man and woman together by God for life.

A temporary, experimental arrangement to see if two people are compatible.

Not even necessary. Men and women are free to live together without it.

2. God recognizes only one reason for divorce. It is (1)

Incompatibility.

An irritable spouse.

Adultery or fornication.

Godlessness of marriage partner.

3. The courtesies of courtship (1)

Should be continued in the married life.

Should be dropped quickly after the wedding.

Are really silly and unnecessary.

4. The best guarantee of success in marriage is (1)
Having Christ in the hearts and home.
For the husband to force his wife into line.
For the wife to get her way by threatening divorce.
5. For safety in quarrels, do the following: (3)
Speak softly and kindly to one another.
Make your spouse admit error.
Call in neighbors to settle things.
Force your spouse to keep quiet.
Walk out and stay away for several days.
Pray together.
Get over your anger before retiring for the night.

6. Check the items that are keys to success in marriage: (2)

Close the family circle to all third parties.

Live in your parents' home.

Run home to mother when angry.

Tell close friends your spouse's faults.

Establish your own private home.

Write an old boyfriend for counsel.

Never confess first after a spat.

7. The best ways to improve your marriage partner are to (2)

Threaten to leave unless you get your way.

Nag and criticize.

Improve your own relationship with Jesus Christ.

Make your partner sleep alone.

Be loving, appreciative, and forgiving.

Force your partner to change.

8. Check the items below which endanger a marriage: (6)

Criticism.

A stingy husband.

A money-wasting wife.

Laziness.

A Christian home.

Praying together.

Disorder and filthiness.

A forgiving spirit.

Jealousy.

9. For success in making major decisions, (2)

Husband and wife should counsel together.

Husband should force his will on his wife Seek God in prayer together.

Insist upon having your own way.

10. A good rule for in-laws is to (1)

Tend your own business and leave the newlyweds alone.

Insist that newlyweds live with you.

Determine to counsel newlyweds whether they want it or not.

11. In case of unfaithfulness by your spouse, the best thing to do is to (1)

Leave at once and never come back.

Immediately tell everyone how "low-down" your partner is.

Be willing to forgive and to preserve your home, if at all possible.

12. Thoughts should be guarded carefully because (2)

Impure thoughts lead to impure acts.

Your spouse can read your thoughts.

Wrong thinking will destroy your marriage.

Written in Stone

Lesson 6

Centuries ago, God wrote His law in stone, and you're still supposed to keep it today! It's absolutely true that violating any part of God's law always brings negative consequences. As crime overruns our cities, doesn't it make sense that for peace and safety we need to obey the laws of the land? Well, this same principle applies with God's law - the Ten Commandments - in our own lives too! They aren't called the ten suggestions, ten recommendations, or the ten greatest ideas. Since so much is at stake, you should take a few minutes to seriously consider your responsibility.

And the tables were the work of God.

1. Did God Himself really write the Ten Commandments "And he gave unto Moses ... two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." "And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables." Exodus 31:18; 32:16.

Answer: Yes, the great God of heaven wrote the Ten Commandments on tables of stone with His own finger.

God says that sin is breaking His law.

2. What is God's definition of sin?

"Sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:4.

Answer: Sin is breaking God's Ten Commandment law. And since the law of God is perfect (Psalms 19:7), it covers every conceivable sin. It is impossible to commit a sin that is not condemned by at least one of God's Ten Commandments. The commandments cover "the whole duty of man." Ecclesiastes 12:13. Nothing is left out.

Happiness follows those who keep His commandments.

3. Why did God give us the Ten Commandments?

"He that keepeth the law, happy is he." Proverbs 29:18. "Keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee." Proverbs 3:1, 2.

Answer:

A. As a guide for happy, abundant living.

God created us to enjoy happiness, peace, long life, contentment, accomplishment, and all the other great blessings for which our hearts long. God's

law is the road map that points out the right paths to follow in order to find this true, supreme happiness.

"By the law is the knowledge of sin." Romans 3:20. "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." Romans 7:7.

B. To show me the difference between right and wrong.

God's law is like a mirror (James 1:23-25). It points out wrongdoing in my life as a mirror points out dirt on my face. The only possible way for a person to know if he is sinning is for him to carefully check his life by the mirror of God's law. Hope for this mixed-up, sinking generation is found in God's Ten Commandment law. It tells where to draw the line!

"And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes [commandments] ... for our good always." Deuteronomy 6:24. "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually. Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes." Psalms 119:117, 118.

C. To protect me from danger and tragedy.

God's law is like a strong cage at the zoo, which protects us from fierce, destructive animals. It protects us from impurity, falsehood, murder, idolatry, theft, and many other evils that destroy life, peace, and happiness. All good laws protect, and God's law is no exception.

Special Note: The eternal principles of God's law are written deep in every person's nature by the God who created us. The writing may be dim and smudged, but it is still there. This means, of course, that you cannot find true peace unless you are willing to live in harmony with your inner nature, upon which God has written these principles. We were created to live in harmony with them. When we choose

to ignore them, the result is always tension, unrest, and tragedy, just as ignoring the rules for safe driving leads to serious trouble.

The law protects us from the devil as a cage protects us from the lion at the zoo.

4. Why is God's law exceedingly important to me personally?

"So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." James 2:12.

Answer: Because the Ten Commandment law is the standard by which God examines people in the heavenly judgment. How are you measuring up? It is a life-or-death matter!

The cross is positive proof that the law is unchangeable.

5. Can God's law (the Ten Commandments) ever be changed or abolished?

"It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." Luke 16:17. "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." Psalms 89:34. "All his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever." Psalms 111:7, 8.

Answer: Absolutely not! The Bible is very clear on this point. If the law could have been changed, God would have immediately made that change when Adam and Eve sinned instead of sending His Son to die in the sinner's behalf to pay the penalty of the broken law. But this was impossible, because the commandments are not laws in the sense of rules or regulations that have been enacted. They are revealed principles of God's holy character that will always be true as long as God exists.

Notice on the chart below that God and His law have the same characteristics. Do you see what this means? The Ten Commandment law is God's character in written form written so we can comprehend it. It is no more possible to change God's law than to pull God out of heaven and change Him. Jesus came to show us what the law (which is the pattern for holy living) looked like when made up in human form.

God's character can never change. Neither can His law, for it is His character in human language.

GOD IS THE LAW IS

Good Luke 18:19

1 Timothy 1:8

Holy Isaiah 5:16

Romans 7:12

Perfect Matthew 5:48

Psalms 19:7

Pure 1 John 3:2,3

Psalms 19:8

Just Deuteronomy 32:4

Romans 7:12

True John 3:33

Psalms 19:9

Spiritual 1 Corinthians

10:4

Romans 7:14

Righteousness Jeremiah 23:6

MaarifaMtandaoni.Com

Psalms 119:172

Faithful 1 Corinthians 1:9

Psalms 119:86

Love 1 John 4:8

Romans 13:10

Unchangeable James 1:17

Matthew 5:18

Eternal Genesis 21:33

Psalms 111:7,8

Jesus is the law in human form. When He is in the heart, keeping the law becomes a pleasure.

6. Did Jesus abolish God's law while He was here on earth?

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law. ... I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill Till heaven

and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Matthew 5:17, 18.

Answer: No, indeed! Jesus specifically asserted that He did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill (or keep) it. Instead of doing away with the law, Jesus magnified it (Isaiah 42:21) as the perfect guide for right living. For example, Jesus pointed out that "thou shalt not kill" condemns anger "without a cause" (Matthew

5:21, 22) and hatred (1 John 3:15), and that lust is adultery (Matthew 5:27, 28). He says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." John 14:15.

The law is like a length of chain. If only one link is broken, its entire purpose is undone.

7. Will people who knowingly continue to break even one of God's commandments be saved? "The wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23. "He shall destroy the sinners." Isaiah 13:9. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." James 2:10.

Answer: No! They will be lost. The Ten Commandment law is the guide we must use in finding our way to God and holy living. If I ignore even one of the commandments, I am neglecting part of the divine pattern, or blueprint. If only one link of a chain is broken, its entire purpose is undone. The Bible says that when we knowingly break any command of God, we are sinning (James 4:17), because we have refused His will for us. Only those who do His will can enter the kingdom of heaven. Sinners will be lost.

Salvation from Jesus is just as real as a gift received on a special holiday or birthday. It's free, specially prepared for us from Jesus!

8. Can anyone be saved by keeping the law?

"By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Romans 3:20. "For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Ephesians 2:8, 9.

Answer: No! The answer is too plain to miss. No one can be saved by keeping the law. Salvation comes only through grace, as a free gift from Jesus Christ, and we receive this gift by faith, not by works. The law serves only as a mirror to point out sin in our lives. Cleansing and forgiveness from that sin come only through Christ.

Our own standards are never safe. I cannot know whether I am a sinner unless I look carefully into the perfect standard, God's law-mirror.

9. Why, then, is the law an absolute essential for perfecting Christian character?

"Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Ecclesiastes 12:13. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." Romans 3:20.

Answer: Because the full pattern, or "whole duty," for Christian living is contained in God's law. Like a 6-year-old boy who made his own ruler, measured himself, and told his mother that he was 12 feet tall, our own standards are never safe. I cannot know whether I am a sinner unless I look carefully into the perfect standard, God's law-mirror. Millions who have cast out devils, prophesied, and done many wonderful works in Jesus' name will be lost (Matthew 7:21-23) because they did not bother to check their lives with His great law-pattern. Hence, they think they are righteous and saved when, instead, they are sinful and lost. "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." 1 John 2:3.

With Jesus living in the heart, the dark, ugly past is replaced by His triumphant indwelling.

10. What enables a truly converted Christian to follow the pattern of God's law?

"I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." Hebrews 8:10.

"I can do all things through Christ." Philippians 4:13. "God sending his own Son That the righteousness of the law

might be fulfilled in us." Romans 8:3, 4.

Answer: Christ not only pardons repentant sinners, but He restores in them the image of God. He brings them into harmony with His law through the power of His indwelling presence. "Thou shalt not" then becomes a promise that the Christian will not steal, lie, murder, etc., because Jesus lives inside and is in control. God could not change His law, but He made a blessed provision through Jesus to change the sinner so he can measure up to that law.

A governor's pardon forgives a prisoner, but does not give him freedom to break one single law.

11. But isn't a Christian who has faith and is living under grace freed from keeping the law?

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin [break the law], because we are not under the law,

but under grace? God forbid." Romans 6:14, 15. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." Romans 3:31.

Answer: No! The Scriptures teach the very opposite. Grace is like the governor's pardon to a prisoner. It forgives him, but it does not give him freedom to break one single law on the statute books. The forgiven person, living under grace, is under double obligation to keep the law. A person who refuses to keep God's law, saying that he is living under grace, is mistaken. He is living under disgrace.

12. Are the Ten Commandments of God reaffirmed in the New Testament?
Answer: Yes, and very clearly so. Look the following over very carefully.

THE LAW OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT THE LAW OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Matthew 4:10.

1. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Exodus 20:3.

2. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21. "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." Acts 17:29.

2. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." Exodus 20:4-6.

3. "That the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed." 1 Timothy 6:1.
3. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Exodus 20:7.
4. "For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works." "There remaineth therefore a rest ["keeping of a sabbath," margin] to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." Hebrews 4:4, 9, 10.
4. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." Exodus 20:8-11.
5. "Honour thy father and thy mother." Matthew 19:19.
5. "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Exodus 20:12.
6. "Thou shalt not kill." Romans 13:9.
6. "Thou shalt not kill." Exodus 20:13.
7. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Matthew 19:18.
7. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Exodus 20:14.
8. "Thou shalt not steal." Romans 13:9.

8. "Thou shalt not steal." Exodus 20:15.

9. "Thou shalt not bear false witness." Romans 13:9.

9. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." Exodus 20:16.

10. "Thou shalt not covet." Romans 7:7.

10. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's." Exodus 20:17.

Ceremonial sacrifices and rituals pointed forward to Jesus' sacrifice.

13. Are God's law and Moses' law the same?

Answer: No, they are not the same. Study the following notes and comparison carefully.

Note: Moses' law was the temporary, ceremonial law of the Old Testament. It regulated the priesthood, sacrifices, rituals, meat and drink offerings, etc., all of which foreshadowed the cross. This law was added "till the seed should come," and that seed was Christ (Galatians 3:16, 19). The ritual and ceremony of Moses' law pointed forward to Christ's sacrifice. When He died, this law came to an end, but the Ten Commandments (God's law) "stand fast for ever and ever." Psalms 111:8. That there are two laws is made crystal clear in Daniel 9:10, 11.

Special Note: Please note that God's law has existed at least as long as sin has existed. The Bible says, "Where no law is, there is no transgression [or sin]." Romans 4:15. So God's Ten Commandment law existed from the beginning. Men

broke that law (sinned, 1 John 3:4). Because of sin (or breaking God's law), Moses' law was given (or "added" Galatians 3:16, 19) till Christ should come and die. Two separate laws are involved: God's law and Moses' law.

MOSES' LAW GOD'S LAW

Called "the law of Moses" (Luke 2:22).

Called "the law of the Lord" (Isaiah 5:24).

Called "law ... contained in ordinances" (Ephesians 2:15).

Called "the royal law" (James 2:8).

Written by Moses in a book (2 Chronicles 35:12).

Written by God on stone (Exodus 31:18 32:16).

Placed in the side of the ark (Deuteronomy 31:26).

Placed inside the ark (Exodus 40:20).

Ended at the cross (Ephesians 2:15).

Will stand forever (Luke 16:17).

Added because of sin (Galatians 3:19).

Points out sin (Romans 7:7 3:20).

Contrary to us, against us (Colossians 2:14).

Not grievous (1 John 5:3).

Judges no one (Colossians 2:14-16).

Judges all people (James 2:10- 12).

Carnal (Hebrews 7:16).

Spiritual (Romans 7:14).

Made nothing perfect (Hebrews 7:19).

Perfect (Psalms 19:7).

And the dragon was wroth with the woman [true church].

14. How does the devil feel about the people who pattern their lives after God's Ten Commandments?

"And the dragon [the devil] was wroth with the woman [true church], and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God." Revelation 12:17. "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God." Revelation 14:12.

Answer: The devil hates the people who uphold God's law because the law is the pattern of right living. And if you decide to follow the pattern outlined in God's law, you will feel the devil's wrath upon you at once and with all fury. It is not surprising that the devil hates and bitterly opposes all who uphold God's law. But it is shocking and astounding to hear religious leaders denying the binding claims of the Ten Commandments while at the same time upholding the traditions of men. No wonder Jesus said, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Matthew 15:3, 9. And David said, "It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law." Psalms 119:126. Christians must wake up and restore God's law to its rightful, exalted position. It is folly for this

undisciplined generation to presume that it can break the laws of the living God with impunity.

15. I believe a Christian must obey God's Ten Commandments, and I am asking Jesus to help me bring my life into harmony with them.

Answer:

Thought Questions

1. Doesn't the Bible say the law was (or is) faulty?

No. The Bible says the people were faulty. God found "fault with them." Hebrews 8:8. And in Romans 8:3 the Bible says that the law "was weak through the flesh." It is always the same story. The law is perfect, but the people are faulty, or weak. So God would have His Son live within His people "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Romans 8:4) through the indwelling Christ.

2. Galatians 3:13 says we are redeemed from the curse of the law. Can you explain this?

The curse of the law is death (Romans 6:23). Christ tasted "death for every man." Hebrews 2:9. Thus He redeemed all from the curse of the law (death) and in its place provided eternal life.

3. Don't Colossians 2:14-17 and Ephesians 2:15 teach that God's law ended at the cross?

No, these passages both refer to the law containing "ordinances," or Moses' law, which was a ceremonial law governing the sacrificial system and the priesthood. All of this ceremony and ritual foreshadowed the cross and ended at Christ's death, as God had intended. Moses' law was added till the "seed should come," and that "seed ... is Christ." Galatians 3:19, 16. God's law could not be involved here, for Paul spoke of it as holy, just, and good many years after the cross (Romans 7:7, 12).

4. The Bible says, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Romans 13:10. The Bible also, in Matthew 22:37- 40, commands us to love God and to love our neighbors, and ends with the words, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Do these commands replace the Ten Commandments?

No, the Ten Commandments hang from these two commands like our 10 fingers hang from our two hands. They are inseparable. Love to God makes keeping the first four commandments (which concern God) a pleasure, and love toward our neighbor makes keeping the last six (which concern our neighbor) a joy. Love fulfills the law by taking away the drudgery and by making law keeping a delight (Psalms 40:8). When we truly love a person, honoring his or her requests becomes a joy. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." John 14:15. It is impossible to love the Lord and not keep His commandments, because the Bible says, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5:3. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." 1 John 2:4.

5. Doesn't 2 Corinthians 3:7 teach that the law written and engraved in stone "was to be done away"?

No. The passage says that the "glory" of Moses' ministration of the law was to be done away, but not the law. Read the whole passage of 2 Corinthians 3:3-9 again, carefully. The subject is not the doing away with the law or its establishment, but rather, the change of the location of the law from "tables of stone" to the "tables of the heart." Under Moses' ministration the law was on stones. Under the Holy Spirit's ministration, through Christ, the law is written upon the heart (Hebrews 8:10). A rule posted on a school bulletin board becomes effective only when it enters a student's heart. Christ's ministration of the law is effective because He transfers the law to the heart of the Christian. Then keeping the law becomes a delight and a joyful way of living because the Christian has true love for both God and man.

6. Romans 10:4 says that "Christ is the end of the law." So it has ended, hasn't it? "End" in this verse means purpose or object, as it does in James 5:11. The meaning is clear. To lead men to Christ--where they find righteousness--is the goal, purpose, or end of the law.

7. Why do so many people deny the binding claims of God's law?

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." Romans 8:7-9.

8. Were the righteous people of the Old Testament saved by the law?

No one has ever been saved by the law. All who have been saved in all ages have been saved by grace. This "grace ... was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." 2 Timothy 1:9. The law only points out sin. Christ alone can save. Noah "found grace" (Genesis 6:8); Moses found grace (Exodus 33:17); the Israelites in the wilderness found grace (Jeremiah 31:2); and Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and many other Old Testament worthies were saved "by faith" according to Hebrews 11. They were saved by looking forward to the cross; we, by looking back to it. The law is necessary because, like a mirror, it reveals the "dirt" in our lives. Without it, people are sinners but are not aware of it.

However, the law has no saving power. It can only point out sin. Jesus, and He alone, can save a person from sin. This has always been true, even in Old Testament times. (Acts 4:10, 12; 2 Timothy 1:9).

9. Why worry about the law? Isn't conscience a safe guide?

No! A thousand times, no! The Bible speaks of an evil conscience, a defiled conscience, and a seared conscience--none of which is safe. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Proverbs 14:12. God says, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Proverbs 28:26.

Quiz Questions

1. The Ten Commandments were written by (1)
God.
Moses.
An unknown person.
2. According to the Bible, sin is (1)
A personality deficiency.
Breaking God's law.
Whatever seems wrong.
3. Check the statements that tell the truth about God's law: (4)
It is a perfect guide for happy living.
Like a mirror, it points out sin.
It is burdensome and oppressive.
It can protect me from evil.
It has the same characteristics as God.
It was canceled in the New Testament.
It is a curse.
4. God's Ten Commandment law (1)

Was for Old Testament times only.

Was abolished by Jesus at the cross.

Is absolutely unchangeable.

5. In the judgment day I will be saved if (1)

I maintain an excellent record of good works.

I love the Lord, regardless of whether or not I obey the Ten Commandments.

My personal love relationship with Jesus leads me to obey all His commandments.

6. People are saved by (1)

Keeping the law.

Breaking the law.

Jesus Christ alone.

7. Truly converted Christians (1)

Keep God's law through the power of Christ.

Ignore the law because it is done away.

Consider commandment-keeping unnecessary.

8. A person living under grace (1)

Can break the Ten Commandments without sinning.

Is freed from keeping the law.

Will gladly keep God's commandments.

9. Love fulfills the law because (1)

Love does away with the law.

True love toward God and man makes keeping the law a pleasure.

Love is more important than obedience.

10. Moses' law is (1)

The same thing as God's law.

The law of ceremonies and sacrifices, which pointed forward to Christ and ended at His cross.

Still binding today.

11. People who obey the Ten Commandments (1)

Are all legalists.

Will be bitterly opposed by the devil, who hates God and His law.

Are saved by keeping the law.

12. Check the statements that are true regarding Christ and the law: (4)

Jesus broke the law.

Jesus is the perfect human example of keeping the law.

Jesus abolished the law.

Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Jesus magnified the law and showed that it covers all sin.

Jesus said that the law cannot be changed.

The Lost Day of History

Did you know there is a very important day that almost everyone has forgotten about? It's astounding that only a few people are aware of it, because it's one of the most significant days in all of human history! It's

not only a day in the past, but the present and future. Furthermore, what happened on this neglected day can have a profound effect on your life. Want to know more amazing facts about this lost day of history? Then read over this Study Guide carefully.

When Jesus was here on earth, He worshiped on the Sabbath.

1. On what day did Jesus customarily worship?

"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read." Luke 4:16.

Answer: Jesus' custom was to worship on the Sabbath.

The seventh day of the week (Saturday) is the Sabbath.

2. But which day of the week is the Sabbath?

"The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God." Exodus 20:10. "And when the sabbath was past, ...very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre." Mark 16:1, 2.

Answer: The Sabbath is not the first day of the week (Sunday), as many believe, but the seventh day (Saturday). Notice from the above Scripture that the Sabbath is the day that comes just before the first day of the week.

God made the Sabbath at the time of Creation.

3. Who made the Sabbath and when?

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." Genesis 1:1; 2:2, 3.

Answer: God made the Sabbath at the time of Creation, when He made the world. He rested on the Sabbath and blessed and sanctified it (set it apart for a holy use).

God wrote the Sabbath commandment with His own finger.

4. What does God say about Sabbath-keeping in the Ten Commandments, which He wrote with His own finger?

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy

maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." Exodus 20:8-11. "And the Lord delivered unto me two tables of stone written with the finger of God." Deuteronomy 9:10.

Answer: In the fourth commandment of the 10, God commands us to observe the seventh-day Sabbath as His holy day. God knew people would forget His Sabbath, so He began this commandment with the word "remember." He has never commanded anyone anywhere to keep any other day as a weekly holy day.

Jesus says it is easier for heaven to pass away than for God's law to change.

5. But haven't the Ten Commandments been changed?

Jesus says: "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." Luke 16:17. God says: "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." Psalms 89:34. Notice, the Ten Commandments came from His lips. Exodus 20:1 says, "And God spake all these words, saying ... [the Ten Commandments follow in verses 2-17]."

Answer: No, indeed! It is utterly impossible for any of God's moral law ever to change. All Ten Commandments are binding today.

Paul and the other apostles kept God's seventh-day Sabbath holy.

6. Did the apostles keep the Sabbath?

"And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures." Acts 17:2. "Paul and his company ... went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down." Acts 13:13, 14. "And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither." Acts 16:13. "And he [Paul] reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." Acts 18:4.

Answer: Yes, the book of Acts makes it clear that Paul and the early church kept the Sabbath.

The apostles taught the Gentiles to keep the Sabbath holy.

7. Did the Gentiles also worship on Sabbath?

God commanded it:

"Blessed is the man ... that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it." "Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, ... every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer ... for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." Isaiah 56:2, 6, 7, emphasis added.

Apostles taught it:

"And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath." "And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God." Acts 13:42, 44, emphasis added. "And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." Acts 18:4.

Answer: The apostles in the early New Testament church not only obeyed God's Sabbath command, but they also taught the converted Gentiles to worship on Sabbath. Never once do they refer to Sunday as a holy day.

The Sabbath was not changed to Sunday at the time of Jesus' resurrection.

8. But wasn't the Sabbath changed to Sunday at Christ's death or resurrection?

Answer: No, there is not the remotest hint that the Sabbath was changed at Christ's death or resurrection. The Bible teaches just the opposite. Please carefully review the following evidence:

A. God blessed the Sabbath.

"The Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it." Exodus 20:11. "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." Genesis 2:3.

B. Christ expected His people to be still keeping the Sabbath in A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed.

Knowing full well that Jerusalem would be destroyed by Rome in A.D. 70, Jesus warned His followers of that time, saying, "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day." Matthew 24:20, emphasis added. Jesus made it clear that He intended for the Sabbath to be kept even 40 years after His resurrection. In fact, there is no intimation anywhere in the Scriptures that Jesus, His Father, or the apostles ever (at any time, under any circumstances) changed the holy seventh-day Sabbath to any other day.

C. The women who came to anoint Christ's dead body kept the Sabbath. Jesus died on "the day before the sabbath" (Mark 15:37, 42), which is now called Good Friday.

The women prepared spices and ointments to anoint His body, then "rested the sabbath day according to the commandment." Luke 23:56. Only "when the sabbath was past" (Mark 16:1) did the women come "the first day of the week" (Mark 16:2) to continue their sad work. They found "Jesus was risen early the first day of the week" (verse 9), commonly called Easter Sunday. Please note that the Sabbath "according to the commandment" was the day preceding Easter Sunday, which we now call Saturday.

D. Christ's follower, Luke, wrote two books of the Bible, Luke and Acts.

He says that in the book of Luke he wrote about "all" of Jesus' teachings (Acts 1:1-3). But he never wrote about Sunday-keeping or a change of the Sabbath.

Everybody in God's eternal kingdom will keep the Sabbath holy.

9. Some people say the Sabbath will be kept in God's new earth. Is this correct?

"For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord." Isaiah 66:22, 23.

Answer: Yes, the Bible says the saved people of all ages will keep the Sabbath in the new earth.

The Lord's day is Sabbath, not Sunday.

10. But isn't Sunday the Lord's day?

"Call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord." Isaiah 58:13. "For the son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day." Matthew 12:8.

Answer: The Bible speaks of the "Lord's day" in Revelation 1:10, so the Lord does have a special day. But no verse of Scripture refers to Sunday as the Lord's day.

Rather, the Bible plainly identifies Sabbath as the Lord's day. The only day ever blessed by the Lord or claimed by Him as His holy day is the seventh-day Sabbath.

Jesus instituted baptism--not Sunday keeping--in honor of His resurrection.

11. Shouldn't I keep Sunday in honor of Christ's resurrection?

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Romans 6:3-6.

Answer: No! No more than you would keep Friday in honor of the crucifixion. Christ gave the ordinance of baptism in honor of His death, burial, and resurrection. The Bible never suggests Sunday-keeping in honor of the resurrection (or for any other reason, for that matter). We honor Christ by obeying Him (John 14:15)--not by substituting man-made requirements in place of His.

Misguided men had the audacity to substitute Sunday for the Sabbath of God's law.

12. Well, if Sunday-keeping isn't in the Bible, whose idea was it anyway?

"And he shall think to change the times and the law." Daniel 7:25, RSV.* "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Matthew 15:6,

9. "Her priests have violated my law." "And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, ... saying, Thus saith the Lord God, when the Lord hath not spoken." Ezekiel 22:26, 28.

Answer: Misguided men of long years past announced that God's holy day was changed from Sabbath to Sunday. God predicted it would happen, and it did. This error was passed on to our unsuspecting generation as gospel fact. Sunday-keeping is a tradition of uninspired men and breaks God's law, which commands Sabbath-keeping. Only God can make a day holy. God blessed the Sabbath, and when God blesses, no man can "reverse it." Numbers 23:20.

Changing Sabbath to Sunday is an insult to God because it attempts to alter His divine law.

13. But isn't it very dangerous to tamper with God's law?

"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God."

Deuteronomy 4:2. "Every word of God is pure. Add thou not unto his words, lest

he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." Proverbs 30:5, 6.

Answer: God has specifically and positively forbidden men to change His law by deletions or additions. To tamper with God's holy law in any way is one of the most fearful and dangerous things a person can do.

The Sabbath is a sign of God's power to create and redeem.

14. Why did God make the Sabbath anyway?

A. Sign of Creation.

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." "For in six days the Lord made heaven

and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." Exodus 20:8, 11.

B. Sign of redemption and sanctification.

"Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." Ezekiel 20:12.

Answer: God gave the Sabbath as a twofold sign: (1) It is a sign that He created the world in six literal 24-hour days, and (2) it is also a sign of God's mighty power to redeem and sanctify men. Surely every Christian will love the Sabbath as God's precious sign of Creation and redemption (Exodus 31:13, 17; Ezekiel 20:12, 20). It is a great insult to God for people to trample upon His Sabbath. In Isaiah 58:13, 14, God says all who would be blessed must first get their feet off His Sabbath.

Breaking any commandment of God's law is sin.

15. How important is Sabbath-keeping?

"Sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:4. "The wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." James 2:10. "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." 1 Peter 2:21. "He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Hebrews 5:9.

Answer: It is a matter of life and death. Sabbath-keeping is enjoined in the fourth commandment of God's law. The deliberate breaking of any one of the Ten Commandments is a sin. Christians will gladly follow Christ's example of Sabbath-keeping. Our only safety is to diligently study the Bible, "rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15. We must have positive Scripture support for every Christian practice we follow.

God will pour out His indignation upon religious leaders who knowingly ignore His Sabbath.

16. How does God feel about religious leaders who ignore the Sabbath?

"Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane ... and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them." "Therefore have I poured out my indignation upon them." Ezekiel 22:26, 31.

Answer: In hiding their eyes from God's true Sabbath, religious leaders offend the God of heaven. God promises punishment for such false shepherds. Millions have

been misled on this matter. God cannot treat it lightly. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for pretending to love God while making void one of the Ten Commandments by their tradition (Mark 7:7-13).

Everyone who enters heaven and eats from the tree of life will keep God's Sabbath holy.

17. Does Sabbath-keeping really affect me personally?

"If ye love me, keep my commandments." John 14:15. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Romans 14:12. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James 4:17. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Revelation 22:14. "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God." Revelation 14:12.

Answer: Yes, by all means, the Sabbath is your Sabbath. God made it for you, and if you love Him you will keep it, because it is one of His commandments. Love without commandment-keeping is no love at all (1 John 2:4). You must make a decision. You cannot avoid it. No one can excuse you. You yourself will answer before God on this most important matter. God asks you to love and obey Him now!

18. I am willing to follow Jesus' example of Sabbath-keeping

Answer:

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. But isn't the Sabbath for the Jews only?

No. Jesus said, "The sabbath was made for man." Mark 2:27. It is not for the Jews only, but for mankind--all men and women everywhere. The Jewish nation did not even exist until 2,500 years after the Sabbath was made.

2. Isn't Acts 20:7-12 proof that the disciples kept Sunday as a holy day? According to the Bible, each day begins at sundown and ends at the next sundown (Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31 Leviticus 23:32) and the dark part of the day comes first. So Sabbath begins Friday night at sundown and ends Saturday night at sundown. This meeting of Acts 20 was held on the dark part of Sunday, or on what we now call Saturday night. The New English Bible* begins Acts 20:7 like this: "On the Saturday night in our assembly ..."

It was a Saturday-night meeting, and it lasted until midnight. Paul was on a farewell tour and knew he would not see these people again before his death (verse 25). No wonder he preached so long! (No regular weekly service would have lasted all night.) Paul was "ready to depart on the morrow." The "breaking of bread" has no "holy day" significance whatever, because they broke bread daily (Acts 2:46). There is not the slightest indication in this Scripture passage that the first day is holy, nor that these early Christians considered it so. Nor is there the remotest evidence that the Sabbath had been changed. Incidentally, this meeting is probably mentioned in the Scripture only because of the miracle of raising Eutychus back to life after he fell to his death from a third-floor window. In Ezekiel 46:1, God refers to Sunday as one of the six "working days."

3. Doesn't 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2 speak of Sunday school offerings?

No, there is no reference here to a public meeting. The money was to be laid aside privately at home. A famine was raging in Judea (Romans 15:26; Acts 11:26-30), and Paul was writing to ask the churches in Asia Minor to assist their famine-stricken brethren. These Christians all kept Sabbath holy, so Paul suggested that on Sunday morning (which was the time they paid bills and settled accounts), after the Sabbath was over, they put aside something for their needy brethren so it would be on hand when he came. It was to be done privately or, as La Santa Biblia (a Spanish translation) says, "at home." Notice also that there is no reference here to Sunday as a holy day. In fact, the Bible nowhere commands or even suggests Sunday-keeping.

4. But hasn't time been lost and the days of the week changed since the time of Christ?

No! Reliable encyclopedias and reference books make it clear that our seventh day is the same one that Jesus kept holy. It is a simple matter of research.

5. But isn't John 20:19 the record of the disciples instituting Sundaykeeping in honor of the resurrection?

On the contrary, the disciples at this time did not believe that the resurrection had taken place (Mark 16:14). They had met there "for fear of the Jews" and had the doors bolted. When Jesus appeared in their midst, He rebuked them "because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen." There is no implication that they counted Sunday as a holy day. Only eight texts in the New Testament mention the first day of the week; none of them imply that it is holy.

6. Doesn't Colossians 2:14-17 do away with the seventh-day Sabbath?

Not at all. It refers only to the sabbaths which were "a shadow of things to come" and not to the seventh-day Sabbath. There were seven yearly holy days, or holidays, in ancient Israel which were also called sabbaths. These were in addition to, or "beside the sabbaths of the Lord" (Leviticus 23:38), or seventh-day Sabbath. These all foreshadowed, or pointed to, the cross and ended at the cross. God's seventh-day Sabbath was made before sin entered, and therefore could foreshadow nothing about deliverance from sin. That's why Colossians chapter 2 differentiates and specifically mentions the sabbaths that were "a shadow." These seven yearly sabbaths which were abolished are listed in Leviticus chapter 23.

7. According to Romans 14:5, the day we keep is a matter of personal opinion, isn't it?

Notice that the whole chapter is on judging one another (Verses 4, 10, 13). The issue here is not over the seventh-day Sabbath, which was a part of the great moral but over the yearly feast days of the ceremonial law. Jewish Christians were judging Gentile Christians for not observing them. Paul is simply saying, "Don't judge each other. That ceremonial law is no longer binding."

QUIZ QUESTIONS

1. Jesus kept (1)
 - Sunday as a holy day.
 - The seventh-day Sabbath holy.
 - Every other day holy.
2. The Lord's day is (1)
 - Sunday, the first day of the week.
 - Sabbath, the seventh day of the week.
 - Any day that we dedicate to the Lord.
3. The Sabbath was made (1)
 - For the Jews only.
 - By God at Creation for all men and women everywhere for all time.
 - Only for people who lived in the Old Testament times.
4. The change from Sabbath to Sunday was made by (1)
 - Christ.
 - The apostles.
 - Misguided men.
5. God's law, which includes the Sabbath commandment, (1)
 - Is no longer in effect today.

Can never change. It is still binding today.

Ended at the death of Christ.

6. In the New Testament church the converted Gentiles and the apostles (1)

Observed Sunday as a holy day.

Taught that any day will suffice as a holy day if you are sincere.

Observed the Sabbath.

7. The Sabbath (1)

Ended at the cross.

Will end at Jesus' second coming.

Will be kept in God's new eternal kingdom by the redeemed of all ages.

8. Since the Sabbath is part of God's law, breaking the Sabbath is (1)

Nothing to be concerned about since Christ's death.

A dangerous sin because it tramples upon holy things.

Of no importance today.

9. All who really love and follow Jesus will (1)

Observe the Sabbath, as Jesus did.

Keep every other day holy.

Keep Sunday as a holy day.

10. The Sabbath is (1)

Sunday, the first day of the week.

Saturday, the seventh day of the week.

Any day we dedicate to God.

11. Sunday-keeping (1)

Is an invention of men that was predicted in the Bible.

Is God's plan for today.

Originated at Christ's resurrection and was approved at Pentecost.

12. Sabbath-keeping is (1)

A sign of legalism.

Important only to the Jews.

God's twofold sign of Creation and redemption.

The Ultimate Deliverance

It's no fairytale - one day, you can be free from all the hurt, hunger, aloneness, crime, and chaos infecting the world today. Doesn't

that sound wonderful? But it's not going to be some charismatic earthly leader who's going to deliver you... no, He's much more superior than that! Jesus is coming soon, but there is a lot of popular misconceptions regarding just how He's coming. So take a few minutes to understand what the Bible really says about the second coming so you won't be left behind!

Jesus taught that He will return to earth the second time.

1. Will Jesus return to this earth the second time? Can we be positive?

"Christ ... shall ... appear the second time." Hebrews 9:28.

"If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again." John 14:3. Answer: Yes! In Matthew 26:64, Jesus testified under oath that He would come back to this earth again. Since the Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35), this is proof positive. Believe it just as it reads. It is Christ's own personal guarantee.

Jesus said He will return to earth in the clouds.

2. In what manner will Jesus return the second time?

"While they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:9-11.

Answer: The Scriptures promise that Jesus will return to this earth in the same manner that He left at His ascension--in a visible, literal, bodily, personal manner. Matthew 24:30 says, "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." He will come in the clouds literally, as a personal being with a body of flesh and bones (Luke 24:36-43, 50, 51), and His coming will be visible. Scripture is clear on these facts.

Every person living on earth will see Jesus when He returns the second time.

3. Will the second coming of Christ be visible to all men or only to a select group?"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him." Revelation 1:7.

"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matthew 24:27.

Answer: Every man, woman, and child living in the world when Jesus returns will see Him at His second coming. The staggering threefold (Luke 9:26) brightness of His coming will stretch from horizon to horizon, and the atmosphere will be charged with brilliant glory like lightning. No one will be able to hide. Every living soul will be forced to face Christ. Christ left no loophole for doubt or misunderstanding.

Note: The secret rapture so commonly believed and taught today is not in the Bible. It is a human invention. Nor is the second coming a spiritual coming into the heart at conversion. It does not take place at a man's death, nor is it figurative, to be manifested by better world conditions. These theories are all of human origin. The second coming will be a literal, worldwide, visible, personal appearance of Christ in the clouds to bring this world to an end and to reward or punish all men and women.

All the angels of heaven will be with Jesus at His second coming.

4. Who will come with Jesus at His second coming, and why?

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." Matthew 25:31.

Answer: All the angels of heaven will come with Jesus at His second coming. As the cloud nears the earth, Jesus will send His angels, and they will quickly gather together all of the righteous people in preparation for the trip back to heaven (Matthew 24:31).

Jesus will take His people to heaven and restore to them everything Adam and Eve lost.

5. What is the purpose of Jesus' second coming to this earth?

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:12.

"I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:3.

"And he shall send Jesus Christ ... Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things." Acts 3:20, 21.

Answer: Jesus is coming back to this earth to reward His people as He promised and to take them to the beautiful home He has prepared for them. He will restore to His people all of the joys and glories of Eden that Adam and Eve lost by sinning. His second coming will bring an end to this present age of evil.

Little babies taken from their parents by death will be returned to them at Jesus' second coming.

6. What will happen to the righteous people when Jesus comes the second time?

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven ... and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17 "We shall all be changed, ... and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. For ... this mortal must put on immortality." 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.

"We look for ... the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Philippians 3:20, 21.

Answer: The righteous dead will be raised from their graves, given perfect, immortal bodies like that of Christ, and caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord. Then the righteous living will also be given bodies like Christ and will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. And Jesus will take the righteous to heaven with Him.

Note that Jesus does not touch the earth at His second coming. The saints meet Him "in the air." So God's people will ignore any report that Christ is in Baltimore, New Orleans, Los Angeles, etc. False christs will appear and do miracles on the earth (Matthew 24:23-27), but Jesus will remain in the clouds above the earth at His second coming.

The wicked will be slain at Jesus' second coming.

7. What will happen to the wicked people when Jesus comes again?

"With the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." Isaiah 11:4.

"And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth." Jeremiah 25:33.

Answer: The wicked will be slain by Jesus.

Today's earthquakes are minor in comparison with the massive earthquake at Jesus' coming.

8. How will Christ's second coming affect the earth itself?"And there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great." "And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." Revelation 16:18, 20.

"I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord." Jeremiah 4:26.

"The Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste." "The land shall be utterly emptied." Isaiah 24:1, 3.

Answer: The earth will be seized by a great earthquake at the coming of the Lord. This earthquake will be of such a devastating nature that it will leave the world in a state of total destruction.

Millions of Christians died during the Dark Ages. Many were burned at the stake.

9. Does the Bible give specific information regarding the nearness of Christ's second coming?

Answer: Yes, it does! And Jesus Himself said, "When ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Matthew 24:33. The Lord placed signs all along the way from His ascension to His second coming. They are listed below. Study them carefully.

A. The Destruction of Jerusalem

Prophecy: "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." "Let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." Matthew 24:2, 16.

Fulfillment: Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Roman warrior Titus.

B. A Great Persecution, or TribulationProphecy: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world." Matthew 24:21.

Fulfillment: This prophecy points primarily to the long period of tribulation that took place during the Dark Ages and was instigated by the apostate church. It

lasted more than 1,000 years. Over 50 million Christians were slain for their faith in this terrible tribulation period. One writer says the apostate church "has shed more innocent blood than any other institution that has ever existed among mankind."

C. The Sun Turned into Darkness

Prophecy: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened." Matthew 24:29.

Fulfillment: This was fulfilled by a day of supernatural darkness on May 19, 1780. It was not an eclipse. Timothy Dwight says, "The 19th of May, 1780, was a remarkable dark day. Candles were lighted in many houses the birds were silent and disappeared, and the fowls retired to roost. A very general opinion prevailed, that the day of judgment was at hand." Quoted in Connecticut Historical Collections, compiled by John Warner Barber (2nd ed. New Haven: Durrie & Peck and J.W. Barber, 1836) p. 403.

D. The Moon Turned into Blood

Prophecy: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come." Joel 2:31.

Fulfillment: The moon became as red as blood on the night of the "dark day," May 19, 1780. Milo Bostick in Stone's History of Massachusetts says, "The moon which was at its full, had the appearance of blood."

The great star shower took place on November 13, 1833.

E. The Stars Fall from Heaven

Prophecy: "And the stars shall fall from heaven." Matthew 24:29.

Fulfillment: The great star shower took place on the night of November 13, 1833. It was so bright that a newspaper could be read on the street. One writer says,

"For nearly four hours the sky was literally ablaze."* Men thought the end of the world had come. Look into this. It is most fascinating, and a sign of Christ's coming.

*Peter A. Millman, "The Falling of the Stars," The Telescope, 7 (May-June, 1940) 57.

F. Jesus Comes in the Clouds

Prophecy: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Matthew 24:30.

Fulfillment: This is the next great event. Are you ready?

Strife between capital and labor is a sign of Jesus' second coming.

10. How may we know when we have reached the very last days of earth's history? Does the Bible clearly describe the world and its people in the last generation?

Answer: Yes, indeed it does. Look at the following specific signs of the last days. You will be amazed. And these are just a few of many, many positive signs that show we are in the closing days of earth's history.

A. Capital-labor troubles "The hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord." "Be ... patient ... for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." James 5:4, 8.

Trouble between capital and labor is predicted for the last days. For fulfillment, consult your newspaper.

B. Wars and commotions

"But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass." Luke 21:9.

Wars and the ravages of civil distress are affecting thousands worldwide. Only Jesus' soon coming will bring an end to the pain and destruction of war.

C. Unrest, fear, and upheaval

"And there shall be ... upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity ... Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Luke 21:25, 26.

This sounds strangely like an editorial from a current newspaper a perfect picture of the world today and there is a reason: We are the people of the very last days of earth's history. The tense atmosphere present in the world today should not surprise us. Christ foretold it. It should convince us that His coming is near.

D. Increase of knowledge

"Even to the time of the end ... knowledge shall be increased." Daniel 12:4.

The Information Age makes this one all too obvious. Even the most skeptical mind must admit that this sign is fulfilled. Knowledge is exploding in all directions. It is said that 80 percent of the world's total knowledge has been brought forth in the last decade and that 90 percent of all the scientists who have ever lived are alive today.

E. Scoffers and religious skeptics who turn away from Bible truth

"There shall come in the last days scoffers." 2 Peter 3:3. "They will not endure sound doctrine ... And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." 2 Timothy 4:3, 4.

It is not difficult to find scoffers today in fulfillment of this prophecy. Even religious leaders are denying the plain Bible teachings of Creation, the Flood, the divinity of Christ, the second coming of Christ, and many other vital Bible truths.

Psychiatry and the traditions of pseudo-intellectuals have replaced the Bible in many religious circles. Secular educators teach our youth to scoff at the Bible record of these great truths and substitute evolution and other man-made, false teachings for the plain, simple facts of God's Holy Word. A recent poll discovered that only two percent of American student ministers believe in the literal second coming of Christ.

F. Moral degeneracy; decline of spirituality

"In the last days ... men shall be lovers of their own selves, ... Without natural affection, ... incontinent, ... despisers of those that are good, ... Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

America is in the midst of a tremendous crisis. People from all walks of life are saying so. Suicide is becoming a popular solution to human problems.

Divorce rates are climbing wildly, with nearly one marriage in two ending in the divorce court. The current immoral generation, with its obsession with seamy filth, with its increasing church membership but decreasing true spirituality, is plain and positive fulfillment of God's Word. For a real shock, see how many of the last-day sins listed in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 you can find depicted in any issue of your Sunday newspaper. Nothing short of the coming of the Lord will stem the tide of evil that is now engulfing the world.

G. Craze for pleasure

"In the last days ... men shall be ... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." 2 Timothy 3:1-4.

The world has gone crazy for pleasure. Only a small percentage of the citizens of our large cities attend church services regularly, but they jam pleasure resorts by the thousands. America is spending billions each year for pleasure and only "peanuts" (in comparison) for God. Pleasure-mad Americans waste billions of hours in front of the TV set in direct fulfillment of 2 Timothy 3:4.

H. Increasing lawlessness, bloody crimes, and violence

"Iniquity shall abound." Matthew 24:12. "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." 2 Timothy 3:13. "The land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence." Ezekiel 7:23.

It is all too obvious that this sign is fulfilled. Crime and lawlessness are increasing with shocking rapidity. Most people in large cities do not answer their doorbells after dark. The wisest statesmen of our time are concerned for the survival of civilization because crime sweeps forward seemingly beyond control.

I. Destructive earthquakes, storms, and famines

"And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences." Luke 21:11.

Earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, etc. are increasing at an unprecedented rate. One-third of the people of the world are hungry, and thousands die daily of starvation. All these things are further proof that we live in earth's last hours.

J. A special message to the world in the very last days

"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come." Matthew 24:14.

The great, solemn, last warning message of Christ's second coming is now being presented in more than 900 languages and dialects. Nearly 95 percent of the world's population has access to this message. Before Jesus' second coming, every person in the world will be warned of His soon return. People will be lost only if they reject the warning message.

K. A turning to spiritism

"In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits." 1 Timothy 4:1. "They are the spirits of devils." Revelation 16:14.

People today, including a vast number of the heads of nations, seek counsel from psychics, channelers, and spiritualists. Spiritism has invaded the churches, as well, with the false teaching of the immortality of the soul. The Bible teaches that the dead are dead.

We are living in the final moments of time.

11. Just how near is the Lord's second coming?

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." Matthew 24:32-34.

Answer: The Bible is very specific and plain on this point. The signs have almost all been fulfilled. We cannot know the exact day and hour of Christ's return (Matthew 24:36), but we can be confident that we are the people who will live to see Jesus return. God has promised to finish things very quickly now and cut the work short (Romans 9:28). Christ is coming back to this earth for His people very soon. Are you ready?

What appears to be Jesus in a seance chamber is one of Satan's impersonating demons.

12. Satan is telling many falsehoods regarding the second coming of Christ and, with lying wonders and miracles, will deceive millions. How can I be certain I will not be deceived?

"They are the spirits of devils, working miracles." Revelation 16:14.

"And shall shew great signs and wonders insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Matthew 24:24.

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Answer: Satan has invented many false

teachings about the second coming and is deceiving millions into believing that Christ has already come or that He will come in some non-biblical manner. But Christ has warned us of Satan's strategy, saying, "Take heed that no man deceive you." Matthew 24:4. He then exposes Satan's plans and falsehoods so we will be forewarned, and He reminds us, "Behold, I have told you before." Matthew 24:25. For example, Jesus stated specifically that He will not appear in the desert or come to the seance chambers (verse 26). There is no reason to be deceived if we learn what God's book teaches about Christ's second coming.

The acid test is this: What does the Bible teach about it? People who know what the Bible says about the second coming will not be led astray by Satan. All others will be deceived.

We must not become so busy that we have not time for Christ.

13. How can I be certain to be ready when Jesus comes back?

"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37.

"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." John 1:12.

"I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." Hebrews 8:10.

"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:57.

Answer: Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door [this door represents the human mind or heart], and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in." Revelation 3:20. Through the Holy Spirit and my conscience, Jesus knocks and asks to come into my heart so that He can change my life. If I unreservedly turn my life over to Him, He will erase all my sins of the past (Romans 3:25) and give me the power to live a godly life (John 1:12). As a free gift, He bestows upon me His own righteous character so I can stand unafraid before a holy God when my life is changed by Jesus. Then doing His will becomes a pleasure. It is so simple that many doubt its reality. But it's true. My part is simply to give my life to Christ and let Him live within me. His part is to work the mighty miracle

within me that changes my life and prepares me for His second coming. It is a free gift. I need only to accept it.

14. Of what great danger does Christ solemnly warn?

"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Matthew 24:44.

"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." Luke 21:34.

"But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matthew 24:37.

Answer: There is great danger in becoming so busy with the cares of this life or so entranced by the pleasures of sin that the coming of the Lord may slip up on us as the Flood did on the world in Noah's day, and we will be surprised, unprepared, and lost. This will be the experience of millions. How is it with you? Jesus is coming back very, very soon--in our present day. Are you ready? Nothing else matters.

15. I am planning to be ready when Jesus returns.

Answer:

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Isn't the great tribulation yet to come?

It is true that a terrible tribulation will cover the earth just before Jesus returns to deliver His people. Daniel describes it as "a time of trouble, such as never was." Daniel 12:1. In context, though, the "great tribulation" of Matthew 24:21 refers to the awful persecution of God's people during the Dark Ages. Millions were slain for their faith at that time.

2. Since the Lord is coming "as a thief in the night," how can anyone know anything about it?

The answer is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4: "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in

darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." Notice, the day of the Lord comes as a thief to the unprepared, but not to those who are called "brethren."

3. When will Christ set up His kingdom upon the earth?

After the great 1,000-year period of Revelation 20. The 1,000-year period begins at the second coming of Christ, when Jesus takes the righteous from this earth to heaven to live and reign with Him "a thousand years." Revelation 20:4. At the close of the 1,000 years "the holy city, new Jerusalem" (Revelation 21:2) comes down from heaven to the earth with all the saints (Zechariah 14:1, 4, 5) and the wicked dead of all ages are raised to life (Revelation 20:5). They surround the holy city to capture it (Revelation 20:9), and fire comes down from God out of heaven and devours them. This fire purifies the earth and burns up all traces of sin and sinners (2 Peter 3:10).

Finally the fire goes out (Isaiah 47:14), leaving only ashes (Malachi 4:3). Then God creates a new earth (2 Peter 3:13; Isaiah 65:17;

Revelation 21:1) and gives it to the righteous, and "God ... will dwell with them, ... and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." Revelation 21:3. Perfect, holy, happy beings, restored once again to the perfect image of God, will at last be at home in a sinless, spotless world as God originally planned. Only the most foolish person would choose to miss this.

4. Why don't we hear more preaching and teaching today regarding Christ's second coming?

The devil is responsible. He well knows that the second coming is the "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13) of the Christian, and that once understood, it changes the lives of men and women and leads them to take a personal, diligent, active part in spreading that good news to others so that Christ's coming may be hastened. This infuriates Satan, so he influences those who have "a form of godliness" (2 Timothy 3:5) but deny "the power thereof" to scoff, saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning." 2 Peter 3:3, 4. Those who deny, ignore, or make light of Christ's second advent (as a literal, soon-coming event) are specifically fulfilling Bible prophecy- and doing the devil a very great service.

5. But wasn't Jesus speaking of the secret rapture when He said in Luke 17:36, "One shall be taken, and the other left"?

No. There is not the slightest indication that the event is secret. Jesus was describing Noah's flood and the destruction of Sodom. (See Luke 17:26-37.) He told how God spared Noah and Lot and destroyed the wicked. He says specifically that the flood and fire "destroyed them all." Verses 27, 29. Plainly, in each case, a few were taken to safety and the rest were destroyed. Then He added, "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." Verse 30. To illustrate, Jesus continued, "Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left." Verse 36. There is nothing secret about it. "Every eye shall see Him." Revelation 1:7. At His second coming, Christ publicly and openly takes the righteous up into the clouds (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17) and slays the wicked (Isaiah 11:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:8). That's why Luke 17:37 speaks of the bodies of the wicked and mentions the eagles (or vultures) gathered around them. (See also Revelation 19:17, 18.) The wicked who are left behind at Christ's coming are left dead.

QUIZ QUESTIONS

1. At His second coming (1)
Christ will arrive privately and visit certain cities of the earth.
Christ will appear in the desert.
Christ will remain in the clouds and call the righteous up to meet Him in the air.
2. When Jesus returns to this earth (1)
Only the righteous will see Him.
Every eye will see Him.
People will not know it until it is announced on TV.
3. What will happen to the righteous at Christ's second coming? (2)
Righteous dead will be raised, given immortality, caught up into clouds, and taken to heaven.

Righteous living will be given immortality, caught up into clouds, and taken to heaven.

Righteous will stay here and convert the wicked.

Righteous will be secretly snatched away.

4. On the basis of biblical signs, Christ's coming is most likely to occur (1)
Very, very soon!
Several hundred years from now.
In the mid-21st century.
5. The wicked who are living when Jesus returns will be (1)
Placed in hell, where they burn forever.
Slain at His second coming.
Spared and given another chance.
6. Check the statements below that tell the truth about Christ's second coming:
(4)
He will come secretly.
The second coming is the experience of conversion.
He will come in the clouds.
Christ comes for us at the hour of our death.
The wicked will not see Him.
All the angels will be with Him.
He will not actually touch the earth.
It is possible to know the day and hour of His coming.
Millions will be surprised and lost.
7. At Christ's second coming (1)
The whole world will be ready and waiting.
There will be a devastating, worldwide earthquake.
The wicked will be converted.
8. Mark all statements that are true signs of the last days of earth: (7)
The world will get better and better.
Strife between capital and labor.
Fewer earthquakes, storms, etc.

Falling away from Bible truth.
Lower divorce rate.
Craze for pleasure.
Moral degeneracy.
A great drop in the crime rate.
Great famines.
Increase of knowledge.
Unrest and upheaval.

9. Which signs in the heavens are signs of Christ's return? (2)

Haley's comet.
The dark day of 1780.
The falling stars of November 1833.
The moon falling to the earth.

10. How do we know that Jesus is coming back to earth very soon? (1)

The Bible gives signs and perfect descriptions of the last days Because so many people believe that Jesus is coming soon.
Some fortune tellers predict it.

11. Millions will be deceived regarding the manner and time of Christ's return because (1)

God does not want all to be saved.
They do not give large enough offerings.
They do not study their Bibles to find the truth of the matter.

12. I can be ready for Christ's return if (1)

Jesus lives within me.
I read the newspaper daily.
I do what my minister suggests

Purity & Power!

Lesson 9

Are you tired of hurting your loved ones and wounding your conscience? Do you live in constant regret for your past mistakes? Have you ever wished you could take a bath and come out clean inside and out? Then we have great news for you... you can! God has a plan that can totally wash all your sins away and supercharge your character - preposterous? Not at all! Christ says, "We are buried with him by baptism" (Romans 6:4). When you accept Christ, the old life dies and the Lord promises to forget all our sins! Not only that, He can help you overcome every sinful habit in your life. Did you know the cross is mentioned 28 times in the Bible, but baptism is mentioned 97 times? It must be pretty important then, and no wonder, because it signifies a new life with the haunting, sinful past buried and forgotten forever. Read the Bible's amazing facts on this incredible subject... you'll never be the same!

This verse makes it clear that baptism is necessary for salvation.

1. Is baptism really essential?

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16:16.

Answer: Yes, indeed! How could any language or words make it plainer?

Circumstances made it a human impossibility for the thief on the cross to be baptized.

2. But the thief on the cross was not baptized, so why should I be?

"For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." Psalms 103:14.

Answer: Neither did he restore what he had stolen, as the Lord specifically directs in Ezekiel 33:15. God holds us accountable for what we can do, but He also recognizes the limitations of "dust." He will not require a physical impossibility. Could the thief have come down from the cross, he immediately would have been baptized. This is the only example in the Bible of an exception to this rule. God wanted to make certain that no one would be presumptuous in refusing baptism.

Only ONE method of baptism is biblical, not 14.

3. There are many ordinances called baptism. Isn't any one of these acceptable, provided a person is sincere and earnest about it?

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism." Ephesians 4:5.

Answer: No! There is only one true baptism. All other so-called baptisms are counterfeits.

Note: The devil's "buffet" plan for baptism says, "Take your pick. The method of baptism doesn't matter. It is the spirit that counts." But the Bible says, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." Ephesians 4:5. It also says, "Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord." Jeremiah 38:20.

Jesus was baptized by immersion.

4. How was Jesus baptized?

"Jesus ... was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened." Mark 1:9, 10.

Answer: By immersion! Notice that after the ordinance, He came "up out of the water." Jesus was baptized "in Jordan," not on the bank, as many believe. John always found a place to baptize where "there was much water" (John 3:23), so it would be deep enough. The Bible commands us to follow Jesus' example (1 Peter 2:21). Any baptism other than immersion breaks this command. The word "baptism" comes from the Greek word "baptizo." It means "to dip under or submerge or immerse." There are eight different Greek words in the New Testament used to describe the application of liquids. But among these various words--meaning to sprinkle, to pour, or to immerse-- only the one meaning "to immerse" (baptizo) is used to describe baptism.

Philip baptized the Ethiopian by immersion.

5. But didn't the disciples or the apostles change the method of baptism?

"They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip." Acts 8:38, 39.

Answer: No! Please notice that Philip, a leader in the early church, baptized the treasurer of Ethiopia by immersion precisely as John baptized Jesus. And the apostle Paul warned that any who teach contrary to what Jesus taught should be "accursed." Galatians 1:8. No person--no matter how godly--is authorized to change God's words and commands.

All forms of baptism other than immersion come from people rather than Scripture.

6. Since Jesus and the disciples baptized by immersion, who introduced these other so-called baptisms which exist today?

"In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Matthew 15:9.

Answer: Misguided men introduced other forms of baptism in direct contradiction of God's Word. Jesus says, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." Matthew 15:3, 6. Worship that follows human teaching is "vain." Just think of it! The sacred ordinance of baptism has been changed and made of little consequence during truth's hazardous journey through the centuries. No wonder the Bible exhorts us to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Jude 3.

There are three simple things a person must do prior to baptism.

7. What must a person do to prepare for baptism?

Answer:

A. Learn God's requirements. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them ... Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Matthew 28:19, 20.

B. Believe the truth of God's Word. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Mark 16:16.

C. Repent of and turn away from his sins and experience conversion. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Acts 2:38. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Acts 3:19.

When I am baptized, I affirm my belief in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

8. What is the meaning of baptism?

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Romans 6:4-6.

Answer: It represents the believer following Christ into His death, burial, and resurrection. The symbolism is perfect and filled with deep meaning. In baptism the eyes are closed, hands are folded, and breath is suspended as in death. Then comes burial in the water and resurrection from the watery grave to a new life in Christ. When raised from the water, the eyes open and the candidate begins breathing again and mingles with friends, a complete likeness of resurrection. The great difference between Christianity and every other religion is simply the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. In these three acts is made possible all that God desires to do for us. To keep these three vital acts alive in the minds of Christians until the end of time, the Lord instituted baptism by immersion as a memorial.

There is no symbolism of death, burial, and resurrection in other forms of baptism. Only immersion fulfills the meaning of Romans 6:4-6.

Death to sin. Old life buried in the waters. Raised a new person in Christ.

New Christians are like toddlers learning to walk. They sometimes slip and fall.

9. But a person shouldn't be baptized until he is certain he will never slip and fall, should he?

"If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." 2 Corinthians 8:12.

Answer: This is like saying a baby should never try to walk until certain that he will never slip and fall. A Christian is a newborn "babe" in Christ. This is why the experience of conversion is called "the new birth." The ugly, sinful past no longer exists for a child of God.

A person's sinful past is forgiven and forgotten by God at conversion. And baptism symbolizes the burial of that old life. We begin the Christian life as babies, rather than adults, and God judges us on our attitude and the trend of our life, rather than on a few slips and falls that we may experience as immature Christians.

Baptism is a glorious event because it symbolizes the burial of the old life of sin and the beginning of a new life in Christ.

10. Why is baptism an urgent matter for a converted sinner?

"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Answer: Baptism is a public testimony that the repentant sinner has been forgiven and cleansed by Jesus (1 John 1:9) and that his sinful, traitorous past is behind him. No incriminating evidence against a person exists after conversion.

Men and women today stagger and struggle along under heavy loads of guilt and sin. This contamination and burden is so devastating to the human personality that people will go to almost any length to achieve a sense of forgiveness and cleansing. Many have been driven to the psychiatrist's couch, where human beings earnestly

attempt to assist other human beings. But the real help is found in coming to Christ, who says to all who approach Him, "I will be thou clean." Matthew 8:3. Not only does He cleanse, but He crucifies the old nature of sin within you. Burial in the water of baptism symbolizes the burial of the ugly corpse of the old sinful life. The ordinance is of utmost importance because it publicly represents the most stupendous provisions ever made for people.

Philip baptized the Ethiopian treasurer the same day he accepted Christ as his Saviour.

11. How long does it take to prepare for baptism?

Answer: That depends on the person. Some grasp things more quickly than others. But in most cases, preparation can be made in short order. Here are some Bible examples:

- A. Ethiopian treasurer (Acts 8:26-39)baptized same day he heard truth.
- B. Philippian jailer and his family (Acts 16:23-34)baptized same night they heard truth.
- C. Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:1-18)baptized three days after Jesus spoke to him on the road to Damascus.
- D. Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48)baptized same day he heard truth.

At conversion, God:

- 1. Forgives and forgets our past.
- 2. Miraculously transforms us into new spiritual beings.
- 3. Adopts us as His own sons and daughters.

Certainly no truly converted person would want to delay baptism, which publicly pays tribute to Jesus for working all these miracles.

God is pleased with people who are baptized by immersion. Is He pleased with your baptism?

12. How does God feel about the baptism of a converted person?

Answer: He said at His Son's baptism, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matthew 3:17. So, today, God is well pleased when a person is baptized by immersion in harmony with His command. Those who love the Lord will always strive to please Him (1 John 3:22; 1 Thessalonians 4:1). Is God pleased with your baptism?

Baptism is the official entry into God's church. Being baptized without joining God's church is unbiblical.

13. Can a person experience true baptism without becoming a member of God's church?

Answer: No! God clearly outlines this. Notice the steps:

- A. All are called into one body. "Ye are called in one body." Colossians 3:15.
- B. The church is the body. "He is the head of the body, the church." Colossians 1:18.
- C. We enter that body by baptism. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." 1 Corinthians 12:13.
- D. God's converted people are added to the church. "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Acts 2:47.

If Jesus is speaking to you about baptism, do not put it off. Baptism is a public expression of your desire to follow God fully.

14. Notice four things that baptism does not do:

Answer:

First

Baptism itself does not change the heart of man it is a symbol of the change that has taken place. A man might be baptized without faith, without repentance, and without a new heart. He might even be immersed after the example of Jesus, but he would simply come up a wet sinner instead of a dry one, still without faith, without repentance, without a new heart. Baptism cannot make a new person. Neither can it change or regenerate anyone. It is the transforming power of the Holy Spirit that changes the heart in conversion. One must be born of the Spirit as well as born of water.

Second

Baptism does not necessarily make a person feel better. It doesn't necessarily change his feelings. Some people are disappointed because they do not feel different after baptism. Salvation is a matter not of feeling, but of faith and obedience.

Third

Baptism does not remove temptations. The devil is not through with a person when he is baptized. But Jesus is the helper of every believer. He says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Hebrews 13:5. No temptation will come without a way of escape. This is the promise of Scripture (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Fourth

Baptism does not guarantee salvation. It is not a magical rite. Salvation comes only as a free gift from Jesus Christ when one experiences the new birth. Baptism is a symbol of true conversion, and unless conversion precedes baptism, the ceremony is meaningless.

15. Jesus asks you to be baptized by immersion as a symbol that your sins have been washed away. Would you like to plan for this sacred ordinance soon?

Answer:

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Is it ever proper to be baptized more than once?

Yes, Acts 19:1-5 shows that the Bible endorses rebaptism in certain cases.

2. Should infants be baptized?

No! No one should be baptized unless he (1) knows the truth of God, (2) believes it, (3) has repented, and (4) has experienced conversion. No baby could possibly qualify here. No one has a right to baptize a baby. In fact, to do so completely disregards God's direct commands regarding baptism.

Misguided men in the church years ago decreed that unbaptized babies are lost, but this is scripturally untrue. It defames God as an unjust tyrant who would destroy innocent infants who died, simply because unworthy parents failed to have baptism administered. Such a teaching is tragic beyond words! It is bad enough to sprinkle babies and call it baptism. It is infinitely worse to hold to the unscriptural concept that babies are lost eternally because careless parents failed to do their duty.

3. Isn't baptism just a matter of personal opinion?

Yes, but not your opinion or mine. It's Christ's opinion that matters. Christ says baptism is important to Him. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:5. To refuse baptism is to refuse the direct counsel of God (Luke 7:29, 30).

4. How old should one be to qualify for baptism?

Old enough to understand the difference between wrongdoing and right-doing, and to make an intelligent decision to surrender to Christ and follow Him.

Many children are ready for baptism at 9 or 10 years of age, some at 7 or 8. And some are not ready at 12 or 13. No age level is specified in the Bible, because children have different levels of experience and understanding.

Some are ready for baptism earlier than others.

5. Can baptism in and of itself save you?

No! But refusing baptism can cause one to be lost, because it means disobedience. Salvation is for "all them that obey Him." Hebrews 5:9.

6. Isn't baptism of the Holy Spirit all that is necessary?

No! The Bible shows in Acts 10:44-48 that water baptism is necessary, even when the baptism of the Holy Spirit has preceded it.

7. Shouldn't we be baptized in Jesus' name only?

In Matthew 28:19, we are told to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. These are Jesus' words, and we consider them very sacred. In the book of Acts, we find the new believers were baptized in the name of Jesus. Identifying Jesus as the Christ and Messiah was present truth for the people of that day; therefore, it was crucial for them to be baptized in His name. We believe it is very important for today as well. Combining the testimonies of Matthew with the book of Acts, we baptize people in the name of the Father, and the Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost. Following this method prevents exalting one Scripture above another.

8. There is one sin I do not wish to surrender. Should I be baptized?

No! Obviously you are not ready to be buried in the baptismal waters, because the old life of sin is not dead. It would be a criminal act for a funeral director to bury someone who is not dead and equally serious for a minister to baptize one whose old sinful life is not dead.

9. Can you explain Galatians 3:27?

Here God compares baptism to marriage. The person who is baptized thus publicly acknowledges that he has taken Christ's name (Christian), just as a bride publicly announces the taking of her husband's name at the time of the wedding. In baptism, as with marriage, several rules always apply:

- A. It should never be entered into unless true love rules supreme.
- B. It should never be entered into unless the candidate has determined to be faithful through thick and thin.
- C. It should be approached with full understanding.
- D. It should not be unduly delayed.

QUIZ QUESTIONS

1. The Bible tells us there is one Lord, one faith, and (1)
15 baptisms.
5 baptisms.

12 baptisms.
One baptism.

2. Did Jesus teach the necessity of baptism? (1)
Yes.
No.
3. Jesus was baptized by (1)
Pouring.
Sprinkling.
Immersion.
4. The word "baptize" means to (1)
Be happy.
Sprinkle Pour.
Dip under, or immerse.
5. The many counterfeit baptisms of today were given to us by (1)
Christ.
The apostles.
Misguided men.
6. Mark the things a person should do to prepare for baptism: (4)
Read the Bible through five times.
Believe the truth.
Experience conversion.
Pray for 10 days straight.
Spend 40 days fasting.
Learn God's requirements.
Repent of and forsake sin.
7. Baptism is a symbol of (1)

The creation of the world.
The Bible.
Heaven.
Christ's death, burial, & resurrection.
The angels.

8. A newly baptized Christian is a (1)
Spiritual baby.
Spiritual adult.
9. Baptism, when entered into with prayer, sincerity, and understanding (1)
Publicly acknowledges conversion.
Means no more than going swimming.
Assures a person he will never be tempted again.
10. Is infant baptism scriptural? (1)
Yes.
No.
11. Some children are ready for baptism earlier than others. (1)
True.
False.
12. Is it always necessary for a person to take many weeks or months to prepare for baptism? (1)
Yes.
No.
13. Can a person experience true baptism without becoming a member of the church? (1)
Yes.
No.

Are The Dead Really Dead?

Death just might be one of the most misunderstood subjects today. To many it is enshrouded in mystery and evokes dreaded feelings of fear, uncertainty, and even hopelessness. Others

believe that their deceased loved ones are not dead at all, but instead live with them or in other realms! Still others are confused about the relationship between the body, spirit, and soul. But does it really matter what you believe? Yes... absolutely! Because what you believe about the dead will have a profound impact on what happens to you in the end-times. There's no room for guessing, so this Study Guide will give you exactly what God says on this subject. Get ready for a real eye-opener

Adam was created by God in the beginning.

1. How did we get here in the first place?

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Genesis 2:7.

Answer: God made us from dust in the beginning.

The spirits of both the righteous and the wicked return to God. Their bodies return to dust.

2. What happens when a person dies?

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Ecclesiastes 12:7.

Answer: The body turns to dust again, and the spirit goes back to God, who gave it. The spirit of every person who dies--whether righteous or wicked--returns to God at death.

There is nothing mysterious about the spirit that returns to God at death. It is the breath of life.

3. What is the "spirit" that returns to God at death?

"The body without the spirit ["breath," see margin] is dead." James 2:26. "The spirit of God ["the breath which God gave him," see margin] is in my nostrils." Job 27:3.

Answer: The spirit that returns to God at death is the breath of life. Nowhere in all of God's book does the "spirit" have any life, wisdom, or feeling after a person dies. It is the "breath of life" and nothing more.

These four people are four souls.

4. What is a "soul"?

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Genesis 2:7.

Answer: A soul is a living being. A soul is always a combination of two things: body plus breath. A soul cannot exist unless body and breath are combined. God's Word teaches that we are souls.

5. Do souls die?

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Ezekiel 18:20. "Every living soul died in the sea." Revelation 16:3.

Answer: According to God's Word, souls do die! We are souls, and souls die. Man is mortal (Job 4:17). Only God is immortal (1 Timothy 6:15, 16). The concept of an undying, immortal soul goes against the Bible, which teaches that souls are subject to death.

6. Do good people go to heaven when they die?

"All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth." John 5:28, 29. "David ... is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day."

"For David is not ascended into the heavens." Acts 2:29, 34. "If I wait, the grave is mine house." Job 17:13.

Answer: No, people do not go either to heaven or hell at death. They go to their graves to await the resurrection day.

7. How much does one know or comprehend after death?

"The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun." "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10. "The dead praise not the Lord." Psalms 115:17.

Answer: God says that the dead know absolutely nothing!

Though millions think it is possible, the dead cannot communicate with the living.

8. But can't the dead communicate with the living, and aren't they aware of what the living are doing?

"So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep." "His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them." Job 14:12, 21. "Neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun." Ecclesiastes 9:6.

Answer: No, the dead cannot contact the living, nor do they know what the living are doing. They are dead. Their thoughts have perished (Psalms 146:4).

Jesus calls death "sleep." It is a state of total unconsciousness.

9. Jesus called the unconscious state of the dead "sleep" in John 11:11-14. How long will they sleep?

"So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep." Job 14:12.

"The day of the Lord will come ... in the which the heavens shall pass away." 2 Peter 3:10.

Answer: The dead will sleep until the great day of the Lord at the end of the world. In death, humans are totally unconscious with no activity or knowledge of any kind.

The righteous will be raised to life and given immortality at Jesus' second coming.

10. What happens to the righteous dead at the second coming of Christ?

"Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:12. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, ... and the dead in Christ shall rise ... and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. "We shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, ... and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. For this

corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.

Answer: They will be rewarded. They will be raised, given immortal bodies, and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. There would be no purpose in a resurrection if people were taken to heaven at death.

The devil's first lie to Eve was "You won't die" - a statement completely contrary to all Scripture.

11. What was the devil's first lie?

"And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die." Genesis 3:4. "That old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan." Revelation 12:9. Answer: Satan told Eve that sin would not bring death. "Ye shall not surely die," he said.

Those who believe the dead are alive become easy targets for the devil's deceptions.

12. Why did the devil lie to Eve about death? Could this subject be more important than many think?

Answer: It is one of the cornerstones of the devil's kingdom. He has worked powerful miracles down through the ages through people who claim to receive their power from the spirits of the dead. (Examples: Magicians of Egypt Exodus 7:11, Woman of Endor 1 Samuel 28:3-25, Sorcerers Daniel 2:2, A certain damsel Acts 16:16-18.)

A Solemn Warning

In the end-time Satan will again use sorcery as he did in Daniel's day to deceive the world (Revelation 18:23). Sorcery is a supernatural agency that claims to receive its power and wisdom from the spirits of the dead.

Posing as Jesus' Disciples

Posing as godly loved ones who have died, saintly clergymen who are now dead, Bible prophets, or even the apostles or disciples of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:13), Satan and his angels will deceive billions. Those who believe the dead are alive, in any form, will most assuredly be deceived.

All miracle working is not from God, because devils also work miracles.

13. Do devils really work miracles?

"They are the spirits of devils, working miracles." Revelation 16:14. "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Matthew 24:24. Answer: Yes, indeed! Devils work incredibly convincing miracles (Revelation 13:13, 14). Satan and his angels will appear as angels of light (2 Corinthians 11:14) and, even more shocking, as Christ Himself (Matthew 24:23, 24). The universal feeling will be that Christ and His angels are leading out in a fantastic worldwide revival. The entire emphasis will seem so spiritual and be so supernatural that only God's elect will not be deceived.

The elect will not be deceived, because they firmly reject everything that is contrary to Scripture.

14. Why will God's people not be deceived?

"They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Acts 17:11. "If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20.

Answer: God's people will know from their earnest study of His book that the dead are dead, not alive. Spirits of the dead do not exist. Therefore, God's people will reject all miracle workers and teachers who claim to receive special "light" or work miracles by contacting the spirits of the dead. And God's people will likewise reject as dangerous and false all teachings that claim the dead are alive in any form, anywhere.

In Moses' day, people who claimed power to communicate with the dead were stoned to death.

15. Back in Moses' day, what did God command should be done to people who taught that the dead were alive?

"A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones." Answer: God insisted that wizards and others with "familiar spirits" (who claimed to be able to contact the dead) should be stoned to death. This shows how God regards the false teaching that the dead are alive.

No one in God's new kingdom will ever die. Death will cease at the destruction of Satan.

16. Will the righteous people who are raised in the resurrection ever die again?

"They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, ... Neither can they die any more." Luke 20:35, 36. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." Revelation 21:4.

Answer: No! Death, sorrow, crying, and tragedy will never enter into God's new kingdom.

Reincarnation is impossible. Because God says all who died, both good and evil, are in their graves.

17. Belief in reincarnation is expanding rapidly today. Is this teaching biblical?

"The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing
Neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun." Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6.

Answer: Almost half the people on earth believe in reincarnation, a teaching that the soul never dies but is instead continually reborn in a different kind of body with each succeeding generation. This teaching, however, is contrary to Scripture.

The Bible Says

After death a person: returns to dust (Psalms 104:29), knows nothing (Ecclesiastes 9:5), possesses no mental powers (Psalms 146:4), has nothing to do with anything on earth (Ecclesiastes 9:6), does not live (2 Kings 20:1), waits in the grave (Job 17:13), and continues not (Job 14:1, 2)

Satan's Invention

We learned in questions 11 and 12 that Satan invented the teaching that the dead are alive. Reincarnation, channeling, communication with spirits, spirit worship, and the "undying soul" are all inventions of Satan, with one aim to convince people that when you die you are not really dead. When people believe that the dead are alive, "spirits of devils, working miracles" (Revelation 16:14) and posing as spirits of the dead will be able to deceive and lead them astray virtually 100 percent of the time (Matthew 24:24).

Those who insist on Scripture proof for all doctrines will not be led astray by Satan.

18. I am thankful for the Bible, which tells us the truth on this sensitive subject of death.

Answer:

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Didn't the thief on the cross go to paradise with Christ the day He died? No. In fact, on Sunday morning Jesus said to Mary, "I am not yet ascended to my Father." John 20:17. This shows that Christ did not go to heaven at death. Also note that the punctuation of the Bible is not inspired, but was added by men. The comma in Luke 23:43 should be placed after the words "to day" rather than before, so the passage should read, "Verily I say unto thee to day, shalt thou be with me in paradise." Or, "I'm telling you today--when it seems that I can save no one, when I myself am being crucified as a criminal--I give you the assurance today that you will be with me in paradise." Christ's kingdom is set up at His second coming (Matthew 25:31), and all the righteous of all ages will enter it at that time (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17) and not at death.

2. Doesn't the Bible speak of the "undying," "immortal" soul?

No, the undying, immortal soul is not mentioned in the Bible. The word "immortal" is found only once in the Bible, and it is in reference to God (1 Timothy 1:17).

3. At death the body returns to dust and the spirit (or breath) returns to God. But where does the soul go?

It goes nowhere. Instead, it simply ceases to exist. Two things must be combined to make a soul: body and breath. When the breath departs, the soul ceases to exist because it is a combination of two things. When you turn off a light, where does the light go? It doesn't go anywhere. It just ceases to exist. Two things must combine to make a light: a bulb and electricity. Without the combination, a light is impossible. So with the soul; unless body and breath are combined, there can be no soul. There is no such thing as a disembodied soul.

4. Does the word "soul" ever mean anything other than a living being?

Yes, it may mean also (1) life itself, or (2) the mind, or intellect. No matter which meaning is intended, the soul is still a combination of two things (body and breath), and it ceases to exist at death.

5. Can you explain John 11:26, which says, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die"?

This refers not to the first death, which all people die (Hebrews 9:27), but to the second death, which only the wicked die and from which there is no resurrection (Revelation 2:11; 21:8).

6. Matthew 10:28 says, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." Doesn't this prove that the soul is undying?

No, it proves the opposite. The last half of the same verse proves that souls do die. It says, "But rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." The word "soul" here means life and refers to eternal life, which is a gift (Romans 6:23) that will be given to the righteous at the last day (John 6:54). No one can take away the eternal life that God bestows. (See also Luke 12:4, 5.)

7. Doesn't 1 Peter 4:6 say the gospel was preached to dead people?

No, it says the gospel "was" preached to those who "are" dead. They are dead now, but the gospel "was" preached to them while they were yet living.

8. What about the souls crying out from under the altar in Revelation 6:9, 10? Doesn't this show that souls do not die?

No. This cry was figurative, as was the cry of Abel's blood (Genesis 4:10). The word "soul" here means people (or living beings) who had been slain for their faith. Surely no one believes that souls who die literally lie under the altar, nor do people believe that the righteous beg God to punish their enemies. Rather, the righteous beg for mercy for their enemies, as Christ did on the cross (Luke 23:34).

9. Doesn't the Bible say Christ went and preached to lost souls in hell between His crucifixion and resurrection?

No, the Bible passage in question is 1 Peter 3:18-20. The preaching was done "by the Spirit" (verse 18) in Noah's day--to people who were then living (verses 19, 20). The "spirits in prison" refers to people whose lives were in bondage to Satan. (See Psalms 142:7; Isaiah 42:6, 7; 61:1; and Luke 4:18.)

QUIZ QUESTIONS

1. The Bible speaks of death as (1)
A sleep.
A change to a different form of life.
An inexplicable mystery.
2. The "spirit" that returns to God at death is (1)
A person's real inner self.
The soul.
The breath of life.
3. A person who dies goes to (1)
Heaven or hell.
The grave.

Purgatory.

4. A soul is (1)
A person's spiritual nature.
The undying part of a person.
A living being.
5. Do souls die? (1)
Yes.
No.
6. When are the righteous rewarded? (1)
In this life.
At death.
At the second coming of Christ.
7. Why does Satan try to deceive people by telling them the dead are not dead?
(1)
So they will believe his miracles and be deceived and lost.
Because he feels sorry for them.
Because he is just mean and wicked.
8. Individuals who "communicate" with the dead are actually talking with (1)
Immortal souls.
Holy angels.
Evil spirits impersonating the deceased.
9. In Moses' day God commanded that all who taught that the dead are alive be
(1)
Made priests.
Honored for their wisdom.
Killed.
10. How can a person be sure he is safe and right? (1)
Ask God for a special sign from heaven.
Do what the preacher or minister says to do.

Study the Bible prayerfully and carefully and follow it.

11. When a person dies (1)

His spirit, or soul, remains alive.

He is able to observe the living and contact them.

He is dead in every way--the body dies, the soul ceases to exist, and no contact with the living is possible.

12. Are miracles proof that something is of God? (1)

Yes. Only God can work miracles.

No. The devil also works great miracles.

Is The Devil In Charge Of Hell?

Well? Does God really keep the devil on His payroll - is he the chief superintendent of hell measuring out the punishment of the lost? Nearly the entire world holds a very unbiblical view about hell, and you owe it to yourself to know what the Bible really says about it. Don't be fooled, because what you think about hell certainly affects what you think about God's character! Take a few moments to get the amazing facts you need to know today! The wicked will not be punished until after the judgment.

1. How many lost souls are being punished in hell today?

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." 2 Peter 2:9.

Answer: There is not one single soul in hellfire today. The Bible says that God reserves, or holds back, the wicked until the day of judgment to be punished.

Sinners will be cast into hellfire at the end of the world -- not when they die.

2. When will sinners be cast into hellfire?

"So shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire." Matthew 13:40-42. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." John 12:48.

Answer: Sinners will be cast into hellfire at the great judgment day at the end of the world--not when they die. God would not punish a person in fire until his case was tried and decided in court at the end of the world. Nor would God burn a murderer who died 5,000 years ago 5,000 years longer than one who dies and deserves punishment for the same sin today.

All who have died, both good and evil, are in their graves awaiting the resurrection.

3. Where are sinners (who have died) now?

"The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28, 29. "The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction." "Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb." Job 21:30, 32.

Answer: The Bible is specific. Both the wicked and the righteous who have died are in their graves "sleeping" until the resurrection day.

Jesus died to save us from our sins. Those who do not accept His gift of salvation will receive death.

4. What is the end result of sin?

"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." James 1:15. "God ... gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

Answer: The wages (or punishment) for sin is death, not everlasting life in hellfire. The wicked "perish," or receive "death." The righteous receive "everlasting life."

The wicked are not immortal. The Bible says they will "perish", "burn up" and "be destroyed".

5. What will happen to the wicked in hellfire?

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Revelation 21:8.

Answer: The wicked die the second death in hellfire. If the wicked lived forever being tortured in hell, they would be immortal. But this is impossible, because the Bible says God "only hath immortality." 1 Timothy 6:16. When Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden, an angel was posted to guard the tree of life so that sinners would not eat of the tree and "live for ever." Genesis 3:22-24. The teaching that sinners are immortal in hell originated with Satan and is completely untrue. God prevented this when sin entered this earth by guarding the tree of life. Bible Clear - Wicked Obliterated

The Bible says the wicked suffer "death" (Romans 6:23), will suffer "destruction" (Job 21:30), "shall perish" (Psalms 37:20), will "burn" up (Malachi 4:1), "shall be destroyed together" (Psalms 37:38), will "consume away" (Psalms 37:20), "shall be cut off" (Psalms 37:9), "shall be slain" (Psalms 62:3). God will "destroy" them (Psalms 145:20), and "fire shall devour them" (Psalms 21:9). Note that all of these references make it clear that the wicked die and are destroyed. They do not live forever in misery.

At the end of the world, fire will fall from heaven upon the wicked and devour them.

6. When and how will hellfire be kindled?

"So shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man ... shall cast them into a furnace of fire." Matthew 13:40-42. "They went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." Revelation 20:9. "The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner." Proverbs 11:31.

Answer: At the end of the world, God Himself will kindle hellfire. As the holy city comes down from God out of heaven (Revelation 21:2), the wicked attempt to capture it. At that time, God will rain down fire from heaven upon the earth, and it will devour the wicked. This fire is Bible hellfire.

Hell will be the entire world on fire. It will be 25,000 miles in circumference--its heat so great that everything on earth will be "burned up".

7. How big and how hot will hellfire be?

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." 2 Peter 3:10.

Answer: Hellfire will be just as big as this earth because it will be the earth on fire. This fire will be so hot as to melt the earth and burn up all "the works that are therein." The atmospheric heavens will explode and "pass away with a great noise." Jesus will insist upon just treatment for the wicked. Their degree of punishment will be fair and according to their works, as He promised.

8. How long will the wicked suffer in the fire?

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:12. "And then he shall reward every man according to his works." Matthew 16:27. "That servant, which knew his lord's will, and ... neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." Luke 12:47, 48.

Answer: The Bible does not tell how long the wicked will be punished before receiving death in the fire. God does specifically state, however, that all will be punished according to their deeds. This means some will receive greater punishment than others, based upon their works.

God will recreate a new world where no trace of the former evils of this world will be seen.

9. Will the fire eventually go out?

"Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it." Isaiah 47:14. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth." "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Revelation 21:1, 4.

Answer: Yes, indeed, the Bible specifically teaches that hellfire will go out and that there will not be left "a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it." The Bible also teaches that in God's new kingdom all "former things" will be passed away. Hell, being one of the former things, is included, so we have God's promise that it will be abolished.

Is God a Torturer?

If God tortured His enemies in a fiery horror chamber throughout eternity, He would be more vicious and heartless than men have ever been in the worst of war atrocities. An eternal hell of torment would be hell for God also, who loves even the vilest sinner.

The fires will burn until only ashes are left. Even the bones will be completely gone.

10. What will be left when the fire goes out?

"For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." "And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts." Malachi 4:1, 3.

Answer: Notice the verse does not say the wicked will burn like asbestos, as many today believe, but rather like stubble, which will be burned up. The little word "up" denotes completion. Nothing but ashes will be left when the fire goes out. In Psalms 37:10, 20, the Bible says the wicked will go up in smoke and be completely destroyed.

The fire from heaven will fall upon the wicked and destroy them, both body and soul.

11. Will the wicked enter hell in bodily form and be destroyed both soul and body?

"It is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." Matthew 5:30. "Rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matthew 10:28. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Ezekiel 18:20. Answer: Yes. Real, live people enter hell in bodily form and are destroyed both soul and body. The fire from God out of heaven will fall upon real people and blot them out of existence.

The devil will be completely destroyed by fire.

12. Will the devil be in charge of hellfire?

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire." Revelation 20:10. "I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. ...

And never shall thou be any more." Ezekiel 28:18, 19.

Answer: Absolutely not! The devil will be cast into the fire, and it will turn him into ashes.

13. Does the word "hell" as used in the Bible always refer to a place of burning or punishment?

Answer: No, the word "hell" is used 54 times in the Bible, and in only 12 cases does it refer to "a place of burning."

The word "hell" is translated from several different words with various meanings, as indicated below:

Note: The Greek word "Gehenna" (mentioned above) is a transliteration of the Hebrew "Ge-Hinnom," which means the "Valley of Hinnom." This valley, which lies immediately south and west of Jerusalem, was a place where dead animals,

garbage, and other refuse were dumped. Fire burned constantly, as it does at modern sanitation dump sites. The Bible uses "Gehenna" or the "Valley of Hinnom" as a symbol of the fire that will destroy the lost at the end of time. The fire of Gehenna was not unending. Otherwise it would be still burning southwest of Jerusalem today. Neither will the fire of hell be unending.

Destroying sin, sinners, and Satan is the only way to make the universe safe for eternity.

14. What is God's real purpose in hellfire?

"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matthew 25:41. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Revelation 20:15. "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be." "The enemies of the Lord ... shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away." Psalms 37:10, 20.

Answer: God's purpose is that hell will destroy the devil and all sin and sinners and make the world safe for eternity. One sinner, if left on this planet, would be a deadly virus forever threatening the universe. It is God's plan to isolate sin and blot it out of existence for all time.

Eternal Hell Would Perpetuate Sin: An eternal hell of torment would perpetuate sin and make its eradication impossible. An eternal hell of torment is not part of God's great plan at all. Such a horrible theory is slander against the holy name of a loving God. The devil delights to see our loving Creator pictured as such a monstrous tyrant, and he alone can benefit from such teachings.

Eternal Hell a Man-made Theory: The "eternal hell of torment" theory originated not from the Bible, but from misguided people who were (perhaps inadvertently) led of the devil. And, incidentally, no one will be in heaven because he feared hell. People are saved because they love and obey Christ.

Jesus will be deeply saddened when He must destroy those whom He died to save.

15. Isn't the work of destroying sinners foreign to God's nature?

"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" Ezekiel 33:11. "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Luke 9:56. "For the Lord shall rise up ... that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act." Isaiah 28:21.

Answer: Yes, the work of God has always been to save rather than destroy. The work of destroying the wicked in hellfire is so foreign to God's nature that the Bible calls it His "strange act." God's great heart will ache at the destruction of the wicked. Oh, how diligently He works to save every soul! But if one spurns His love and clings to sin, God will have no choice but to destroy the sinner with his sin when He rids the universe of that horrible, malignant growth called "sin" in the fires of the last day.

After sinners are destroyed, God will create a fantastic new earth for His people, where they will live in peace, joy, and love forever. Sin will never rise again.

16. What are God's post-hell plans for the earth and His people?

"He will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time." Nahum 1:9. "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." Isaiah 65:17. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." Revelation 21:3, 4.

Answer: After hellfire goes out, God will create a new earth and restore it to His people with all the beauties and glories of Eden before sin entered. The horrors of sin and the past will be forgotten. Pain, death, tragedy, woe, tears, sickness, disappointment, sorrow, and all sin will be banished forever. Sin Will Not Rise Again God promises that sin will never rise again. His people will be filled with perfect peace, love, joy, and contentment. Their lives of complete happiness will be far more glorious and thrilling than mere words could ever describe. The real tragedy

of hell is in missing heaven. A person who fails to enter this magnificent kingdom has made the saddest choice of a lifetime.

17. I am thankful to learn that God does not punish the wicked throughout eternity in hellfire.

Answer:

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Doesn't the Bible speak of "eternal torment"?

No, the phrase "eternal torment" does not appear in the Bible.

2. Then why does the Bible say that the wicked will be destroyed with unquenchable fire?

Unquenchable fire is fire that cannot be put out, but which goes out when it has turned everything to ashes. Jeremiah 17:27 says Jerusalem was to be destroyed with unquenchable fire, and in 2 Chronicles 36:19-21 the Bible says this fire burned the city "to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah" and left it desolate. Yet we know this fire went out, because Jerusalem is not burning today.

3. Doesn't Matthew 25:46 say the wicked will receive "everlasting punishment"? Notice the word is punishment, not punishing. Punishing would be continuous, while punishment is one act. The punishment of the wicked is death, and this death is everlasting.

4. Can you explain Matthew 10:28: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul"? The word "soul" has three meanings in the Bible: (1) a living being—Genesis 2:7, (2) the mind—Psalms 139:14, and (3) life—1 Samuel 18:1, which here refers to eternal life that God guarantees all who reach His kingdom. No one can take this away. The last part of Matthew 10:28 says both soul and body will be destroyed in hell.

5. Matthew 25:41 speaks of "everlasting fire" for the wicked. Does it go out? Yes, according to the Bible, it does. We must let the Bible explain itself. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed with everlasting, or eternal, fire (Jude 7), and that fire turned them "into ashes" as a warning to "those that after should live ungodly." 2 Peter 2:6. These cities are not burning today. The fire went out after everything was burned up. Likewise, everlasting fire will go out after it has turned the wicked

to ashes (Malachi 4:3). The effects of the fire are everlasting, but not the burning itself.

6. Doesn't the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 teach an eternal hell of torment?

No, indeed! It is simply a parable used to emphasize a point. Many facts make it clear that this is a parable. A few are as follows:

A. Abraham's bosom is not heaven (Hebrews 11:8-10, 16).

B. People in hell can't talk to those in heaven (Isaiah 65:17).

C. The dead are in their graves (Job 17:13; John 5:28, 29). The rich man was in bodily form with eyes, a tongue, etc., yet we know that the body does not go to hell at death. It is very obvious that the body remains in the grave, as the Bible says.

D. Men are rewarded at Christ's second coming, not at death (Revelation 22:11, 12).

E. The lost are punished in hell at the end of the world, not when they die (Matthew 13:40-42). The point of the story is found in verse 31 of Luke 16. Parables cannot be taken literally. If we took parables literally, then we must believe that trees talk! (See this parable in Judges 9:8-15.)

7. But the Bible speaks of the wicked being tormented "forever," doesn't it? The term "for ever," as used in the Bible, means simply a period of time, limited or unlimited. It is used 56 times in the Bible in connection with things that have already ended. (To check in a concordance, look up the word "ever.") It is like the word "tall," which means something different in describing men, trees, or mountains. In Jonah 2:6, "for ever" means "three days and nights." (See also Jonah 1:17.) In Deuteronomy 23:3, this means "10 generations." In the case of man, this means "as long as he lives" or "until death." (See 1 Samuel 1:22, 28; Exodus 21:6; Psalms 48:14.) So the wicked will burn in the fire as long as they live, or until death. This fiery punishment for sin will vary according to the degree of sins for

each individual, but after the punishment, the fire will go out. The teaching of eternal torment has done more to drive people to atheism and insanity than any other invention of the devil. It is slander upon the loving character of a tender, gracious heavenly Father and has done untold harm to the Christian cause.

QUIZ QUESTIONS

1. Sinners are cast into hellfire (1)
When they die.
At the end of the world.
By the devil.
2. The reward that sinners will receive in hellfire is (1)
Death.
Eternal torment.
Being tortured by the devil, who is in charge.
3. Hellfire (1)
Will be the whole world set on fire by God.
Is burning now.
Burns throughout the endless ages of eternity.
4. Sinners who have died are in (1)
Purgatory.
Hellfire.
Their graves.
5. The population of hell today (1)
Is exactly zero Numbers in the millions.
Cannot be determined.
6. Hellfire (1)
Destroys only the body of the wicked.
Tortures the soul of the wicked throughout eternity.
Destroys sinners -both soul and body- turning them to ashes, then goes out.

7. An eternal hell of torment (1)
Is a very important part of God's great plan.
Is the devil's doctrine and is slander upon the holy, loving name of God, who abhors seeing people suffer
Gives Satan a job throughout eternity.
8. "Hell" in the Bible (1)
Always refers to a place of burning.
Has several meanings, one of them being the grave.
Refers to Satan's subterranean torture chambers.
9. The purpose for hell is to (1)
Pay back and torture God's enemies.
Frighten people into being good.
Completely blot out sin and evil from the universe and make the righteous safe for eternity.
10. Destroying people in hell (1)
Will be a delight to the great God of heaven.
Is called God's 'strange act', because it is so foreign to His loving plan of saving people.
Will be the devil's job, in cooperation with God's plan.
11. After hellfire goes out (1)
God will banish Satan to far outer space.
God will make a perfect new earth, where sin will never rise again, and give it to His people.
The righteous will live in fear of sin's rising again.
12. The story of the rich man and Lazarus (1)
Is a parable and should not be taken literally.
Is Bible proof for the teaching of eternal torment.
Proves that souls in hell can converse with souls in heaven.
13. The term "for ever" as used in the Bible in reference to a man's life (1)

Means 'time without end'.

Is mysterious and cannot be understood.

Usually means 'a man's lifetime', or 'until he dies'.

1000 Years of Peace

Lesson 12

You can be certain that it's coming - an incredible millennium that will be ushered in after Christ's return. And the devil doesn't want you to know about his 1,000-year prison sentence because it reveals his true character. In fact, Satan has concocted a counterfeit message on the millennium to trick you! It's an awesome, fascinating study that will utterly shake everything you've ever known! Now you can have the Bible's amazing truths about the coming 1,000-year reign.

1. What event begins this 1,000-year period?

"These came to life again and reigned with Christ for a thousand years." Revelation 20:4, NEB, last part of verse.*

Answer: A resurrection begins the 1,000-year period.

*The New English Bible, (C) 1961, 1970 by the Delegates of the Oxford University Press and the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press. Used by permission.

The 1000-year period begins at the resurrection of the righteous.

2. What is this resurrection called? Who will be raised in it?

"This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." Revelation 20:5, 6.

Answer: It is called the first resurrection. The righteous people--"blessed and holy" of all ages--will be raised in it.

The 1000-year period ends at the resurrection of the wicked.

3. The Bible says there are two resurrections. When is the second resurrection, and who will be raised in it?

"The rest of the dead [those who were wicked] lived not again until the thousand years were finished." Revelation 20:5. "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; thethat have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28, 29.

Answer: The second resurrection takes place at the close of the 1,000-year period. The wicked will be raised in this resurrection. It is called the resurrection of damnation.

Please notice: The resurrection of the righteous begins the 1,000 years. The resurrection of the wicked ends the 1,000 years.

A devastating earthquake and hailstorm will strike the earth at Jesus' second coming. At that time the righteous of all ages will rise to meet Jesus in the air.

4. What other momentous events take place when the 1,000 years begin?

"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him." Revelation 1:7. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, ... and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. "And there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great." "And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent [scholarly estimates vary from 58 to 100 pounds]." Revelation 16:18, 20, 21. (See also Jeremiah 4:23-26; Isaiah 24:1, 3, 19, 20; Isaiah 2:21.)

Answer: Other momentous events that take place as the 1,000 years begin are: the most devastating earthquake and hailstorm in history strike the earth; Jesus returns in the clouds for His people; and all the saints are caught up into the air to meet Jesus.

The living wicked will be slain by the brightness of Jesus' second coming.

5. What happens to the wicked--living and dead--at Jesus' second coming?

"With the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." Isaiah 11:4. "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God." 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8. "Let the wicked perish at the presence of God." Psalms 68:2. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." Revelation 20:5.

Answer: The living wicked will be slain by the very presence of Christ at the second coming. When an angel appeared at Jesus' tomb, the entire group of Roman guards fell as dead men (Matthew 28:2, 4). When the brightness of all the angels, God the Father, and God the Son combine, the wicked will die as if hit by lightning.

The wicked already dead when Jesus returns will remain in their graves until the end of the 1,000 years.

The righteous will be in heaven with Jesus during the 1,000 years.

6. Many believe the unsaved will have an opportunity to repent during the 1,000 years. What does the Bible say about this?

"The slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground." Jeremiah 25:33. "I beheld, and, lo, there was no man." Jeremiah 4:25.

Answer: It is impossible for any person to repent during the 1,000 years because there will not be a person alive on earth. The righteous will all be in heaven. All the wicked will be lying dead upon the earth. Revelation 22:11, 12 makes it clear that the case of every person is closed before Jesus returns. Those who wait to accept Christ until the 1,000 years begin will have waited too long.

The earth, in a torn-up, darkened condition, is the "bottomless pit" where Satan will be forced to stay during the 1,000 years.

7. The Bible says that Satan will be bound in the bottomless pit during the 1,000 years. What is this pit?

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit.

And he laid

hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit ... till the thousand years should be fulfilled." Revelation 20:1-3. Answer: The word for "bottomless pit" in the original Greek is "abussos," or abyss. That same word is used in the Greek version of the Old Testament in Genesis 1:2 in connection with the creation of the earth, but there it is translated "deep." "The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." How interestingThe words "deep," "bottomless pit," and "abyss" here refer to the same thing--the earth in its totally dark, disorganized form before God made order of it. Jeremiah, in describing this earth during the 1,000 years, used virtually the same terms as these in Genesis 1:2: "without form and void," "no light," "no man," "black." Jeremiah 4:23, 25, 28. So the battered, dark earth with no people alive will be called the bottomless pit, or abyss, during the 1,000 years just as it was in the beginning before Creation was completed. Isaiah 24:22 also speaks of Satan and his angels during the 1,000 years as "gathered in the pit" and "shut up in the prison."

The earth, in a torn-up, darkened condition, is the "bottomless pit" where Satan will be forced to stay during the 1,000 years.

8. What is the chain that binds Satan? Why is he bound?

"An angel ... having ... a great chain in his hand ... laid hold on ... Satan, and bound him a thousand years, ... and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled." Revelation 20:1-3.

Answer: The chain is symbolic, a chain of circumstances. A spirit being cannot be confined with a literal chain. Satan is "tied down" because he has no people to deceive. The wicked are all dead and the righteous are all in heaven. The Lord confines the devil to this earth so he cannot roam the universe hoping to find someone to deceive. Forcing the devil to stay on the earth, alone with his demons for a thousand years with no one to deceive, will be for him the most galling chain ever forged.

REVIEW THE EVENTS OCCURRING AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 1,000 YEARS:

Devastating earthquake and hailstorm (Revelation 16:18-21 Revelation 6:14-17).

Second coming of Jesus for His saints (Matthew 24:30, 31).

Righteous dead raised to life (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

Righteous given immortality (1 Corinthians 15:51-55). Righteous given bodies like Jesus (1 John 3:2 Philippians 3:21).

All righteous caught up into the clouds (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17). Living wicked slain by the breath of the Lord's mouth (Isaiah 11:4).

Wicked in graves remain dead until the end of the 1,000 years (Revelation 20:5).

Jesus takes righteous to heaven (John 13:33, 36 14:1-3).

Satan bound (Revelation 20:1-3).

9. Revelation 20:4 says there will be a judgment in heaven during the 1,000 years. What for? Who will participate?

"I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them ... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Revelation 20:4. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? ... Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3.

Answer: The righteous of all ages (and probably even good angels) will participate in the judgment during the 1,000 years. The cases of all who are lost, including the devil and his angels, will be reviewed.

This judgment will make details regarding the lost clear to each saved person. In the end, all will see that people are shut out of heaven only if they did not really

want to live like Jesus or to be with Him. REVIEW THE EVENTS AND CONDITIONS DURING THE 1,000 YEARS:

Earth in battered condition from huge hailstones and devastating earthquake (Revelation 16:18-21 6:14-17).

Earth in total blackout/bottomless pit (Jeremiah 4:23, 28).

Satan and his angels forced to stay on the earth/bound (Revelation 20:1-3).

Righteous in heaven participating in the judgment (Revelation 20:4).

Wicked are all dead (Jeremiah 4:25 Isaiah 11:4).

During the 1,000 years, every soul who has ever lived on earth will be in one of two places: (1) on the earth, dead and lost, or (2) in heaven, taking part in the judgment. The Lord invites you to be in heaven. Please accept His invitation.

The holy city, along with all God's people, will descend to earth at the close of the 1,000 years.

10. At the close of the 1,000 years the holy city, new Jerusalem, will come down from heaven to this earth. Who will come with it? Where will it settle?

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven And I heard a

great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men."

Revelation 21:2, 3. "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh." "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof. ...

And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." "All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem." Zechariah 14:1, 4, 5, 10.

Answer: The new Jerusalem will settle where the mount of Olives now stands. The mountain will be flattened to make a great plain, upon which the city will come to rest. All of the righteous people of all ages (Zechariah 14:5), the angels of heaven (Matthew 25:31), plus God the Father (Revelation 21:2, 3) and God the Son (Matthew 25:31) will return to earth with the holy city for Jesus' special third coming. The second coming will be for His saints the third will be with His saints. Jesus' Three Advents:

1. First coming, to Bethlehem in a manger.

2. Second coming, in the clouds at the beginning of the 1,000 years to take His people to heaven.

3. Third coming, with the holy city and all righteous people at the close of the 1,000 years.

11. What will happen to the wicked dead at this time? How will this affect Satan? "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations." Revelation 20:5, 7, 8.

Answer: At the close of the 1,000 years (when Jesus comes the third time) the wicked will be raised. Satan, loosed from his bonds, will then have an earth full of people (all the nations of the world) to deceive.

After the holy city descends, the wicked people of all ages--with Satan as their leader--will attempt to capture the city.

12. What will Satan do then?

"Satan shall ... go out to deceive the nations ... of the earth, ... to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city." Revelation 20:7-9.

Answer: Satan, true to his nature, will immediately begin lying to the people left on the earth--the wicked from all ages. He will probably claim that the city is really his, that he was unjustly deposed from the heavenly kingdom, that God is power-hungry and ruthless, and that God is getting ready to wipe them all off the face of the earth with a devastating, inescapable fire. He will convince them that, if they unify, God does not have a chance. With the entire world against one city, the victory will appear certain. The nations will then unite and marshal their armies to surround the new Jerusalem.

When the wicked of the ages surround the holy city, God will destroy them with fire that falls from heaven.

13. What will interrupt Satan's plan to capture or destroy the city?

"Fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into ... the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Revelation 20:9, 10; 21:8. "The wicked ... shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts." Malachi 4:3.

Answer: Fire will suddenly come down from heaven (not up from hell, as many believe) upon the wicked and all will be turned into ashes, including the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). This fire that destroys sin and sinners is called the

second death. There is no resurrection from this death. It is final. Notice that the devil will not be tending the fire, as is commonly believed. He will be in it, and it will put him out of existence.

14. When the wicked are burned up and the fire goes out, what glorious, thrilling event will take place next?

"Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth." Isaiah 65:17. "Look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." 2 Peter 3:13. "He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." Revelation 21:5. "The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Revelation 21:3.

Answer: God will create new heavens and a new earth, and the new Jerusalem will be the capital city of the earth made new. Sin and its ugliness will be gone forever. God's people will at long last receive the kingdom promised to them. "They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Isaiah 35:10. Too fabulous to describe! Too glorious to miss! Too near for us to be unsure! God has a place prepared there for you (John 14:1-3). Plan to live in it. Jesus is waiting for your consent.

REVIEW THE EVENTS AT THE CLOSE OF THE 1,000 YEARS:

- Third coming of Jesus with His saints (Zechariah 14:5).
- Holy city settles on mount of Olives, which becomes a great plain (Zechariah 14:4, 10).
- The Father, angels, and all of the righteous come with Jesus (Revelation 21:1-3 Matthew 25:31 Zechariah 14:5).
- Wicked dead raised Satan loosed (Revelation 20:5, 7). Satan deceives entire world (Revelation 20:8).
- Wicked surround the holy city (Revelation 20:9). Wicked destroyed by fire (Revelation 20:9).
- New heavens and earth created (Isaiah 65:17 2 Peter 3:13 Revelation 21:1). God's people enjoy eternity with Christ on the new earth (Revelation 21:2-4).

FIRST RESURRECTION

AT BEGINNING OF THE 1,000 YEARS

1. Devastating earthquake and hailstorm.

SECOND RESURRECTION

AT CLOSE OF THE 1,000 YEARS

1. Third coming of Jesus with the saints.
2. Second coming of Jesus for the saints.
mount of Olives, which becomes a great plain.
3. Righteous dead raised to life.
Jesus.
4. Righteous given immortality.
5. Righteous given bodies like that of Jesus.
They surround the holy city.
6. All righteous caught up into clouds.
7. Living wicked slain by the Lord's presence.
created.
8. Wicked already in their graves remain dead.
eternity with Jesus.
9. Jesus takes righteous to heaven.
10. Satan bound.
2. Holy city descends onto the
3. Father, angels, righteous come with
4. Wicked dead raised and Satan loosed.
5. Satan deceives all nations.
6. Wicked destroyed by fire.
7. New heavens and earth
8. God's people enjoy

16. I am definitely planning to live in the fantastic custom-built home that Jesus is preparing for me in heaven.

Thought Questions

1. How long will the time period be from the day the holy city descends until the wicked are destroyed by fire from heaven?

The Bible says it will be a "little," or short, season (Revelation 20:3). Enough time will be required for Satan to persuade people to follow his plan and prepare weapons of war. The exact length of time is not revealed in Scripture.

2. What kind of bodies will people have in God's new kingdom?

The Bible says the redeemed will have bodies like that of Jesus (Philippians 3:21). Jesus had a real body of flesh and bones after His resurrection (Luke 24:36-43). The saved will not be ghosts. They will be real people, as were Adam and Eve.

3. Does the Bible say how the lost will react at Jesus' second coming?

Yes. The Bible says they will cry "to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Revelation 6:16, 17. (See also verses 14 and 15.) The righteous, on the other hand, will say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." Isaiah 25:9.

4. When the holy city descends, will the wicked be able to see the righteous people who are inside the city?

Quite likely they will. The Bible says the city will be the see-through type—clear as crystal (Revelation 21:11, 18). The righteous will be able to see the wicked (Psalms 37:34), and the wicked will be able to see the righteous (Luke 13:28). This could mean that some very sad encounters will take place at the city wall, with the saved part of a family inside and the lost part outside. The resulting heartache and trauma are too much for human language to describe.

5. The Bible says God will wipe away all tears from the eyes of His people and there will be no more death, sorrow, or pain. When will this happen?

From Revelation 21:1-4 and Isaiah 65:17, it appears that this will happen after sin and sinners are destroyed. During the final judgment and destruction by fire, God's people will have many reasons for deep sorrow.

As they realize that relatives and friends are lost and that people they loved are being destroyed in the fire, anguish will doubtless bring tears and heartache to God's people. But after the fire goes out, the Lord will wipe away their tears. He will then create new heavens and a new earth for His people, which will bring

them unspeakable joy and fulfillment. And sorrow, sadness, crying, and heartache will be forever gone.

6. How will the destruction of wicked angels and people affect God the Father and His Son? Doubtless they will be relieved and overjoyed that the ugly cancer of sin is gone forever and that the universe is secure. Surely they will also experience deep, wrenching sadness over the fact that so many of those they loved, and for whom Jesus died, chose to cling to sin and reject salvation. Satan himself was once their warm, personal friend, and many people in the fire were their dearly beloved children. It will be like the agony of seeing one of your own errant children executed. Sin has been a crushing load upon both Father and Son since its inception. The aim of the Father and Son has been to love people and gently draw them to salvation. Their feelings are expressed in Hosea 11:8, NASB: "How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? ... My heart is turned over within Me, all my compassions are kindled."**The New American Standard Bible, (C) 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

7. What kind of body does Jesus have?

He has a body of flesh and bones. After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples (Luke 24:36- 43) and demonstrated that He was not a spirit or ghost by stating that He was flesh and bones, having them feel His body, and by eating some fish and honey.

Jesus Ascends

He then walked with them to Bethany and, as He was conversing with them, ascended to heaven (Luke 24:49-51). The angel who appeared to the disciples as Jesus ascended explained that "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:11.

This Same Jesus Will Return

The angel's emphasis was that this same Jesus (of flesh and bones) will come again. He will be real, not ghostly, and the risen and translated saints will have bodies like His (Philippians 3:21 1 John 3:2). The saints' heavenly bodies will also be incorruptible and immortal (1 Corinthians 15:51-55).

Quiz Questions

1. Mark the events that will take place at the beginning of the 1,000 years of Revelation chapter 20: (10)

Second coming of Jesus.
Earthquake and hailstorm.
Righteous dead raised.
Satan bound.
Living wicked slain.
Righteous given immortality.
Holy city descends.
Righteous taken to heaven.
Wicked in graves remain dead.
Righteous given bodies like Jesus.
Righteous caught up into the clouds.
Jesus enters the new Jerusalem in triumph.

2. Every living person on earth will see Jesus at His second coming. (1)

True.
False.

3. The righteous will have spirit- or ghost-like bodies in heaven. (1)

True.
False.

4. Which of the following items are true about the 1,000-year period? (2)

Many sinners will be converted.
Satan and his angels will be forced to stay on the earth.
Satan will be bound by the fact that there is no television to watch.
It will be bright and sunny on earth during the 1,000 years.
Satan will raise the wicked dead to life to keep him company.
The righteous will be in heaven, participating in the judgment.

5. Which of the following are true regarding the events at the close of the 1,000-year period? (4)

Christ will come for a fifth time.
The holy city will land in the Washington, D.C., area.

The angels and God the Father will come with Jesus.
The wicked will be raised.
Jesus will come with His saints.

God will decide not to raise the wicked after all.
The wicked will be destroyed by angry evil angels.
God will create new heavens and a new earth.
God will banish Satan to the outer reaches of the universe.
The devil will wipe out the holy city with a powerful new missile.

6. The chain that binds Satan will (3)

Be symbolic--a chain of circumstances.
Force him to stay on the earth.
Be made of a new, very hard metal.
Be broken by the devil within 24 hours.
Keep him from tempting God's people, who will be safe in heaven.

7. Which statements are true of the bottomless pit? (2)

It is a vast hole deep inside the earth.
It means abyss.
It refers to the earth--dark and without form and void.
It is another name for hell.

8. Which items are true about the first, second, and third comings of Jesus? (3)

First coming was to Bethlehem as a baby.
First coming was in Noah's day.
Second coming was in Martin Luther's day.
Second coming will be at the beginning of the 1,000 years.
Third coming will be at the end of the 1,000 years.
Third coming takes place after the new earth is created.

9. The death the wicked die in the lake of fire is the second death. (1)

True.
False.

God's Free Health Plan

Great medical care is priceless - but wouldn't it be great if we didn't need doctors anymore? Did you know there is a proven way to put a lot of doctors out of work? Take care of your body! Scientists have sounded the ominous warnings about cholesterol, tobacco, stress, obesity, and alcohol, so why press your luck? Hospitals and psychiatric institutions are packed with people who have ignored the warnings - do you really want to join them? God truly cares how you treat your body, and He's given you a free health plan, and a manual to go by... the Bible! For amazing facts about how you can have abundant health and longer life, look over this Study Guide - but be sure to read it all before jumping to conclusions!

1. Are health principles really a part of true Bible religion?

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." 3 John 2.

Answer: Yes. In fact, the Bible rates health right near the top of the list in importance. Man's mind, spiritual nature, and body are all interrelated and interdependent. What affects one affects the other. If our bodies are misused, our minds and spiritual natures cannot become what God ordained they should.

2. Why did God give health rules to His people?

"And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes ... for our good always, that he might preserve us alive." Deuteronomy 6:24. "And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee." Exodus 23:25.

Answer: God gave health rules because He knows what is best for the human body. Automobile manufacturers place an "operations manual" in the glove compartment of each new car because they know what is best for their product. God, who made our bodies, also has an "operations manual." It is called the Holy Bible. Ignoring God's "operations manual" results in disease, twisted thinking, and burned-out lives, just as abusing a car (against the manufacturer's counsel) results in serious car trouble. Following God's rules results in "saving health" (Psalms 67:2) and more abundant life (John 10:10). These great health laws are like a wall or fence to keep out the diseases of Satan. God tells us what these rules are so we can avoid the devil's traps.

God's health rules have much to say about what we eat and drink.

3. Do God's health rules have anything to do with eating and drinking?

"Eat ye that which is good." Isaiah 55:2. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Answer: Yes, a Christian will even eat and drink differently, all to the glory of God, using only "that which is good." If God says a thing is not fit to eat, He must have a good reason. He is not a harsh dictator, but a loving Father. All His counsel is for our good always. The Bible promises: "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Psalms 84:11. So if God withholds a thing from us, it is because it is not good.

Note: No person can eat his way into heaven. Eating even the food of angels will not entitle people to paradise. Only acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour can do that. Ignoring God's health laws, however, may cause a person to be lost, because it will ruin his judgment and cause him to sin.

God prescribed a vegetarian diet for Adam and Eve.

4. What did God give people to eat when He created them and provided a perfect diet?

"And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed ... and every tree ... yielding seed." "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat." Genesis 1:29; 2:16.

Answer: The diet God gave people in the beginning was fruit, grains, and nuts. Vegetables were added a bit later (Genesis 3:18).

5. What items are specifically mentioned by God as being unclean and forbidden?

Answer: In Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, God very clearly points out the following groups as being unclean. Read both chapters in full.

A. All animals which do not have a split hoof and chew the cud (Deuteronomy 14:6).

- B. All fish and water creatures that do not have both fins and scale
- C. Nearly all fish are clean (Deuteronomy 14:9).
- D. All birds of prey, carrion eaters, and fish eaters (Leviticus 11:13-20).
- E. Most "creeping things" (or invertebrates) are also unclean (Leviticus 11:21-47).

Note: These chapters make it clear that most animals, birds, and water creatures people ordinarily eat are clean. There are, however, some very notable exceptions. According to God's rules, the following animals are unclean and are not to be eaten: hogs, squirrels, rabbits, catfish, eels, lobsters, clams, crabs, shrimp, oysters, frogs, and many others.

6. But I like pork. Will God destroy me if I eat it?

"For, behold, the Lord will come with fire ... and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many. They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves ... eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord." Isaiah 66:15-17.

Answer: This may be shocking, but it is true and must be told. The Bible positively states that all who eat "swine's flesh," the "mouse," and other unclean things that are an "abomination" will be destroyed with fire at the coming of the Lord. When God says to leave something alone and not eat it, we should by all means obey Him. After all, the mere eating of a piece of forbidden fruit by Adam and Eve, a sinless couple, brought sin and death to this world in the first place. Can anyone say it doesn't matter, when God so clearly shows it does? God says men will be destroyed because they "chose that in which I delighted not." Isaiah 66:4.

Noah's sacrifice of a clean animal (Genesis 8:20) shows that he understood the difference between clean and unclean.

7. But didn't this law of clean and unclean animals originate at Sinai? Wasn't it for the Jews only, and didn't it end at the cross? And the Lord said unto Noah, ... Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens ... and of beasts that are not clean by two." Genesis 7:1, 2.

Answer: No indeed! The Bible has ample evidence that there were clean and unclean animals from the very dawn of Creation. Noah lived long before any Jews

existed, but he knew of the clean and unclean, because he took into the ark the clean animals by "sevens" and the unclean by "twos." Revelation 18:2 refers to some birds as being unclean just before the second coming of Christ.

The death of Christ had no altering effect whatever on these health laws, since the Bible says that all who break them will be destroyed when Jesus returns (Isaiah 66:15-17). The Jew's stomach and digestive system in no way differs from that of a Gentile. These health laws are for all people for all time.

The use of alcoholic beverages is clearly condemned by Scripture.

8. Does the Bible forbid the use of alcoholic beverages?

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Proverbs 20:1. "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." Proverbs 23:31, 32. "Neither fornicators ... nor drunkards ... shall inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.

Answer: Yes, the Bible clearly forbids the use of alcoholic beverages.

9. Does the Bible condemn the use of tobacco?

Answer: Yes, the Bible gives six reasons why the use of tobacco is displeasing to God:

A. The use of tobacco injures health and defiles the body.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17.

B. Nicotine is an addictive substance that enslaves people.

Romans 6:16 says that we become servants to whomever (or whatever) we yield ourselves. Tobacco users are servants of nicotine. Jesus says, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Matthew 4:10.

C. The tobacco habit is unclean.

"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you." 2 Corinthians 6:17. It is really preposterous to think of Christ using tobacco in any form, isn't it?

D. The use of tobacco wastes money.

"Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?" Isaiah 55:2. We are God's stewards of the money given us, and "it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." 1 Corinthians 4:2.

E. The use of tobacco never draws anyone closer to Christ.

"Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." 1 Peter 2:11. Tobacco use is a fleshly lust.

F. The use of tobacco shortens life.

Recent scientific findings confirm the fact that the use of tobacco often shortens the life span by as much as one-third. This breaks God's command against killing (Exodus 20:13). Even though it is slow murder, it is still murder. One of the best ways to postpone your funeral is to quit using tobacco.

10. What are some of the simple, yet very important, health laws found in the Bible?

Answer: Here are 11 Bible health rules:

A. Eat your meals at regular intervals, and do not use animal fat or blood.

"Eat in due season." Ecclesiastes 10:17. "It shall be a perpetual statute ... that ye eat neither fat nor blood." Leviticus 3:17.

Note: Recent scientific studies have confirmed the fact that most heart attacks result from a high cholesterol level in the blood, and that the use of "fats" is largely responsible for this high level. It looks like the Lord knows what He is talking about after all, doesn't it?

B. Don't overeat.

"Put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite." Proverbs 23:2. In Luke 21:34, Christ specifically warns against "surfeiting" (overeating) in the last days. Overeating is responsible for many degenerative diseases.

C. Don't harbor envy or hold grudges.

These evils disrupt body processes. The Bible says that envy brings "rottenness of the bones." Proverbs 14:30. Christ even commands us to clear up grudges that others may hold against us (Matthew 5:23, 24).

D. Maintain a cheerful, happy disposition.

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." Proverbs 17:22. "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 23:7. Many diseases from which people suffer are a result of mental depression. A cheerful, happy disposition imparts health and prolongs life.

E. Put full trust in the Lord.

"The fear of the Lord tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied." Proverbs 19:23. Trust in the Lord strengthens health and life. "My son, attend to my words. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh." Proverbs 4:20-22. So health comes from obedience to God's commands and from putting full trust in Him.

F. Balance work and exercise with sleep and rest.

"Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work." Exodus 20:9, 10. "The sleep of a labouring man is sweet." Ecclesiastes 5:12. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Genesis 3:19. "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late." Psalms 127:2. "For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? ... his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity." Ecclesiastes 2:22, 23.

G. Keep your body clean.

"Be ye clean." Isaiah 52:11.

H. Be temperate in all things.

"Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." 1 Corinthians 9:25. "Let your moderation be known unto all men." Philippians 4:5. A Christian will completely avoid all things that are harmful and will be moderate in the use of things that are good. Habits that injure health break the command "Thou shalt not kill." They kill by degrees. They are suicide on the installment plan.

I. Avoid all harmful stimulants.

Here is a surprise for some. Medical science has confirmed the fact that tea, coffee, and soft drinks that contain the addictive drug caffeine and other harmful ingredients are all positively damaging to the human body. None of these contain food value except through the sugar or cream added, and most of us already use too much sugar. Stimulants give a dangerous, artificial boost to the body and are like trying to carry a ton in a wheelbarrow. The popularity of these drinks is due not to flavor or advertising, but to the dose of caffeine they contain. Many Americans are sickly because of their addiction to coffee, tea, and caffeinated soft drinks. But the real tragedy is that men and women seeking peace and strength are using tea and coffee as cheap substitutes for prayer and Bible study. This delights the devil and wrecks human lives.

J. Make mealtime a happy time.

"Every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God." Ecclesiastes 3:13. Unhappy scenes at mealtime hinder digestion. Avoid them.

K. Help those who are in need.

"Loose the bands of wickedness, ... undo the heavy burdens, ... deal thy bread to the hungry, and ... bring the poor that are cast out to thy house ... when thou seest the naked, ... cover him ... and thine health shall spring forth speedily." Isaiah 58:6-8. This is too plain to misunderstand: when we help the poor and needy, we improve our own health.

Ignoring God's health laws is a sure way to end up in surgery.

11. What solemn reminder is given to those who ignore God's rules?

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Galatians 6:7.

Answer: The answer is too plain to miss. Those who break God's rules regarding the care of the body machine will reap broken bodies and burned-out lives, just as one who abuses his automobile will have serious car trouble. And those who continue to break God's laws of health will ultimately be destroyed by the Lord (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17). God's health laws are not arbitrary. They are natural, established laws of the universe, like the law of gravity. Ignoring these laws always brings certain disastrous results. The Bible says, "The curse causeless shall not come." Proverbs 26:2. Trouble comes when we ignore the laws of health. God, in mercy, tells us what these laws are so we may avoid the tragedies that result from breaking them.

Drug-using parents often transmit weaknesses to their children.

12. What fearful, shocking truth about health involves our children and grandchildren?

"Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee." Deuteronomy 12:25. "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." Exodus 20:5.

Answer: God makes it very plain that children and grandchildren (to the fourth generation) pay for the folly of parents who ignore God's health rules. The children and grandchildren inherit weakened, sickly bodies when mother and father defy God's rules for their lives. Is this what you want for your dear children and grandchildren?

Exercise in the great outdoors will help us prepare for heaven.

13. What more fearful, sobering fact does God's Word reveal?

"There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth." Revelation 21:27. "But as for them whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord God." Ezekiel 11:21.

Answer: Nothing defiling or unclean will be permitted in God's kingdom. All filthy habits defile a person. Use of improper food defiles a person (Daniel 1:8). It is sobering, but true. Choosing their "own ways" and that in which God "delighted not" will cost people their eternal salvation (Isaiah 66:3, 4, 15-17).

Sincere, living Christians will want to bring their lives in harmony with God's health rules.

14. What should every sincere Christian endeavor to do at once?

"Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." 2 Corinthians 7:1. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure." 1 John 3:3. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." John 14:15.

Answer: Sincere Christians will bring their lives into harmony with God's rules at once, because they love Him. They know that His rules greatly add to their happiness and protect them from the devil's diseases (Acts 10:38). God's counsel and rules are always for our good, just as good parents' rules and counsel are best for their children. And once we know better, God holds us accountable. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James 4:17 Evil habits that bind us can be quickly broken by Jesus.

15. But I'm worried because some of my evil habits have bound me so tightly. What can I do?

"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." John 1:12. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Philippians 4:13.

Answer: Take all of these habits to Christ and lay them at His feet. He will joyfully give you a new heart and the power you need to break any evil habit and become a son or daughter of God (Ezekiel 11:18, 19). How thrilling and heartwarming it is to know that "with God all things are possible." Mark 10:27. And Jesus says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37. Jesus is ready to break the shackles that bind us. He longs to set us free, and will, if only we will permit it. Our worries, evil habits, nervous tensions, and fears will be gone when we do His bidding. He says, "These things have I spoken unto you ... that your joy might

be full." John 15:11. The devil argues that freedom is found in disobedience, but this is a falsehood (John 8:44).

Heaven will be free from disease and sickness. All of its inhabitants will follow God's laws of life.

16. What thrilling promises are given about God's new kingdom?

"And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." Isaiah 33:24. "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." Revelation 21:4. "They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Isaiah 40:31.

Answer: The citizens of God's new kingdom will obey His health laws, and there will be no sickness or disease. They will be blessed with eternal vigor and youth and will live with God in supreme joy and happiness throughout all eternity.

17. Since healthful living truly is a part of Bible religion, it is my plan to follow God's health rules.

Answer:

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. 1 Timothy 4:4 says, "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused." Can you explain this?

This Scripture passage (verse 3) refers to meats "which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving" by His people. These meats, as we have already discovered, are the clean meats listed in Leviticus chapter 11 and Deuteronomy chapter 14. Verse 4 makes it clear that all creatures of God are good and not to be refused, provided they are among those created to "be received with thanksgiving" (the clean animals). Verse 5 tells why these animals (or foods) are acceptable: they are "sanctified" by God's Word, which says they are clean, and by a "prayer" of blessing, which is offered before the meal. Please note, however, that God will destroy people who try to "sanctify themselves" while eating unclean foods (Isaiah 66:17).

2. Matthew 15:11 says, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out." How do you explain this?

The subject in Matthew 15:1-20 is eating without first washing the hands (verse 2). The focus is not eating, but washing. The scribes taught that eating any food without a special ceremonial washing defiled the eater. Jesus said the ceremonial washings were meaningless. In verse 19, He listed certain evils--murders, adulteries, thefts, etc. Then He concluded, "These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man." Verse 20.

3. But didn't Jesus cleanse all animals in Peter's vision, as recorded in Acts 10? No! In fact, the subject of this vision is not animals, but people. God gave Peter this vision to show him that the Gentiles were not unclean, as the Jews believed. God had instructed Cornelius, a Gentile, to send men to visit Peter.

But Peter would have refused to see them if God had not given him this vision, because Jewish law forbade entertaining Gentiles (verse 28). But when the men finally did arrive, Peter welcomed them, explaining that ordinarily he would not have done so, but "God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean." Verse 28. In the next chapter (Acts 11), the church members criticized Peter for speaking with these Gentiles. So Peter told them the whole story of his vision and its meaning. And Acts 11:18 says, "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

4. What did God make the hog for, if not to eat?

He made it for the same purpose that He made the buzzard--as a scavenger to clean up garbage. And the hog serves this purpose admirably.

5. Romans 14:3, 14, 20 says: "Let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth." "There is nothing unclean of itself." "All things indeed are pure." Can you explain this?

Verses 3 through 6 are a discussion of those who eat certain things versus those who do not. The passage does not say either is right, but rather counsels that neither pass judgment on the other. Instead, let God be the Judge (verses 4, 10-12). Verses 14 and 20 refer to foods that were first offered to idols (and were thus ceremonially unclean)--not to the clean and unclean meats of Leviticus chapter 11. (Read 1 Corinthians 8:1, 4, 10, 13). The point of the discussion is that no food is "unclean" or "impure" just because it has first been offered to idols, because an idol is "nothing in the world." 1 Corinthians 8:4. But if a person's conscience bothers

him for eating such food, he should leave it alone. Or even if it merely offends a brother, he should likewise abstain.

6. Are health laws and eating and drinking really important to me personally? If I love the Lord, isn't that enough?

They are a matter of life versus death, because these laws involve obedience. "He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Hebrews 5:9. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 7:21. Love to Christ is involved here because He says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." John 14:15. When we truly love the Lord, we will gladly obey Him without dodging or making excuses. This is the supreme test.

QUIZ QUESTIONS

1. Following God's health rules for the human body (1)
Is necessary for children, but not of great importance to an adult.
Is a very important part of true Bible religion.
Has nothing to do with a person's religion.
2. God's health laws were given (1)
By a loving God who made us in the beginning and knows what is best for our happiness.
For the Jews only and do not apply today.
To show us He is boss and can control us.
3. A true Christian will (1)
Eat and drink anything he desires.
Just love the Lord supremely and ignore His health laws because they were done away with at the cross.
Eat and drink only those things which will strengthen the body, mind, and character and bring honor to God.
4. Man's first diet (1)
Consisted of fruit, grains, and nuts.
Included alcoholic beverages and flesh foods.
Consisted of anything and everything that Adam and Eve wanted.

5. God lists these creatures as unclean: (7)
 - Cow.
 - Pig.
 - Chicken.
 - Squirrel.
 - Rabbit.
 - Catfish.
 - Deer Trout.
 - Clam.
 - Shrimp.
 - Lobster.
 - Goat.
6. Alcoholic beverages are (1)
 - All right for a Christian if used in moderation.
 - Wrong for a person to use only if he thinks they are wrong.
 - Not to be used by a Christian.
7. The use of tobacco is (1)
 - Each person's private business and has no relationship whatever to his religion.
 - Sinful, and a Christian will not use it in any form.
 - Beneficial to the Christian.
8. Check the health laws listed below which are God's health laws: (9)
 - Don't overeat.
 - Smoke after each meal.
 - Be happy and cheerful.
 - Drink some liquor before meals.
 - Keep your body clean.
 - Eat lots of pork.
 - Drink plenty of coffee and tea.
 - Be temperate in all things.
 - Eat meals at regular intervals.
 - Don't harbor grudges.

Balance work, exercise, and sleep.
Trust fully in the Lord.
Don't use animal fat and blood.

9. A very important truth regarding God's health laws is that (1)
Children and grandchildren often have weak bodies and minds because parents ignore God's health laws. These laws were for the Jews only and do not apply today.
If we really love Christ, His health laws are unimportant.
10. The best way to overcome sinful habits is to (1)
'Taper off.'
Yield fully to Christ, who gives us power to do all things.
Hope they will go away.
11. God's health laws are (1)
Like the rules for operating a car: They are best for us, and we run into serious trouble when we ignore them.
Part of Moses' law that was done away at the cross.
A good idea, but do not affect a person's relation to God.
12. A sincere Christian will (1)
Spend more time praying and ignore God's health rules.
Immediately change any habit when he finds it conflicts with God's rules, because when we love Christ, we will gladly keep His rules and commandments.
Feel free to use tobacco.

Is Obedience Legalism?

People might feel like they can get away with violating a traffic law or cheating on their taxes, but God and His laws work much differently.

God sees everything we do, hears everything we say, and He really does care about how we behave. While the Lord offers forgiveness for our sins, there still are deadly consequences for breaking God's law. Amazingly, some Christians say any attempt to obey God's law amounts to legalism. Yet Jesus said if you really love God, you'll do what He asks. So is obedience legalism? Take time to read this Study Guide carefully... eternal consequences are at stake!

God knows and cares for YOU personally.

1. Does God really see and take note of me personally?

"Thou God seest me." Genesis 16:13. "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou ... art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether." Psalms 139:1-4. "But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Luke 12:7.

Answer: Yes, God knows each one of us (every person on earth) better than we know ourselves. He takes a personal interest in every human being and carefully watches all that we do. Not one word, thought, or deed is hidden from Him.

Search the Bible for God's will. It is your only safety.

2. Can I be saved in His kingdom without obeying His Word, as found in the Holy Bible?

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 7:21. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. " Matthew 19:17. "He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Hebrews 5:9.

Answer: No! Scripture is very clear on this point. Salvation and the kingdom of heaven are for those who obey the Lord's commands. God does not promise eternal life to those who merely make a profession of faith or are church members or are baptized, but rather to those who do His will, which is revealed in Scripture. Of course, this obedience is possible only through Christ (Acts 4:12).

Only one path leads to heaven. The Bible is the map that shows us the way.

3. Why does God require obedience? Why is it necessary? "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Matthew 7:14. "But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." Proverbs 8:36. "And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive." Deuteronomy 6:24.

Answer: Because there is only one narrow path that leads to godlikeness, and thus to His kingdom. All roads do not lead to the same place. The Bible is the map and guidebook with full instructions, warnings, and information on how to safely reach that kingdom. To disregard any part of it leads away from God and His kingdom. The universe of God is a universe of law and order. Natural, moral, and spiritual laws are involved. Breaking any of these laws always has certain fixed results. If the Bible had not been given, people would sooner or later have discovered (by trial and error) that the great principles of the Bible exist and are true.

These Bible principles are written in our nervous systems, glands, and minds. When ignored, they result in shattered nerves, disease, and unhappiness of every kind. So the words of the Bible are not merely advice which we can accept or ignore without consequences. The Bible tells what these consequences are and explains how to avoid them. A person cannot live any way he wishes and still become godlike any more than a builder can ignore the blueprints for a house without running into trouble. This is why God asks all to follow the blueprint of the Holy Scripture. There is no other way to become like Him and thus be fitted for a place in His kingdom. And there is no other way to true happiness.

Sin can be safely destroyed by God only after all people understand and admit that He is just, loving, and merciful.

4. Why does God permit disobedience to continue? Why not destroy sin and sinners now?

"Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which

ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Jude 14, 15. "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." Romans 14:11. Answer: God permits disobedience and sin to continue until all people everywhere are at last fully convinced of God's justice, love, and mercy. All will finally realize that God, by requiring obedience, is not trying to force His will upon us, but rather is trying to keep us from hurting and destroying ourselves. The sin problem is not settled until even the most cynical and hardened sinners are convinced of God's love and confess that He is just. It will take perhaps a major catastrophe or worse to convince some, but the horrible results of sinful living will finally convince all that God is just and right.

Then, and only then, can sin and disobedience be safely brought to an end by the Lord.

All who knowingly choose not to follow Christ will finally be destroyed with the sin they love.

5. Will God actually destroy the disobedient?

"God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." 2 Peter 2:4. "All the wicked will he destroy." Psalms 145:20. "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thessalonians 1:8.

Answer: No question about it. The disobedient, including the devil and his angels who sinned, will be destroyed. This being true, surely it is high time to abandon all fuzziness regarding what is right or wrong. People had better stop letting their own foolish whims and egotistical notions guide them and pay attention to God's great book. And they had better do it now--there is not much time left!

God promises that if I seek His Word for truth and sincerely follow it, I will not end up in error.

6. I want to obey all of God's rules. How can I be certain I will not overlook one?

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find." Matthew 7:7. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, ... rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of

God." John 7:17. "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you." John 12:35. "As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me." Psalms 18:44.

Answer: God leaves no room for doubt. He promises to keep me from error and lead me safely to all truth if I: (1) pray earnestly for guidance, (2) sincerely study God's Word, and (3) follow truth as soon as I am shown.

Playing ostrich in spiritual matters leads to tragedy and destruction.

7. Does God count me guilty for disobeying Bible truth that has never been made clear to me?

"If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." John 9:41. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James 4:17. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee." Hosea 4:6. "Seek, and ye shall find." Matthew 7:7.

Answer: If I have had no opportunity to learn a certain Bible truth, God does not hold me accountable. But the Bible teaches that I am responsible to God for all the light (knowledge of right) I have and all I can have! Many people who refuse or neglect to study, seek, learn, and listen will be destroyed by God because they have "rejected knowledge." To play ostrich in these exceedingly crucial matters is fatal. It is my responsibility to hunt diligently for truth.

Only two of the thousands of Israelites who left Egypt followed God fully and were able to enter the promised land of Canaan.

8. But God isn't particular about obedience on every point and in small details, is He?

"Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt ... shall see the land ... because they have not wholly followed me: Save Caleb ... and Joshua ... for they have wholly followed the Lord." Numbers 32:11, 12. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Matthew 4:4. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Answer: Indeed, He is particular. God's people in Old Testament times learned this the hard way. Those who left Egypt for the promised land of Canaan were 603,550 in number. Of this group, only two (Caleb and Joshua) fully followed the Lord, and they alone entered

Canaan. The other 603,548 died in the wilderness. Jesus says we are to live by "every word" of the Bible. There is not one word too many or one word too few. They are all important.

Unless I follow light as soon as it is revealed, it eventually turns to darkness.

9. When I discover new truth, I wait until all obstacles are removed before embracing it. This is best, isn't it?

"Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you." John 12:35. "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." Psalms 119:60. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33. "As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me." Psalms 18:44.

Answer: No, once you are clear on a Bible truth, it is never best to wait. In fact, procrastination is the devil's most dangerous trap. It seems so harmless to wait, but the Bible teaches that unless a person acts immediately upon light, it quickly turns to darkness. Obstacles to obedience are not removed while we stand and wait; instead, they usually increase in size. Man says to God, "Open up the way, and I'll go forward." But God's way is just the opposite. He says, "You go forward, and I will open up the way."

Satan invented the lie that obedience is impossible.

10. But isn't full obedience an impossibility for a human being?

"With God all things are possible." Matthew 19:26. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Philippians 4:13. "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." 2 Corinthians 2:14. "He that abideth in me, and I in him, ... bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." John 15:5. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." Isaiah 1:19. Answer: None of us can obey in our own power, but through Christ we can and must. Satan, in order to make God's requests appear unreasonable, invented the falsehood that obedience is impossible.

If I ignore God's loving warnings, I will perish.

11. What will happen to a person who willfully and knowingly continues in disobedience?

"If we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." Hebrews 10:26, 27. "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." John 12:35.

Answer: The Bible leaves no room for doubt. The answer is sobering and shocking, but true. When a person knowingly rejects light and continues in disobedience, the light eventually goes out, and he is left in total darkness. A person who rejects truth receives a "strong delusion" to believe that falsehood is truth (2 Thessalonians 2:11). When this happens, he is lost from that moment.

No child will fully obey his parents unless he loves them.

12. I thought love was more important than obedience. Isn't it?

"Jesus answered ... If a man love me, he will keep my words He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." John 14:23, 24. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5:3.

Answer: No, not at all! In fact, the Bible teaches that true love to God cannot exist without obedience. Nor can a person be truly obedient without love. No child will fully obey his parents unless he loves them, nor will he love his parents if he does not obey. True love and obedience are like Siamese twins. When separated, they die.

Only the citizen who obeys the law has freedom. Likewise, true Christian freedom means freedom from disobedience.

13. But I always thought that true freedom in Christ released me from obedience. Doesn't it?

"If ye continue in my word, ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." John 8:31, 32, 34. "But

God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Romans 6:17, 18. "So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever. And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts." Psalms 119:44, 45.

Answer: No. True freedom comes only from obedience. It means freedom "from sin" (Romans 6:18), or disobedience, which is breaking God's law (1 John 3:4). The citizens who obey the law have freedom. The disobedient are caught and lose their freedom. Freedom without obedience is like the false freedom of the drifting balloon or the driverless car. It leads to confusion and anarchy. True Christian freedom means freedom from disobedience. Disobedience always hurts a person and leads into the cruel slavery of the devil.

Loving children obey their parents even though they may not always understand their request. The same is true of children of God.

14. When I believe God requires a certain thing, should I obey even though I do not understand why He requires it?

"Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord ... so it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live." Jeremiah 38:20. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Proverbs 28:26. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." Psalms 118:8. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:9. "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord?" Romans 11:33, 34. "I will lead them in paths that they have not known."

Isaiah 42:16. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life." Psalms 16:11.

Answer: Most assuredly! We must give God credit for being wise enough to require some things of us we may not understand. Good children obey their parents even when the reasons for their commands are not clear. Simple faith and trust in God will cause us to believe that He knows what is best for us and will never lead us in any wrong path. It is folly for us, in our ignorance, to question God's leadership, even when we may not fully understand all His reasons.

The devil wants you to disobey God because he hates you and wants you to be lost.

15. Who is really behind all disobedience, and why?

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." 1 John 3:8, 10. Satan ... deceiveth the whole world." Revelation 12:9.

Answer: The devil is responsible. He knows that all disobedience is sin and that sin brings unhappiness, tragedy, alienation from God, and eventual destruction. With bitter hatred he tries desperately to lead every person into disobedience. You are involved. You must face the facts and make a decision. Disobey and be lost, or accept Christ and obey and be saved. Your decision regarding obedience is a decision regarding Christ. You cannot separate Him from truth, because He says, "I am ... the truth." John 14:6. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." Joshua 24:15.

Following the miracle of the new birth (conversion), God continues working miracles to bring us Christian growth.

16. What glorious promise regarding a super-miracle does the Bible give God's children?

"He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Philippians 1:6.

Answer: Praise God! He promises that just as He worked a miracle to bring us the new birth, He will also continue to work needed miracles in our lives (as we gladly follow Him) until we are safe in His kingdom.

17. It brings me joy to know that Jesus not only provides the new birth to those who accept and follow Him, but He also continues to work needed miracles in their lives until they are safe in His kingdom. I want to begin lovingly obeying and following Jesus fully at once.

Answer:

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Will any be lost who truly think they are saved?

Yes! Matthew 7:21-23 makes it clear that many who prophesy, cast out devils, and do many wonderful works in Christ's name will be lost but will think they are saved. Christ said they are lost because they did not do "the will of my Father which is in heaven." Verse 21. Those who refuse to obey God will end up believing a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12) and thus think they are saved when instead they are lost.

2. Since there is only one right way, what will happen to sincere people who truly think they are right when they are wrong?

Jesus says that He will call them to His true way, and His true sheep will hear and follow (John 10:16, 27).

3. Aren't sincerity and zeal enough?

No! We must also be right. The apostle Paul was sincere and zealous when he persecuted the Christians before his conversion, but he was also wrong (Acts 22:3, 4; 26:9-11).

4. Isn't it a scientific impossibility that God can see everyone at the same time? So was Noah's Flood (it had never before rained--Genesis 2:5, 6), but it happened anyway. Conjuring up "scientific" reasons for disobedience is the favorite pastime of the class mentioned in Romans 1:22, who "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."

5. What will happen to people who haven't received light?

The Bible says that all have received some light. "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." John 1:9. Each person will be judged according to how he follows available light. Even the heathen have some light and follow the law, according to Romans 2:14, 15.

6. I have asked God to give me a sign if He wants me to obey. This is safe, isn't it?

No! It is not. Jesus said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." Matthew 12:39. All teachings should be checked by the Bible, and if in harmony with God's Word, should be accepted and followed (Isaiah 8:20; 2 Timothy 2:15). People who won't accept the plain teachings of the Bible would not be convinced by a sign either. As Jesus said, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Luke 16:31.

7. Hebrews 10:26, 27 seems to indicate that if a person willfully commits just one sin after he knows better, he is lost. Is this correct?

No! Anyone can confess such a sin and be forgiven. The Bible is speaking here not of one single act or sin but of a presumptuous continuation in sin and a refusal to surrender to Christ after one knows better. Such action grieves away the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) and hardens a person's heart until one is "past feeling" (Ephesians 4:19) and lost. The Bible says, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." Psalms 19:13.

8. Doesn't a person have to be educated to understand the Bible?

No! Even the simple can understand it if surrendered to the Lord (Psalms 19:7; 119:130; Matthew 11:25).

QUIZ QUESTIONS

1. People will be saved who (1)

Cast out devils in Christ's name.

Claim to love Christ.

Accept and obey the Lord.

2. What three things listed below will assure me of receiving full truth? (3)

Ask my psychiatrist.

Pray for light.

Do what my minister says.
Give liberal offerings at church.
Punish myself.
Receive a better education.
Ask God for a sign.
Study the Bible.
Follow the truth that I now understand.

3. God holds me accountable for (1)
Doing what my minister suggests.
Following in my parents' footsteps.
The light that I have and can have.
4. When I discover new truth, I should (1)
Ignore it.
Wait until I feel impressed to accept it.
Accept and obey it at once.
5. Full obedience to the Lord's commandments is (1)
Not possible under any circumstances.
Legalism and of the devil.
Possible only through Christ.
6. Willful disobedience (1)
Leads to darkness and eternal destruction.
Is okay for zealous church workers.
Is overlooked by God if I am stubborn.
7. Genuine love for the Lord (1)
Is better than obedience.
Makes obedience unnecessary.
Causes me to obey Him happily.
8. True Christian freedom means (1)

The right to do as I please in everything The right to disobey God.
Freedom from disobedience and slavery to the devil.

9. When a point of truth becomes clear but I do not understand why God requires me to obey it, I should (1)
Wait until the reason becomes clear.
Reject that point of truth.
Accept it and obey God's Word.
10. Who is really responsible for all disobedience? (1)
The government.
My parents, who trained me wrong.
The devil.
11. Why is obedience necessary? (1)
Because God is bigger than I am, and I am afraid of Him.
To keep God from getting angry.
Because I love God and want to follow His rules for Christian behavior.
12. Why doesn't God destroy the disobedient right now? (1)
He is afraid to.
He enjoys watching wickedness develop.
He is waiting until all are fully convinced of His love and justice.

Who is the Antichrist?

Scripture: Daniel 7:7-8, Daniel 7:24-25, Revelation 13:18

Lesson 15

Who, or what, is the Antichrist? Evil alliance, or sinister individual? Some say his appearance is still in the future. Others say he appeared long ago in the days of ancient Rome. But the Bible indicates that he is alive today! The Bible prophecies teach this antichrist power will play a crucial role in the final events of earth's history. Do you know who he is? Are you sure? You need to be, for you can't understand last-day events until you understand this evil power. Be prepared for one of the most intriguing Study Guides yet!

This Study Guide, based on Daniel chapter 7, clearly and unmistakably identifies the Antichrist. But it is only an introduction. Future lessons will reveal details of some of his activities that will have worldwide impact. What you discover today may displease or sadden you, but please remember that the prophecy of Daniel chapter 7 comes from Jesus, who loves you. Pray for God's guidance as you delve into this urgent subject. Be sure to read Daniel 7 before studying this guide.

In prophecy, God uses beasts to symbolize nations.

1. As the chapter begins, Daniel sees four beasts coming up out of the sea. In prophecy, what does a beast represent? What does the sea represent?

"The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon the earth." Daniel 7:23. "The waters ... are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." Revelation 17:15.

Answer: Beasts represent kingdoms or nations. Water represents multitudes of people or large populations.

The lion beast of Daniel 7 represents the empire of Babylon.

2. The four beasts of Daniel 7 represent the four world kingdoms (verses 17, 18). Babylon, the first kingdom (Daniel 2:38, 39), is represented as a lion in Daniel 7:4. (See also Jeremiah 4:7 50:17, 43, 44 for Babylon pictured as a lion elsewhere.) What do the "eagle's wings" mean? What do the "four winds" of verse 2 represent? "The Lord shall bring a nation against thee ... as swift as the eagle flieth." Deuteronomy 28:49.

"Thus saith the Lord of hosts, ... a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth." Jeremiah 25:32, 33.

Answer: The wings of eagles represent speed.

(See also Jeremiah 4:13; Habakkuk 1:6-9.) Winds represent strife, commotion, and destruction. (See also Revelation 7:1-3.)

The bear with three ribs in its mouth symbolizes Medo-Persia.

3. What kingdom does the bear represent (Daniel 7:5)? What do the three ribs in its mouth symbolize?

Answer: Read Daniel 8. Notice that the beasts in chapter 8 parallel those in chapter 7. Daniel 8:20 specifically names Medo-Persia as the kingdom that precedes the rough goat, or Greece, of verse 21. It is the second world kingdom, the same power as the bear of Daniel 7. The empire was made up of two groups of people.

The Medes came up first (represented in Daniel 7:5 by the bear coming up on one side), but the Persians eventually became stronger (represented in Daniel 8:3 by the ram's second horn which grew "higher," or taller). The three ribs represent the three principal powers conquered by Medo-Persia:

Lydia, Babylon, and Egypt.

The leopard beast of Daniel 7 represents the world kingdom of Greece.

4. Greece, the third kingdom (Daniel 8:21), is represented by a leopard with four wings and four heads (Daniel 7:6). What do the heads represent? What do the four wings represent?

Answer: The four heads represent the four kingdoms into which the empire of Alexander the Great was divided when he died. The four generals who headed these areas were: Cassander, Lysimachus, Ptolemy, and Seleucus. The four wings (instead of two like the lion) represent super-speed, which was true of Alexander's conquests (Jeremiah 4:11-13).

The world empire of Rome is symbolized by the monster beast of Daniel chapter 7.

5. The Roman empire, the fourth world kingdom, is represented by a horrible monster with iron teeth and 10 horns (Daniel 7:7). What do the horns represent?

Answer: The 10 horns represent the 10 kings or kingdoms into which pagan Rome was eventually split (Daniel 7:24). (These 10 kingdoms are the same as the 10 toes of the image described in Daniel 2:41-44.) Roving barbarian tribes swept in upon the Roman empire and carved out land niches for their people.

Seven of those 10 tribes developed into the countries of modern Western Europe, while three were uprooted and destroyed. The next section will discuss those kingdoms that were rooted up.

Visigoths - Spain

Anglo-Saxons - England Franks - France Alemani - Germany
Burgundians - Switzerland Lombards - Italy
Suevi - Portugal Heruli - Rooted up
Ostrogoths - Rooted up Vandals - Rooted up

The little horn of Daniel 7:8 represents Antichrist.

6. In the Daniel 7 prophecy, what happens next?

"I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things." Daniel 7:8.

Answer: The "little horn" power appears next. We must identify it carefully because God takes more space describing it than the other four kingdoms combined. Why? Because the biblical characteristics identify it as the Antichrist of prophecy and history. There must be no mistake in making this identification.

The Bible says Antichrist would persecute God's people.

7. Are there clear points of identification?

Answer: Yes, God gives us nine characteristics of Antichrist in Daniel 7 so we can be certain of his identity. And even though some may find these truths from God's Word painful, we must be honest enough to accept them as His revealed will. Now let's discover what Jesus' nine points are:

A. The "little horn" or kingdom "came up among them" "the 10 horns which were the kingdoms of Western Europe (Daniel 7:8). So it would be a little kingdom somewhere in Western Europe.

B. It would have a man at its head who could speak for it (Daniel 7:8).

C. It would pluck up or uproot three kingdoms (Daniel 7:8).

D. It would be "diverse" or different from the other 10 kingdoms (Daniel 7:24).

E. It would make war with and "wear out" or persecute the saints (Daniel 7:21, 25).

F. It would emerge from the pagan Roman empire, the fourth world kingdom (Daniel 7:7, 8).

G. God's people (the saints) would "be given into his hand" for "a time and times and the dividing of time" (Daniel 7:25).

H. It would "speak great words against" or blaspheme God (Daniel 7:25). In Revelation 13:5, the Bible says the same power speaks "great things and blasphemies."

I. It would "think to change times and laws." Daniel 7:25.

Don't forget all these identification points come directly from the Bible. They are not some human opinion or speculation. Historians could tell you quickly what power is being described. These points can fit only one power, the papacy. But in order to be certain, let us carefully examine all nine points, one by one. There must be no room left for doubt.

The papacy clearly fits all nine identification points.

8. Does the papacy fit these points?

Answer: Yes, it fits every point perfectly. See items A through H below.

A. It "came up among" the 10 kingdoms of Western Europe.

The geographical location of the papal power was in Rome, Italy the very heart of the territory of Western Europe.

B. It would have a man at its head who speaks for it.

The papacy meets this identifying mark because it does have one man at the head (the pope) who speaks for it.

C. It would pluck up or uproot three kingdoms.

The emperors of Western Europe were largely Catholic and supported the papacy in its growth and authority. Three Arian kingdoms, however, did not support the papacy, the Vandals, Heruli, and Ostrogoths. So the Catholic emperors decided they must be subdued or destroyed. Here is how Dr. Mervyn Maxwell, a theologian and historian, described the results in volume 1, page 129, of his book God Cares:

"The Catholic emperor Zeno (474-491) arranged a treaty with the Ostrogoths in 487 which resulted in the eradication of the kingdom of the Arian Heruls in 493. And the Catholic emperor Justinian (527- 565) exterminated the Arian Vandals in 534 and significantly broke the power of the Arian Ostrogoths in 538. Thus were Daniel's three horns the Heruls, the Vandals, and the Ostrogoths' plucked up by the roots.' " It is not difficult to recognize that the papacy fits this point.

D. It would be "diverse" or different from the other kingdoms.

The papacy clearly fits this description, also. It came on the scene as a religious power and was totally different from the secular nature of the other 10 kingdoms.

E. It would make war with and persecute the saints.

That the church did persecute is a well-known fact. The papacy clearly admits doing so. Much supportive evidence exists. Even conservative historians claim the church probably destroyed at least 50 million people over matters of religious conviction. We will quote here from two sources:

1. "That the Church of Rome has shed more innocent blood than any other institution that has ever existed among mankind, will be questioned by no Protestant who has a competent knowledge of history. 1

2. In The History of the Inquisition of Spain, D. Ivan Antonio Llorente provides these figures from the Spanish Inquisition alone:

31,912 persons were condemned and perished in the flames. 241,450 persons were condemned to severe penalties.

F. It would emerge from the fourth kingdom of iron - the pagan Roman Empire. We are quoting two authorities on this point:

1. "The mighty Catholic Church was little more than the Roman Empire baptised ... The very capital of the old Roman Empire became the capital of the Christian empire. The office of Pontifex Maximus was continued in that of the pope." 2

2. "Whatever Roman elements the barbarians and Arians left ... [came] under the protection of the Bishop of Rome, who was the chief person there after the emperor's disappearance. The Roman Church in this way privily pushed itself into the place of the Roman World-Empire, of which it is the actual continuation." 3
So, once again, the point fits the papacy.

G. God's people (the saints) would "be given into his hand" for "a time and times and the dividing of time." Daniel 7:25.

Several things need clarification in connection with this point:

1. A time is a year, times is two years, and the dividing of time is a half-year. The Amplified Bible translates it: "Three and one-half years." 4

2. This same time period is mentioned seven times (Daniel 7:25 12:7 Revelation 11:2, 3 12:6, 14 13:5) in the books of Daniel and Revelation: three times as a time, times, and half a time twice as 42 months and twice as 1,260 days. Based on the 30-day calendar used by the Jews, these time periods are all the same amount of time:

3 1/2 years = 42 months = 1,260 days.

3. One prophetic day equals one literal year (Ezekiel 4:6 Numbers 14:34).

4. Thus, the little horn (Antichrist) was to have power over the saints for 1,260 prophetic days or 1,260 literal years.

5. The rule of the papacy began in A.D. 538, when the last of the three opposing Arian kingdoms was uprooted. Its rule continued until 1798 when Napoleon's general, Berthier, took the pope captive with hopes of destroying both Pope Pius VI and the political, secular power of the papacy. This period of time is an exact fulfillment of the 1,260-year prophecy. The blow was a deadly wound for the papacy, but that wound began to heal and continues healing today.

6. This same period of persecution is mentioned in Matthew 24:21 as the worst period of persecution God's people will ever experience. Verse 22 tells us it was so devastating that not one soul would have survived if God had not shortened it. But God did shorten it. The persecution ended long before the pope was taken captive in 1798. It is plain to see that this point, likewise, fits the papacy.

H. It would speak "great words" of blasphemy "against the most High [God]." Blasphemy has two definitions in Scripture:

1. Claiming to forgive sins (Luke 5:21).

2. Claiming to be God (John 10:33).

Does this point fit the papacy? Yes!

Let's first look at the evidence for it claiming to forgive sins: "Does the Priest truly forgive the sins, or does he only declare that they are remitted? The Priest does really and truly forgive the sins in virtue of the power given to him by Christ."

5 The papacy further undermines Jesus by setting up a system of confession to an earthly priest, thus bypassing Jesus, our High Priest (Hebrews 3:1 8:1, 2) and only Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5).

Next consider the evidence for it claiming to be God: "We [the popes] hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty."

6 Here is another: "The pope is not only the representative of Jesus Christ, but he is Jesus Christ, Himself, hidden under the veil of flesh."

7 Its obvious this point, likewise, fits the papacy.

I. It would "think to change times and laws."

In a future Study Guide we will deal with the "times" of this point. It is a major topic and needs separate consideration. But what about changing the "laws"? The Amplified Bible translates "laws" as "the law." The reference is to changing God's law. Of course, no one can really change it, but has the papacy attempted to do so? The answer is "yes."

In its catechisms, the papacy has omitted the second commandment against veneration of images and has shortened the fourth commandment from 94 words to eight and divided the tenth commandment into two commandments. (Check this for yourself. Compare the Ten Commandments in any Catholic catechism with God's list of the commandments in Exodus 20:3-17.)

There is no doubt that the little horn power of Daniel chapter 7 (the Antichrist) is the papacy. No other organization could possibly fit these nine points. And incidentally, this is no new teaching. Every Reformer, without exception, spoke of the papacy as Antichrist. 8

Words of Care and Concern

Lest some should think that we are attacking fellow Christians by identifying this little-horn power, please keep in mind that the prophecy is aimed at a system and not individuals. There are sincere, devout Christians in all churches, including the Catholic faith. Daniel chapter 7 is simply a message of judgment and correction upon a large religious institution which compromised with paganism, like so many other churches that arose after her.

Prophecy Reveals Faults of All Faiths

Other prophecies point out the faults of Protestant and Jewish faiths. God has true people in all religions. His true people (no matter what their faith) will always humbly accept the correction of the Lord and will not shut their ears and hearts against Him by self-defensiveness. We should be very thankful that God's Word speaks with impartial honesty on every subject.

1 W. E. H. Lecky, History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe, Volume 2, p. 40.

22 Alexander Clarence Flick, The Rise of the Medieval Church, pp. 148, 149.

3 Adolf Harnack, What is Christianity? (New York: Putnam, second edition, revised, 1901), pp. 269, 270.

4 The Amplified Bible, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1962.

5 Joseph Deharbe, S.J., A Complete Catechism of the Catholic Religion (New York: Schwartz, Kirwin & Fauss, 1924), p. 279.

6 Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter "The Reunion of Christendom" (dated June 20, 1894) trans. in the Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII (New York: Benziger, 1903), p. 304.

7 Catholic National, July 1895.

8 R. Allen Anderson, Unfolding the Revelation, p. 137.

The angel told Daniel that the prophecies of this book would be sealed until 1798, the time of the end.

9. Wasn't Daniel told to seal up his book until "the time of the end"? (Daniel 12:4) When will Daniel's prophecies be opened to our understanding?

Answer: In Daniel 12:4, the prophet was told to seal parts of the book till "the time of the end." In verse 6 an angelic voice asked, "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" Verse 7 says, "It shall be for a time, times, and an half." The angel assured Daniel that the section of the book dealing with end-time prophecies would be opened after the end of the 1260-year period of papal control which was, as we learned earlier in this Study Guide, 1798.

So the time of the end began in the year 1798. Obviously, the book of Daniel contains crucial messages from heaven for us today. We absolutely must understand it.

All religious teachings must be compared with Scripture to determine their accuracy.

10. Many Christians today have been tragically misinformed regarding the Antichrist. To believe an untruth about the Antichrist could easily cause a person to be deceived and lost. What should a person do when new Bible teachings are encountered?

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Acts 17:11.

Answer: When a new Bible teaching is encountered, the only safe procedure is to compare it carefully with Scripture to see if it is in harmony with God's Word.

11. I am willing to follow where Jesus leads, even though it may be painful?

Concluding Remarks

Many momentous prophecies from the Bible books of Daniel and Revelation will be featured in upcoming Amazing Facts Study Guides. God has given these prophecies to:

- A. Reveal earth's closing events.
- B. Identify the participants in the final phase of the battle between Jesus and Satan.
- C. Clearly reveal Satan's sinister plans to ensnare and destroy us all.
- D. Present the security and love of the judgment God's saints will be vindicated!
- E. Uplift Jesus, His salvation, love, power, mercy, and justice.

Major Participants Will Appear Repeatedly

Key participants in the closing war between Jesus and Satan will appear repeatedly in these prophecies. These include: Satan, Jesus, the United States, the papacy, Protestantism, and spiritism. Jesus repeats and expands His messages from the prophets to make certain His warnings of love and protection come through with clarity and certainty.

Answer:

Thought Questions

1. I always thought Antichrist was a person rather than an organization. Am I wrong?

Antichrist is an organization--the papacy. The words "eyes of man" in Daniel 7:8, however, do point to a leader. Revelation 13:18 speaks of man with a number being involved. In Daniel

chapter 8, Greece is represented by a goat and its leader, Alexander the Great, is symbolized by a horn. The same is true of Antichrist. The organization is the papacy. The pope in office is its representative. The prophecy of Daniel chapter 7 is not saying that popes are evil and that Catholics are not Christians. There are many warm, loving Catholic Christians. The system, however, is called Antichrist because it has usurped Jesus' authority and attempted to change His law.

2. Do you think it is wise or Christian to pass laws to enforce Christianity?

No. The Bible is clear that all should have freedom to choose the direction they wish to go in matters of conscience (Joshua 24:15)--even if they choose to deny God and be atheists. God permitted Adam and Eve to choose to disobey even though it hurt both them and Him. Forced worship is not acceptable to God. Forced worship is the devil's way. God's way is loving persuasion. History shows that virtually every time the church passed laws to enforce its beliefs, persecution and murder of others resulted. This is a lesson we can learn from the Middle Ages history of the little horn.

3. Perhaps I have misunderstood, but my concept has always been that Antichrist would be an evil being who openly opposed God. Is this concept incorrect?

We usually consider the word "anti" to mean "against". But in "Antichrist" it means "in the place of" or "instead of". Antichrist is guilty of assuming the prerogatives of God. It claims:

- A. Its priests can forgive sins which only God can do (Luke 5:21).
- B. To have changed God's law by dropping out the second commandment (on worshipping images) and splitting the tenth into two parts. God's law cannot be changed (Matthew 5:18).
- C. That the pope is God on earth.

Satan's Original Plan

Satan's original plan (in heaven) was to assume God's position and authority. His aim was to oust God and rule in His place. (See Study Guide 2.) When Satan was ejected from heaven, his aim did not change, but rather intensified. Through the centuries he has endeavored (using various human agencies) to discredit God and take over His position.

Antichrist Appears to Be Spiritual

Satan aims to replace God in these last days by deceiving people into following Antichrist, who appears spiritual and holy. The main purpose of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation is to expose Satan's traps and strategies and lead people to anchor in Jesus and His Word for safety.

Antichrist Will Deceive Many

Most people will follow the Antichrist (Revelation 13:3), thinking they are following Christ. Only the very elect will be safe (Matthew 24:23, 24). They will be safe because they test every spiritual teaching and leader by Scripture (Isaiah 8:20). Religious deception is everywhere today. We cannot be too careful.

- 4. Doesn't the Bible say in 1 John 2:18-22 that there are many antichrists? Yes, there have been many antichrists down through history who have worked against the kingdom of God. However, there is only one entity that specifically fulfills all the prophesied characteristics of the Antichrist. In Daniel chapters 7 and 8 and in Revelation chapter 13, you will find at least 10 identifying traits of the Antichrist. These 10 identifying marks can be fulfilled in only one entity, the papacy.
- 5. In prophecy, does the symbol "beast" mean "beastly" characteristics? Not at all. God uses the symbolism of a beast to signify a ruler, nation, government, or kingdom. It is His way of depicting governments in prophecy. We

do this ourselves to some degree: We have depicted Russia as a bear, the United States as an eagle, etc. The symbol "beast" is not a demeaning, disrespectful term. It is synonymous with "animal" or "creature". Even Christ is portrayed as a Lamb

by John the Baptist (John 1:29) and the apostle John (Revelation 5:6, 9, 12, 13). The term "beast" is utilized by God to give us a message about nations and leaders, good and evil.

Quiz Questions

1. Which four world kingdoms are represented by beast symbols in Daniel chapter 7? (4)
 - Sweden.
 - Egypt.
 - Greece.
 - China.
 - Medo-Persia.
 - Japan.
 - Babylon.
 - Iraq.
 - Rome.
2. In Bible prophecy, a beast represents a (1)
 - Computer.
 - Kingdom or nation.
 - Creature or alien.
3. The 10 horns on the monster beast represent (1)
 - Ten years.
 - Ten special cities.
 - Angels.
 - Riches.
 - The kingdoms into which pagan Rome eventually split.
4. How many tribes or nations were "rooted up" by the little horn power? (1)
 - Eight.
 - One.
 - Six.
 - Three.

5. The little horn power, or Antichrist, represents (1)
 - One of Babylon's generals.
 - An evil ruler from the days of old pagan Rome.
 - An evil power that will arise after the second coming of Jesus.
 - Atheism.
 - The papacy.
6. Check the true statements about the little horn (Antichrist) power from the list below: (3)
 - It came from Egypt.
 - It would persecute God's people.
 - It arose immediately after Babylon fell.
 - It speaks great words against God.
 - It attempted to change God's law.
7. In prophecy, "time, times, and a half time" is symbolic of (1)
 - Three and one-half literal days.
 - 42 years.
 - 1,260 literal years.
8. When did "the time of the end" begin? (1)
 - A.D. 31
 - A.D. 1991
 - A.D. 588
 - A.D. 1798
9. Antichrist is an organization, rather than a person. (1)
 - Yes.
 - No.
10. Antichrist exists today. (1)
 - Yes.
 - No.
11. God approves of enforcing true worship by law. (1)
 - Yes.
 - No.
12. General Berthier's capture of the pope only wounded the papacy. Its deadly wound began to heal and continues healing today. (1)
 - Yes.

No.

13. What item from the list below is essential for the spiritual safety of God's people in these end- time days? (1)

Learn to preach.

Pray much in public.

Test every religious teaching by the Bible.

Angel Messages From Outer Space

Lesson 16

Angels are real! Sometimes called cherubim or seraphim, these powerful ministering spirits appear all through Bible history. Often they are seen protecting and guiding God's people, and sometimes punishing evil - but one of their most important missions is to reveal and explain prophecy. Did you know God has said something special through His angels to the stressed out people of our hectic world? In Revelation 14, God reveals some awesome last-day messages coded in the symbolism of three flying angels. So

significant are these messages, that when they are completed, Jesus returns! This Guide will give you an eye-opening overview, and the following eight guides will present the incredible details. Hold on to your seat... God's personal message to you is about to be explained!

The book of Revelation reveals Jesus in a unique manner.

1. Why are we studying Revelation? Isn't it sealed? Answer: There are six crucial reasons to study Revelation:

A. It never has been sealed (Revelation 22:10). The age long controversy between Christ and Satan, plus the devil's strategies and last-day devious plans, are exposed in Revelation. Satan cannot easily trap people who are aware of his lying deceptions in advance, so he hopes people will believe that Revelation is sealed.

B. The very name "Revelation" means "unveiling," "opening," or "revealing" the complete opposite of being sealed. It always has been wide open.

C. Revelation is Jesus' book in a unique way. It begins, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." It even gives a word picture of Him in Revelation 1:13-16. No other book

of the Bible reveals Jesus and His last-day instructions and plans for His work and His people as does Revelation.

D. Revelation is primarily written for and geared to the people of our day, just before Jesus' return (Revelation 1:1-3 3:11 22:6, 7, 12, 20).

E. A special blessing is pronounced upon those who read Revelation and heed its counsel (Revelation 1:3 22:7).

F. Revelation describes God's end-time people and church with startling clarity. It makes the Bible come to life when you see the last-day events depicted in Revelation taking place. It also tells precisely what God's church must be preaching in the last days (Revelation 14:6-14). This Study Guide will give an overview of that preaching so you will recognize it when you hear it.

Note: Before proceeding further, please open your Bible and read Revelation 14:6-14. God uses angels to symbolize His final three-point message.

2. God commissioned His church to take the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). How does He symbolize this sacred work in Revelation?

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach. And

there followed another angel, saying And the third angel followed them, saying " Revelation

14:6-9.

Answer: The word "angel" literally means "messenger," so it is fitting that God uses three angels to symbolize the preaching of His three-point gospel message for the last days. God uses the symbolism of angels to remind us that supernatural power will accompany the messages.

God's end-time message of hope must be delivered to every person on earth.

3. What two crucial points does Revelation 14:6 reveal about God's message for the last days? "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Revelation 14:6.

Answer: The two crucial points are: (1) that it is "the everlasting gospel," and (2) that it must be preached to every person on earth. The three angels' messages

stress the gospel, which makes it plain that people are saved by faith in -and acceptance of- Jesus Christ alone (Acts 4:12 Mark 10:26, 27).

Since no other way to salvation exists, it is evil to claim that there is some other way.

Satan's Counterfeits

Satan's counterfeits, while many, include two very effective ones: (1) salvation by works, and (2) salvation in sin. These two counterfeits are uncovered and revealed in the three angels' messages. Many, without realizing it, have embraced one of these two errors and are trying to build their salvation upon it - an utterly impossible feat. We also must stress that no one is truly preaching the gospel of Jesus for the end time who does not include the three angels' messages.

Those who revere God will find pure joy in serving Him.

4. What four distinctive points does the first angel's message cover?

"Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Revelation 14:7. Answer: A. Fear God. This means we should revere God and look upon Him with love, trust, and respect - eager to do His bidding. This keeps us from evil. "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." Proverbs 16:6. Solomon, the wise man, also said, "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Ecclesiastes 12:13.

B. Give glory to God. We fulfill this command when we obey, praise, and thank God for His goodness to us. One of the major sins of the last days is un-thankfulness (2 Timothy 3:1, 2).

C. The hour of His judgment is come. This indicates that everyone is accountable to God, and it is a clear statement that the judgment is now in session. A number of translations say "has" come instead of "is" come.

D. Worship the Creator. This command rejects idolatry of all kinds -including self-worship- and totally repudiates evolution, which denies that God is Creator and Redeemer. (Many books and radio talk shows today overstress self-worth, which leads to self-worship. A Christian's self-worth is in Christ, who makes His children sons and daughters of the King of heaven.)

The gospel includes the creation and redemption of the world by the Lord God of heaven. Worshiping the Creator includes worshiping Him on the day He set aside

as a memorial of Creation (the seventh- day Sabbath). That the reference in Revelation 14:7 is to the Sabbath is made clear by the fact that the words "made heaven, and earth, and the sea" were lifted right out of the Sabbath commandment (Exodus 20:11) and used here.

Our true roots are found in God alone, who made us in His image in the beginning. Those who do not worship God as Creator, no matter what else they may worship, may never discover their real roots.

God's people must come out of Babylon.

5. What solemn statement does the second angel make about Babylon? What does the angel of Revelation 18 command God's people to do?

"And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen." Revelation 14:8. "I saw another angel come down from heaven And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people." Revelation 18:1-4.

Answer: The second angel solemnly states that "Babylon is fallen," and the voice from heaven urges all of God's people to come out of Babylon at once. Unless you know what Babylon is, you could easily end up in it. Think about it. Could you possibly be in Babylon now?

Those who worship the beast and receive his mark will be destroyed by God.

6. Against what does the third angel's message solemnly warn?

"And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God." Revelation 14:9, 10.

Answer: The third angel's message warns people against worshiping the beast and his image and receiving the mark of the beast in their foreheads or hands. The first angel commands true worship. The third angel tells of the awesome consequences connected with false worship. Do you know for certain who the beast is? And what is his mark? Unless you know positively who the beast is and what his mark is, you may end up worshiping him without realizing it.

The Lord's end-time saints will find their greatest happiness in pleasing Him.

7. What four-point description does God give in Revelation 14:12 of His people who accept and follow the three angels' messages?

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12.

Answer: A. They are patient, persevering, and faithful to the end, a big order for a "do it now" generation. God's people reveal Him by their patient, loving conduct.
B. They are saints, or holy ones, because they are fully on God's side.

C. They keep the commandments of God. These people of God happily obey His Ten Commandments and all other commandments He has given them. Their first aim is to please Him, whom they love (1 John 3:22).

D. They have the faith of Jesus. This also can be translated "faith in Jesus." In either case, God's people fully follow Jesus and fully trust Him.
When all have heard Jesus' end-time message, He will return to earth to take His people with Him to heaven.

8. What happens immediately following the teaching of the three angels' messages to all people? "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown." Revelation 14:14.

Answer: Immediately after the teaching of the three angels' messages to every person, Jesus will return in the clouds (His second advent) to take His people to their heavenly home. At His appearing, the great 1,000-year blackout of Revelation chapter 20 will begin.

9. In 2 Peter 1:12, the apostle speaks of "present truth." What does he mean?
Answer: Present truth is an aspect of the everlasting gospel that has particular urgency for a certain time. Examples are:

A. Noah's message of the Flood (Genesis 6 and 7 2 Peter 2:5). Noah was a preacher of righteousness. He taught God's love as he warned of a coming flood that would destroy the world. The Flood message was "present truth" for that time. Its urgent cry was "get into the boat." And it was so important that it would have been immoral not to preach it.

B. Jonah's message to Nineveh (Jonah 3:4). Jonah's "present truth" was that Nineveh would be destroyed in 40 days. Jonah also uplifted the Saviour, and the city repented. To omit, however, the 40-day warning would have been unfaithful and unforgivable. It was present truth. It fitted that time in a special way.

C. John the Baptist's message (Matthew 3:1-3 Luke 1:17). John's "present truth" was that Jesus, the Messiah, was about to appear. His work was to present the gospel and prepare people for Jesus' first coming. To have omitted that first-coming element of the gospel for his day would have been unthinkable.

D. The three angels' messages (Revelation 14:6-14). God's "present truth" for today is contained in the three angels' messages. Of course, salvation through Jesus Christ alone is central to these messages. However, the "present truth" of the three angels also has been given to prepare people for Jesus' second coming and to open their eyes to Satan's brilliant and highly convincing deceptions. Unless people understand these messages, Satan will indeed capture and destroy them. Jesus knew we needed these three special messages, so in loving kindness He has given them. They must not be omitted. Please pray earnestly as you examine them point by point in the next eight Study Guides.

Some of your discoveries may be almost shocking. But all will be satisfying. Your heart will be tremendously stirred. You will sense Jesus speaking to you! After all, they are His messages.

10. Who does the Bible say will come to give a "present truth" message before the great day of the Lord?

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." Malachi 4:5.

Answer: Elijah the prophet. There is something significant about Elijah and his message, as we shall see in the next few questions.

God's end-time messages are also called the "Elijah" message. They call for a decision.

11. What did Elijah do that caused the Lord to focus on him?

Note: Please open your Bible and carefully read 1 Kings 18:17-40 before answering this question. Answer: Elijah urged the people to make up their minds whom they would serve (verse 21). The nation was almost wholly idolatrous. The people had forsaken the true God and His commandments. There was one prophet of God, Elijah, and 450 heathen prophets of Baal (verse 22). Elijah suggested that both he and the idolaters build altars and place wood and a bull on them. He then

suggested they ask the true God to reveal Himself by setting fire to His altar. The heathen god did not answer, but the true God of Elijah sent fire from heaven and burned up Elijah's sacrifice.

The Message Demanded a Decision

Elijah's message came at a time of deep spiritual crisis and national apostasy. It came with such power from heaven above that it stopped "business as usual" and drew national attention. Elijah then insisted that people decide whom they would serve, God or Baal. Deeply moved and fully convinced, the people chose God (verse 39).

John the Baptist presented the "Elijah" message of his day. Those who preach Revelation 14:6-14 have the Elijah message for today.

12. The Elijah message has a twofold application. It applies to a "present truth" message to prepare people for Jesus' first advent and a "present truth" message to prepare people for Jesus' second advent. Who did Jesus say preached the Elijah message to prepare people for His first advent? "There hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." "And if ye will receive it, this is Elias [Elijah], which was for to come." Matthew 11:11, 14.

Answer: Jesus called John's preaching to prepare people for His first advent "Elijah," or the Elijah message. John's message, as in Elijah's day, made truth very clear and then insisted on a decision. The Bible says of John the Baptist, "He shall go ... in the spirit and power of Elias [Elijah]." Luke 1:17.

13. How do we know the prophecy has a second application to our time just before the second advent?

"I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." Malachi 4:5. "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come." Joel 2:31.

Answer: Please take note that two events will occur before the coming of "the great and terrible day of the Lord" mentioned in Joel 2:31. One, the coming of Elijah. And two, the tremendous signs in the heavens. This helps us locate both events. The dark day occurred May 19, 1780. That same night, the moon appeared as blood. Matthew 24:29 includes one more sign, the falling of the stars, which took place November 13, 1833. From this, we know the end-time Elijah message must begin sometime near or after 1833, before the coming of the great day of the Lord.

Second Elijah Message After Sky Signs

It is obvious that John's "Elijah message" does not apply to the second "Elijah message" because God's great sky signs appeared over 1,700 years after John preached his message. The Elijah message of Joel 2:31 had to begin after those sky signs in 1833 and must prepare people for Jesus' second advent.

The threefold "present truth" message of Revelation 14:6-14 fits perfectly. It began around 1844 and is preparing people worldwide for Jesus' second advent (verse 14), which will take place after the threefold message has reached every person on earth.

The Message Demands a Decision

Elijah insisted evil be met head-on and that all decide whom they would serve. So it is with God's threefold message for us today. A decision must be made. God's threefold message unmasks Satan and his plans. It clearly reveals God's love and His requirements. God is calling people today back to true worship, worship of God alone. To knowingly serve and worship anyone or anything else in this crucial day amounts to disloyalty and will result in eternal death. God miraculously reached hearts in Elijah's day (1 Kings 18:37, 39) and in the days of John the Baptist. He will do the same in these last days as people respond to the three angels' messages (Revelation 18:1).

God's final Elijah message will bring families together in joy, love, and happiness.

14. What other wonderful blessing will the preaching of the Elijah (or the three angels') messages bring?

"Elijah ... shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers." Malachi 4:5, 6.

Answer: Praise God! The Elijah message, or three angels' messages, will bring family members together in a loving, close, joyous, heavenly relationship. What a blessed promise!

The three angels' messages focus upon Jesus.

15. The word "gospel" means "good news." Do the three angels' messages of Revelation chapter 14 provide good news?

Answer: Yes indeed! Let's review the good news we have found in this overview of the three angels' messages:

- A. Every person will have an opportunity to hear and understand the last-day gospel. Not one will be passed by.
 - B. The devil's brilliant, powerful plans to trap and destroy people will be revealed to us, so we need not be ensnared.
 - C. Heaven's supernatural power will accompany the spreading of God's message in these last days.
 - D. God's people will be patient. He calls them "saints."
 - E. God's people will have the faith of Jesus.
 - F. God's people will, out of love, obey His commandments.
 - G. God loves us so much that He has sent a very special message to prepare us for Jesus' second coming.
 - H. God's message for these last days will bring family members together in love and unity.
 - I. The major emphasis of the three angels' messages is that salvation has been provided for everyone
- through Jesus Christ alone. He gives His righteousness to cover our past and miraculously imparts His righteousness to us daily so we will grow in grace and truly become like Him. With Him, we cannot fail. Without Him, we cannot succeed.

A Further Word

Points of the three angels' messages that will be explained in upcoming Study Guides are:

- A. God's judgment hour has arrived!
- B. Come out of fallen Babylon.

C. Don't receive the mark of the beast.

Much more good news will be revealed as you prayerfully study these subjects in the next eight Study Guides. You will be surprised and gladdened at some things, shocked and saddened at others. Some points may be very hard to accept. But since Jesus sent a special message from heaven to help and guide each one of us personally in these last days, surely nothing could be more important than to hear it, understand it fully, and follow it.

16. I am relieved and thankful that Jesus has a special three-point message to guide and assist His people in these last days of earth.

Answer:

Thought Questions

1. Will every person on earth be reached with the three angels' messages before Jesus returns? With billions of people now living, how can this be possible?

Yes, it will happen because God promised it (Mark 16:15). Paul says the gospel went "to every creature which is under heaven" in his day (Colossians 1:23). Jonah, by God's grace, reached the entire city of Nineveh in less than 40 days (Jonah 3:4-10). The Bible says God will finish the work and cut it short (Romans 9:28). Count on it. It will happen very quickly and in our day.

2. Did Moses and Elijah actually appear with Jesus at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:3) or was it only a vision?

The event was literal. The Greek word "horama", translated "vision" in verse 9, literally means "what had been seen". Moses was raised from the dead and taken to heaven (Jude 1:9), and Elijah was later translated without seeing death (2 Kings 2:1, 11, 12). These two men, who had been on earth and suffered terribly from the onslaughts of the devil and the rebellion of God's people, understood what Jesus was passing through. They came to encourage and remind Him of all who would be translated into His kingdom without seeing death (like Elijah) and raised to life from the grave to enter His kingdom (like Moses) because of His sacrifice for our sins.

3. Why did John say he was not Elijah (John 1:19-21) when Jesus said that he was (Matthew 11:10-14)?

The answer comes from Luke 1:3-17. The angel who announced John's coming birth said, "Thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

He shall be great in the sight of the Lord And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Verses 13-17. When Jesus referred to John as Elijah, He was referring to his life, spirit, power, and work being like that of Elijah. The same is true of the Elijah message of these last days. The emphasis is on the message, not the man. So John was not Elijah in person, but he was presenting the Elijah message. ("Elias" is the Greek form of "Elijah".)

4. Is it possible for someone to be preaching Jesus' full end-time truth for today without including the three angels' messages?

No! The three angels' messages must be included. In the book of Revelation, Jesus Himself reveals or stipulates His end-time message (Revelation 1:1) and says clearly that His people must keep on following what He has revealed in the book (Revelation 1:3 22:7). So faithful end-time clergymen must be preaching Jesus' messages from the book of Revelation. This, of course, includes preaching His special three-point message of Revelation 14:6-14. Notice that Jesus calls these messages the "everlasting gospel" in verse 6. He also says they must be taken to every person on earth before He returns for His people. Here are three solemn thoughts:

A. No one is truly preaching Jesus' "everlasting gospel" unless he includes the three angels' messages.

B. No one has the right to call his messages the everlasting gospel if he omits the three angels' messages.

C. The three angels' messages prepare people for Jesus' second coming (Revelation 14:12-14). Unless you hear, understand, and accept Jesus' three-point end-time messages, you may not be prepared for His second coming.

Special Messages for the End-time

Jesus, who knows what we need, gave us three special messages for the end-time. We must understand and follow them. The next eight Study Guides will make these messages clear to you.

5. Luke 1:17 says the Elijah message was to turn "the disobedient to the wisdom of the just". What does this mean?

"The just shall live by faith." Romans 1:17. The just have the wisdom to rest their salvation upon faith in the Saviour. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12. John's message was to make this crystal clear to all. A faith that is anchored to anyone or anything other than Jesus Christ can never save people from sin and lead to a changed life. People must hear and understand this great point of truth. This truth is also the very heart of God's three-point Elijah message for today.

Quiz Questions

1. The three angels of Revelation 14 (1)
 - Are literal and must shout loudly to be heard.
 - Represent God's last-day message moving with speed and power.
 - Are a figment of someone's imagination.
2. Which items below tell the truth about Revelation? (3)
 - The book is sealed.
 - The name means "unveiling" or "revealing."
 - It tells what message God's people will preach in the last days.
 - It contains a word picture of Jesus.
 - God pronounced a curse on those who study it.
3. The message of the three angels must go to every person before Jesus returns. (1)
 - Yes.
 - No.
4. The first angel's message stresses the following: (3)
 - It is the everlasting gospel being presented.
 - It can't be understood.
 - Evolution is a fine Christian theory.
 - The judgment is now in session.

We should respect and truly trust God.

Each person should worship whatever he wishes.

5. The second angel's message says Babylon is fallen, and the angel of Revelation 18 urges God's people who are in Babylon to come out. (1)

Yes.

No.

6. The third angel's message urges all of God's people to receive the mark of the beast. (1)

Yes.

No.

7. How does Revelation 14:12 speak of God's people? (2)

They are patient.

They are saints.

They do not believe in the Ten Commandments.

They have very little faith.

8. What happens immediately after the gospel has reached every person? (1)

The nations are all converted.

God rebuilds New York and London.

The second coming of Jesus takes place.

9. Which of the following are "present truth" messages for today? (1)

Jonah's message to Nineveh.

Noah's message before the Flood.

The three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-14.

10. Which items are true about the three angels' messages? (6)

These messages are being preached now.

These messages stress salvation through Jesus Christ alone.

They can also be called the "Elijah message."

Elijah will appear in person to help present them.

They stress the Christian values of evolution.

Most people will never hear about them.

They will bring family members together in a close, loving relationship.

Supernatural power will accompany them.

They help prepare people for Jesus' second coming.

11. John the Baptist was called the Elijah of his day because (1)

He liked to call down fire from heaven.

The high priest preferred that name.

His preaching, with the spirit and power of Elijah, prepared people for Jesus' first coming.

12. The word "gospel" means "good news." (1)

Yes.

No.

God Drew The Plans-Lesson 17

Lesson 17

We all know that 4,000 years ago, on the grand summit of Mt. Sinai, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. But most people don't know that at the same time, the Lord gave Moses the blueprints for one of the most mysterious structures ever built - the sanctuary. It must have been important, because the Israelites could not enter the Promised Land until it was completed. This unique portable temple represented God's dwelling place among His people, and its services showed the nation of freed slaves a three-dimensional panorama of the plan of salvation. A careful look into the secrets of the sanctuary will crystallize your understanding of how Jesus saves the lost and leads

the church. The sanctuary is also a key to understand several prophecies. This awesome Study Guide lets you explore the sanctuary and discover its hidden meanings. An exciting adventure awaits you! God Himself gave Moses the plans for the sanctuary.

1. What did God ask Moses to build?

"And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." Exodus 25:8.

Answer: The Lord asked Moses to erect a sanctuary, a special building that would serve as a dwelling place for the great God of heaven.

A Brief Description of the Sanctuary

The sanctuary was an elegant, tent-type structure (15' x 45' based on an 18-inch cubit) where the supernatural presence of God dwelt and special services were conducted.

The walls were made of upright acacia (wooden) boards, set in silver sockets and overlaid with gold (Exodus 26:15-19, 29). The roof was made of four layers of coverings: linen, goat's hair, ram's skin, and badger skin (Exodus 26:1, 6-14). It had two rooms: the holy place and the most holy place. A thick, heavy veil or curtain separated the rooms. The courtyard, the area around the sanctuary, was 75' x 150' (Exodus 27:18). It was fenced with fine linen cloth supported by 60 pillars of brass (Exodus 27:9- 16).

2. What did God expect His people to learn from the sanctuary?

"Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?" Psalms 77:13.

Answer: God's way, or plan of salvation, is revealed in the earthly sanctuary. The Bible teaches that everything in the sanctuary or connected with its service was a symbol of something Jesus would do in saving us. This means we cannot fully comprehend the plan of salvation until we understand the symbolism connected with the sanctuary. Thus, the importance of this Study Guide can hardly be overstated.

The sanctuary and its services were to demonstrate the plan of salvation.

3. From what source did Moses obtain the blueprints for the sanctuary? Of what was the building a copy?

"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount." Hebrews 8:1, 2, 5.

Answer: The sanctuary blueprints and full specifications for its construction were given to Moses by God. They were a copy of the original sanctuary in heaven, which was the pattern for Moses' sanctuary.

4. What furniture was in the courtyard?

Answer: A. The altar of burnt offerings where animals were sacrificed was located in the courtyard, just inside its entrance (Exodus 27:1-8). This altar represented

the cross of Christ. The animal represented Jesus, the ultimate sacrifice (John 1:29).

B. The laver, located between the altar and the entrance of the sanctuary, was a large washbasin made of brass. Here priests washed their hands and feet before offering a sacrifice or entering the sanctuary (Exodus 30:17-21 38:8).

The water represented cleansing from sin, or the new birth (Titus 3:5).

5. What furniture was in the holy place?

Answer: A. The table of shewbread (Exodus 25:23-30) represented Jesus, the living bread (John 6:51).

B. The seven-branch candlestick (Exodus 25:31-40) represented Jesus, the light of the world (John 9:5 1:9). The oil represented the Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:1-6 Revelation 4:5).

C. The altar of incense (Exodus 30:7, 8) represented the prayers of God's people (Revelation 5:8).

The mercy seat represents God's throne in heaven, which is also located between two angels.

6. What furniture was in the most holy place?

Answer: The ark of the covenant, the only piece of furniture in the most holy place (Exodus 25:10- 22), was a box or chest of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Standing atop the chest were two angels made of solid gold. Between these angels was the mercy seat (Exodus 25:17-22), where the supernatural presence of God dwelt.

This symbolized God's throne in heaven, which is likewise located between two angels (Psalms 80:1).

The Ten Commandments were inside the ark. They represent God's character, which He implants within His people.

7. What was inside the ark?

Answer: The Ten Commandments, which God wrote on tables of stone with His own finger, and which His people will always obey (Revelation 14:12), were inside the ark (Deuteronomy 10:4, 5). But the mercy seat was above them, which

signified that as long as God's people confessed and forsook sin (Proverbs 28:13), mercy would be extended to them through the blood which was sprinkled on the mercy seat by the priest (Leviticus 16:15, 16). The blood of the animal represents Jesus' blood that was shed for us to bring us forgiveness of sin (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 9:22).

The animals sacrificed represented Jesus, who sacrificed His life for all people.

8. Why did animals need to be sacrificed in the Old Testament sanctuary services?

"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." Hebrews 9:22. "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matthew 26:28.

Answer: The sacrificing of animals was necessary to help people understand that without the shedding of Jesus' blood, their sins could never be forgiven. The ugly, shocking truth is that the punishment for sin is eternal death (Romans 6:23). Since all of us have sinned, all of us should die. When Adam and Eve sinned, they would have died at once except for Jesus, who stepped forward and offered to give His perfect life as a sacrifice to pay the death penalty for all people (Revelation 13:8). After sin, God required the sinner to bring an animal sacrifice (Genesis 4:3-7). The sinner was to kill the animal with his own hand (Leviticus 1:4, 5). It was bloody and shocking. And it indelibly impressed the sinner with the solemn reality of sin's awful consequences (eternal death) and the desperate need of a Saviour and a substitute. Without a Saviour, no one had any hope for salvation. The sacrificial system taught, through the symbol of the slain animal, that God would give His Son to die for their sins (1 Corinthians 15:3). Jesus would become not only their Saviour, but also their substitute (Hebrews 9:28). When John the Baptist met Jesus, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29. In the Old Testament, people looked forward to the cross for salvation. We look backward to Calvary for salvation. There is no other source of salvation (Acts 4:12).

Animal sacrifices taught the shocking truth that sin would cost the death of Jesus.

9. How were animals sacrificed in the sanctuary service, and with what meaning?

"And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him." "And he shall kill it on the side of the altar northward." Leviticus 1:4, 11. Answer: When a sinner brought a sacrificial animal to the door of the courtyard, a priest handed him a knife and a basin. The sinner laid his hands on the animal's head and confessed his sins. This symbolized the transfer of sin from the sinner to the animal. At that point, the sinner was considered innocent and the animal guilty. Since the animal was now symbolically guilty, it had to pay sin's wage-

-death. By slaying the animal with his own hand, the sinner was thus graphically taught that sin caused the innocent animal's death and that his sin would cause the death of innocent Jesus.

10. When a sacrificial animal was offered for the entire congregation, what did the priest do with the blood? What does this symbolize?

"And the priest that is anointed shall bring of the bullock's blood to the tabernacle of the congregation: And the priest shall dip his finger in some of the blood, and sprinkle it seven times before the Lord, even before the veil." Leviticus 4:16, 17.

Answer: When a sacrifice was offered for the sins of the entire congregation, the blood was taken by the priest, who represented Jesus (Hebrews 3:1), into the sanctuary and sprinkled before the veil which separated the two rooms. The presence of God dwelt on the other side of the veil. Thus, the sins of the people were removed and symbolically transferred to the sanctuary. This ministry of the blood by the priest foreshadowed Jesus' present blood-ministry for us in heaven. After Jesus died on the cross as our sacrifice for sin, He arose and went to heaven as our Priest to minister His blood in the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 9:11, 12). The blood ministered by the earthly priest represents Jesus applying His blood to our record of sins in the sanctuary above, showing that they are forgiven when we confess them in His name (1 John 1:9).

As our sacrifice, Jesus brings us a completely transformed life with all sins forgiven.

11. Based on the sanctuary services, in what two major capacities does Jesus serve His people? What fantastic benefits do we receive from His loving ministry?

"Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." 1 Corinthians 5:7. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are,

yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:14-16.

Answer: Jesus serves as the sacrifice for our sins and as our heavenly Priest. Jesus' death as our sacrificial lamb and substitute, and His continual powerful ministry as our heavenly Priest, accomplish two incredible miracles for us:

A. A complete life change called the new birth, with all the sins of the past forgiven (John 3:3-6 Romans 3:25).

B. Power to live right in the present and future (Titus 2:14 Philippians 2:13). These two miracles make a person righteous - which means a right relationship exists between the person and God. There is no possible way for a person to become righteous by works (his own efforts), because righteousness requires miracles which only Jesus can accomplish (Acts 4:12). A person becomes righteous by trusting Jesus to do for him what he cannot do for himself.

This is what is meant by the biblical term "righteousness by faith." I ask Jesus to become the ruler of my life and trust Him to work the needed miracles as I cooperate fully with Him. This righteousness, which is miraculously accomplished for me and in me by Jesus, is the only true righteousness that exists. Every other kind is a counterfeit.

Jesus, by His miracles, will cause us happily to do only the things that please God.

12. What six sublime promises does the Bible give us about the righteousness offered to us through Jesus?

Answer:

A. He will cover our past sins and count us as guiltless (Isaiah 44:22 John 1:9).

B. We were created in God's image in the beginning (Genesis 1:26, 27). Jesus promises to restore us to God's image (Romans 8:29).

C. Jesus gives us the desire to live right and then grants us His power to actually accomplish it (Philippians 2:13).

D. Jesus, by His miracles, will cause us to happily do only the things that please God (Hebrews 13:20- 21, John 15:11).

E. He removes the death sentence from us by crediting us for His sinless life and atoning death (2 Corinthians 5:21).

F. Jesus assumes responsibility for keeping us faithful until He returns to take us to heaven (Philippians 1:6 Jude 1:24).

Jesus is ready to fulfill all these glorious promises in your life. Are you ready? Kneel down now and ask Him to take control of your life. He will not fail you. Our role in salvation is to lovingly and willingly follow where Jesus leads.

13. Does a person have any role at all to play in becoming righteous by faith? "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 7:21.

Answer: Yes, Jesus says we must do His Father's will. In Old Testament days, a person who truly had been converted kept bringing lambs to sacrifice, indicating his sorrow for sin and his whole-hearted desire to let the Lord totally lead in his life.

Today, though we cannot work the miracles needed to become righteous, we must daily recommit to Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:31), inviting Him to control our lives so those miracles can take place. We must be willing to be obedient and to follow where Jesus leads (John 12:26 Isaiah 1:18-20).

Sin causes us to want to have our own way (Isaiah 53:6) and, thus, rebel against the Lord as Satan did in the beginning (Isaiah 14:12-14). Permitting Jesus to rule our lives is sometimes as wrenchingly difficult as having an eye plucked out or an arm torn off (Matthew 5:29, 30), because sin is addictive and can be overcome only by God's miraculous power (Mark 10:27).

Many believe that Jesus will take all who profess salvation to heaven, regardless of their conduct. But this is not so. It is a fabrication of Satan. A Christian must follow Jesus' lifestyle (1 Peter 2:21). The powerful blood of Jesus can accomplish this for us all (Hebrews 13:12), but only if we give Jesus full control of our lives and happily follow where He leads, even though the path may sometimes be stony and rough (Matthew 7:13, 14, 21).

The Lord's goat represented Jesus, who would die for our sins.

14. Can you help me understand the day of atonement?

Answer: A. Once each year, on the day of atonement, a solemn day of judgment took place in Israel (Leviticus 23:27). All were to confess every sin. Those who

refused were that very day cut off forever from the camp of Israel (Leviticus 23:29).

B. Two goats were selected: One, the Lord's goat the other, the scapegoat, representing Satan (Leviticus 16:8). The Lord's goat was slain and offered for the sins of the people (Leviticus 16:9). But on this day the blood was taken into the most holy place and sprinkled upon and before the mercy seat (Leviticus 16:14). Only on this special judgment day did the high priest enter the most holy place to meet God at the mercy seat.

The sprinkled blood (representing Jesus' sacrifice) was accepted by God, and the confessed sins of the people were transferred from the sanctuary to the high priest. He then transferred these confessed sins to the scapegoat, which was led into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:16, 20-22). In this manner, the sanctuary was cleansed of the sins of the people, which had been transferred there by the blood sprinkled before the veil and had been accumulating for a year.

Israel's day of atonement was a symbol of the final judgment, which will forever settle the sin question throughout the universe.

15. Does the day of atonement symbolize or foreshadow a part of God's great plan of salvation, as did the other facets of the earthly sanctuary and its services? "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." Hebrews 9:23.

Answer: Yes. That day's services pointed to the blotting out of sin by the real High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. Through His shed blood applied to those written in the book of life, Christ would confirm the decisions of His people to serve Him eternally. This special judgment day, like that of Israel's Yom Kippur, foreshadowed the final atonement to be made for planet Earth. From the yearly type of the ancient day of atonement, all of humanity is assured that our faithful High Priest, Jesus, still mediates in heaven for His people and stands ready to blot out the sins of all who will exercise faith in His shed blood. The final atonement leads to the final judgment, which settles the sin question in the life of every individual, culminating in either life or death.

Momentous Events

You will discover in the next two Study Guides how the symbolism of the earthly sanctuary and especially the day of atonement foreshadowed momentous events of the end time, which God will bring to pass from the heavenly sanctuary.

Date for the Judgment

In the next Study Guide, we will examine a crucial Bible prophecy in which God sets a date for the heavenly judgment to begin. Thrilling, indeed!

16. I am willing to accept Christ's righteousness, which includes forgiveness, cleansing from sin, and the power to live right in the present and future.

Answer:

Quiz Questions

1. Which pieces of furniture were in the courtyard of the sanctuary? (2)
The mercy seat.
The laver.
Chairs.
Altar of burnt offerings.
2. God's presence dwelt at the mercy seat. (1)
Yes.
No.
3. The seven-branch candlestick represented (1)
Jesus, the light of the world.
The second coming of Christ.
The glittering walls of the new Jerusalem.
4. The purpose of the sanctuary and its services was to (1)
Help the people understand angels.
Provide flesh food for the people.
Symbolize the plan of salvation.
5. Who drew the plans for the sanctuary? (1)
Noah
An angel.
Aaron.
God.
6. The Ten Commandments were inside the ark of the covenant. (1)
Yes.
No.
7. The slain sacrificial animals represented (1)
The Holy Spirit.
Warfare.

Jesus.

8. Based on the sanctuary, in what two capacities does Jesus serve us? (2)
King.
Sacrifice.
High Priest.
Ruler of the universe.
9. Which of the following were true of the earthly sanctuary? (2)
It had three rooms.
It was a tent-type structure.
Its size was 500' x 1000'.
Courtyard was made of brass pillars and linen cloth.
Roof was made of Egyptian tile.
Laver was in most holy place.
10. Righteousness by faith is the only true righteousness. (1)
Yes.
No.
11. Righteousness by faith comes from (1)
Man's works.
Being baptized.
Faith in Jesus Christ alone.
12. Who killed the sacrificial animal that a sinner brought? (1)
God.
The priest.
The sinner.
13. Which statements are true about the righteousness Jesus offers? (3)
It will restore us to God's image.
It is not miraculous.
Our good works are a big part of it.
It covers our past sins.
It gives us the desire to live right.
14. Which of the following are true regarding the day of atonement? (4)
It occurred monthly.
It was a day of judgment.
It was a day of games and good fun.
It symbolized the final judgment.

The scapegoat symbolized Satan.

The blood was taken into the most holy place.

15. Righteousness means a right relationship with God. (1)

Yes.

No.

16. Slaying an animal helped the people realize that sin brought the death penalty upon all people. (1)

Yes.

No.

Right on Time! Prophetic Appointments Revealed!

Lesson 18

Fasten your seat belt! You're now going to explore the longest time prophecy in the Bible - a prophecy that perfectly predicted the first coming of Jesus and the time of His death. In Study Guide 16, "Angel Messages from Space," you learned that God has an extremely important message the world must hear before Christ's return! The first point commands people to worship God and glorify Him, because the hour of His judgment has arrived (Revelation 14:7). In Daniel 8 and 9, God reveals the date for His final judgment to begin and powerful prophetic clues proving Christ as the Messiah. Thus no prophecy in all of Scripture is more vital - yet few people are aware of it! Others completely misinterpret it.

Please read Daniel chapters 8 and 9 before starting this Study Guide, and ask God's Spirit to guide you in understanding this phenomenal lesson.

The ram represents Medo-Persia.

1. In vision, Daniel saw a two-horned ram pushing west, north, and south and conquering every beast he met (Daniel 8:3, 4). What does that ram symbolize?

"The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia." Daniel 8:20. Answer: The ram is a symbol of the world kingdom of Medo-Persia, which was also represented by the bear of Daniel 7:5. The prophecies of the Bible books of Daniel and Revelation follow the principle of "repeat and expand," which means they repeat prophecies covered in earlier chapters of the book and enlarge upon them. This approach brings clarity and certainty to Bible prophecies.

The goat symbolizes Greece.

2. What striking animal did Daniel next see?

"And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation." Daniel 8:21, 22.

Answer: Next in Daniel's vision, a male goat with one huge horn suddenly appeared, traveling at great speed. He attacked and conquered the ram. Then the great horn was broken off and four horns arose in its place. The rough male goat symbolized the third world kingdom of Greece, and the huge horn symbolized Alexander the Great. The four horns that replaced the great horn represent the four kingdoms into which Alexander's empire was divided. In Daniel 7:6, these four kingdoms are represented by the four heads of the leopard beast, which also symbolizes Greece. These symbols are so fitting that it is easy to identify them in history.

REGION GENERAL

I. Macedonia

(Macedonia ruled Greece for 200 years.) Cassander

II. Asia

(Called Asia Minor today. It is modern day Turkey.) Lysimachus - Lie sim cus
(generally ruled western portion of Asia Minor in addition to Thrace in Europe.)

III. Syria Seleuchus -

(in addition to portions of Asia.)

IV. Egypt Ptolemy

(The infamous Cleopatra was the last Ptolemy to rule Egypt.)

The "little horn" of Daniel chapter 8 represents Rome in both its pagan and papal stages. So the little horn of the last days is the papacy.

3. According to Daniel 8:8, 9, a little horn power next arose. What does the little horn represent? Answer: The little horn represents Rome. Some have suggested that the little horn represents Antiochus Epiphanes, a Seleucid king who ruled over Palestine in the second century B.C. and who disrupted the Jewish worship services. Others, including most leaders of the Reformation, have believed that the little horn represents Rome in both its pagan and papal forms. Let's examine the clear Bible evidence for this:

A. In harmony with the prophetic rule of "repeat and expand," Rome must be the power represented here because both chapters 2 and 7 of Daniel point to Rome as the kingdom that follows Greece. Daniel 7:24-27 also establishes the fact that Rome in its papal form will be succeeded by the kingdom of Christ. The little horn of Daniel chapter 8 fits this pattern exactly: It follows Greece and is finally supernaturally destroyed or "broken without hand" at Jesus' second coming. (Compare Daniel 8:25 with Daniel 2:34.)

B. Daniel chapter 8 says the Medo-Persians would become "great" (verse 4), the Grecians "very great" (verse 8), and the little horn power "exceeding great" (verse 9). History is clear that no power following Greece became "exceeding great" other than Rome.

C. Rome extended its power to the south (Egypt), the east (Macedonia), and the "pleasant land" (Palestine) precisely as the prophecy predicted (verse 9). No major power other than Rome fits this point.

D. Only Rome stood up against Jesus, "the prince of the host" (verse 11) and "the Prince of princes" (verse 25). Pagan Rome crucified Him. It also destroyed the Jewish temple. And papal Rome effectively caused the heavenly sanctuary to be "cast down" (verse 11) and "trodden under foot" (verse 13) by replacing the essential ministry of Jesus, our High Priest in heaven, with an earthly priesthood which claims to forgive sins. No one but God can forgive sins (Luke 5:21). And Jesus is our only Priest or Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5).

The little horn power persecuted and destroyed millions of God's people.

4. Daniel 8 informs us that this little horn power would also destroy many of God's people (verses 10, 24, 25) and cast truth to the ground (verse 12). When a saint asked how long God's people and heavenly sanctuary would be trodden under foot, what was heaven's reply?

"And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." Daniel 8:14.

Answer: Heaven's reply was that the sanctuary in heaven would be cleansed after 2,300 prophetic days, or 2,300 literal years. (Study Guide 15 gives a full explanation of the prophetic day-for-a-year principle found in Ezekiel 4:6 and

Numbers 14:34.) We have already learned that the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary took place on the day of atonement in ancient Israel.

On that day God's people were clearly identified as His, and the record of their sins was removed. The wicked who clung to sin were cut off forever from Israel. Thus the camp was cleansed from sin.

Heaven was here assuring Daniel that sin and the little horn power would not continue to prosper, control the world, and persecute God's people endlessly. Instead, in 2,300 years God would step in with the heavenly day of atonement, or judgment, where sin and sinners would be identified and later removed from the universe forever. Thus the universe will be cleansed from sin. The wrongs against God's people will at long last be righted, and the peace and harmony of Eden will once again fill the universe.

Daniel prayed that God would help him understand the 2,300-year prophecy.

5. What urgent point did the angel Gabriel repeatedly stress?

"Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision." "I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation." "Wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days." Daniel 8:17, 19, 26, emphasis added.

Answer: Gabriel repeatedly asserted that the 2,300-day vision involved events in the end-time, which began in 1798, as we learned in Study Guide 15. The angel wanted us to understand that the 2,300-day prophecy is a message which applies primarily to all of us who are living in the end-time of earth's history. It has special meaning for today.

Introduction to Daniel Chapter 9

After Daniel's vision of chapter 8, the angel Gabriel came and began explaining the vision to him. When Gabriel reached the point of the 2,300 days, Daniel collapsed and was ill for some time. He regained his strength and resumed doing the king's business but was much concerned regarding the unexplained portion of the vision, the 2,300 days. Daniel prayed earnestly for his people, the Jews who were in captivity in Medo-Persia. He confessed his sins and pleaded with God to forgive His people. Daniel chapter 9 begins with the prophet's earnest prayer of confession and appeal to God.

Please take time now to read Daniel 9 before proceeding further with this Study Guide. The angel Gabriel came to Daniel to explain the 2,300-year prophecy.

6. While Daniel was praying, who suddenly touched him and with what message (Daniel 9:21-23)? Answer: The angel Gabriel touched him and stated he had come to explain the rest of the vision described in Daniel chapter 8 (compare Daniel 8:26 with Daniel 9:23).

Gabriel explained to Daniel important events to take place within the 2,300 years.

7. How much of the 2,300 days would be allotted to (or cut off for) Daniel's people, the Jews, and their capital city, Jerusalem (Daniel 9:24)?

Answer: Seventy weeks were to be "determined upon," or cut off, for the Jews. The seventy prophetic weeks equal 490 literal years ($70 \times 7 = 490$). God's people would soon be returning from captivity in Medo-Persia, and God would cut off 490 years from the 2,300 years and allot them to His chosen people as another opportunity to repent and serve Him.

8. What event and date were to mark the starting point for the 2,300-day and 490-year prophecies (Daniel 9:25)?

Answer: The starting event was a decree from Persian King Artaxerxes authorizing God's people (who were captive in Medo-Persia) to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city. The decree, found in Ezra chapter 7, was issued in 457 B.C.--the seventh year of the king (verse 7)--and was implemented in the autumn. Artaxerxes began his reign in 464 B.C.

Jesus' baptism was an accurate fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

9. The angel said that 69 prophetic weeks, or 483 literal years ($69 \times 7 = 483$), added to 457 B.C. would reach to the Messiah (Daniel 9:25). Did it?

Answer: Yes, indeed! Mathematical calculations show that moving ahead 483 full years from the fall of 457 B.C. reaches the fall of A.D. 27. The word "Messiah" means "anointed" (John 1:41, margin).

Jesus was anointed with the Holy Ghost (Acts 10:38) at His baptism (Luke 3:21, 22). His anointing took place in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1), which was A.D. 27. And to think the prediction was made more than 500 years before!

Then Jesus began to preach that "the time is fulfilled" (referring to the 483 years which were to reach to the Messiah). He thus audibly confirmed the prophecy (Mark 1:14, 15 Galatians 4:4). So Jesus actually began His ministry by clearly referring to the 2,300-day prophecy, stressing its importance and accuracy. This is awesome and thrilling evidence that:

- A. The Bible is inspired.
- B. Jesus is the Messiah.
- C. All other dates in the 2,300-day/490-year prophecy are valid. What a firm foundation on which to build!

10. We have now considered 483 years of the 490-year prophecy. There is one prophetic week, or seven literal years, left (Daniel 9:26, 27). What happens next? When does it happen?

Answer: Jesus is "cut off" or crucified "in the midst of the week," which is three and one-half years after His anointing, or the spring of A.D. 31. Please notice how the gospel is revealed in verse 26: "After threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself."

No, praise God, when Jesus was cut off, it was not for Himself. He "who did no sin" (1 Peter 2:22) was crucified for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3 Isaiah 53:5). Jesus' priceless life was lovingly and willingly offered to save us from sin. Hallelujah, what a Saviour! Jesus' atoning sacrifice is the very heart of Daniel chapters 8 and 9.

The disciples preached to multitudes of Jews.

11. Since Jesus died after three and one-half years, how could He "confirm the covenant with many" for the full final seven years, as the prophecy in Daniel 9:27 mandates?

Answer: The covenant is His blessed agreement to save people from their sins (Hebrews 10:16, 17). After His ministry of three and one-half years ended, Jesus confirmed the covenant through His disciples (Hebrews 2:3). He sent them first to the Jewish nation (Matthew 10:5, 6), because His chosen people still had three

and one-half years remaining of their 490-year opportunity to repent. After the stoning of Stephen, the disciples began preaching to the Gentiles.

12. When the 490-year period of final opportunity for the Jewish nation ended in the fall of A.D. 34, what did the disciples do?

Answer: They began preaching the gospel to other people and nations of the world (Acts 13:46). Stephen, a righteous deacon, was publicly stoned in A.D. 34. From that date onward the Jews, because they rejected Jesus and God's plan, were no longer God's chosen people or nation. Instead, God now counts people of all nationalities who accept and serve Him as spiritual Jews. They have become His chosen people--"heirs according to the promise." Spiritual Jews do, of course, include Jewish people who individually accept and serve Jesus (Galatians 3:27-29; Romans 2:28, 29).

God's investigative judgment is witnessed by the heavenly host.

13. After A.D. 34, how many years of the 2,300-year prophecy remained? What is the ending date for the prophecy? What did the angel say would happen on that date (Daniel 8:14)?

Answer: There were 1,810 years remaining (2,300 minus 490 = 1,810). The ending date for the prophecy is 1844 (A.D. 34 + 1810 = 1844). The angel said the heavenly sanctuary would be cleansed, or the heavenly judgment would begin. (The earthly sanctuary was destroyed in A.D. 70.) We learned in Study Guide 17 that the heavenly day of atonement, or judgment, was slated for the end time. Now we know that the beginning date is 1844. God set this date. It is as certain as the A.D. 27 date for Jesus to become the Messiah. God's end-time people must be announcing it (Revelation 14:6, 7).

You will be thrilled and gratified to learn the details of the judgment in Study Guide 19. In Noah's day, God stated that the Flood judgment would occur in 120 years (Genesis 6:3) and it happened. In Daniel's day, God stated that His end-time judgment would begin in 2,300 years (Daniel 8:14) and it happened. God's end-time judgment has been in session since 1844.

Meaning of the Atonement

The English word "atonement" originally meant "at-one-ment" that is, a state of being "at one" or in agreement. It denotes harmony of relationship. Perfect harmony originally existed throughout the universe. Then Lucifer, a brilliant heavenly angel (as we learned in Study Guide 2), challenged God and His principles

of government. One-third of the angels of heaven joined Lucifer's rebellion (Revelation 12:3, 4, 7-9).

This rebellion against God and His loving principles is called sin in the Bible (Isaiah 53:6 1 John 3:4). It brings heartache, confusion, chaos, tragedy, disappointment, sorrow, betrayal, and evil of every kind. Worst of all, its penalty is death (Romans 6:23) from which there is no resurrection in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8). Sin spreads faster and is more lethal than the most deadly type of cancer. It put the universe itself in jeopardy.

So God cast Lucifer and his angels out of heaven (Revelation 12:7-9), and Lucifer received a new name "Satan," which means "adversary." His fallen angels are now called demons. Satan seduced Adam and Eve, and sin thus came upon all humans. What a horrendous tragedy! The devastating conflict between good and evil had begun, and evil appeared to be winning. The situation seemed hopeless.

But, no! Jesus, God's Son deity Himself who was more than equal to all the people who would ever live on earth, agreed to sacrifice His life to pay the death penalty for every sinner (1 Corinthians 5:7). By accepting His sacrifice, sinners would thus be freed from the guilt of sin (Romans 3:25). This glorious plan also included Jesus entering a person's life when invited (Revelation 3:20) and changing him to a new person (2 Corinthians 5:17). It provided power from Jesus to resist Satan and to restore

every converted person to the image of God, in which he was created (Genesis 1:26, 27; Romans 8:29).

This blessed atonement offer includes a plan to isolate sin and destroy it including Satan and his fallen angels, plus all who join him in rebellion (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 21:8). Further, the full information regarding Jesus and His loving government and Satan and his diabolical dictatorship will be taken to every person on earth so all can make an intelligent, informed decision to align either with Christ or Satan (Matthew 24:14; Revelation 14:6, 7).

The case of every person will be examined in the heavenly courtroom (Romans 14:10-12), and God will honor the choice of each individual to serve either Christ or Satan (Revelation 22:11, 12). Finally, after eradicating sin, God's plan is to create new heavens and a new earth (2 Peter 3:13; Isaiah 65:17), where sin will never again rise (Nahum 1:9), and give it to His people as their home throughout

eternity (Revelation 21:1-5). The Father and Son will then dwell with their people in perfect joy and harmony forever.

All of this is included in the "at-one-ment." God has informed us of it in His Word and demonstrated it in the Old Testament sanctuary services, especially the day of atonement. Jesus is the key to the atonement. His loving sacrifice for us on Calvary makes it all possible. Getting rid of sin in our lives and in the universe is possible only through Him (Acts 4:12). No wonder heaven's three-point final message to the world calls upon us all to worship Him (Revelation 14:6, 7).

Why would anyone cut away an important part of this prophecy?

14. Why do some Bible interpreters detach the last week (or seven years) of the 490 years allotted to the Jewish nation and apply it to Antichrist's work at the end of the world's history?

Answer: This question is a good one "Why would anyone remove the last seven years of the 490 years allotted to the Jewish nation and place it at the end of the world's history?"

Let us review the facts:

A. There is no warrant or evidence whatever for inserting a gap anywhere between any of the years of the 490-year prophecy. It is continuous, as were the 70 years of exile for God's people mentioned in Daniel 9:2.

B. Never in Scripture does a specific number of time units (days, weeks, months, years) comprising a stretch of time mean anything but continuous or consecutive time units. The burden of proof is on those who claim that any part of any time prophecy should be detached and counted later.

C. A.D. 27 (the year of Jesus' baptism) was the starting date for the last seven years of the prophecy, which Jesus emphasized by beginning at once to preach, "The time is fulfilled." Mark 1:15.

D. At the moment of His death on the cross in the spring of A.D. 31, Jesus cried out, "It is finished." The Saviour here clearly refers to the predictions of His death made in Daniel chapter 9, such as:

1. "Messiah" would be "cut off" or crucified (verse 26).

2. He would "cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" by dying for all as the true Lamb of God (verse 27 1 Corinthians 5:7 15:3).

3. He would "make reconciliation for iniquity" (verse 24).

There is no biblical authority or evidence for detaching the last week, or seven years, of the 490 years allotted to the Jewish nation and applying it to the work of Antichrist near the end of the world's history. More serious, detaching the last seven years from the 490-year prophecy so distorts the true meaning of many prophecies in the books of Daniel and Revelation that people simply cannot correctly understand them. This is why God condemns private interpretation of prophecy, such as this seven-year gap theory. Such interpretations always lead people astray.

15. I have accepted Christ's atoning sacrifice for my life and have invited Him to cleanse me from sin and make me a new person.

Answer:

Thought Questions

1. A little horn power appears in both Daniel chapter 7 and Daniel chapter 8. Are they the same power?

The little horn power of Daniel 7 symbolizes the papacy. The little horn power of Daniel 8 symbolizes both pagan and papal Rome.

2. The "two thousand and three hundred days" of Daniel 8:14 translated literally from the Hebrew reads "two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings". Does this mean 1,150 days, as some contend?

No, the Bible clearly shows in Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31 that an evening and a morning equal a day. There was no event in history at the end of 1,150 days that would fulfill this prophecy.

3. What part does "choice" play in a Christian's life?

It is a major key to success. God's way has always been freedom to choose (Joshua 24:15). Though He wants to save every person (1 Timothy 2:3, 4), He still permits free choice (Deuteronomy 30:19). God permitted Satan to choose to rebel against Him. He also permitted Adam and Eve to choose disobedience. Righteousness is never a locked-in, programmed provision that takes me to heaven no matter how I live and even if I do not want to go. Choice means I am always free to change my mind. Jesus asks me to choose Him (Matthew 11:28-30) and to reaffirm my choice daily (Psalms 86:3). If my daily choice is for Him, He will change me and make me

like Him and eventually take me into His blessed new kingdom. But please remember, I am free to turn and go another direction at any time. God will not force me. My daily choice to serve Him is thus imperative.

4. Many believe that the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes is the little horn power of Daniel 8. How can we be certain this is not true?

There are many reasons. A few of them are as follows:

A. Antiochus Epiphanes did not become "exceeding great", as the prophecy mandates (Daniel 8:9).

B. He did not rule at the "latter time" or near the end of the Seleucid kingdom as the prophecy requires (Daniel 8:23) but, rather, near the middle.

C. Those who teach that Antiochus Epiphanes is the little horn count the 2,300 days as literal days instead of prophetic dayseach equal to a year. This literal time period of a little over six years has no meaningful application to Daniel chapter 8. All attempts to make this literal time period fit Antiochus Epiphanes have uniformly failed, which is an embarrassment to its proponents.

D. The little horn still exists at the "time of the end" (Daniel 8:12, 17, 19), while Antiochus Epiphanes died in 164 B.C.

E. The little horn was to become "exceeding great" in the south, the east, and Palestine (Daniel 8:9). Although Antiochus Epiphanes did rule Palestine for a while, he had almost no success in Egypt (south) and Macedonia (east).

F. The little horn throws down the place of God's sanctuary (Daniel 8:11). Antiochus Epiphanes did not destroy the temple in Jerusalem. He did profane it, but it was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. Neither did he destroy Jerusalem, as mandated by the prophecy (Daniel 9:26).

G. Christ applied the desolating abominations of Daniel 9:26 and 27, not to the past outrages of Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 B.C., but rather to the immediate future when the Roman army would destroy Jerusalem and the temple in His own generation in A.D. 70 (Luke 21:20-24). In Matthew 24:15, Jesus specifically mentioned the prophet Daniel and said that his prediction of Daniel 9:26, 27 would be fulfilled when the Christians would see (in the future) the abomination of desolation "stand in the holy place" in Jerusalem. This is too clear to misunderstand.

H. Jesus clearly related the destruction of Jerusalem to Israel's final refusal to accept Him as the King and Saviour (Matthew 21:33-43 23:37, 38 Luke 19:41-44). This relationship between rejecting the Messiah and the destruction of the city and temple is the crucial message of Daniel 9:26, 27. It is a message announcing the consequences of Israel's continued rejection of the Messiah - even after being given an additional 490 years of loving probation. Applying the prophecy to Antiochus Epiphanes, who died in 164 B.C., long before Jesus' birth, completely destroys the meaning of Daniel chapters 8 and 9 - the most important time prophecy of the Bible.

Quiz Questions

1. The ram of Daniel 8 symbolizes (1)
Babylon.
Medo-Persia.
Greece.
Rome.
2. What does the male goat of Daniel 8 represent? (1)
Egypt.
Palestine.
Greece.
Assyria.
3. The little horn power of Daniel 8 represents (1)
Antiochus Epiphanes.
Rome, in its pagan and papal phases.
Atheism.
Iraq.
4. The day of atonement in ancient Israel was a day of judgment. (1)
Yes.
No.
5. How much of the 2,300 years was cut off for the Jews? (1)

490 years.
700 years.
1810 years.
100 years.

6. In Bible prophecy, one prophetic day equals one literal year. (1)

Yes.

No.

7. The 2,300-year prophecy predicted (500 years before it happened) that the Messiah would appear in A.D. 27. He appeared right on time. This proves that (3)

The Bible is inspired.

The angel Gabriel made a lucky guess.

All other dates in the prophecy are accurate.

Jesus is the Messiah.

8. When the 490 years allotted to the Jewish nation ended in A.D. 34, what did the disciples do? (1)

They began preaching to people of other nations.

They took a long vacation.

They said that no Jew would ever be saved after A.D. 34.

9. According to the 2,300-year prophecy of Daniel chapters 8 and 9, what happened in 1844? (1)

The judgment began in heaven.

The day of probation for the Jewish nation ended.

Jesus ascended to heaven.

God closed probation for all people.

10. The heavenly day of atonement, or at-one-ment, will bring all the universe into complete harmony with God. Which of the following statements tell the truth about some facet of the atonement? (10)

Jesus sacrificed His life to pay our death penalty.

Jesus freed us from the guilt of sin.

Jesus changes us and makes us completely new persons.

Jesus restores us to God's image.

In the heavenly courtroom, God honors the choice of every person to serve either Christ or Satan.

Full information goes to every person on earth regarding Satan's plan to destroy and God's glorious plan to save people.

Sin, Satan, and sinners will be isolated and destroyed.

God creates new heavens and a new earth for His people and will dwell with them.

Sin will never rise again.

The atonement was made possible by Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary.

Satan and his angels will be converted and saved.

11. There is no Bible authority or evidence for detaching the last week or seven years of the 490 years allotted to the Jewish nation and applying it to the work of Antichrist near the end of the world's history. (1)

True.

False.

12. In A.D. 34, (3)

Probation ended for the Jews as God's chosen nation.

The disciples began preaching to other people and nations.

Stephen, a righteous deacon, was stoned.

The judgment began in heaven.

13. The 2,300-day time period began in (1)

A.D. 34

1944

1491 B.C.

457 B.C.

14. The prophecies of Daniel and Revelation apply primarily to us and our time. (1)

Yes.

No.

The jury is in, the verdict read ... case closed! Few thoughts could be more sobering. The day is fast approaching when every person who has ever lived will have their lives reviewed before the all-knowing eyes of God (2 Corinthians 5:10). But don't let this alarm you - take heart! Millions have already found the judgment message in this Study Guide to be very good news! On four occasions when the book of Revelation mentions the great judgment, it brings forth praise and thanksgiving! But

did you know that the Bible mentions judgment more than a thousand times? Almost every Bible writer refers to it, so its importance cannot be overemphasized. In the next few minutes, you're going to get a real eye-opener in this neglected subject.

First Phase of the Final Judgement

1. The angel Gabriel gave Daniel the prophecy of the 1844 heavenly judgment. The first phase of the judgment is called the pre-advent judgment because it takes place before Jesus' second coming. What group of people will be considered in the first phase of the judgment? When does it end? "Judgment must begin at the house of God." 1 Peter 4:17. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:11, 12. (See also 1 Timothy 3:15.)

Answer: It ends just before the second coming of Jesus. Those (living and dead) who claimed to be Christians--"the house of God"--will be considered in the pre-advent judgment. (The 1844 date is established in Study Guide 18.)

Jesus stands with His faithful people in the judgment and promises them a positive verdict.

2. Who presides at the judgment? Who is the defense attorney? The judge? The accuser? Who are the witnesses?

"The Ancient of days did sit, ... his throne was like the fiery flame." "The judgment was set, and the books were opened." Daniel 7:9, 10. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2:1. "The Father ... hath committed all judgment unto the Son." John 5:22. "The Devil, ... the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." Revelation 12:9, 10. "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." Revelation 3:14. (See also Colossians 1:12-15.)

Answer: God the Father, the Ancient of days, presides in the judgment. He loves you very much (John 16:27). Satan is your only accuser. In the heavenly court, Jesus, who loves you, your best friend will be your attorney, judge, and witness. And He promises that judgment will be "given in favour of the saints." Daniel 7:22, NEB.*

*The New English Bible, (C) 1961, 1970 by the Delegates of the Oxford University Press and the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press. Used by permission.

Evidence presented in the judgment comes from the books of heaven.

3. What is the source of evidence used in the pre-advent judgment? By what standard will all be judged? Since God already knows everything about every person, why have a judgment?

"The judgment was set, and the books were opened." Daniel 7:10. "The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Revelation 20:12. "They ... shall be judged by the law of liberty." James 2:12. "We are made a spectacle [theater] unto the world, and to angels, and to men." 1 Corinthians 4:9.

Answer: Evidence for court comes from books in which all details of one's life are recorded. For the faithful, the record of prayer, repentance, and forgiveness of sin will be there for all to see. The records will prove that God's power enables Christians to live changed lives. God is pleased with His saints and will delight in sharing the evidence of their lives. The judgment will confirm that there is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:1.

The Ten-Commandment law is God's standard in the judgment (James 2:10-12). Breaking His law is sin (1 John 3:4). The righteousness of the law will be fulfilled by Jesus in all of His people (Romans 8:3, 4). To claim that this is impossible is to doubt Jesus' word and His power. The judgment is not to inform God. He is already fully informed (2 Timothy 2:19). However, the redeemed people will be coming to heaven from a world that has been degraded by sin. Both the angels and the inhabitants of other unfallen worlds would certainly feel uneasy about admitting anyone to God's heavenly kingdom who might start sin all over again. Thus, the judgment will open to them every detail and answer every question. Satan's real aim has always been to discredit God as unfair, ruthless, unloving, and untruthful. This makes it even more important for all beings in the universe to see firsthand how extremely patient God has been with sinners. The vindication of God's character is the prime purpose of the judgment (Revelation 11:16-19 15:2-4 16:5, 7 19:1, 2 Daniel 4:36, 37). Note that the praise and glory are given to God for the way He handles the judgment.

Every facet of a person's life will be reviewed in the judgment.

4. What portion of a person's life is considered in the pre-advent judgment? What will be confirmed? How will rewards be decided?

"God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Ecclesiastes 12:14. "Let both [wheat and tares] grow

together until the harvest." "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend."

Matthew 13:30, 41. "Behold, I come quickly and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:12.

Answer: Every detail of life will be reviewed, including secret thoughts and actions. For this reason, this first phase of the judgment is also called the investigative judgment. The judgment will confirm who will be saved of those who claimed to be Christians. It will doubtless also confirm as lost those whose names are not judged in the pre-advent judgment. Although we are saved by grace, rewards will be given based on works, deeds, or conduct, which prove the genuineness of a Christian's faith (James 2:26).

Second Phase of the Final Judgement

5. What group is involved in the heavenly judgment during the 1,000 years of Revelation chapter 20? What is the purpose of this second phase of the judgment? "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? ... Know ye not that we shall judge angels?"

1 Corinthians 6:2, 3. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them." Revelation 20:4.

Answer: The "saints," or righteous people of all ages who Christ takes to heaven in the cloud at His second coming, will be participating in this second phase of the judgment.

Suppose a family discovered that their much-beloved son who was murdered was not in heaven. But the murderer was. Doubtless they would need some answers. This second phase of the judgment will answer all the questions of the righteous. The life of every lost person (including Satan and his angels) will be carefully reviewed by the righteous, who will then totally agree with Jesus' decisions regarding the reward for each one. It will become obvious to all that the judgment is no arbitrary matter.

Instead, it simply confirms the choices which people have already made to serve either Jesus or another master (Revelation 22:11, 12). (For a review of the 1,000 years, see Study Guide 12.) Third Phase of the Final Judgement

6. When and where will the third phase of the final judgment take place? What new group will be present at this phase of judgment?

"His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem." "And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." "All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem." Zechariah 14:4, 5, 10. "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven." Revelation 21:2. "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall ... go out to deceive the nations ... to gather them together to battle." Revelation 20:7, 8. The wicked will try to attack the holy city.

Answer: The third phase of the judgment will take place on the earth at the close of the 1,000 years of Revelation chapter 20, after Jesus' return to earth with the holy city. All the wicked who have ever lived, including the devil and his angels, will be present. At the close of the 1,000 years, the wicked dead of all ages will be raised (Revelation 20:5). Satan immediately launches a powerful propaganda campaign to deceive them. Amazingly, he succeeds in convincing the nations of earth that they can capture the holy city.

7. What happens next?

"They went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city." Revelation 20:9.

Answer: The wicked surround the city and prepare to attack.

The third phase of the judgment will interrupt the plan to attack the city.

8. What interrupts their battle plan, and with what results?

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Revelation 20:12. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." 2 Corinthians 5:10. "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Romans 14:11, 12.

Answer: Unexpectedly, without warning, God appears with almost paralyzing brightness above the city (Revelation 19:11-21). The moment of truth has arrived. Every lost soul since the world began, including Satan and his angels, now faces God in judgment. Every eye is fastened upon the King of kings (Revelation 20:12). Each Person Sees Own Life Reviewed

Then each lost soul recalls his own life story: God's constant, warm, pleading calls to repent that wooing, still, small voice the awesome conviction that often came

the repeated refusals to respond. It is all there. Its accuracy is incontestable. Its facts are irrefutable. God wants the wicked to fully understand. He will provide any details desired in order to make all things clear. The books and records are available.

No Cover-Up

God is not involved in some celestial cover-up. He has destroyed no evidence, erased no tapes. There is nothing to hide. Everything is open, and every person who has ever lived plus all the good and bad angels will be viewing this drama of all dramas.

The Lost Fall to Their Knees

Suddenly there is a movement. One lost soul drops to his knees to admit his guilt and openly confess that God was more than fair with him. His own stubborn pride kept him from responding. And on all sides now, people and evil angels are likewise kneeling. Then in one great, almost simultaneous move all remaining people and evil angels, including Satan, fall prostrate before God (Romans 14:11). They openly clear the name of God from all false accusations and give witness to His loving, fair, merciful treatment of them.

All Confess That the Sentence Is Fair

All confess that the sentence of death pronounced upon them is fair the only safe way to handle sin. Of each lost person it can be said, "Thou hast destroyed thyself." Hosea 13:9. God now stands vindicated before the universe. The accusations and claims of Satan have been exposed and unequivocally discredited as the perverse lies of a hardened sinner.

Fire from heaven will eradicate sin and sinners for eternity

9. What final steps will eradicate sin from the universe and provide a secure home and future for the righteous?

"They ... compassed the camp of the saints about, ... and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire." Revelation 20:9,

10. "For they [the wicked] shall be ashes under the soles of your feet." Malachi 4:3. "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth." Isaiah 65:17. "Look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." 2 Peter 3:13. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, ... and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them." Revelation 21:3. Answer: Fire from heaven will fall upon the wicked. The fire will completely eradicate sin and sinners from the

universe forever. (See Study Guide 11 for full details on hellfire.) This will be a time of deep sadness and trauma for God's people. Virtually every person will have a loved one or friend in the fire. Guardian angels will probably shed tears over the loss of the people they protected and loved for years. Even Christ will doubtless weep over those He loved and plead with so long. At that awful moment the anguish of God, our loving Father, over the terrible cost of sin will defy description.

New Heavens and Earth

Then the Lord will wipe all tears away from His redeemed people (Revelation 21:4) and create new heavens and a new earth lovely beyond description for His saints. And best of all, He will reside here with His people throughout eternity. No thinking person would want to miss that.

The sacrificed animal represented Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

10. How did the "day of atonement" service in the Old Testament earthly sanctuary symbolize the judgment and God's plan to eradicate sin from the universe and restore perfect harmony? Answer: In Study Guide 2, we learned how Satan falsely accused and challenged God and brought the ugly malignancy of sin into the universe. The day of atonement in ancient Israel taught, through symbols, how God will handle the sin problem and bring harmony back to the universe by the atonement.

(Atonement means "at-one-ment," or "to bring all things into total divine harmony.") In the earthly sanctuary, the symbolic steps were:

- A. Lord's goat slain to cover sins of the people.
- B. Priest ministered the blood before the mercy seat.
- C. Judgment took place in this order:

(1) the righteous confirmed, (2) the unrepentant cut off, and (3) the record of sin removed from the sanctuary.

- D. Record of sin placed on scapegoat.
- E. Scapegoat sent into wilderness.
- F. People cleansed from their sins.
- G. All begin new year with a clean slate.

These five symbolic steps represent literal atonement events which are instituted from the heavenly sanctuary, God's celestial headquarters for the universe. The first point above is the symbol of the literal atonement event of the first point below the second point above is the symbol of the second point below, etc. Notice how clearly God has symbolized these great atonement events:

- A. Jesus' sacrificial death as man's substitute (1 Corinthians 15:3 5:7).
- B. Jesus as our High Priest restores people to God's image (Hebrews 4:14-16 Romans 8:29).
- C. Judgment provides records to confirm lives, good and bad, and then removes the records of sin from the heavenly sanctuary (Revelation 20:12 Acts 3:19-21).
- D. Responsibility for originating sin and for causing all people to sin is placed on Satan (1 John 3:8 Revelation 22:12).
- E. Satan banished into wilderness (1,000 years of Revelation chapter 20).
- F. Satan, sin, and sinners eradicated permanently (Revelation 20:10 21:8 Psalms 37:10, 20 Nahum 1:9).
- G. New earth created for God's people. Everything lost by sin is restored to the Lord's saints (2 Peter 3:13 Acts 3:20, 21).

The atonement is not completed until the universe and all in it are restored to pre-sin condition with the assurance that sin will never rise again.

After the judgment, sin will be gone forever. The righteous will be safe for eternity.

11. What is the good news about the judgment as revealed in this Study Guide and listed below? Answer: A. God and His manner of handling the sin problem will be gloriously vindicated before the entire universe. This is the central purpose of the judgment.

- B. Judgment will be decided in favor of God's people.
- C. The righteous will be safe from sin for eternity.

- D. Sin will be completely eradicated and will never rise a second time.
- E. Everything that Adam and Eve lost by sin will be restored to the redeemed.
- F. The wicked will be turned to ashes, not tortured endlessly.
- G. In the judgment, Jesus is our judge, attorney, and witness.
- H. Both the Father and Son love us. It is the devil who accuses us.
- I. The heavenly books will be helpful to the righteous because they will show how the grace of the gospel changed their lives.
- J. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. The judgment will only make that truth evident.
- K. Not one soul (man or angel) will complain that God is unfair. It will be unanimous that God has been loving, fair, gracious, and kind in dealing with all.
- 12. God promises to acquit you in the heavenly judgment if you will invite Him to enter your life and permit Him to remain in control. Will you invite Him to enter your life today?

Answer:

Thought Questions

1. What is the difference between accepting Jesus as my Saviour and accepting Him as my Lord?

The difference is substantial.

When I accept Him as Saviour, He saves me from the guilt and penalty of sin and gives me the new birth. He changes me from sinner to saint. This transaction is a glorious miracle and is essential to salvation. No one can be saved without it. However, Jesus is not finished with me at this point. I have been born, but His plan is that I also grow up to become like Him (Ephesians 4:13). When I accept Him daily as the ruler, or Lord, of my life, He, by His miracles, causes me to grow in grace and Christian conduct until I am mature in Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

The Problem - I Want My Own Way

The problem is that I want to run my own life - have my own way. The Bible calls this "iniquity", or sin (Isaiah 53:6). Making Jesus my Lord is so important that the New Testament mentions Him as "Lord" 766 times. In the book of Acts alone, He is referred to as "Lord" 110 times and as "Saviour" only twice. This demonstrates

how important it is to know Him as Lord and Ruler of our lives. A Neglected Imperative - Making Him Lord

Jesus placed continuing emphasis upon His Lordship because He knew that crowning Him Lord would be a forgotten and neglected imperative (2 Corinthians 4:5). Unless I make Him Lord of my life, there is no way I can ever become a full-grown Christian clothed in Christ's righteousness. Instead, I will end up "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" and, even worse, feeling that I "have need of nothing". Revelation 3:17.

2. Since the record of the sins of God's people were transferred on the day of atonement to the scapegoat, doesn't that make him also our sin-bearer? I thought Jesus alone bore our sins.

The scapegoat, which represents Satan, in no way bears, or pays for, our sins. The Lord's goat, which was sacrificed on the day of atonement, represents Jesus, who assumed and paid for our sins on Calvary. Jesus alone "taketh away the sin of the world". John 1:29. Satan will be punished (as will all other sinners—Revelation 20:12-15) for his own sins, which will include responsibility for (1) the existence of sin, (2) his own evil actions, and (3) influencing every person on earth to sin. God will clearly hold him accountable for evil. This is what the symbolism of the transfer of sin to the scapegoat (Satan) on the day of atonement is meant to convey.

3. The Bible is clear that God forgives all sins which are confessed (1 John 1:9). It is also clear that, though forgiven, the record of these sins remains on heaven's books until the end of time (Acts 3:19-21). Why aren't the sins blotted out when forgiven?

There is a very good reason. The heavenly judgment is not complete until the judgment of the wicked takes place—immediately prior to their destruction at the end of the world. If God destroyed the records before this final phase of the judgment, He could be accused of a massive cover-up. All records of conduct remain open for viewing until the judgment is completed.

4. Some say the judgment took place at the cross. Others say it takes place at death. Can we be certain the timing for the judgment as shown in this Study Guide is correct?

Yes. To make it possible for us to be certain regarding the timing for the judgment, God clearly specified it three times in Daniel chapter 7. Notice God's specific

timing. God left no room for uncertainty. The divine sequence is stated three times (verses 8-14, 20-22, 24-27) in this one chapter as follows:

- A. The little horn power - ruled A.D. 538-1798. (See Study Guide 15.)
- B. The judgment - begins after 1798 (in 1844) and continues until Jesus' second advent.
- C. God's new kingdom - established at the end of the judgment.

So God makes it clear that the judgment does not take place at death or at the cross, but between 1798 and Jesus' second coming. Remember that the first angel's message is in part, "The hour of his judgment is come". Revelation 14:6, 7. God's end-time people must be telling the world that the final judgment is in session now!

- 5. What important lessons can we learn from our study of the judgment?

Notice the following five points:

- A. God may seem to take a long time before He acts, but His timing is right. No lost person will ever be able to say "I didn't understand" or "I didn't know".
- B. Satan and evil of all kinds will ultimately be dealt with by God in the judgment. Since the judgment is God's work and He has all the facts, we should stop judging others and let God do it. It's a serious matter for us to take over God's work of judging. It's usurping His authority.
- C. God leaves us all free to decide how we will relate to Him and who we will serve. However, we must be prepared for serious consequences when we decide contrary to His Word.
- D. God loves us so much that He has given us the books of Daniel and Revelation to make these end- time issues clear. Our only safety lies in listening to Him and following His counsel from these great prophetic books.
- E. Satan is determined to destroy every one of us. His deceiving strategies are so effective and so convincing that all but a very few will be ensnared. Without

Jesus' resurrection power in our lives daily to protect us from the devil's traps, we will be devastated by Satan.

Quiz Questions

1. How many phases are there of the judgment? (1)
Six.
One.
Three.
2. Check the true items regarding the first phase of the judgment. (7)
It is the pre-advent judgment.
It began in 1844.
It is in session now.
Satan is the accuser.
The angel Gabriel is the judge.
God presides.
The prophet Jonah foretold it.
God's law is the standard.
Will consider the lives of those who claimed to be Christians.
3. Which items tell the truth about the second phase of the judgment, which takes place during the 1,000 years? (3)
The righteous of all ages will be present.
Satan will continually interrupt the court proceedings.
All will agree that Satan's punishment is just.
Satan's angels will be pardoned.
The wicked will demand their rights.
The righteous will learn why some of their friends are lost.
4. Jesus will serve in three capacities. What are they? (3)
Judge.
Witness.
Bailiff.
Clerk of the court.
Defense attorney.
5. The wicked will be present in person for judgment at the close of the 1,000 years after they surround the holy city. (1)
Yes.
No.

6. God will make it clear to every lost person and angel why he or she is lost. (1)
Yes.
No.
7. At one phase of the judgment every person (good and bad) who has ever lived, plus all evil angels and Satan, will be present in person. Which phase? (1)
First phase—the present pre-advent judgment.
Second phase—during the 1,000 years.
Third phase—at the close of the 1,000 years.
8. Why are record books needed in heaven's judgment? (1)
To inform God of the facts.
To remind God of what He may have forgotten.
To give the angels something to do.
To help people, angels, and inhabitants of other worlds understand God's fair and righteous handling of the judgment.
9. "Atonement" means "to bring all things into total divine harmony." Which items below are part of the great heavenly atonement? (5)
Jesus' death on the cross.
The judgment.
Jesus' ministry as our High Priest.
The flood of Noah's day.
Daniel in the lion's den.
The final destruction of sin and sinners.
Creation of new heavens and a new earth.
10. Which items are good news from the judgment? (5)
The judgment will be decided in favor of the saints.
The devil burns forever in hell.
Sin will never start over again.
Sin could easily start up again in the far future.
Jesus is our judge, attorney, and witness.
God's method of dealing with sin and salvation will be fully vindicated.
All that Adam and Eve lost by sin will be restored.
11. What is the truth about Satan as the judgment scapegoat? (3)
He is punished for originating sin.

He is punished for leading every person into sin.

He has nothing to do with paying for our sins.

Satan will refuse to be the scapegoat and will escape.

12. The judgment is not arbitrary. Instead, it basically confirms the choices that people have already made either to serve Jesus or to choose another master. (1)

Yes.

No.

13. The main purpose of the judgment is to make it clear to people, Satan, the good and bad angels, and the inhabitants of other worlds that God has handled the sin tragedy wisely, equitably, and righteously since its inception. (1)

Yes.

No.

The Mark of the Beast

Scripture: Revelation 13:1-8, Revelation 14:9-18

Lesson 20

A tattooed number, a computer chip under the skin, or something more subtle? It's one of the most misinterpreted prophecies in all of the Bible - yet it is so important to correctly understand this subject. But in studying the mark of the beast, we must address some very sensitive issues, naming names and being specific. This is not a popular thing today, but we must be firm because God loves His people and He wants them to know the truth. This message is not ours, but Jesus'. And with eternal death facing those who receive the mark, it would be a crime to not help Him deliver this message. This lesson should probably be prefaced with a warning: "THE DEVIL DOES NOT WANT YOU TO READ AND COMPLETE THIS STUDY GUIDE." Please

read Revelation 13:1-8, 14:9-12, and 16-18, and pray for the Holy Spirit to grant you an honest and understanding heart before embarking on this study adventure.

An Urgent Reminder

We learned from Study Guide 2 that a terrible conflict is in progress between God and the devil. It has raged through the centuries since Lucifer, heaven's most powerful angel, rebelled against God. With the angels who joined him, he attempted to overcome God and seize control of the universe. God and the loyal angels had no choice but to eject Lucifer and his angels from heaven. Lucifer, who

became known as the devil and Satan, was infuriated. His determination to destroy God and control the universe has grown with every passing year. Amazingly, he has won the support of the vast majority of earth's people in his rebellion. The Lord also asks for people's loyalty and support, but He leaves all free to choose. Soon every person on earth will have aligned with either Satan or God. The final battle between Satan and God is just ahead, and it is described in the book of Revelation. This book points out that God has an emblem, or mark, which will identify His people. Satan also has an emblem, or mark, that will identify those who support him. As usual, Satan will work through an earthly power symbolized in Revelation by a beast to impose his mark. This Study Guide will reveal the beast's mark, which every lost person of the end time will receive. Unless you know what his "mark" is, how will you avoid receiving it?

The papacy is the antichrist.

1. In order to know what the "mark" is, we must first identify the beast. How does the Bible describe the beast?

Answer: Revelation 13:1-8, 16-18 provides 11 identifying characteristics. They are listed below:

- A. Rises from sea (verse 1).
- B. Composite of the four beasts of Daniel chapter 7 (verse 2).
- C. Dragon gives it power and authority (verse 2).
- D. Receives a deadly wound (verse 3).
- E. Deadly wound healed (verse 3).
- F. Strong political power (verses 3, 7).
- G. Strong religious power (verses 3, 8).
- H. Guilty of blasphemy (verses 1, 5, 6).
- I. Wars with and overcomes the saints (verse 7).
- J. Rules for 42 months (verse 5).
- K. Has mysterious number 666 (verse 18).

Do some of these points have a familiar ring? Certainly! We encountered many of them earlier when we studied about the Antichrist in Daniel chapter 7. The "beast" of Revelation 13 is simply another name for the "Antichrist," which we learned from Daniel 7 is the papacy.

Prophecies of Daniel and Revelation often cover the same ground as prior prophecies, but each time new features are added that help make the prophecies certain. So expect to learn some new things about the Antichrist from this Study Guide. Now let's consider, one by one, the 11 points that describe the beast.

A. It would rise from the sea (Revelation 13:1).

The sea (or water) in prophecy refers to people, or a populated area (Revelation 17:15). So the beast, or Antichrist, would arise from amid the established nations of the then-known world. The papacy, as we all know, arose in western Europe, so it fits this point.

A Word of Explanation

In harmony with God's command to honor all people (1 Peter 2:17), we pause here to recognize the papacy for her many good deeds and activities. Her hospitals, orphanages, care for the poor, homes for unwed mothers, and care for the aged are appreciated universally. She can honestly be lauded for many things. But, like all other organizations, she has also made mistakes. God pinpoints some of her errors in Revelation. The Lord, who blesses and comforts, must sometimes chasten and correct.

Please ask His Spirit to speak to you as you study this crucial topic.

B. It would be a composite of the four beasts of Daniel chapter 7 (Revelation 13:2). Study the comparison below to see how it all fits together:

Daniel chapter 7 Revelation chapter 13

Babylon Lion-like beast (vs. 4) "Mouth of a lion" (vs. 2)

Medo-Persia Bearlike beast (vs. 5) "Feet of a bear" (vs. 2)

Greece Leopard-like beast (vs. 6) "Like unto a leopard" (vs. 2)

Rome Ten-horned beast (vs. 7) "Having ... ten horns" (vs. 1)

The four beasts of Daniel 7 are depicted as part of Antichrist, or the beast, because the papacy incorporated pagan beliefs and practices from all four empires. She clothed them in spiritual garb and spread them to the world as Christian teachings. Here is one of many supporting statements from history: "In a certain respect, she [the papacy] has copied her organization from that of the Roman Empire, has preserved and made fruitful the philosophical intuitions of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, borrowed from both Barbarians and the Byzantine Roman Empire, but always remains herself, thoroughly digesting all elements drawn from external sources." 1 This point definitely fits the papacy.

C. The beast must receive its power, seat (capital), and authority from the dragon (Revelation 13:2). To identify the dragon, we go to Revelation chapter 12, where God's end-time church is pictured as a pure woman. In prophecy, a pure woman represents God's true people or church (Jeremiah 6:2 Isaiah 51:16). (In Study Guide 23, we will present a detailed study of God's end-time church of Revelation chapter 12. Study Guide 22 explains Revelation chapters 17 and 18, where fallen churches are symbolized by a fallen mother and her fallen daughters.) The pure woman is portrayed as pregnant and about to deliver. The dragon crouches nearby, hoping to "devour" the baby at birth. However, when the baby is born He evades the dragon, fulfills His mission, and then ascends to heaven. Obviously the baby is Jesus, whom Herod tried to destroy by killing all the babies in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16). So the dragon represents pagan Rome, of which Herod was a king. The power behind Herod's plot was, of course, the devil (Revelation 12:7-9). Satan acts through various governments to accomplish his ugly work in this case, pagan Rome.

We will quote just two supportive references from history, though there are many: (1) "The Roman Church ... pushed itself into the place of the Roman World-Empire, of which it is the actual continuation. ...The Pope ... is Caesar's successor." 2 (2) "The mighty Catholic Church was little more than the Roman Empire baptised. Rome was transformed as well as converted. The very capital of the old Empire became the capital of the Christian Empire. The office of Pontifex Maximus was continued in that of Pope." 3 So this point also fits the papacy. She received her capital city and power from pagan Rome.

D. It would receive a deadly wound (Revelation 13:3).

The deadly wound was inflicted when Napoleon's general, Alexander Berthier, entered Rome and took Pope Pius VI captive in February of 1798. Napoleon decreed that at the death of the pope, the papacy would be discontinued. The pope died in France in August of 1799. "Half Europe thought ... that without the Pope the Papacy was dead." 4 So this point also fits the papacy.

E. The deadly wound would be healed, and the entire world would give homage to the beast (Revelation 13:3).

Since its healing, the strength of the papacy has grown and increased until today she is one of the most powerful religio-political organizations and influence-centers in the world. Malachi Martin, consummate Vatican insider and intelligence expert, reveals the following in his best-selling book *The Keys of This Blood* 5 (page numbers in parentheses):

ABOUT THE POPE:

He is as determined to be world ruler as was Constantine in his day (49). He is protected by four governments (120). He is the best-known person of the 20th century (123). He is personal friends with the leaders of 91 countries (490). People of the world seem to him ready for strong worldwide moral government with control (160). Sixteen thousand journalists covered his American visit (490).

ABOUT THE PAPACY:

The American ambassador says the Vatican is unmatched as a "listening post" (120). The Vatican knows by Saturday what will happen on Monday anywhere in the world (439). Papal structure is prepared for worldwide rule now (143).

Obviously, the wound is healed and the eyes of the nations are upon the Vatican, so this point also fits the papacy.

F. It would become a strong political power (Revelation 13:3, 7). See item E above.

G. It would become a very powerful religious organization (Revelation 13:3, 8). See item E above.

H. It would be guilty of blasphemy (Revelation 13:5, 6).

The papacy is guilty of blasphemy because her priests claim to forgive sins and her popes claim to be Christ.

I. It would war with and persecute the saints (Revelation 13:7).

The papacy did persecute and destroy millions of saints during the Dark Ages.

J. It would reign for 42 months (Revelation 13:5).

The papacy reigned for 42 prophetic months, which equals 1,260 years, from A.D. 538-1798.

Points H through J also clearly fit the papacy. We touched on them only briefly here because they were covered thoroughly in Study Guide 15, question 8, items E, G, and H.

K. It would have the mysterious number 666 (Revelation 13:18).

This verse says, "It is the number of a man," and Revelation 15:2 says it is "the number of his name." What man do you think of when you think of the papacy? Naturally, we all think of the pope. What is his official name? Here is a Catholic quote: "The title of the pope of Rome is "Vicarius Filii Dei" (English: "Vicar of the Son of God").⁶ Malachi Martin, in *The Keys of This Blood*, uses the same title for the

pope on pages 114, 122. A footnote for Revelation 13:18 in some Douay [Catholic] versions of the Bible says, "The numeral letters of his name shall make up this number."

Again, the papacy fits the identification point. The beast with the "mark" is the papacy. No other power in history could possibly fit these divine descriptive points. Now that we have positively identified the beast, we can discover her mark, or symbol of authority. But first, let's look at God sign of authority.

¹Andre Retif, *The Catholic Spirit*, trans. by Dom Aldhelm Dean, Vol. 88 of *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (New York, Hawthorne Books, 1959), p. 85.

²Adolf Harnack, *What is Christianity?* trans. by Thomas Bailey Saunders (New York: Putnam, 2nd ed., rev., 1901), p. 270.

³Alexander Clarence Flick, *The Rise of the Mediaeval Church* (reprint: New York, Burt Franklin, 1959), pp. 148, 149.

4Joseph Rickaby, "The Modern Papacy," Lectures on the History of Religion, Lecture 24, (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1910), p. 1.

5(New York, Simon & Schuster, 1990)

6"Answers to Readers' Questions," Our Sunday Visitor, Nov. 15, 1914.

The Sabbath is the sign, or mark, of God's power.

2. What is God's mark, or symbol, of authority?

"I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." Ezekiel 20:12. "It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth." Exodus 31:17.

Answer: God is saying in the texts above that He gave us His Sabbath as a glorious sign of His power to create and His power to sanctify (convert and save) us. In the Bible, the words seal, sign, mark, and token are used interchangeably.⁷ God's sign, the Sabbath, represents His holy power to rule as Creator and Saviour. Revelation 7:1-3 says it will be written upon the foreheads (minds, Hebrews 10:16) of His people. It will signify that they are owned by Him and have His character. Hebrews 4:4-10 confirms this by saying that when we enter His rest (receive salvation), we should keep His seventh-day Sabbath holy as a symbol, or mark, of salvation. True Sabbath-keeping signifies that a person has surrendered his life to Jesus Christ and is willing to follow wherever Jesus leads.

Since the symbol, or mark, of God's authority and power is His holy Sabbath day, it seems likely that the symbol, or mark, of God's challenger, the beast, might also involve a holy day. Let's see if it does.

7(Compare Genesis 17:11 with Romans 4:11 and Revelation 7:3 with Ezekiel 9:4.) Sunday as a holy day is the beast's mark, or symbol of authority.

3. What does the papacy say is her symbol, or mark, of authority? Answer: Notice the following section from a Catholic catechism:

"Question: Have you any other way of proving that the Church has power to institute festivals of precept?"

"Answer: Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her - she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority."⁸

So the papacy is here saying that it changed Sabbath to Sunday and that virtually all churches accepted the new holy day. Thus, the papacy claims that Sunday as a holy day is the mark, or symbol, of her power and authority.

⁸Stephen Keenan, A Doctrinal Catechism [FRS No. 7.], (3rd American ed., rev.: New York, Edward Dunigan & Bro., 1876), p. 174.

Changing Sabbath to Sunday involves altering God's law - a very serious matter.

4. Did God predict such a change in Scripture?

Answer: Yes! In describing the Antichrist in Daniel 7:25, God said it would "think to change times and laws."

A. How has the papacy tried to change God's laws? In three different ways: In her catechisms she has

(1) omitted the second commandment against veneration of images, and (2) shortened the fourth (Sabbath) commandment from 94 words to just eight. The Sabbath commandment (Exodus 20:8-11) clearly specifies Sabbath as the seventh day of the week. As changed by the papacy, the commandment reads: "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day." Written thus, it can refer to any day. And, finally, she (3) divided the tenth commandment into two commandments.

B. How has the papacy attempted to change God's times? In two ways: (1) She has changed the time of the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first day. (2) She has also changed God's "timing" for the beginning and closing hours of the Sabbath. Instead of counting the Sabbath day from sundown Friday night to sundown Saturday night as God mandates (Leviticus 23:32), she adopted the pagan Roman custom of counting the day from midnight Saturday night to midnight Sunday night. God predicted these "changes" would be attempted by the beast, or Antichrist.

Notice the following section from a Catholic catechism:

"Question: Which is the Sabbath day?

Answer: Saturday is the Sabbath day.

Question: Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

Answer: We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday." 9

Here is another Catholic statement: "The Church is above the Bible and this transference of Sabbath observance from Saturday to Sunday is proof positive of that fact." 10

The papacy is saying in these references that its successful change of Sabbath observance to Sunday worship is proof that its authority is greater, or "above," Scripture.

9Peter Geiermann, *The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine* (St. Louis, B. Herder Book Co., 1957 ed.), p. 50.

10The Catholic Record (London, Ontario, Canada, Sept. 1, 1923).

The papacy has changed Sabbath to Sunday.

5. How could anyone dare attempt to change God's holy day?

Answer: We ask the papacy, "Did you really change Sabbath to Sunday?" She replies, "Yes, we did. It is our symbol, or mark, of authority and power." We ask, "How could you even think of doing that? It's a pertinent question. But the question the papacy officially asks Protestants is even more pertinent. Please read it carefully:

"You will tell me that Saturday was the Jewish Sabbath, but that the Christian Sabbath has been changed to Sunday. Changed! but by whom? Who has authority to change an express commandment of Almighty God? When God has spoken and said, Thou shalt keep holy the seventh day, who shall dare to say, Nay, thou mayest work and do all manner of worldly business on the seventh day but thou shalt keep holy the first day in its stead? This is a most important question, which I know not how you can answer. You are a Protestant, and you profess to go by the Bible and the Bible only and yet in so important a matter as the observance of one day in seven as a holy day, you go against the plain letter of the Bible, and put another day in the place of that day which the Bible has commanded.

The command to keep holy the seventh day is one of the ten commandments you believe that the other nine are still binding who gave you authority to tamper with the fourth? If you are consistent with your own principles, if you really follow the Bible and the Bible only, you ought to be able to produce some portion of the New Testament in which this fourth commandment is expressly altered." 11

11Library of Christian Doctrine: Why Don't You Keep Holy the Sabbath-Day? (London: Burns and Oates, Ltd.), pp. 3, 4.

Tragically, both Catholicism and Protestantism stand guilty before the judgment bar of heaven for rejecting God's holy Sabbath, His sacred sign of identification. Religious leaders who ignore God's holy Sabbath will face His indignation.

6. What solemn warnings has God given regarding His law and His sign, or mark?
Answer: A. God warns religious leaders against causing people to stumble by saying that some commandments do not matter (Malachi 2:7-9). For example, some ministers teach, "It doesn't matter what day you keep holy."

B. God warns people who want their ministers to preach smooth fables rather than the truth about His law (Isaiah 30:9, 10).

C. God warns people about hardening their hearts against the truth of His law (Zechariah 7:12).

D. God warns people who say it would seem "strange" to keep God's lawlike the Sabbath, for example (Hosea 8:12).

E. God states that the upheaval, tragedy, problems, and woes of earth come because people refuse to follow His law, and have even tried to change it (Isaiah 24:4-6).

F. God warns religious leaders who refuse to preach the prophecies of the end time (Isaiah 29:10, 11).

G. God solemnly warns that leaders who teach there is really no difference between sacred things (such as God's holy Sabbath) and common things (such as Sunday) will face His indignation (Ezekiel 22:26, 31).

The forehead is a symbol of the mind. People will be marked in their foreheads by observing Sunday as a holy day.

7. Revelation 13:16 says people will receive the mark of the beast in the forehead or in the hand. What does this mean?

Answer: The forehead represents the mind (Hebrews 10:16). A person will be marked in the forehead by a decision to keep Sunday as a holy day. The hand is a symbol of work (Ecclesiastes 9:10). A person will be marked in the hand by working on God's holy Sabbath or by going along with Sunday laws for practical reasons (job, family, etc.). The sign, or mark, for either God or the beast will be invisible to people. You will, in essence, mark yourself by accepting either God's sign or mark, the Sabbath, or the beast's mark, Sunday. Though invisible to men, God will know who has which mark (2 Timothy 2:19).

God requires His people to stop trampling upon His holy day.

8. According to Isaiah 58:1, 13, 14, what decisive message does God deliver to His people in the last days?

"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression." "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, ... Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord." Isaiah 58:1, 13, 14.

Answer: He says, show "my people" that they are (innocently perhaps) sinning because they are trampling on My holy day, and ask them to quit breaking My Sabbath so I can bless them. Speak loudly so they will hear you!

Notice that the third angel of Revelation 14:9-12, who brings the message about the mark of the beast, speaks with a loud voice also (verse 9). The message is too important to treat as ordinary. It's a life-or-death issue. Jesus says His sheep, or people, will follow Him when He calls them. (John 10:16, 27).

When laws are passed forcing Sunday worship, those who comply will receive the beast's mark.

9. Do people who worship on Sunday (as a holy day) have the mark of the beast now?

Answer: No! No one will have the mark of the beast until Sunday worship becomes an issue forced by law. At that time (just ahead), those who decide to follow the false teachings of the beast and worship on Sunday (the beast's counterfeit holy day) will receive the mark of the beast.

Those who follow Jesus and obey His truth will keep His Sabbath day holy and receive His mark. Those who expect to refuse the beast's mark in the future must step under Jesus' Sabbath banner now. His power is available to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32). Without Him, we can do nothing (John 15:5).

With Him, all things are possible (Mark 10:27).

Only those who have God's mark, or sign, in their foreheads will enter heaven.

10. According to the book of Revelation, whom did John specifically see in God's eternal kingdom? Answer: The answer is threefold and very clear:

A. Those who have God's mark, or sign (His Sabbath), in their foreheads (Revelation 7:3).

B. Those who refused to identify with the beast or his image and who refused to have his mark or name in their foreheads (Revelation 15:2).

C. The people who today, and for eternity, follow where Jesus leads, trusting Him fully in everything (Revelation 14:4). There is no other way.

Following Jesus must include keeping His seventh-day Sabbath holy.

11. What is Jesus saying to people today?

"He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."
John 8:12.

Answer: What a fantastic promise! If we follow Him, we will not end up in darkness but will, instead, have glorious truth. Nothing could be more exciting! Further, following Him and keeping His Sabbath will put God's mark on our foreheads and protect us from the dreadful plagues (Psalms 91:10) that will fall upon the disobedient (Revelation chapter 16). It also marks us as ready for translation at Jesus' second coming. What blessed protection and assurance God has offered us!

An Urgent Alert

You will discover some astounding information as you study the final three Study Guides of the nine that deal with the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-14. These Study Guides will explain (1) the role of the United States in earth's final conflict, (2) how churches and religions of the world will be involved, (3) what world conditions will precipitate earth's final battle, and (4) Satan's amazing strategy for deceiving billions.

Perhaps you are wondering what Protestant churches have to say about the papal claim for changing Sabbath to Sunday. The quotes that appear in the "Your Thought Questions Answered" section of this lesson will provide the shocking answers.

12. I have now decided to begin keeping His seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) as His holy day and follow Him wherever He leads.

Answer:

Thought Questions

1. What do other preachers and pastors say about the Sabbath and Sunday?

Answer:

Here are a host of comments from churches and other authorities about the Sabbath:

Baptist: "There was and is a commandment to keep holy the Sabbath day, but that Sabbath day was not Sunday It will be said, however, and with some show of triumph, that the Sabbath was

transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week Where can the record of such a

transaction be found? Not in the New Testament -- absolutely not. There is no scriptural evidence of the change of the Sabbath institution from the seventh to the first day of the week." Dr. Edward T. Hiscox, author of The Baptist Manual, in a paper read before a New York ministers' conference held Nov. 13, 1893.

Catholic: "You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we [Catholics] never sanctify." James Cardinal Gibbons, The Faith of Our Fathers, 16th edition, 1880, p. 111.

Church of Christ: "Finally, we have the testimony of Christ on this subject. In Mark 2:27, he says: 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.' From this passage it is evident that the Sabbath was made not merely for the Israelites, as Paley and Hengstenberg would have us believe, but for man that is, for the race. Hence we conclude that the Sabbath was sanctified from the beginning, and that it was given to Adam, even in Eden, as one of those primeval institutions that God ordained for the happiness of all men." Robert Milligan, Scheme of Redemption, (St. Louis, The Bethany Press, 1962), p. 165.

Congregationalist: "The Christian Sabbath [Sunday] is not in the Scriptures, and was not by the primitive church called the Sabbath." Dwight's Theology, Vol. 4, p. 401.

Episcopal: "Sunday (Dies Solis, of the Roman calendar, 'day of the sun', because dedicated to the sun), the first day of the week, was adopted by the early Christians as a day of worship. No regulations for its observance are laid down in the New Testament, nor, indeed, is its observance even enjoined." "Sunday," A Religious Encyclopedia, Vol. 3, (New York, Funk and Wagnalls, 1883) p. 2259.

Lutheran: "The observance of the Lord's day [Sunday] is founded not on any command of God, but on the authority of the church." Augsburg Confession of Faith, quoted in Catholic Sabbath Manual, Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 10.

Methodist: "Take the matter of Sunday. There are indications in the New Testament as to how the church came to keep the first day of the week as its day of worship, but there is no passage telling Christians to keep that day, or to transfer the Jewish Sabbath to that day." Harris Franklin Rall, Christian Advocate, July 2, 1942.

Moody Bible Institute: "The Sabbath was binding in Eden, and it has been in force ever since. This fourth commandment begins with the word 'remember,' showing that the Sabbath already existed when God wrote the law on the tables of stone at Sinai. How can men claim that this one commandment has been done away with when they will admit that the other nine are still binding?" D. L. Moody, Weighed and Wanting, p. 47.

Presbyterian: "Until, therefore, it can be shown that the whole moral law has been repealed, the Sabbath will stand. The teaching of Christ confirms the perpetuity of the Sabbath." T. C. Blake, D.D., Theology Condensed, pp. 474, 475.

Pentecostal: "'Why do we worship on Sunday? Doesn't the Bible teach us that Saturday should be the Lord's Day?' Apparently we will have to seek the answer from some other source than the New Testament." David A. Womack, "Is Sunday the Lord's Day?" The Pentecostal Evangel, Aug. 9, 1959, No. 2361, p. 3.

Encyclopedia: "Sunday was a name given by the heathen to the first day of the week, because it was the day on which they worshiped the sun, the seventh day was blessed and hallowed by God Himself, and He requires His creatures to keep it holy to Him. This commandment is of universal and perpetual obligation."

Eadie's Biblical Cyclopedia, 1872 ed., p. 561.

Quiz Questions

1. Many people have already received the mark of the beast. (1)
Yes.
No.
2. The mark of the beast is (1)
Your Social Security number Sunday as a holy day.
The bar codes for grocery pricing.
3. The beast organization that has the mark is the (1)
United Nations.
Papacy.
European Community of Nations.
Trilateral Commission.
4. The mark is literal and will be seen by all. (1)
Yes.
No.
5. God also has a mark, or symbol, of His power and authority. (1)
Yes.
No.
6. God's mark of authority is (1)
A secret number that is given to each faithful Christian.
Speaking in tongues.
Sabbath-keeping in commemoration of Creation and sanctification.
Baptism.
7. How did the "beast" attempt to change God's law? (2)
Changing Sabbath (of the fourth commandment) to Sunday.
Teaching that it is not a sin to commit adultery.

- Removing the commandment against the veneration of images.
8. In Bible prophecy, how long is 42 months? (1)
420 literal years.
Three and one-half literal years.
1,260 literal days.
1,260 literal years.
9. Where will the beast's mark be placed? (2)
In the hand.
On the mouth.
On the cheek.
In the forehead.
10. Where will God's mark be placed? (1)
On the hand.
In the forehead.
On the person's tongue.
11. Which of the three angels' messages is the warning against the mark of the beast? (1)
First angel's message.
Second angel's message.
Third angel's message.
12. The beast attempted to change God's times by? (2)
Celebrating New Year's as a holiday.
Changing God's holy day from the seventh to the first day of the week.
Setting the hours for God's holy day as midnight-to-midnight instead of sundown-to-sundown.
13. Jesus gave us the warning message regarding the mark of the beast. (1)
Yes.
No.
14. Sign, mark, seal, and token are used interchangeably in Scripture. (1)
Yes.
No.
15. There is no scriptural authorization for observing Sunday as a holy day. (1)
True.
False.

The USA in Bible Prophecy

The Other Woman

Lesson 21

Can it really be true? America in Bible prophecy - absolutely! When you think about it, it makes sense that the most powerful and influential nation on earth will play a vital role in the final stunning events of the world's closing history. But even more surprises await you as the Bible reveals how the leading nation of the world came to

exist and why! Please read Revelation 13:11-18 before beginning this guide, because these eight verses give a prophetic picture of America in the days ahead.

The beast of Revelation 13:1-10 symbolizes the papacy.

1. Two world powers are symbolized in Revelation chapter 13. What is the first power? Answer: The beast with seven heads (Revelation 13:1-10) is none other than the Roman papacy. (See Study Guide 15 for a complete study on this topic.) Remember that beasts in Bible prophecy symbolize nations or world powers (Daniel 7:17, 23).

In 1798, General Berthier inflicted a deadly wound upon the papacy when he took the pope captive.

2. In what year was the papacy predicted to lose its world influence and power? "Power was given unto him to continue forty and two months." Revelation 13:5. Answer: The Bible predicted that the papacy would lose its world influence and power at the end of the 42 months. This prophecy was fulfilled in 1798, when Napoleon's General Berthier took the pope captive and the papal power received its deadly wound. (For the full details, see Study Guide 15.)

The beast of Revelation 13:11-18 symbolizes America.

3. Which nation was predicted to arise around the same time the papacy was receiving its deadly wound?

"And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon." Revelation 13:11.

Answer: The papal captivity mentioned in verse 10 took place in 1798, and the new power (verse 11) was seen emerging at that time. The United States declared its independence in 1776, voted the Constitution in 1787, adopted the Bill of Rights in 1791, and was clearly recognized as a world power by 1798. The timing obviously fits America. No other power could possibly qualify.

Prophecy predicted that America would arise from a sparsely settled area.

4. What is the significance of the beast "coming up out of the earth?"

Answer: This nation arises "out of the earth" instead of out of the water as did the other nations mentioned in Daniel and Revelation. We know from Revelation that water symbolizes areas of the world that have a large population. "The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." Revelation 17:15. Therefore, the earth represents the opposite. It means that this new nation would arise in an area of the world that had been virtually unpopulated before the late 1700s. It could not arise among the crowded and struggling nations of the Old World. It had to come up in a sparsely populated continent.

5. What is symbolized by its two lamb-like horns and absence of crowns? Answer: Horns represent kings and kingdoms, or governments (Daniel 7:24 8:21). In this case, they represent America's two governing principles: civil and religious liberty. These two governing principles have also been labeled "republicanism" (a government without a king) and "Protestantism" (a church without a pope). Other nations since ancient times had taxed people to support a state religion. Most had also oppressed religious dissidents. But America established something entirely new: Freedom to worship as you wish without government interference or control and with government protection. Absence of crowns signifies a republican form of government, rather than a monarchy. Lamb-like horns denote an innocent, young, non-oppressive, peace-loving, and spiritual nation. Jesus is referred to as a lamb 28 times in Revelation. So this new government was trying to uphold His principles. No other power on earth could possibly fit the characteristics and time slot of the lamb-horned beast, except America.

Special Note: How we wish we could stop right here in Jesus' description of America but we can't, because He didn't. What comes next is jolting and disquieting. America is truly a great country with its freedom of conscience, press, speech, and enterprise the protection it provides its golden opportunities its sense of fair play its sympathy for the underdog and its strong Christian orientation. It is not perfect, but even still a host of people from other countries hasten to become American citizens every year. If America's doors were opened wide, a vast portion of the people of the world would move to the United States at once to "heaven on earth" as they perceive it. Sadly, this richly blessed country will change

drastically in the days just ahead, precipitating unparalleled heartache and woe for God's people. We report it with reticence and deep concern.

America in the end time will force people to either worship or be punished.

6. What does it mean when the prophecy in Revelation 13:11 says America will speak "as a dragon"? Answer: As we learned in Study Guide 20, the dragon is Satan, who works through various governments of the earth to establish his evil kingdom and crush God's church by persecuting and destroying His people. Satan's aim always has been to usurp God's power and throne and to force people to worship and obey him. (See Study Guide 2 for details.) So "speaking as a dragon" means that the United States (under the influence of Satan) will, in the end time, force people to worship contrary to conscience or be punished.

Apostate religion and civil government will unite in the end time to force people's consciences.

7. What specifically will America do that will cause it to speak as a dragon? Answer: Notice the four crucial points:

A. "Exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him." Revelation 13:12. America will become a persecuting power that will force people to go against their conscience, as did papal Rome which is portrayed in the first half of Revelation chapter 13.

B. "Causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed." Revelation 13:12. The United States will lead the nations of the world in forcing worship of, and allegiance to, the papal Antichrist. The issue is always worship. Who will you worship and obey? Will it be Christ your Creator and Redeemer, or Antichrist? Every soul on earth will finally worship one or the other. The entire approach will appear to be deeply spiritual. Incredible miracles will be wrought (Revelation 13:14, 15) which will deceive billions (Revelation 13:3). Those who refuse to join this movement will be considered godless radicals. Jesus labels Protestant America of the end time a "false prophet" (Revelation 19:20 20:10), because it will appear spiritual and trustworthy but instead will be satanic in its conduct.

All this may seem impossible, but Jesus' words are always totally reliable and true (Titus 1:2). He foretold the rise and fall of the four world empires and the Antichrist (Daniel chapters 2 and 7) at a time when such predictions seemed

outlandish and incredible. But all came to pass precisely as predicted. His warning to us today regarding prophecy is, "I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe." John 14:29.

C. "Saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live." Revelation 13:14. The United States will make an image to the beast by legislating religious practice. It will pass laws requiring worship and force people to either obey them or face death. This action is a copy or image of the church-state combination that the papacy utilized at the height of her power during the Middle Ages, when millions were slain for their faith. America will combine civil government and apostate Protestantism in a "marriage" that will support the papacy. It will then influence all the nations of the world to follow her example. Thus, the papacy will gain worldwide support.

D. "And cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." Revelation 13:15. The United States, as head of this international movement, will next influence the nations of the world to impose a universal death sentence upon all who refuse to worship the beast or his image. Another name for this worldwide coalition is "Babylon the Great." (Study Guide 22 will provide more information.) This worldwide alliance will, in the name of Christ, substitute the policeman's power for the Holy Spirit's persuasion and will force worship.

8. Over what specific issues will force be utilized and the death sentence passed?

"And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." Revelation 13:15-17.

Answer: The final points of contention will be worshiping and obeying the beast and receiving his mark--Sunday as a holy day--versus worshiping and obeying Christ and receiving His mark--His holy seventh-day Sabbath. (For details, see Study Guide 20.) When the issues become clear and people are forced either to worship on Sunday and break the Sabbath or be killed, those who then choose Sunday

rather than Sabbath will be, in essence, worshiping the beast. They will have chosen to obey the word of a creature, a man, instead of the word of their Creator, Jesus Christ. Here is the papacy's own statement: "The church changed Sabbath to Sunday and all the world bows down and worships upon that day in silent obedience to the mandates of the Catholic Church." Hartford Weekly Call, February 22, 1884.

During World War II, ration stamps controlled the sale of food, fuel, tires, and other necessities. Such control could easily be utilized again.

9. Could a government really control buying and selling?

Answer: During World War II, buying was controlled for some items (such as sugar, tires, and auto fuel) by requiring ration stamps. Without stamps, money was worthless. In this highly computerized age, a system based on your Social Security number could easily be set up. Unless you agreed to cooperate with the worldwide coalition, your number, when punched in before a purchase, could show you disqualified. We do not know precisely how all this will come about. But we can be positive it will happen because in Revelation 13:16, 17, God says it will.

Two Emerging Powers

Revelation chapter 13 is clear. Two superpowers will emerge in the end time: the United States of America and the papacy. The United States of America will support the papacy by leading a drive to force the people of the world to worship the beast (papacy) and receive his mark or else face death. The next two questions will evaluate the strengths of these two superpowers.

The papacy is the strongest religio-political power on earth.

10. How strong and influential is the papacy today?

Answer: She is by far the strongest religio-political power in the world. Virtually every leading country of the world has an official ambassador or state representative at the Vatican. Notice the following facts:

A. The papacy is so influential and powerful that nearly every major country consults her before making major policy moves. Her "large diplomatic corps maintains relations with more than 100 nations." U.S. News and World Report, October 30, 1978, p. 24.

B. She takes the credit for the demise of communism, saying that Mary, Jesus' mother, guided the pope's strategy that brought down communism. "Handmaid or Feminist," Time, December 30, 1991, pp. 64, 65.

C. The aim of the pope is to unify the Christian world under the leadership of the papacy by the end of this century. He has made more than 40 world trips to lay the ground work for this goal. Gene H. Hogberg, The Plain Truth, November/December 1989, pp. 24, 25.

D. The worldwide response has been almost overwhelming. During the Iraqi crisis, the pope and America's president sometimes discussed world affairs weekly by phone. U.S. News and World Report, August 13, 1990, p. 18.

E. On June 7, 1982, former President Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II met for 50 minutes at the Vatican and structured a plan to eliminate communism. The United States shipped tons of modern communication equipment to Poland (the starting place) to help spread necessary information to the masses. "The Holy Alliance," Time, February 1992, pp. 28, 31, 35.

F. Gorbachev said, "Everything which took place in Eastern Europe in recent years would have been impossible without the Pope's efforts and the enormous role, including the political role, which he played in the world arena." Mikhail Gorbachev, Toronto Star, March 9, 1992.

The papacy, which formerly referred to Protestants as "heretics," is now calling them "separated brethren" and graciously suggesting that all work and pray together for peace and God's presence. Millions of Protestants are deeply impressed. In fact, several Protestant denominations have had official dialog with the papacy to try to settle the differences that caused the Reformation.

America is the world's number one military power.

11. How strong and influential is the United States today?

Answer: The United States is regarded as the world's number one military power and center of influence. Note the following:

A. "[America is] the planet's sole remaining superpower." "The U.N. Obsession," Time, May 9, 1994, p. 86.

B. "There is no prospect in the immediate future of any power to rival the United States." Charles Krauthammer, "The Lonely Superpower", The New Republic, July 29, 1992, p. 23.

C. Yassir Arafat labeled America "the new Rome" because, as old Rome was the undisputed superpower of its age, America is now number one. Newsweek, August 12, 1991, p. 33.

D. "America's power will now determine all major global events." Jim Hoagland, "Of Heroes ...", The Washington Post, August 21, 1991, p. A-23.

When a Marxist group overthrew the government of Ethiopia, America was asked to negotiate. When Boris Yeltsin took office as president of the newly independent Russia, he visited America first. Former

U.S.S.R. President Mikhail Gorbachev turned to America in his crisis. When Kuwait was invaded, its government called on America. The U.S.-led war against Iraq rallied the support of almost the entire world.

A National Public Radio correspondent called the American president the "president of the world." We now have "a highly unusual world structure with a single power, the United States, at the apex of the international system." Krauthammer, The New Republic, p. 23.

All world nations now look to the United States for protection and support.

12. It is clear that the influence and power of both the United States and the papacy are escalating with rapidity. What other factors could possibly help set the stage for a worldwide law to execute those who refuse to violate conscience?

Answer: We cannot name them with certainty, but a few looming possibilities are as follows:

A. The activity of terrorists.

B. Riots and escalating crime and evil.

C. Drug wars.

D. A major economic crash.

- E. AIDS and other epidemics.
- F. Nuclear threats from radical nations.
- G. Political corruption.
- H. Gross miscarriage of justice by the courts.
- I. Welfare abuse.
- J. Increasing taxes.
- K. Pornography and sickening immorality.
- L. Appalling global disasters.
- M. Radical "special interest" groups.
- N. The abortion crisis.

A backlash against corruption, lawlessness, immorality, permissiveness, injustice, poverty, weak and ineffective political leaders, and many similar woes could easily precipitate a demand for strong, specific laws to be rigidly enforced.

13. As world conditions worsen, what will Satan do to deceive the masses?
 "And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live." Revelation 13:13, 14. Answer: America will experience a counterfeit, worldwide revival and will insist that religious laws be passed to force every person to participate. (This is represented by "an image to the beast" in Revelation 13:14.) People will be forced to disregard God's holy, seventh-day Sabbath and worshiinstead on the beast's "holy" day-- Sunday. Some will also comply simply for social or economic reasons. World conditions will become so intolerable that a worldwide "back to God and prayer" movement, with all joining in worship and prayer on Sunday, will seem to be the only solution. Satan will deceive the world into believing that they must

compromise Bible truth and keep Sunday holy. But in reality, obedience to and worship of the beast will shut people out of God's kingdom. No wonder Jesus makes such an issue in Revelation over worshiping the beast and receiving his mark! In the last days on earth, God's end-time message of hope will reach every person.

14. While interest in the counterfeit revival heightens, what will be happening to the genuine worldwide revival sponsored by God's end-time people?

Answer: The Bible says the entire world will be "lightened" with its glory (Revelation 18:1). Every person on earth will be reached (Mark 16:15) with God's end-time, three-point message of Revelation 14:6-14. God's last-day church will grow with amazing speed as millions join God's people and accept His offer of salvation by free grace and faith in Jesus, which transforms them into His obedient servants. Many people and leaders from all countries of the world will refuse to worship the beast and embrace his false teachings. Instead, they will worship and obey Jesus only. They will then receive His holy Sabbath sign, or mark, in their foreheads (Revelation 7:2, 3), thus sealing them for eternity.

Spiraling Growth Infuriates Counterfeit Movement

This spiraling growth among God's people will infuriate the counterfeit movement. Its leaders will become fully convinced that those who refuse to cooperate with the worldwide counterfeit revival are the cause of all the world's woes (Daniel 11:44). They will disqualify them from buying and selling (Revelation 13:16, 17), but God will feed His people (Isaiah 33:16) and protect them (Psalms 34:7).

As his crowning miracle, Satan will impersonate Jesus.

15. In desperation, the U.S.-led coalition will next decide to impose the death sentence on its enemies (Revelation 13:15). What does Revelation 13:13, 14 say its leaders will do to convince people that God is with them?

Answer: They will work miracles so convincing that everyone except God's faithful end-time people will be persuaded (Matthew 24:24). Utilizing the spirits (or fallen angels) of Satan (Revelation 16:13, 14), they will impersonate dead loved ones of the people through sorcery (Revelation 18:23) and probably even pose as Bible prophets and apostles. These lying (John 8:44), demonic spirits will doubtless claim that God has sent them to urge all to cooperate.

Satan Appears as Christ His Angels Pose as Christian Ministers

Satan's angels will also appear as godly clergymen, and Satan will appear as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). As his crowning miracle, Satan will claim to be Jesus (Matthew 24:23, 24). Satan, while impersonating Christ, could easily

claim that he changed Sabbath to Sunday and urge his followers to proceed with their worldwide revival and uphold his "holy" day, Sunday.

Billions Are Deceived

Billions, believing that Satan is Jesus, will bow at his feet and join the counterfeit movement. "The whole world went after the beast in wondering admiration." Revelation 13:3, NEB.* The deception will be overwhelmingly effective. But God's end-time people will not be deceived, because they test everything by the Bible (Isaiah 8:19, 20 2 Timothy 2:15). The Bible says God's law cannot be changed (Matthew 5:18). It also says that when Jesus returns, every eye will see Him (Revelation 1:7) and He will not touch the earth but will remain in the cloud and call His people to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

*The New English Bible, (C) 1961, 1970 by the Delegates of the Oxford University Press and the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press. Used by permission.

16. How can we be safe from powerful end-time deceptions?

Answer: A. Test every teaching by the Bible (2 Timothy 2:15 Acts 17:11 Isaiah 8:19, 20).

B. Follow truth as Jesus reveals it. Jesus promises that those who do His will never end up in error (John 7:17).

C. Stay close to Jesus daily (John 15:5).

Reminder: This is the sixth Study Guide in our series of nine on the three angels' messages. The next Study Guide will reveal how Christian churches and other religions worldwide will relate to the events of the end time.

17. Are you willing to worship and obey Jesus even if it means ridicule, persecution, and finally the death sentence?

Answer:

Thought Questions

1. It doesn't seem fair that, in the final crisis, people who have never heard God's truth will innocently choose a counterfeit and thus be lost.

No one will face the final crisis without first having heard (Mark 16:15) and understood (John 1:9) God's vital three-point message for today (Revelation 14:6).

People will choose to receive the mark of the beast at that time only because they do not wish to pay the price for following Christ.

2. What is the battle of Armageddon spoken of in Revelation 16:12-16? When and where will it be fought?

The battle of Armageddon is the final battle between Christ and Satan. It will be fought on the earth and will begin just before the end of time. The battle will be interrupted by Jesus' second coming. It will begin again after the 1,000 years, when the wicked surround the holy city with hopes of capturing it. The battle will close when God rains fire down from heaven upon the wicked and destroys them (Revelation 20:9). (Study Guide 12 explains the 1,000 years in detail.)

What Does the Word "Armageddon" Mean?

Armageddon is a symbolic name for the "battle of that great day of God Almighty" between Christ and Satan in which all the nations of the world will be involved (Revelation 16:12-16, 19). The "kings of the east" are God the Father and God the Son. "East" in the Bible symbolizes God's heavenly kingdom (Revelation 7:2 Ezekiel 43:2 Matthew 24:27).

In this final battle, virtually the entire world will unite (Revelation 16:14) to fight against Jesus, the Lamb, and His people (Revelation 17:14 19:19). Their aim will be to wipe out all who refuse to worship the beast and accept his mark (Revelation 13:15-17).

Delusion Follows Rejection

People who refuse to accept God's three-point message for the last days (even though they know it is true), will become strongly deluded so they will believe a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). They will begin to sincerely believe they are upholding God's great kingdom when they endeavor to destroy God's people. They will perceive the saints to be hopelessly deceived fanatics who are dooming the entire world by their refusal to cooperate in the counterfeit revival.

Jesus' Second Coming Halts Battle

The battle itself will be worldwide. Governments will simultaneously try to destroy God's people, but God will intervene. The symbolic river Euphrates will be dried up (Revelation 16:12). Water represents people (Revelation 17:15). The drying up of the river Euphrates means that the people who have been supporting the beast (Satan's kingdom) will suddenly withdraw their support. The beast's support will thus dry up. Its coalition of allies (Revelation 16:13, 14) will fall apart (Revelation

16:19). Jesus' second coming will halt this battle and save His people (Revelation 6:14-17 16:18-21 19:11-20).

Battle Resumes After 1,000 Years

After the 1,000 years, Satan will come right out in the open as the leader of the forces against God and His people. He will resume the battle against God as he tries to capture the holy city. Then Satan and his followers will be destroyed by fire from heaven (see Study Guides 11 and 12). Every follower of Satan will be destroyed. Every follower of Jesus will enter His eternal kingdom.

3. The Bible says, "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." John 16:2. Do you think that will be literally fulfilled in our time?

Yes. The end-time coalition of world governments and religions will finally lose all sympathy for God's people, who refuse to join the counterfeit revival or adopt its symbol (Sunday worship). They will feel that the wonderful miracles accompanying their revival prove its validity--miracles such as the sick being healed or notorious God-haters, immoral movie stars, drug lords, and well-known criminals being converted. The coalition will insist that no one be permitted to wreck this worldwide revival which is drawing all religions. Everyone will be urged to lay aside personal feelings and "fanatical teachings" (the Sabbath, for example) and join with the rest of the world in its sincere revival for peace and brotherhood. Everything other than the revival will be considered minor. Those who do not agree to cooperate will be considered disloyal, unpatriotic, anarchists and, finally, dangerous fanatics who must not be tolerated. In that day, those who kill God's people will feel they are doing God a favor.

4. As I study the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, it seems apparent that the real enemy is always the devil. Do you agree?

Absolutely! You are 100 percent correct! Satan is always the real enemy. Satan works through earth's leaders and nations to hurt God's people and thus bring heartache to Jesus and the Father. We so easily forget that Satan is the enemy. He is the one responsible for all evil. Let's blame him and be careful how we judge and condemn people or organizations who hurt God's people and church. They are sometimes uninformed or even totally unaware that they are harming anyone. But that is never true of Satan. He is always fully aware. He hurts God and His people intentionally.

5. How would the death of the pope or the election of a new president affect the prophecy of America in Revelation 13:11-18?

The prophecy will be fulfilled no matter who is pope or president. A new president or a new pope may temporarily speed up or slow down fulfillment, but the final outcome is assured by Bible prophecy.

6. Are the lamb-horned beast of Revelation 13:11-18 and the "false prophet" of Revelation 16:13 the same power?

Yes. In Revelation 19:20, where God mentions the destruction of the Antichrist beast, He also refers to the destruction of the false prophet. In this passage, God identifies the false prophet as the power which "wrought miracles" before the beast and "deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshiped his image." This is a very clear reference to the activities of the lamb-horned beast, which are described in Revelation 13:11-18. In this Study Guide we have identified the lamb-horned beast as the United States of America. So the lamb-horned beast and the false prophet are obviously the same power.

Quiz Questions

1. America is symbolized in Bible prophecy by (1)
A man with red, white, and blue clothing.
An eagle with a computer on its back.
A beast with two lamb-like horns.
2. What do the two horns represent? (1)
Wealth and military might.
Benjamin Franklin and George Washington.
Civil and religious freedom.
3. What does "coming up out of the earth" signify? (1)
That Americans would love country living.
That this new country would arise in an area with a small population.
That some early Americans would be cave dwellers.
4. In this prophecy, lamb-like horns mean that America would (1)
Be shy and inhibited.
Be a sheep-raising country.
Arise as a peace-loving, spiritual nation.
5. At about what time does the prophecy of Revelation chapter 13 indicate America would arise? (1)
1492.

1798.

1620.

6. Revelation chapter 13 indicates that America would eventually speak "as a dragon." What does this mean? (1)

Her people would be angry and hard to understand.

She would use fire-shooting weapons of destruction.

She will force people to worship contrary to conscience or face death.

7. God's mark, sign, or symbol of power is (1)

A lamb.

A two-horned beast.

The Sabbath, God's holy day.

8. How will America make an "image to the beast"? (1)

By making and selling many pictures of the beast.

By making a statue of the beast to display in Washington, D.C.

By creating a church-state combination (patterned after the papacy at the height of her power) that will legislate religious practice.

9. What punishments does Revelation 13:15-17 say will be inflicted upon those who refuse the mark of the beast? (2)

Not allowed to buy or sell.

Banished to outer space.

Put to death.

Forced to make a personal apology to the beast.

10. Which two earthly powers will have the most influence in the end time? (2)

Revitalized Europe.

Japan.

China.

United States.

The papacy.

11. Which items tell the truth about the battle of Armageddon? (6)

It is earth's last battle.

The 'kings of the east' are Japan and China.

The beast's aim in the battle is to destroy God's people.

It will be worldwide.

It begins before Jesus' second coming and ends after the wicked surround the holy city at the close of the 1,000 years.

Armageddon is the symbolic name for the final battle between Christ and Antichrist, or Satan.

Drying up the Euphrates means the beast, or Antichrist, will finally lose the support of most of its followers.

It will be fought in Palestine only.

12. How successful will God's true, end-time revival be? (2)

The whole world will be converted.

Every person on earth will hear the message.

Millions will accept it.

It will not succeed. The devil will stop it.

13. How successful will the end-time counterfeit movement be? (1)

Many countries will not support it.

It will be successful in America and Europe only.

Every person on earth except God's end-time people will join and support it.

14. How powerful will the miracles of the counterfeit revival be? (2)

Not very; people will view them as trickery.

Powerful enough to deceive virtually the entire world.

Only the uneducated will fall for them.

So powerful that only God's elect will escape deception.

The Other Woman

Lesson 22

Every marriage must rely on trust - and likewise in our union with Christ, we must remain faithful to Him and His Word. Revelation speaks about the true bride of Christ, but there is another woman who is trying to seduce believers away from God's Word. Revelation contains a shocking message about Babylon, the other woman. Babylon is fallen, and

Christ's people must escape her charms or perish! Thus begins the second part of the three angels' message. Here you will learn the very real identity of spiritual Babylon and learn how to avoid being hypnotized by her fatal beauty ... what could be more important?

In the book of Revelation, God calls this woman "Babylon."

1. How does Jesus symbolize Babylon in the book of Revelation?

"I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters." "And I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." Revelation 17:1, 3-5.

Answer:

In Revelation 17:1-6, Jesus symbolizes Babylon as a harlot dressed in red and purple. She is seated upon a scarlet-colored beast, which has seven heads and 10 horns and sits on many waters.

2. Who is the symbolic pure woman of Revelation chapter 12?

Answer: A pure woman, clothed with the sun, is depicted in Revelation 12:1-6. We learned in Study Guide 20 that this pure woman symbolizes God's pure church which is faithful to her lover, Jesus. We will study Revelation chapter 12 in depth in Study Guide 23.

3. What does a harlot represent in Bible prophecy?

"Cause Jerusalem to know her abominations." "Thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot." Ezekiel 16:2, 15.

Answer: As a pure woman symbolizes a pure church which is faithful to Jesus, so an impure woman represents an impure, or fallen, church which is unfaithful to Jesus (James 4:4).

Most Reformation leaders taught that "Babylon" of Revelation 17 is the papacy.

4. Can we identify the harlot (church) that is called "Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots" in Revelation chapter 17?

Answer: Yes, it is widely known that there is only one church which claims to be the mother church, the great Roman Catholic Church. A prominent Catholic priest, John A. O'Brien, said: "That observance [Sunday-keeping] remains as a reminder of the Mother Church from which the non-Catholic sects broke away." 1

The points used in Revelation 17 to describe mother Babylon and the beast she rides clearly fit the papacy:

- A. She persecuted the saints (verse 6). (See Study Guides 15 and 20.)
- B. She was dressed in purple and scarlet (verse 4). The popes often wear the royal color of purple at important functions, and red is the color of the robes of Catholic cardinals.
- C. The seven heads of the beast (verse 3) upon which the woman is seated are seven mountains (verse 9). It is well known that Rome, the world headquarters of the papacy, is built upon seven hills or mountains.
- D. The beast is guilty of blasphemy (verse 3), a point which also clearly fits the papacy. (See Study Guides 15 and 20.)
- E. She ruled "over the kings of the earth."

Verse 18. Alexander Flick says that by the 13th century, the pope was "at least in theory and claim ... the ruler of the whole world in temporal and spiritual affairs."² This point could fit no other earthly kingdom or government. The papacy is described in Revelation 17 too clearly for doubt.

Note: Many leaders of the Reformation (Huss, Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Melanchthon, Cranmer, Tyndale, Latimer, Ridley, and others) taught that the papacy is the power here involved.³

¹John A. O'Brien, *The Faith of Millions* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1974), p. 401. ²The Rise of the Mediaeval Church (New York: Burt Franklin, 1959), pp. 575, 576.

³George Eldon Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), pp. 32-34.

The word "Babylon" dates back to the Tower of Babel. It means "confusion".

5. What is the literal meaning of the word "Babylon," and what is its origin? "Let us build ... a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven." "And the Lord said ... let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." "Therefore is the name of it called Babel

["confusion", margin]; because the Lord did there confound the language." Genesis 11:4, 6, 7, 9.

Answer: The words "Babel" and "Babylon" mean "confusion." The name Babylon originated at the Tower of Babel, which was erected after the Flood by defiant pagans who hoped to build it so high that no flood waters could ever cover it (verse 4). But the Lord confounded their languages, and the resultant confusion was so great they were forced to halt construction. They then called the tower "Babel" (Babylon), or "confusion."

Later, in Old Testament days, a worldwide pagan kingdom named Babylon arose which was an enemy of God's people, Israel. It embodied rebellion, disobedience, persecution of God's people, pride, and idolatry (Jeremiah 39:6, 7 50:29, 31-33 51:24, 34, 47 Daniel chapters 3 and 5). In fact, in Isaiah chapter 14 God uses Babylon as a symbol of Satan himself because Babylon was so hostile and devastating to God's work and His people.

In the New Testament book of Revelation, the term "Babylon" is used to signify a religious kingdom that is an enemy of God's spiritual Israel, His church (Revelation 14:8 16:19).

Churches that adopt the false teachings of mother Babylon become "Babylon" themselves.

6. Who are the harlot daughters of the mother Babylon described in Revelation 17:5?

Answer: They are some of the churches which originally protested the false teachings of mother Babylon and left her during the great Protestant Reformation. But, later, they began to mimic the principles and actions of the mother and thus became fallen themselves. No woman is born a harlot. Neither were the symbolic Protestant daughter churches born fallen. Any church or organization that teaches and follows Babylon's false doctrines and practices could become a fallen church or daughter. So Babylon is a family name which embraces both the mother church and those of her daughters, who are also fallen.

The beast of Revelation 17 represents the civil government. The woman astride the beast means that the church is in control of the government.

7. In Revelation 17, why is mother Babylon pictured as riding upon the beast? What does the beast represent?

Answer: In Revelation 13:1-10, Jesus portrays the papacy as a combination of church and state. (For more information, see Study Guide 20.) In Revelation

chapter 17, Jesus depicts the church (the harlot) and state (the beast) as separate entities, though related. The woman is astride the beast, which signifies that the church is in control of the state.

Non-Christian religions and apostate Protestantism will join the papacy as allies in the final war against God and His followers.

8. What other powers unite with the papacy in fulfilling end-time events?

"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Revelation 16:13, 14.

Answer: The dragon of Revelation 12:3, 4 and the false prophet of Revelation 13:11-14 19:20 form an alliance with the beast of Revelation 13:1-10, or the papacy.

A. The dragon of Revelation chapter 12 represents Satan working through pagan Rome. (See Study Guide 20 for more details.) In these last days it includes non-Christian religions such as Buddhism, Shintoism, Hinduism, the New Age, secular humanism, etc.

B. The false prophet represents apostate Protestantism centered in America, which will take the lead in urging and influencing worldwide worship of the beast (see Study Guide 21).

C. The beast is the papacy (see Study Guide 20).

D. These three powers: Non-Christian religions and governments, Roman Catholicism, and apostate Protestantism will become allies in Armageddon, the final war against God, His law, and His loyal followers. This coalition is called "Babylon the great" by Jesus in Revelation 18:2. The powerful miracles of Satan and his angels (posing as spirits of dead) will unite the world in their support of the beast.

9. How will organizations with such diverse backgrounds be able to effectively unite?

"These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast." Revelation 17:13. Answer: Revelation 16:13, 14 says "unclean spirits like frogs" which are "spirits of devils" will unite them through the miracles they will work.

Spiritism - the belief that the dead are alive and can contact the living - will be the tenet which will weld all together. Satan and his angels, posing as the spirits of dead loved ones, prophets of old, angels of heaven (2 Corinthians 11:13, 14), and even Christ Himself (Matthew 24:24) will convince the world that their cause is guided from heaven itself (see Study Guide 10). Incidentally, all three entities believe that the dead are alive:

A. Catholicism prays to Mary and other dead saints and believes these saints bless their followers with miracles.

B. Non-Christian religions are virtually all based on belief in and worship of spirits of the dead. The New Age stresses "channeling" supposed talking to the spirits of the dead.

C. Apostate Protestantism believes that the dead are not dead but, rather, alive in heaven or hell. Thus they are highly susceptible to deception by demons who pose as spirits of the dead.

Babylon falls because she turns away from Bible truth.

10. For what sins does God indict Babylon?

A. "Babylon the great is fallen." Revelation 18:2.

Answer: To fall means to turn away from Bible truth and true worship of the true God (2 Peter 3:17).

B. "And is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit." "By thy sorceries were all nations deceived." Revelation 18:2, 23.

Answer: Here God is indicting Babylon for (1) conferring personally with devils by inviting evil spirits into its midst through spiritism, and (2) for deceiving virtually the entire world through lying, demonic spirits.

C. "The inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk" from the wine of abomination and fornication found in her cup (Revelation 17:2, 4 18:3).

Answer: The word "abomination" in the Bible symbolizes lies (Proverbs 12:22). Babylon's wine, which contains false teachings, disorients and benumbs those who drink it and makes them spiritually drunk.

D. "The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her." Revelation 18:3.

Answer: The church is the bride of Christ (Revelation 19:7, 8) and must love and be loyal only to Him, which Jesus said means keeping His commandments (John 14:15). The papacy is censured here for turning away from her husband, Jesus (James 4:4), and forming illicit relationships with civil governments (union of church and state) for her support.

E. Trafficking in the "souls of men" (Revelation 18:13).

Answer: God here denounces Babylon for treating people as merchandise rather than as precious children of God.

Receiving false doctrine brings spiritual drunkenness, which makes comprehending truth extremely difficult.

11. What are some of the false teachings contained in Babylon's wine that make people spiritually drunk and confused?

Answer: Amazingly, some of the most prominent doctrines of Protestantism today are not found in the Bible at all. They have been brought into the Protestant churches by the mother church of Rome, who received them from paganism. A few of these false teachings are that:

A. The law of God has been amended or repealed. God's law can never be changed or repealed (Luke 16:17). Study Guide 6 cites irrefutable evidence.

B. The soul is immortal.

The Bible mentions "soul" and "spirit" 1,700 times. Not once is either referred to as immortal. People are mortal (Job 4:17), and none receive immortality until Jesus' second advent (1 Corinthians 15:51- 54). (See Study Guide 10 for more information.)

C. Sinners burn eternally in hell.

The Bible teaches that sinners will be completely consumed (put out of existence), both soul and body, in the fire (Matthew 10:28). An eternal hell of torment is not taught in the Bible. (See details in Study Guide 11.)

D. Baptism by immersion is not necessary.

Baptism by immersion is the only baptism recognized by Scripture. (See Study Guide 9 for further information.)

E. Sunday is God's holy day.

The Bible teaches, without question, that God's holy day is the seventh-day Sabbath, Saturday. (For details, see Study Guide 7.)

Note: These false teachings, once believed, tend to bring "confusion" (which is what the term "Babylon" literally means) and make understanding Scripture much more difficult.

A Sobering Thought

It's sobering to think that some might unknowingly be drinking Babylon's wine. Perhaps this is all new to you. If so, please ask God to guide you (Matthew 7:7). Then search the Scriptures to see if these things are so (Acts 17:11). Promise that you will follow where Jesus leads, and He will not permit you to end up in error (John 7:17).

The angels of heaven will be on the side of God's people in earth's final battle.

12. Who will be on the Lord's side in the battle of Armageddon?

Answer: In this final battle, the angels of heaven (Hebrews 1:13, 14 Matthew 13:41, 42) and God's people, the remnant (Revelation 12:17) - will be allied with Jesus, who leads the armies of heaven (Revelation 19:11-16) against Satan and his supporters.

God's remnant is composed of those who refuse the falsehoods of Babylon (Study Guide 23 will give additional details). They are known for: (1) their love of Jesus (1 John 5:2, 3), (2) their loyalty to and faith in Him (Revelation 14:12), and (3) their firm obedience to His Word and commandments (Revelation 12:17 John 8:31, 32).

In the end time, Satan will deceive all who do not demand clear Scripture proof for every Bible doctrine.

13. What will be Satan's strategy in this final conflict between God's truth and Satan's lies? Answer: Though Satan hates God and His Son, he rarely admits it openly. In fact, he and his demons will pose as holy angels and as devoted Christian clergymen (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). What he

presents as evidence for his side will seem so righteous, spiritual, and Jesus-like that nearly everybody on earth will be deceived and follow him (Matthew 24:24). He will doubtless use the Bible, as he did when tempting Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1, 11). Satan's logic is so persuasive that it deceived one-third of the

angels of heaven, Adam and Eve, and (at the time of the Flood) everybody on earth except eight people.

God's Word exposes Satan's strategies.

14. What is God's counter-strategy?

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20.

Answer: God always counters Satan's lies with Bible truth. When tempted by Satan in the wilderness, Jesus repeatedly quoted Scripture (Matthew 4:1-11). Through His remnant people, God will tell the truth about the un-biblical nature of Babylon the great. He will make it clear that Babylon is presenting a false gospel (Galatians 1:8-12) which has opened the door wide for billions to be deceived and lost. God's counter-movement is outlined in the great three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-14, which we are examining in nine of the 27 Study Guides in this series. These three fantastic messages expose and warn against Satan's lies and counterfeits and call people to worship God and obey Him, not only in spirit but in Bible truth as well.

God's end-time message will bring glorious truth and light to every person on earth.

15. Will God's end-time messages of warning and hope be effective?

"After these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory." Revelation 18:1.

Answer: In Scripture, angels represent messengers or messages (Hebrews 1:13, 14). God's end-time appeal is symbolized by a mighty angel whose power is so great that the entire world is lightened with God's truth and glory. This final, God-given message will go to the inhabitants of the entire world (Revelation 14:6; Mark 16:15; Matthew 24:14)

When Jesus' end-time appeal is given to all the world, His true people will come out of Babylon and follow Him.

16. What final, urgent appeal will Jesus make to those who are in Babylon?

Answer: He will say: "Come out of her [Babylon], my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." Revelation 18:4, 5.

Please notice that Jesus refers to many people in Babylon as "my people." There are millions of sincere Christians in Babylon who have not yet heard this urgent

warning message. These people love the Lord supremely, and Jesus says they are His children.

17. How will Jesus' people, who are in Babylon, respond when they hear His appeal to come out? Answer: Jesus gives the answer. He says, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." John 10:16, 27.

Jesus recognizes His children who are in Babylon. Further, He promises to call them out of Babylon before it is destroyed. And, most glorious of all, Jesus promises that His people who are yet in Babylon will hear and recognize His voice and come out to safety.

Note: This is the seventh Study Guide in our series of nine on the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-14. Our next Study Guide will describe God's end-time church so plainly that you cannot fail to recognize it.

18. If you are in Babylon, are you willing to heed Jesus' urgent appeal to come out of her? Answer:

Thought Questions

1. Shouldn't I remain in Babylon and try to reform her instead of coming out? No. Jesus says Babylon is going to be destroyed, not reformed. She will become hopelessly drunk with her wine (identified as false doctrine in Revelation 18:5, 6). It is for this reason that He calls His people out (Revelation 18:4).

2. Who are the kings of the east of Revelation 16:12?

The kings of the east are the Kings (Father and Son) of heaven. They are called kings of the east because that is the direction from which heavenly beings approach the earth. Note the following, for example:

A. Jesus' second coming will be from the east (Matthew 24:27).

B. God's glory comes from the east aRevelation's sealing angel comes from the east (Revelation 7:2).

C. The sun, symbolizing Jesus, rises in the east (Malachi 4:2).

3. Does the warning about the fall of Babylon imply that Babylon has not always been fallen? Yes, it does. Many of the churches comprising Babylon have stood strong, tall, and loyal to Jesus in the past. The founders were outstanding men of

God who were searching the Bible diligently to discover all of its truth. Not all churches are fallen today. However, any church that teaches mother Babylon's false doctrines and follows her practices could become one of her fallen daughters.

4. When called out of Babylon, where should a Christian go?

Find the people who keep God's commandments, have the faith of Jesus, and are preaching the three angels' messages worldwide, and join them (Revelation 14:6-12). Study Guide 23 will fully describe God's church for the last days.

5. What do the 10 kings of Revelation 17:12-16 represent?

The 10 kings symbolize the nations of the world. The 10 toes of the image of Daniel chapter 2 and the 10 horns of the monster beast of Daniel chapter 7 symbolized the 10 kingdoms of Europe. However, the meaning is broadened in Revelation chapters 11 through 18 to mean all "the kings of the earth" or "all nations." (See Revelation 16:14; 18:3.)

6. What does the symbolism of "frogs" mean in Revelation 16:13, 14?

A frog captures its prey with his tongue, which may symbolize the counterfeit gift of tongues that is sweeping the world today. Please remember that miracles, including the gift of tongues, prove only one thing - supernatural power. But the Bible informs us that supernatural power can be from either God or Satan. It further explains that Satan, posing as an angel of light from heaven (2 Corinthians 11:13-15), will utilize supernatural miracles so effectively that almost the entire world will be deceived and follow him (Revelation 13:3). At present, he is using the counterfeit gift of tongues to weld together churches and religions of all kinds - including pagans and spirit worshipers. Each of these feels that the gift of tongues is proof of authenticity.

We Must Test the Spirits

The Bible warns that we must test the spirits (1 John 4:1). If they do not agree with the Bible, they are counterfeits (Isaiah 8:19, 20). Further, the true gifts of the Holy Spirit are never given to one who deliberately and knowingly disobeys God (Acts 5:32). There is a true gift of tongues. It is a miraculous enabling to fluently speak foreign languages previously unlearned and unknown by the speaker (Acts 2:4-12). God uses this gift when needed to present His end-time message to those of other languages. It was needed at Pentecost because 17 language groups were in the crowd and His disciples probably knew only one language.

7. Will the New Age movement play a major role in the final end-time conflict between good and evil?

Without a doubt! It is strongly involved with the occult, psychic phenomena, and spiritism. Spiritism will certainly be a major factor in the closing drama of earth. Combined with the supernatural power of the counterfeit gift of tongues and allied with the end-time worldwide coalition of churches, spiritism will sweep the globe. The New Age belief in spirit communication and reincarnation is simply old-time paganism in new garb. Its belief in an immortal, undying soul that can communicate with earth-people is the same old falsehood Satan told Eve in Eden: "Ye shall not surely die." Genesis 3:4. (See Study Guide 10 for details on death.)

8. It's obvious that God reveals activities of the Antichrist or papacy in Daniel chapter 7 and Revelation chapters 13, 17, and 18. Is the Antichrist mentioned elsewhere in Scripture?

Yes, the beast or Antichrist power (or its activities) are referred to in at least nine prophecies of the Old and New Testaments: Daniel 7; Daniel chapters 8, 9; Daniel 11; Revelation 12; Revelation 13; Revelation 16; Revelation 17; Revelation 18; and Revelation 19. Surely, when God stresses the same power nine different times, He wants us to listen.

9. Did Satan's kingdom called "Babylon" originate at the Tower of Babel?

No, it originated when Satan rebelled against God in heaven. In fact, the prophet Isaiah symbolizes Lucifer at the time of his fall from heaven as the king of Babylon (Isaiah 14:4, 12-15). God has looked upon Satan's kingdom as Babylon from the very beginning of sin. Satan's avowed aim is to conquer God, wipe out God's kingdom, and establish his own rebellious kingdom of Babylon universe-wide. Jesus said there are only two sides (Matthew 7:13, 14). Every soul on earth will finally line up on the side of either Jesus or Babylon. It is a matter of life and death. Those who serve and support Jesus will be saved in His heavenly kingdom. Those who support Babylon will be destroyed by fire. And there is very little time left for decision making. This is why heeding Jesus' end-time warning against Babylon is so extremely crucial and urgent.

10. In Revelation 16:12, what is meant by the waters of the Euphrates River being dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the east?

Before the ancient kingdom of Babylon was captured by the Median general Darius, the water of the river Euphrates, which passed underneath the walls of the city, was diverted into a man-made lake bed. This diversion permitted Darius' army to capture the city at night by entering from underneath the walls through the empty riverbed. In the prophecies of Revelation, "water" symbolizes people (Revelation 17:15). Thus, the waters of the river Euphrates refer to the followers of "Babylon

the great", whose support dries up when they turn against Babylon with intent to destroy her (Revelation 17:16). This drying up of support for "Babylon the great" assures victory for the kings of the east, the heavenly Father and Son.

Quiz Questions

1. What is the meaning of the word "Babylon"? (1)
Confusion.
Rebellion.
Deceiver.
2. Who does mother Babylon symbolize in Bible prophecy? (1)
The United Nations.
The papacy.
Mary, the mother of Jesus.
3. Who are the daughters of mother Babylon? (1)
New Testament ladies--Priscilla, Elizabeth, and Dorcas.
The queens of Europe.
Churches that follow mother Babylon's false doctrines and practices.
4. What is symbolized by mother Babylon sitting upon the scarlet beast? (1)
The church in control of the state, which closely supports it.
Women make good animal trainers.
Women should ride and not walk.
5. What false doctrines of Babylon will make people spiritually confused? (4)
Sanctity of marriage.
Death is a sleep.
Sinners burn eternally in hell.
Sunday as God's holy day.
Spirits, or souls, are immortal.
Baptism by immersion.
Law of God repealed or amended.
6. "Babylon is fallen" means that (1)
An angel fell from heaven.
Babylon has been hit by an earthquake.
The mother church and other churches who embrace her false teachings have fallen away from Bible truth and true worship of the true God.
7. The symbol "Kings of the east" represents (1)
Jesus and His Father.

Satan working through paganism.

Nations of the world.

8. What does the drying up of the waters of the Euphrates River symbolize? (1)

A severe water shortage in the last days.

There will be no food supply in the end time.

Babylon will lose the support of its followers.

9. Babylon is a family name which includes nearly all religions and churches.

(1)

Yes.

No.

10. Who really calls people out of Babylon? (1)

Angels.

The 10 kings.

Lucifer.

Jesus.

11. Wouldn't it be better to try to convert a fallen church rather than come out of it? (1)

Yes.

No.

12. What does it mean to be drunk on Babylon's wine? (1)

To be an alcoholic.

To join her in partying.

To be physically ill.

To be confused by her false doctrines.

13. What three powers will unite to fight against Jesus and His people in the end time? (3)

Non-Christian religions.

The United Nations.

Apostate Protestantism.

Space men.

The papacy.

14. When Jesus calls His people out of Babylon, will they come out? (1)

Yes.

No.

15. Many people are in Babylon but do not know it. (1)

Yes.

No.

The Bride of Christ

Lesson 23

The Bible says there is but one body, or church, into which Jesus calls His end-time people - the bride of Christ. To some, this is unnerving, as there are thousands of different churches today that call themselves Christian. Virtually every one claims to be God's church, yet they each differ widely in biblical interpretation, faith, and practice. It's quite impossible for the honest seeker of truth to investigate the claims of each one.

However, we can be thankful that Jesus has solved this dilemma for us by describing His church such detail that you can easily identify it! That description, vivid and powerful, is found in Revelation 12 and 14, and it will thrill you with amazing truths that will help you in the end times. Please read Revelation 12:1-17 before beginning your journey of discovery into these transforming truths.

1. By what prophetic symbol does Jesus represent His true church?

"I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman." Jeremiah 6:2. "And say unto Zion, Thou art my people." Isaiah 51:16.

Answer: We learned in Study Guide 22 that Jesus symbolizes His true, pure church (Zion) as a pure woman and an apostate church as a harlot. A few other texts which also utilize this symbolism are 2 Corinthians 11:2 Ephesians 5:22, 23 and Revelation 19:7, 8.

2. In Revelation 12:1, Jesus symbolizes His church as a woman "clothed with the sun," with "the moon under her feet," and wearing "a crown of twelve stars." What do these symbols mean? Answer: A. The sun represents Jesus, His gospel, and His righteousness. "The Lord God is a sun." Psalms 84:11. (See also Malachi 4:2.) Without Jesus there is no salvation (Acts 4:12). More than anything else, Jesus wants His church to overflow with His presence and glory.

B. "The moon under her feet" represents the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. As the moon reflects the light of the sun, so the sacrificial system was helpful spiritually only as it reflected light from the Messiah to come (Hebrews 10:1).

C. The "crown of twelve stars" represents the work of the 12 disciples, which crowned the early years of the New Testament church.

The baby mentioned in Revelation chapter 12 is Jesus.

3. Next, the prophecy states that the woman is in labor, about to deliver a baby who would one day rule all nations with a rod of iron. She then delivered the "man child," and later He was taken up to God's throne in heaven (Revelation 12:1, 2, 5). Who was this baby?

Answer: The baby was Jesus. He will one day rule all nations with a rod of iron (Revelation 19:13-16; Psalms 2:7-9). Jesus, who was crucified for our sins, was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9-11). His resurrection power in our lives is one of Jesus' essential gifts to His people (Philippians 3:10).

The great red dragon is Satan, who at Jesus' birth was working through pagan Rome.

4. Revelation 12:3, 4 introduces "a great red dragon" who hated the "man child" and tried to kill him at birth. You may remember this dragon from Study Guide 20. Who was the dragon?

Answer: The dragon represents Satan, who was cast out of heaven (Revelation 12:7-9) and who was working at the time of Jesus' birth through the pagan Roman empire. The ruler who tried to kill Jesus at birth was Herod, a king under pagan Rome. He killed all the male babies of Bethlehem, hoping that one of them would be Jesus (Matthew 2:16).

The "third part of the stars" represent the rebellious angels who were cast out of heaven with Lucifer.

5. What is the meaning of the "seven heads" and "ten horns" of the dragon, and of "the third part of the stars of heaven" being cast to the earth?

Answer: A. The "seven heads" represent the seven hills or mountains upon which Rome was built (Revelation 17:9, 10). We have now encountered a beast with seven heads and 10 horns three times in our Study Guides (Revelation 12:3 13:1 17:3).

B. The "ten horns" represent the governments, or nations, that support the major powers in their oppression of God's people and church. During pagan Rome's tenure (Revelation 12:3, 4), they represented the 10 barbarian tribes that supported the papacy in eventually bringing down the Roman empire (Daniel 7:23, 24). These tribes later became modern Europe. In the last days, they represent all the nations of the world united in the end-time coalition (Revelation 16:14 17:12, 13, 16) which will support "Babylon the great" in her warfare against God's people.

C. "The third part of the stars of heaven" are the angels who supported Lucifer in his insurrection in heaven and who were cast out with him (Revelation 12:9 Luke 10:18 Isaiah 14:12).

A Review and Summary

Thus far, the prophecy has covered the following Bible facts:

1. God's true church appears, symbolized as a pure woman.
2. Jesus is born into the church.
3. Satan, working through King Herod of pagan Rome, tries to kill baby Jesus.
4. Satan's plan is unsuccessful.
5. Jesus' ascension is pictured.

Many millions were burned at the stake because of Satan's persecution.

6. What did Satan do after he failed in his plan to destroy baby Jesus?

"He persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child." Revelation 12:13.

Answer: Since he was no longer able to attack Jesus personally, he aimed his fury and persecution at God's church and His people.

Six Identifying Points

In Revelation chapters 12 and 14, Jesus gives us six descriptive points to use in identifying His end- time church. Watch for them as you study the remainder of this Study Guide.

God's people fled to the solitary places of the earth to escape persecution.

7. What did the woman (church) do to protect herself, and what is the "wilderness" spoken of in Revelation 12:6, 14?

Answer: A. Verses 6 and 14 say, "The woman fled into the wilderness," where she was protected for "a time, and times, and half a time" (or 1,260 literal years) from the wrath of Satan who was then working through papal Rome. The "two wings" represent the protection and support God gave the church during her time in the "wilderness" (Exodus 19:4 Deuteronomy 32:11). The time spent in the wilderness is the same 1,260-year period of papal prominence and persecution (A.D. 538 to 1798) that Jesus repeatedly mentioned in prophecy. One prophetic day equals one literal year (Ezekiel 4:6).

B. The term "wilderness" refers to the solitary places of earth (mountains, caves, forests, etc.) where God's people could hide in seclusion and thus escape total annihilation (Hebrews 11:37, 38). And hide they did, the Waldenses, Albigenses, Huguenots, and many others. God's people (His church) would have been obliterated if they had not fled and hid in the wilderness during this devastating persecution by the papacy. (In one 40-year period, "from the beginning of the order of the Jesuits, in the year 1540, to 1580, nine hundred thousand were destroyed. One hundred fifty thousand perished in the Inquisition in 30 years." 1) At least 50 million people died for their faith during this 1,260-year time period. God's church did not exist as an official organization during this 1,260-year time period. From A.D. 538 to 1798 it was alive but not identifiable as an organization. When it came out of hiding after the 1,260 years, it still had the same doctrine and characteristics as the apostolic church, which entered the "wilderness" in A.D. 538.

Note: We have now discovered our first two identification points for Jesus' end-time church:

1. It would not exist officially as an organization between A.D. 538 and 1798.
2. It would arise and do its end-time work after 1798.

There are many loving, genuine Christians in churches that were officially in existence before 1798. But none of these churches can be God's end-time church into which Jesus is calling all His people, because Jesus' end-time church had to arise after 1798. This means that most of the popular Protestant churches cannot be God's end-time church because they existed officially before 1798.¹ Albert Barnes, Notes on Daniel, comment on Daniel 7:25, p. 328.

A remnant of cloth is the last remaining portion of a bolt. It is exactly like the first piece from the same bolt.

8. In Revelation 12:17, God calls His end-time church the remnant. What does the word "remnant" mean?

Answer: It means the last remaining portion. In reference to Jesus' church, it means His church of the very last days, which is identical in doctrine to the apostolic church.

God's remnant church will keep His commandments and will also have the gift of prophecy.

9. In Revelation 12:17, what additional two-point description did Jesus give of His end-time remnant church?

Answer: It would keep all the Ten Commandments, including the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment (John 14:15 Revelation 22:14). It also would have the "testimony of Jesus", which the Bible tells us is the spirit of prophecy (Revelation 19:10). (Study Guide 24 will give a full explanation of the gift of prophecy.)

So here are Jesus' next two points of identification for His end-time remnant church:

3. It will keep God's commandments, including His seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment.

4. It will have the gift of prophecy.

Remember that while hosts of sincere Christian people are found in churches that do not keep the Sabbath or have the gift of prophecy, none of these churches can be God's remnant end-time church into which Jesus is calling all last-day Christians, because God's end-time church will both keep God's commandments and have the gift of prophecy.

God's remnant must be preaching the three angels' messages worldwide.

10. What final two points of identification for God's remnant does the book of Revelation provide? Answer: The final two points of the six are: (5) It will be a worldwide missionary church (Revelation 14:6), and (6) It will be preaching the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-14, which are briefly summarized below.

A. God's judgment is in session. Worship Him! God's end-time church must be preaching that the judgment began in 1844 (see Study Guides 18 and 19). It also calls upon people to "worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Revelation 14:7. How do we worship God as Creator? God wrote the answer in the fourth commandment. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." Exodus 20:8, 11. So the first angel's message commands all to worship God as Creator by keeping holy His seventh-day Sabbath, which He gave to us as a memorial of Creation.

- B. Come out of the fallen churches of Babylon.
- C. Don't worship the beast or receive his mark, which is Sunday as a holy day. Beware of all counterfeits.

Note: Here are the final two identification points:

- 5. God's end-time church will be a worldwide missionary church.
- 6. It will be preaching and teaching the three-point message of Revelation 14:6-14.

Now let's review the six points that Jesus gives us for identifying His end-time remnant church:

- 1. It would not exist as an official organization between A.D. 538 and 1798.
- 2. It would arise and do its work after 1798.
- 3. It would keep the Ten Commandments, including the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment.
- 4. It would have the gift of prophecy.
- 5. It would be a worldwide missionary church.
- 6. It would be teaching and preaching Jesus' three-point message of Revelation 14:6-14. Jesus promises that all who sincerely apply His six specifications will find His remnant church.

11. Now that we have established Jesus' six identification points for His end-time remnant church, what does Jesus tell us to do, and with what results?

Answer: "Seek, and ye shall find." Matthew 7:7. Jesus hands you these six specifications and says, "Go find my church." He promises that those who seek for heavenly things will find them.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is the only one that fits all six specifications.

12. How many churches fit these six specifications?

Answer: Jesus gave such distinctive and specific specifications that they fit only one church. Jesus did not give vague generalities such as "There will be many good

people in my church" and "There will also be some hypocrites." How many churches would those two points fit? All of them.

Those two points also fit the corner grocery store and downtown civic clubs. They would fit everything, and thus mean nothing. Instead, Jesus gave such pointed, specific, highly descriptive points that they fit one church and only one church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Let's double-check the specifications.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church:

1. Did not exist as an official organization between A.D. 538 and 1798.
2. Arose after 1798. It began to form in the early 1840s.
3. Keeps the Ten Commandments, including the fourth - God's holy seventh-day Sabbath.
4. Has the gift of prophecy.
5. Is a worldwide missionary church, working in 208 of the 236 countries of the world.
6. Teaches and preaches Jesus' great three-point message of Revelation 14:6-14.

Jesus asks you to take these six specifications and check for yourself. It is easy. You cannot miss.

Note: Please remember that there are many loving Christians in churches which these points do not fit, but no such church can be God's end-time remnant into which He is calling all His people for today.

13. After one of Jesus' children heeds His loving warning call and comes out of Babylon (Revelation 18:2, 4), what does Jesus ask him to do next?"Ye are called in one body." Colossians 3:15. "He [Jesus] is the head of the body, the church." Colossians 1:18.

Answer: The Bible says that God's people are called into one body, or church. Jesus asks those who leave Babylon to join the remnant church--of which He is the head. Jesus said, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold." John 10:16. He also calls them "my people" in both the Old Testament (Isaiah 58:1) and the New

Testament (Revelation 18:4). Of His sheep outside His fold (church), He says, "Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one

shepherd." "My sheep hear my voice, ... and they follow me." John 10:16, 27.

When God calls people out of Babylon, He asks them to join His remnant church. People join His remnant church by baptism.

14. How does one enter that body, or church?

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles." 1 Corinthians 12:13.

Answer: We enter Jesus' end-time remnant church by baptism. (See Study Guide 9 for details on baptism.)

15. Does the Bible provide other evidence that Jesus has only one remnant church into which He is calling all of His people?

Answer: Yes, it does. Let's review it:

A. The Bible says there is only one true body, or church (Ephesians 4:4 Colossians 1:18).

B. The Bible says our day is like Noah's day (Luke 17:26, 27). How many ways of escape were there in Noah's day? Only one, the ark. Once again, today, God has provided only one boat, or church, that will take His people safely through to His heavenly kingdom. Be sure to get on the right boat! The Bible says, "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Acts 2:47. It was true in apostolic times it is still true today.

God promises that His remnant church will triumph gloriously.

16. What is the good news regarding God's remnant church? Answer:

A. Its central theme is "the everlasting gospel" of righteousness by faith in Jesus only (Revelation 14:6).

B. It is built on Jesus, the Rock (1 Corinthians 3:11; 10:4), and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18.

C. Jesus died for His church (Ephesians 5:25).

D. Jesus describes His remnant church so plainly that it's easy to identify. He also describes the fallen churches and calls His people out of them. Satan will trap only those who keep their eyes and hearts shut.

E. Its doctrines are all true (1 Timothy 3:15).

17. What is the good news regarding God's remnant people? Answer: They will:
- A. Be saved in His heavenly kingdom (Revelation 15:2).
 - B. Overcome the devil by the "power" and "blood" of Jesus (Revelation 12:10, 11).
 - C. Be patient (Revelation 14:12).
 - D. Have Jesus' faith (Revelation 14:12).
 - E. Find glorious freedom (John 8:31, 32).

18. Earth's hour is very late. Jesus' second coming immediately follows the giving of the three angels' messages (Revelation 14:12-14). What is Jesus' urgent plea now to His people?

"Come thou and all thy house into the ark." Genesis 7:1.

Answer: In Noah's day, only eight people (including Noah himself) heeded God's invitation. Jesus is waiting at the door of His end-time ark, or remnant church, for you.

Note: This is our eighth Study Guide in the thrilling series on the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-14. The final Study Guide of the series will discuss the gift of prophecy.

19. I am willing to heed Jesus' call to come into the safety of His end-time remnant church. Answer:

Thought Questions

1. China, with one-fourth of the world's population, has barely been touched with the gospel. Wouldn't it take a long time to reach everyone there?

"With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."

Mark 10:27. The Bible says the Lord "will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth." Romans 9:28. That same Lord who empowered Jonah to lead an entire city to repentance in less than 40 days (Jonah chapter 3) will finish His work very quickly in these last days. He says His work will move with such breathtaking speed that it will be almost impossible for God's church to adequately handle the overwhelming influx of souls (Amos 9:13). God promised it. It will happen. Soon and suddenly it will all be over. Long-term thinking and planning in God's work misses the point today. This is a time of great emergency, and an emergency demands immediate action. Long-term thinkers may be trapped and wake up too late.

2. Is there really a serious danger that many professed Christian people will be caught off guard and lost when Jesus returns?

Yes, Jesus made that point crystal clear. He warned of several things that will trap and destroy Christians: (1) surfeiting, (2) drunkenness, (3) the cares of this life, and (4) sleeping (Luke 21:34 Mark 13:34-36).

A. Surfeiting is overdoing in anything - eating, working, reading, recreation, etc. It upsets balance and destroys clear thinking. It also precludes spending time with Jesus.

B. Drunkenness refers to things that bring on a stupor and give us a distaste for heavenly things. Examples include pornography, illicit sex, evil companions, neglect of Bible study, neglect of prayer, and avoiding church services. Such things cause people to live in an unreal dream world and thus miss out.

C. Cares of this life destroy Christians who become so busy doing perfectly good things that time for Jesus, prayer, study of the Word, witnessing, and attendance of church services are crowded out. In so doing, we take our eyes off the real goal and drown in peripheral matters.

D. Sleeping refers to being spiritually asleep. It may be the biggest problem today. When a person is asleep, he does not know he is asleep. Taking our relationship with Jesus for granted, having a form of godliness with no power, applying all great sermons to others, and refusing to become actively involved in Jesus' work all these things and many others make sleepwalkers of those who, unless miraculously awakened, will sleep past the moment of truth.

3. I joined God's remnant church and have never been so happy in all my life. But I have never been harassed so much by the devil, either. Why is this?

Because the devil is angry with God's remnant people and spends his time trying to hurt and discourage them (Revelation 12:17). Jesus did not promise that His people would not suffer trials, woes, onslaughts from the devil, tough times, and even serious injury from Satan. In fact, He promised that such things would, indeed, come to His people (2 Timothy 3:12). He did, however, gloriously promise: (1) to give His people the victory (1 Corinthians 15:57), (2) to be with His people always, in everything they face (Matthew 28:20), (3) to give them peace (John 16:33; Psalms 119:165), and (4) to never forsake them (Hebrews 13:5). Finally,

Jesus and His Father promised to hold onto Their children so tightly that no one could take them out of Their hands (John 10:28, 29). Amen!

4. What does the word "church" mean?

The word "church" is translated from the Greek word "ekklesia", which means "called-out ones." How fitting indeed! Jesus' people are called out of the world and Babylon into His precious fold of safety. People become part of Jesus' remnant end-time church by being baptized when Jesus calls them. Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice, ... and they follow me." John 10:27.

Quiz Questions

1. How does Jesus symbolize His true church in prophecy? (1)
 - By a tall steeple.
 - As a beast.
 - By a bright angel.
 - As a pure woman.
 - By a mysterious cloud.
2. What was the "wilderness" into which the church fled? (1)
 - Solitary places such as caves, forests, etc.
 - The Sahara Desert.
 - Iraq.
 - The Gobi Desert.
3. The following items are part of the three angels' messages: (3)
 - Babylon is fallen. Come out of her!
 - Hell burns forever and ever.
 - God's judgment is in session. Revere, praise, and worship Him as the Creator by keeping His holy Sabbath--which is His sign, or mark.
 - The plagues have ended.
 - Everybody is going to be saved.
 - Do not worship the beast or receive his mark.
4. Jesus provides six identification points to guide us to His remnant church. This church will (6)
 - Have many fine Christians.
 - Keep the Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath.
 - Have some hypocrites.
 - Enjoy singing great Christian songs.
 - Pray much.
 - Not exist as an official organization between A.D. 538 and 1798.

- Have the gift of prophecy.
Speak in tongues.
Be a worldwide missionary church.
Have many fine church buildings.
Arise and do its work after 1798.
Preach and teach the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-14.
5. How long was the church to be in the wilderness? (1)
Five years.
1,000 years.
680 years.
1,260 years.
33 years.
6. In Revelation chapter 12, the symbol of a baby born to a woman represents (1)
The apostolic church.
Jesus.
The gospel going to the Gentiles.
7. Does Jesus call His people out of the world and Babylon and into His remnant church? (1)
Yes.
No.
8. How does one join the remnant church? (1)
By shaking the preacher's hand.
By signing a membership card.
By baptism.
By giving a large donation.
9. There are many fine Christians in all churches, and even some who are not members of any church. (1)
Yes.
No.
10. Which of the following things cause Christians to be caught off guard and lost? (4)
Surfeiting.
Cares of this life.
Getting too excited about your religion.

Spiritual drunkenness.
Being spiritually asleep.
Faithful witnessing.
Reading the newspaper.

11. God will cut short His work on earth by taking the gospel quickly to every creature. (1)

Yes.

No.

12. Which of the following does God promise His children? (4)

Peace.

They will have no troubles.

Victory.

They will never get sick.

No one can take them out of His and Jesus' hands.

He'll never forsake them.

They will be rich.

13. What does the word "church" literally mean? (1)

A properly designated place of worship.

A congregation of the faithful.

'Called-out ones.'

A cathedral.

Does God Inspire Astrologers and Psychics?

Lesson 24

If some self-proclaimed prophet suddenly arose and began drawing crowds with stirring messages, healing the sick, raising the dead, bringing fire from heaven, and revealing knowledge of your personal secrets - would you believe in him or her? Should you believe? Your ultimate destiny just might be tied directly to your ability to distinguish between true and false prophets. So it's very important to know what the Bible really says about this timely subject!

1. Does the Bible teach that there will be true prophets in the last days of earth?

"In the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." Acts 2:17.

Answer: Yes, both men and women will prophesy in the last days (Joel 2:28-32). The gift of prophecy is essential for perfecting God's church.

2. Jesus at His ascension placed the gift of "prophets" in His church, along with four other gifts: apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Ephesians 4:7-11). Why did God place these gifts in the church?

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Ephesians 4:12.

Answer: Jesus gave all five gifts for the perfecting of the saints. The perfecting of God's end-time church is not possible if any of these five gifts is missing.

The Bible says that God gives the gift of prophecy to both men and women.

3. In Bible days, was the gift of prophecy limited to men?

Answer: No! In addition to many men who had the gift of prophecy, God also gave the gift to at least eight women: Anna (Luke 2:36-38); Miriam (Exodus 15:20); Deborah (Judges 4:4); Huldah (2 Kings 22:14); and the four daughters of Philip, an evangelist (Acts 21:8, 9).

4. How long were these gifts to remain in His church?

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Ephesians 4:13.

Answer: They will remain until God's people are all unified, mature Christians--which, of course, will be at the end of time.

Prophets speak as their thoughts are guided by the Holy Spirit.

5. From what source do true prophets obtain their information?

"Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1:21.

Answer: Prophets speak as they are "moved by the Holy Ghost." The word "ghost" comes from "ghast", the old English word for "spirit," so today we usually say Holy "Spirit". Prophets do not express their own private opinions in spiritual matters. Their thoughts come from Jesus, through the Holy Spirit.

God usually speaks to a prophet through visions and dreams.

6. God speaks to prophets in three different ways. What are these ways?

"If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream." "With him will I speak mouth to mouth." Numbers 12:6, 8.

Answer: Visions, dreams, or face to face.

7. What are the physical evidences of a true prophet in vision? Answer: A. Will initially lose physical strength (Daniel 10:8).

B. May later receive supernatural strength (Daniel 10:18, 19).

C. No breath in the body (Daniel 10:17).

D. Able to speak (Daniel 10:16).

E. Won't be aware of earthly surroundings (Daniel 10:5-8 2 Corinthians 12:2-4).

F. Eyes will be open (Numbers 24:4).

Note: Though the preceding six Bible points are physical evidences of a true prophet in vision, not all of them always appear together. A prophet's vision may be genuine without manifesting all six evidences.

Miracle working is no proof that a prophet is of God.

8. Is the working of great miracles proof that a prophet is of God?

"They are the spirits of devils, working miracles." Revelation 16:14.

Answer: No! The devil and his emissaries also have the power to work miracles. Miracles prove only one thing: supernatural power. But such power comes from both God and Satan (Deuteronomy 13:1- 5; Revelation 13:13, 14).

In the last days, false prophets will be so convincing that they will cause billions to be deceived and lost.

9. Of what perilous end-time danger does Jesus warn us?

"There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Matthew 24:24.

Answer: God warns us of false Christs and false prophets who will be so extremely convincing that they will deceive all except the very elect of God. Billions will be deceived and lost.

Prophets must be tested by Scripture.

10. How can I determine whether a prophet is true or false?

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20.

Answer: Test their teachings and conduct by the Word of God, which is the Bible. If they teach and behave contrary to Scripture, they are false prophets and "there is no light in them."

Psychics and diviners who claim to be guided by spirits of the dead are not led of God.

11. Are certain types of false prophets specifically named and condemned in the Bible?

Answer: Yes. Deuteronomy 18:10-12 and Revelation 21:8 speak against the following types of false prophets:

- A. Charmer - one who casts spells or uses charms.
- B. Observer of times - astrologer.
- C. Sorcerer - one who claims to contact spirits of the dead.
- D. Consulter with familiar spirits - medium, or channeler.
- E. User of divination - fortune teller.
- F. Enchanter - same as a charmer.
- G. Necromancer - another name for sorcerer.
- H. Witch - female psychic.
- I. Wizard - male psychic.

Note: Most of these false prophets claim to have contact with spirits of the dead. The Bible clearly states that the dead cannot be contacted by the living. (Study Guide 10 contains more information on death.) The supposed spirits of the dead are evil angels, or devils (Revelation 16:13, 14). Crystal balls, palm reading, leaf deciphering, astrology, and talking with the supposed spirits of the dead are not God's ways of communicating with people. The Scriptures teach plainly that all who become involved with such things are an abomination (Deuteronomy 18:12). And worse, those who continue involvement will be shut out of God's kingdom (Galatians 5:19-21 Revelation 21:8 22:14, 15).

A prophet of God will primarily serve the church rather than the general public.

12. Is a true prophet's work primarily to serve the church or to serve unbelievers?

"Prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe."
1 Corinthians 14:22. Answer: The Bible is clear. Although a prophet's message may sometimes edify the public, the primary purpose of prophecy is to serve the church.

13. Does God's end-time church have the gift of prophecy?

Answer: In Study Guide 23, we discovered that Jesus gives a six-point description of His end-time church. Let's review these six points:

- A. It would not exist as an official organization between A.D. 538 and 1798.
- B. It would arise and do its work after 1798.
- C. It would keep the Ten Commandments, including the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment.
- D. It would have the gift of prophecy.
- E. It would be a worldwide missionary church.
- F. It would be teaching and preaching Jesus' three-point message of Revelation 14:6-14.

It is important to remember that God's end-time remnant church must fit all six of Jesus' descriptive points. This means that the gift of prophecy must be included. It will have a prophet.

Joining God's church, which has all the gifts, will anchor you spiritually.

14. When you join God's end-time church, which has all of the gifts, how will it affect you? "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." Ephesians 4:14.

Answer: It will anchor you spiritually. You will no longer be uncertain and unsettled in your beliefs. The eye of the church symbolize prophecy.

15. The apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 12:1-18, likens the gifts that Jesus gave the church to parts of the body. What part of the body best represents the gift of prophecy?

"Before time in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer." 1 Samuel 9:9.

Answer: Since a prophet is sometimes called a seer (someone who can see into the future), the eyes would best represent the gift of prophecy.

A church without the gift of prophecy is blind.

16. Since prophecy is the eyes of the church, a church without the gift of prophecy would be in what condition?

Answer: It would be blind. Jesus referred to the subsequent dangers when He said, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Matthew 15:14.

17. Must God's remnant church have all the gifts that Christ gave?

Answer: Yes. The Scripture plainly teaches that God's end-time remnant church will "come behind in no gift", which means it must have all of the gifts, including the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 1:5-8).

18. Revelation 12:17 points out that God's end-time remnant church will "have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 19:10 says that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Can we be sure this means that the church will have a prophet?

Answer: Yes. An angel told John in Revelation 19:10 that he was John's "fellowservant", one of his "brethren" who have the testimony of Jesus. This same angel repeated the identical information to John in Revelation 22:9. He said, "I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets." Notice this time he called himself a prophet rather than one with the testimony of Jesus. So, obviously, having the "testimony of Jesus" and being a prophet mean the same thing.

The words of a true prophet are a special message from Jesus to His people.

19. Of what other special significance are the words "the testimony of Jesus"?

Answer: The "testimony of Jesus" means that the words of a prophet are from Jesus. We are thus to regard the words of a true prophet as a special message from Jesus to us (Revelation 1:1 Amos 3:7). To bring reproach, in any way, upon a true prophet is an extremely dangerous matter. It is the same as bringing reproach upon Jesus, who sends them and guides them. No wonder God warns, "Do my prophets no harm." Psalms 105:15.

20. What are the Bible qualifications for a true prophet?

Answer: The Bible testing points for a true prophet are as follows:

- A. Live a godly life (Matthew 7:15-20).
- B. Be called to service by God (Isaiah 6:1-10; Jeremiah 1:5-10; Amos 7:14, 15).
- C. Speak and write in harmony with the Bible (Isaiah 8:19, 20).
- D. Predict events that will come true (Deuteronomy 18:20-22).
- E. Will have visions (Numbers 12:6).

21. Did God send a prophet to His end-time remnant church? Answer: Yes, He did! Here are the brief details:

God Calls a Young Woman

God's end-time church began to form in the early 1840s and desperately needed guidance. So, in harmony with His promise of Amos 3:7, God then called a young woman named Ellen Harmon to be His prophetess. Ellen accepted the call. She had been injured in an accident at age nine and had to quit school with only three years of formal education. Her health deteriorated until, when called by God at age 17, she weighed only 70 pounds and had been given up to die.

She Served 70 Years

Ellen accepted God's call with the understanding that He would enable her physically and keep her humble. She lived an additional 70 years and died at age 87. She insisted that her aim and work were to point the church and its members to the Bible, which was to be its creed, and to Jesus' free gift of righteousness. Ellen fulfilled every test of a prophet mentioned in this Study Guide.

Her Pen Name and Books

Ellen married James White, a clergyman, and wrote under the name Ellen G. White. She became one of the world's most prolific woman writers. Her books, read worldwide, give inspired counsel on health, education, temperance, the Christian home, parenting, publishing and writing, assisting the needy, stewardship, evangelism, Christian living, and more.

Her book Education is considered an authority in its field. It has been used by a secular university as a textbook. It is so perceptive and relevant that it was once plagiarized by the minister of education of a certain nation, who published it under his own name. Dr. Florence Stratemeyer, a former professor of education at Columbia University, said the book contained "advanced educational concepts" and "was more than fifty years ahead of its time." Dr. Clive McCay, former

professor of nutrition at Cornell University, said of her writings on health: "In spite of the fact that the works of Mrs. White were written long before the advent of modern scientific nutrition, no better overall guide is available today." Newscaster Paul Harvey said she "wrote with such profound understanding on the subject of nutrition that all but two of the many principles she espoused have been scientifically established."

Her book *The Desire of Ages*, on the life of Christ, has been labeled an "English masterpiece" by Stationers Hall in London. It is heartwarming and uplifting beyond description. She said on the subject of intelligence that a person's IQ could be increased long before experts agreed. She said in 1905 that cancer is a germ (or virus), which medical science began to endorse only in the 1950s. Ellen G. White is said to be the fourth-most-translated writer of all time. Her book on Christian living, *Steps to Christ*, has been translated into more than 150 languages and dialects.

Ellen White had many visions, all of which meet the Bible standard for a true prophet in vision.

22. Did Ellen White have visions?

Answer: Yes, many of them. They lasted from a few minutes to six hours. And they meet the Bible standard for visions as outlined in the answer to question seven of this Study Guide.

23. Are Ellen White's words intended to be part of the Bible, or an addition to the Bible?

Answer: No! Doctrine comes from the Bible alone. As an end-time prophet, her aim was to stress the love of Jesus and His imminent return. She urged people to serve Him and accept His righteousness as a free gift. She also directed people's attention to the Bible prophecies for the end time--especially Jesus' three-point message for the world today (Revelation 14:6-14)--and urged that they share these messages of hope quickly and worldwide.

24. Does Ellen White speak in harmony with the Scriptures?

Answer: Yes! Her writings are saturated with Scripture. Her stated and obvious purpose was to point people to the Bible. Her words never contradict God's Word.

25. How can I accept Ellen White as a true prophet, since I do not know what she wrote?

Answer: You can't, until you read what she has written. However, you can know that she (1) meets the tests of a prophet, (2) did the work of a prophet, and that (3) God's true end-time church must have a prophet. We urge you to get one of her books and read it. (An inexpensive paperback copy of *The Desire of Ages* may be purchased from Amazing Facts, Inc.) As you read it, ask yourself if it draws you to Jesus and if it is in harmony with the Bible. It was written for you. We think you will find it absolutely enthralling.

26. What three-point command does Paul give us regarding a prophet?

Answer: "Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." 1 Thessalonians 5:20, 21. The apostle Paul says that we should not despise or "tune out" a prophet. But rather, we should carefully test what the prophet says and does by the Bible. If a prophet's words and behavior are in harmony with the Bible, we should heed them. This is what Jesus asks of His end-time people today.

27. How does Jesus regard the rejection of the words and counsel of a true prophet?

Answer: Jesus counts the rejection of a true prophet as rejecting the counsel of God (Luke 7:28-30). Further, He clearly states that spiritual prosperity hinges upon believing His prophets (2 Chronicles 20:20).

The words of a true prophet always lead people to a deeper study of the Bible.

28. Do true end-time prophets originate new doctrine, or does doctrine come strictly from the Bible? Answer: True end-time prophets do not originate doctrine (Revelation 22:18, 19). The Bible is the source of all doctrine.

However, true prophets do:

A. Reveal exciting new facets of old-time Bible doctrines that were not obvious until pointed out by the prophet (Amos 3:7).

B. Lead God's people to a closer walk with Jesus and a deeper study of His Word.

C. Help God's people understand difficult, unclear, or unnoticed portions of the Bible so that they suddenly come to life for us and bring great joy.

- D. Help protect God's people from fanaticism, deception, and spiritual stupor.
- E. Help God's people understand end-time prophecies which, verified by everyday news events, suddenly take on new meaning.
- F. Help God's people sense the certainty of Jesus' soon return and the end of the world.

For a deepening love for Jesus, a vibrant new excitement about the Bible, and a fresh understanding of Bible prophecies, listen to God's end-time prophet. You will find life taking on glorious new dimensions. Remember, Jesus says He will bless His end-time church with most-helpful prophetic messages. Praise the Lord! He is doing everything heaven can think of for His end-time people. He intends to save His people and take them to His glorious eternal kingdom. Those who follow Him are guaranteed entrance to heaven (Matthew 19:27-29).

Note: This is the ninth and final Study Guide on the subject of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-14. Three fascinating Study Guides on other crucial subjects remain.

29. I am willing to test Ellen White's writings by Scripture and accept them if they are in harmony with Scripture.

Answer:

Thought Questions

1. What happens when a church does not have a prophet?
"Where there is no vision [prophecy], the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." Proverbs 29:18. When a church does not have a prophet to counsel, guide, and lead it back to Jesus and the Bible, the people will flounder in a disoriented manner (Psalms 74:9) and eventually perish.
2. Do you think additional true prophets may appear between now and Jesus' second coming? Based on Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28-32), it certainly appears possible. There also will be false prophets (Matthew 7:15; 24:11, 24). We must be prepared to test prophets by the Bible (Isaiah 8:19, 20; 2 Timothy 2:15), heeding their counsel only if they are genuine and rejecting them if they are counterfeit. God knows when prophets are needed to wake people up, warn them, and turn them to Jesus and His Word. He sent a prophet (Moses) to lead His people out of Egypt (Hosea 12:13). He sent a prophet (John the Baptist) to prepare people for

Jesus' first coming (Mark 1:1-8). He also promised prophetic messages for these end-time days. God sends them to point us to the Bible and its crucial end-time prophecies; to strengthen, encourage, and assure us; and to make us like Jesus so we will be "blameless" when the Master returns. Without the help of a prophet, many will be lost through backsliding, sleeping spiritually, and being too busy. So let's welcome prophetic messages and praise God for sending them for our personal good.

3. Why do most churches today not have the gift of prophecy?

Because God normally sends prophets to His church only when it is keeping His commandments. Notice how Lamentations 2:9 puts it: "The law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the Lord." Please review the following texts: Ezekiel 7:26; Jeremiah 26:4-6; Ezekiel 20:12-16; and Proverbs 29:18. These verses verify that when God's people disregard His commandments, He sends no prophet. When they begin to obey His commands, He sends a prophet to assist, encourage, and guide.

So when God's remnant church for the end time emerged keeping His commandments, it was time for a prophet. And God sent one--right on schedule.

4. What can I do to make the gift of prophecy meaningful to me?

The way to make the gift of prophecy meaningful is to study it for yourself and follow it prayerfully so Jesus can guide and preserve you and prepare you for His coming. "I thank my God always ... That in every thing ye are enriched by him, ... Even as the testimony of Christ [spirit of prophecy] was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 1:4-8.

5. Which of these two--the gift of prophecy or the gift of tongues--will play the major role in God's end-time remnant church?

The gift of prophecy will play the leading role. In 1 Corinthians 12:28 it is listed as second in importance of all the gifts, while the gift of tongues is listed last. A church without the gift of prophecy is blind (see question 16 in this Study Guide). Jesus solemnly warns His end-time church of the danger of blindness and urges them to anoint their eyes with heavenly eyesalve so they will be able to see (Revelation 3:17, 18). The eyesalve represents the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:20, 27; John 14:26), who gives

all gifts to the church (1 Corinthians 12:4, 7-11). Heeding the words of God's prophet will help His end-time remnant people clearly understand the Bible and will prevent uncertainty and confusion.

6. I believe in "the Bible and the Bible only" as the source of doctrine and guidance for Christian living. Therefore, I reject all modern-day prophets. You are correct in believing in the Bible as the source of Christian doctrine. However, please remember that the Bible clearly points out that:

A. The gift of prophecy will exist in God's church until the end of time (Ephesians 4:11, 13).

B. Jesus' end-time church will have the gift of prophecy (Revelation 12:17 19:10 22:9).

C. To reject a prophet's counsel is to reject God's counsel (Luke 7:28-30).

D. We are commanded to test prophets and follow their counsel if they speak and live in harmony with the Bible (1 Thessalonians 5:20, 21).

People who base their faith on "the Bible only" must follow its counsel regarding prophets. True prophets will always speak in harmony with the Bible. Prophets who contradict God's Word are false and should be rejected. If I fail to listen to and test prophets, I am not basing my faith upon the Bible, which mandates doing so.

Quiz Questions

1. Please check the items below that have the same meaning: (4)
Testimony of Jesus.
The gift of tongues.
Spirit of prophecy.
Predictions of psychics.
Gift of prophecy.
Conversing with dead spirits.
Prophets speaking to the church.
2. Does God give the gift of prophecy to both men and women? (1)
Yes.

No.

3. According to Ephesians chapter 4, what five gifts did Jesus leave the church at His ascension? (5)

Prophets.

Teachers.

Singing.

Sharing with the needy.

Pastors.

Apostles.

Witnessing.

Evangelists.

4. How long were these five gifts, including prophets, to remain in the church? (1)

Only until the New Testament prophets died.

Until the judgment begins.

Until the end of the world.

5. According to the Bible, which things listed below are true of a prophet in vision? (5)

Talks in unknown tongues.

Never speaks during a vision.

Eyes remain open.

Often becomes violent.

No breath in body.

May sometimes speak while in vision.

Unconscious of earthly surroundings.

May receive supernatural strength.

6. Miracle working is always proof that a prophet is of God. (1)

Yes.

No.

7. I can know for certain that a prophet is of God if he or she (1)

Is kindly and gracious in conduct.

Works fantastic miracles.

Is dazzlingly bright.

Seems to know the Bible well.

Looks like Jesus.

Speaks and acts in harmony with the Bible.

8. Which of the following is not condemned by the Bible? (1)

Fortune teller.

Male and female psychics.

Astrologer.

Sorcerer.

One who casts spells or uses charms.

Spirit medium or channeler.

A prophet who speaks and lives in harmony with the Bible.

9. A prophet's primary work is to serve the church. (1)

Yes.

No.

10. A church cannot be God's true end-time church unless it has a prophet. (1)

True.

False.

11. What part of the body represents prophecy? (1)

Mouth.

Hands.

Feet.

Ears.

Eyes.

12. Additional true end-time prophets may appear before Jesus' second coming. (1)

Yes.

No.

13. To follow "the Bible and the Bible only" means that one must accept a true prophet. (1)

Yes.

No.

14. What three things regarding prophecy does the Bible command in 1 Thessalonians 5:20, 21? (3)

Don't despise prophets or prophecy.

Follow all prophets.

Prove or test a prophet's words and acts by the Bible.

Ask prophets if they are true or false.

Believe, or hold fast to, that which is good.

Ignore all prophets.

15. When we reject the counsel of a true prophet, we reject the counsel of God.

(1)

Yes.

No.

16. True end-time prophets teach new doctrines not found in the Bible. (1)

Yes.

No.

17. Why don't most churches have a true prophet or prophets? (1)

They would not believe them if they came.

They are not keeping all of God's commandments.

They have all the light they need without a prophet.

18. Where there is no vision, the people perish. (1)

True.

False.

18. A church without the gift of prophecy is blind. (1)

Yes.

No.

In God we Trust?

Lesson 25

Do you trust God... really? The truth is, a lot of people might say yes, but they don't act like it. And worse, because they don't trust Him, they might actually steal from Him! "Come on!" you say, "No one would steal or embezzle money from God." But God's shocking message to His people is, "Ye have robbed me" (Malachi 3:8). Real records prove that billions of people steal from God, and as amazing as it may seem, they use that stolen

money to subsidize their own reckless spending! Yet many are unaware of their larceny, and in this Study Guide, we'll show you how to avoid that same mistake and how to prosper financially through real faith in God.

One tenth of a person's income belongs to God.

1. According to the Bible, what portion of our income belongs to the Lord?

"And all the tithe of the land ... is the Lord's." Leviticus 27:30.

Answer: The tithe belongs to God.

The word "tithe" literally means "tenth."

2. What is the "tithe"?

"I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance." "The tithes of the children of Israel ... I have given to the Levites to inherit." Numbers 18:21, 24.

Answer: The tithe is one-tenth of a person's income. The word "tithe" literally means "tenth." The tithe belongs to God. It is His. I have no right to keep it. When I tithe, I am not making a gift; I am simply returning to God what is already His. Unless I am returning one-tenth of my income to God, I am not tithing.

The tithe is to be brought into God's storehouse, or church.

3. Where does the Lord ask His people to bring the tithe? "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse." Malachi 3:10. Answer: He asks us to bring the tithe into His storehouse.

4. To what does the Lord refer when He speaks of His storehouse?

"Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries." Nehemiah 13:12. (The marginal reference calls treasuries "storehouses.")

Answer: In Malachi 3:10, God refers to the storehouse as "mine house," which means His temple or church. Nehemiah 13:12 further points out that the tithe is to be brought to the temple treasury, which is God's storehouse. Other texts that refer to the storehouse as the temple treasuries, or chambers, include 1 Chronicles 9:26 (see margin); 2 Chronicles 31:11, 12 (see margin); and Nehemiah 10:37, 38. In Old Testament times, God's people brought 10 percent of all their increase--including crops and animals--to the storehouse.

5. Some have thought that tithing was part of Moses' system of rites and ceremonies that ended at the cross. How does the Bible help us understand that this is not so?

"And he [Abram] gave him tithes of all." Genesis 14:20. And in Genesis 28:22, Jacob said, "And of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

Answer: These passages reveal that both Abraham and Jacob, who lived long before Moses' day, tithed their income. We can therefore conclude that God's plan of tithing preceded Moses' law. Jesus explained to the Pharisees that although

they should tithe, they must not neglect the more important matters of justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

6. But didn't Jesus abolish the plan of tithing?

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Matthew 23:23.

Answer: No! On the contrary, He endorsed it. Jesus was rebuking the Jews for omitting the more important matters of the law--"judgment, mercy, and faith"--even though they were meticulous tithers. He then plainly told them they should continue tithing, but should also be just and merciful and faithful.

In Old Testament days, the tithe was used to pay the priests.

7. For what was tithe used in Old Testament days?

"I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation." Numbers 18:21.

Answer: The tithe in Old Testament days was used for the income of the priests. The tribe of Levi (the priests) received no portion of land for crop-growing and business operations, while the other 11 tribes did. The Levites worked full-time taking care of the temple and ministering to God's people. So God's plan was that the tithe support the priests and their families.

Today, tithe is to be used to pay the salaries of God's ministers.

8. Did God change His plan for tithe usage in New Testament days?

"Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." 1 Corinthians 9:13, 14.

Answer: No! He continued it. His plan today is that tithe be used to support those who work solely in gospel ministry. If all people tithed and the tithe were used strictly for the support of gospel workers, there would be more than enough money to reach the entire earth very quickly with God's end-time gospel message.

God promises that faithful tithe payers will receive blessings so great that they will not have room enough to receive them.

9. What startling proposal does God make to people who feel uncertain about tithing?

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse ... and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Malachi 3:10.

Answer: He says, "Prove me now" and see if I will not "pour you out a blessing" too big to receive. This is the only time in the Bible that God makes such a proposal. He is saying, "Give it a try. It will work. I promise you." Hundreds of thousands of tithers the world over will gladly testify to the truth of God's tithing promise. They have all learned the truth of the words: "You can't out-give God."

10. When we tithe, who really receives our money?

"And here men that die receive tithes; but there he [Jesus] receiveth them." Hebrews 7:8.

Answer: Jesus, our heavenly High Priest, receives our tithes.

When I take God's tithe and use it for myself, I repeat the sin of Adam and Eve.

11. What test did Adam and Eve fail, which all of us must pass if we would inherit His heavenly kingdom?

Answer: They took things that God said were not theirs. God gave Adam and Eve the fruit of all the trees in the garden of Eden except one - the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16, 17). The fruit of that tree was not theirs to eat. They were to leave it alone. Eve said they were not even to touch it (Genesis 3:3). But they did not trust God. They ate the fruit and fell - and the long, horrendous, wrenching sojourn in sin began. To people today, God gives His riches, wisdom, and all of the other assets and blessings of heaven.

Everything is ours - except one-tenth of our income, which is His (Leviticus 27:30). But as with Adam and Eve, He does not take it by force. He leaves it within our reach but warns, "Don't take that. It is holy. It is mine." When we knowingly take God's tithe and appropriate it for our own use, we repeat the sin of Adam and Eve and thus display a tragic lack of trust in our Redeemer. God does not need our money, but He deserves our loyalty and trust.

Make God Your Partner

When I return God's tithe, I make Him a partner in everything I undertake. What a fantastic, blessed privilege: God and I - partners! With Him as my partner, I have everything to gain and nothing to lose. It is an awesomely dangerous venture to take God's own money, which He has earmarked for the saving of souls, and use it for our own personal budgets.

God's people gladly give offerings as an expression of their love for Him.

12. In addition to the tithe, which belongs to God, what else does God ask of His people?

"Bring an offering, and come into his courts." Psalms 96:8.

Answer: The Lord asks us to give offerings for His work as an expression of our love for Him and our thanksgiving for His blessings.

The Bible does not specify the amount to be given for offerings.

13. How much shall I give to God as offerings?

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7.

Answer: The Bible does not specify a set amount for offerings. Each person decides (as God impresses) how much to give and then gives it cheerfully.

14. What additional Bible principles does God share with us regarding giving?

Answer: A. My first priority should be to give myself to the Lord (2 Corinthians 8:5).

B. I should give God my very best (Proverbs 3:9).

C. God blesses the generous giver (Proverbs 11:24, 25).

D. It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).

E. When stingy, I am not rightly using my God-given blessings (Luke 12:16-21).

F. God returns more than I give (Luke 6:38).

G. I should give in proportion to how God has prospered and blessed me (1 Corinthians 16:2).

H. I should give as I am able (Deuteronomy 16:17).

We return tithe to God, to whom it already belongs. We give offerings. Offerings are voluntary and should be given joyously.

The world and everything in it belong to God.

15. What does the Lord own? Answer:

A. All the silver and gold in the world (Haggai 2:8).

B. The earth and all its people (Psalms 24:1).

C. The Lord owns the world and everything in it (Psalms 50:10-12). But He permits people to use His great riches. He also gives them the wisdom and power to prosper and to accumulate wealth (Deuteronomy 8:18). In return for furnishing everything, all God asks is that we return to Him 10 percent as our acknowledgement of His great investment in our business affairs, plus offerings as an expression of our love and gratitude.

God considers people robbers who do not tithe and give offerings.

16. How does the Lord refer to people who do not return His 10 percent and give offerings? "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings." Malachi 3:8.

Answer: He refers to them as robbers. Can you imagine people stealing from God? Those who rob God by withholding tithes and offerings will not be permitted to enter heaven

17. What does God say will happen to those who knowingly continue to rob Him in tithes and offerings?

"Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." Malachi 3:9. "Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Corinthians 6:10.

Answer: The curse of God will rest upon them. They will not inherit the kingdom of heaven. A preoccupation with accumulating money makes one grasping and proud.

17. God warns us against covetousness. Why is it so extremely dangerous?

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Luke 12:34.

Answer: Because our hearts follow our investments. If my focus is on accumulating more and more money, my heart becomes covetous, grasping, and proud. But if my focus is on sharing and helping others and blessing God's work, then my heart becomes caring, loving, liberal, and humble.

Covetousness is one of the 20 terrible sins of the last days that will shut people out of heaven (2 Timothy 3:1-7).

To steal from Jesus grieves Him much.

18. How does Jesus feel when we rob Him of His sacred tithe and love offerings?

"Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart." Hebrews 3:10.

Answer: He probably feels much as a parent whose child steals money from him. The money itself is not the big thing. It is the child's lack of integrity, love, and trust that is deeply disappointing.

Love caused God's people in Macedonia to give very liberally to the famine-stricken Christians in Jerusalem.

19. What thrilling points does Paul stress about the stewardship of the believers in Macedonia? Answer: Paul had written the churches in Macedonia asking them to please lay aside some funds for God's people in Jerusalem, who were suffering terribly from an extended famine. He told them he would pick up these gifts when he came to their cities on his next visit. The thrilling response from the churches in Macedonia, described in 2 Corinthians chapter 8, is most heartening:

A. Verse 5A is a first step, they rededicated their lives to Jesus Christ.

B. Verses 2, 3 Though in "deep poverty" themselves, they gave "beyond their power" to give.

C. Verse 4 They urged Paul to come and pick up their gifts.

D. Verse 9 Their gifts followed the sacrificial example of Jesus.

Note: If we truly love Jesus, giving sacrificially for His work will never be a burden, but rather a glorious privilege that we will perform with great joy and satisfaction. When a person tithes, God stretches the remaining nine-tenths so there is always enough.

20. What does God promise to do for those who are faithful in returning tithes and giving offerings? "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts." Malachi 3:10-12.

Answer: God promises to prosper His faithful financial stewards, and they will be a blessing to those around them.

Consider the Following Ways God Blesses:

A. God promises that your nine-tenths will go further with His blessing than your total income would go without it. If you doubt this, ask any faithful tither.

B. Blessings are not always financial. They may include health, peace of mind, answered prayers, protection, a close-knit and loving family, added physical strength, ability to make wise decisions, a spirit of thankfulness, a closer relationship with Jesus, success in soul-winning, an old car kept running longer, etc.

C. He becomes your partner in everything. No one except God could ever structure a plan so utterly fantastic.

21. Are you willing to begin tithing your income and giving offerings to demonstrate your love and thankfulness?

Answer:

Thought Questions

1. I don't tithe because I don't like the way my church is using God's money.

Tithing is a command of God. Tithe is holy money that belongs to the Lord (Leviticus 27:30). When you tithe, you tithe to Him. God is big enough to take care of the money you give for His church. Your responsibility is to tithe. Leave it to God to deal with those who misuse His funds.

2. I am frustrated because financial difficulties have made it impossible for me to give more than a very small amount beyond my tithe. With gospel needs so great, I feel guilty.

The size of your gift is not important if you are doing the best you can. Jesus said that the poor widow of Mark 12:41-44, who gave only a pittance (two mites), gave more "than all they which have cast into the treasury" because the others gave "of their abundance; but she ... did cast in all that she had."

The Lord measures our gifts by the amount of sacrifice we make and by the attitude or spirit with which we give. Jesus counts your gift very big. Give it with joy and know that Jesus is pleased. Read 2 Corinthians 8:12 for encouragement.

3. Doesn't stewardship involve more than the proper handling of my money?

Yes, stewardship involves the proper handling of every talent and blessing that I receive from God, who gives me everything (Acts 17:24, 25). In fact, it involves my very life!

Faithful stewardship of God's gifts to me also includes my time spent:

- A. Doing the work that God has assigned me (Mark 13:34).
- B. Actively witnessing for Christ (Acts 1:8).
- C. Studying the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15).
- D. Praying (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
- E. Helping those in need (Matthew 25:31-46).
- F. Daily surrendering my life anew to Jesus (Romans 12:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 15:31).

4. Don't you feel that some preachers are paid too much money?

Yes, without doubt. The seemingly arrogant flaunting of riches by some clergymen today is reducing the influence of all ministers. It brings reproach upon the name of Jesus. It causes hundreds of thousands to turn away in disgust from the church and its ministry. Such leaders will face an awful day of reckoning in the judgment. Ministers of God's End-Time Remnant Church

However, no minister in God's end-time, remnant church is overpaid. After internship, all ministers receive virtually the same salary (varying only a few dollars monthly) regardless of their job title or the size of their church. In many cases, spouses work in the public marketplace to supplement the pastors' incomes.

5. What if I cannot afford to pay tithe?

God says if we put Him first, He will see to it that our needs are all met (Matthew 6:33). His mathematics often work just opposite to human conception. Under His plan, what we have left after tithing will go further than all of it would without His blessing. Actually, we cannot afford not to tithe!

Quiz Questions

1. The word "tithe" actually means "tenth." (1)
Yes.
No.
2. The tithe already belongs to God. (1)
True.
False.
3. I am not tithing unless I return one-tenth of my income to God. (1)
True.

- False.
4. Jesus endorsed returning tithe. (1)
Yes.
No.
5. Which of the following are Bible guidelines and principles for freewill giving?
(5)
Give if you have anything left.
Give cheerfully.
Give liberally.
Give so you will feel good.
Give as God has prospered you.
Giving is more blessed than receiving.
God will return more than you give.
Give if you feel like it.
Give so people won't think you are stingy.
6. According to the Bible, the source of income for gospel ministers should be
(1)
Bingo games.
White elephant sales.
Tithe.
Bake sales.
Raffles.
7. What Old Testament patriarchs who returned tithe before Moses' day are mentioned in this Study Guide? (2)
Adam.
Jacob.
Noah.
Isaac.
Abraham.
Methuselah.
8. According to Malachi 3:8, of what sin are people guilty who do not tithe and give offerings? (1)
Idolatry.
Breaking the Sabbath.
Murder.
Robbery.

9. According to the book of Hebrews, who really receives our money when we tithe? (1)
The pastor
The needy.
Jesus, our heavenly High Priest.
10. According to 2 Timothy 3:1-7, one of the 20 sins of the very last days that will shut people out of God's kingdom is covetousness. (1)
Yes.
No.
11. Bringing the tithe into God's storehouse means (1)
Using it to buy spiritual books.
Spending it for any spiritual cause.
Giving it to the treasury of God's church.
12. What does God promise the faithful tither in Malachi 3:10? (1)
He will never get sick.
He will never lose his job.
He will receive more blessings than he can handle.
13. God gave Adam and Eve a test regarding eating a piece of fruit. According to this Study Guide, what similar test does He give His people today? (1)
Reading the Bible daily.
Witnessing.
Returning tithe.
Praying.
14. Tithing was a part of Moses' law, which ended at the cross. (1)
Yes.
No.
15. How does God measure my gifts to Him? (2)
By how much I give.
By the amount of sacrifice.
By the attitude with which I give.
16. Faithful stewardship involves not only my proper handling of money, but also the amount of time I spend in activities such as prayer, witnessing, study of the Scripture, and helping others. (1)
Yes.
No.

A Love That Transforms

Lesson 26

Being in love changes everything. For instance, a young lady was reading a large book for her university's English literature course. She found the whole thing very boring and could barely stay focused when reading it. But then she met a striking young professor on campus, and they quickly fell in love. Soon after, she realized her beloved was the author of the book she had struggled with. That night she stayed up and devoured the entire book exclaiming, "This is the best book I have ever read!" What changed her perspective?

Love did. Likewise, many today find Scripture boring, oppressive, and unappealing. But that all changes when you fall in love with the author. See how in this heart-warming Study Guide!

Jesus is the author of Scripture.

1. Who is the author of Scripture?

"The prophets have enquired and searched diligently, ... Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." 1 Peter 1:10, 11.

Answer: The God of the Bible (even the Old Testament) is virtually always Jesus Christ. Jesus created the world (John 1:1-3, 14 Colossians 1:13-17), wrote the Ten Commandments (Nehemiah 9:6, 13), was the God of the Israelites (1 Corinthians 10:1-4), and guided the writings of the prophets (1 Peter 1:10, 11).

So, Jesus Christ is the author of Scripture.

Jesus loves the people of earth with an everlasting love.

2. What is Jesus' attitude toward the people of earth?

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

Answer: Jesus loves us all with an indescribable, unfailing love that passes understanding. Jesus died for us all, even though none of us deserved it.

3. Why should we love Jesus?

"We love him, because he first loved us." 1 John 4:19. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8.

Answer: We should love Him because He loved us enough to die for us--while we were yet His enemies.

4. In what respects are a successful marriage and the Christian life similar?

"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." 1 John 3:22.

Answer: In a good marriage certain things are imperative, such as faithfulness to one's spouse. Other things may not seem major, but if they please a spouse they are necessary. If they displease, they should be discontinued. So it is with the Christian life. The commands of Jesus are imperative.

But in Scripture Jesus has also outlined for us principles of conduct that please Him. As in a good marriage, a Christian finds it sheer joy to do the things that make Jesus, the One he loves, happy. He also avoids things that displease Him.

Doing the things that please Jesus brings a person great joy and abundant living.

5. What does Jesus say are the results of doing the things that please Him?

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; ... These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." John 15:10, 11.

Answer: The devil claims that to follow Christian principles is drab, dull, demeaning, and legalistic. But Jesus says it brings fullness of joy (John 15:10, 11) and a more abundant life (John 10:10).

Believing the devil's lies brings heartache and deprives people of life that is "really living." Jesus' Bible principles for Christian living protect us from Satan's danger zones.

6. Why does Jesus give us specific principles for Christian living? Answer: Because they:

A. Are for our own good always (Deuteronomy 6:24). As good parents teach good principles to their children, so Jesus teaches good principles to His children.

B. Set for us a safeguard from sin (Psalms 119:11). Jesus' principles protect us from entering the danger zones of Satan and sin.

C. Show us how to follow in Christ's footsteps (1 Peter 2:21).

D. Bring us true happiness (John 13:17).

E. Give us an opportunity to express our love for Him (John 15:10).

F. Help us be the right example to others (1 Corinthians 10:31-33; Matthew 5:16). When I love the things of the world, I become God's enemy.

7. According to Jesus, how should Christians relate to the evil of the world and to worldliness? Answer: His commands and counsel are clear and specific:

A. Don't love the world or the things of the world. The things of the world that are not of God are: (1) the lust of the flesh, (2) the lust of the eyes, and (3) the pride of life (1 John 2:16). All sin falls into one or more of these three categories. Satan uses these three avenues to lure us into love of the world. When I begin to love the world, I become an enemy of God (1 John 2:15, 16 James 4:4).

B. I must keep myself unspotted from the world (James 1:27).

A Christian must firmly resist the things of the world, or he will be led astray by Satan.

8. What urgent warning does God give us regarding the world?

Answer: Jesus warns Christians, "Be not conformed to this world." Romans 12:2. Phillips translation puts it: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould."* The devil is not neutral. He presses every Christian constantly. Through Jesus (Philippians 4:13), I must firmly resist the devil's suggestions, and he will flee from me (James 4:7). The minute I permit the "squeezing" of any other factor to influence my conduct, I imperceptibly begin slipping into apostasy. Christian behavior is not to be decided by the feelings and conduct of the majority, but by Jesus' words from Scripture.

*Reprinted with the permission of Macmillan Publishing Company from The New Testament in Modern English, Revised Edition by J. B. Phillips, (C) 1958, 1959, 1960, 1972 by J. B. Phillips. The New Testament in Modern English by J. B. Phillips. Reprinted by permission of Harper-Collins Publishers Limited.

We must carefully guard our thoughts, because thoughts become actions.

9. Why do we need to guard our thoughts?

"As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 23:7.

Answer: We must guard our thoughts, because thoughts dictate behavior. God wants to help us bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:5. But Satan desperately wants to bring "the world" into our thoughts. He can do this only through our five senses-

-especially sight and hearing. He presses his sights and sounds upon us all and, unless we consistently refuse to look at or listen to what he offers, he will direct us into the broad way that leads to destruction. The Bible is clear. We do become like the things we repeatedly see and hear (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Christians must avoid any music that erodes the desire for godly living.

10. What are some principles for Christian living?

"Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Philippians 4:8.

Answer: Christians must separate themselves from all things that are not true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. They will avoid:

A. Dishonesty of every kind - cheating, lying, stealing, being unfair, intent to deceive, slander, and betrayal.

B. Impurity of every kind. This includes fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality, perversion of all types, pornography, profanity, filthy conversation, off-color jokes, social dancing, degenerate songs or music, and most of what is shown on television and in movie theaters.

C. Places where we would never invite Jesus to accompany us, such as nightclubs, taverns, gambling casinos, racetracks, etc.

Let's take a few minutes to enlarge upon the dangers of popular music, dancing, television, videos, and the theater.

Music and Song

Many types of secular music (rap, country, pop, rock, heavy metal, adult contemporary, and dance music) have been largely captured by Satan. The lyrics often glorify vice and destroy a desire for spiritual matters. Researchers have discovered some interesting things regarding the power of music:

(1) It enters the brain through the emotions, thus bypassing reasoning powers.

(2) It affects every function of the body.

(3) It can alter pulse, breath rates, and reflexes without the person realizing it.

(4) Syncopated dance rhythms alter moods and create a mild hypnosis in the listener.

Even without lyrics, the music itself has power to debase a person's feelings, desires, and thoughts. Secular rock musicians openly admit this. Rolling Stones leader Mick Jagger said: "You can feel the adrenalin going through your body. It's sort of sexual."¹ John Oates of Hall and Oates stated that "Rock 'n' Roll is 99% sex."² Would such music please Jesus? Converted pagans from overseas tell us that our modern secular band music is the same kind they used in witchcraft and devil worship!

Ask yourself: "If Jesus came to visit me, what music would I feel comfortable asking Him to listen to with me?" Any music you are not sure of should be abandoned. (For an in-depth analysis of decadent, secular music, we recommend Notes on Music by Carol and Louis Torres, which can be purchased from Amazing Facts.) When we fall in love with Jesus, He changes our musical desires. "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." Psalms 40:3. God has provided for His people plenty of good music that inspires, refreshes, elevates, and strengthens the Christian experience. Those who accept the devil's degrading music as a substitute are missing one of life's choicest blessings.

Dancing

Dancing inevitably leads away from Jesus and spirituality. When the Israelites danced around the golden calf, they forgot God (Exodus 32:17-25). When the daughter of wicked Herodias danced before King Herod, John the Baptist was beheaded (Matthew 14:2-12). Notice these shocking statistics: A Catholic priest in New York said that three-fourths of the girls who have confessed adultery to him put the blame on dancing. Other priests have said that three-fourths is too low they estimate nine-tenths. Remember, if Christ can participate in an activity with you, you are safe. If not, stay away from it.

TV, Videos, and the Theater

Do the things you watch on television and videos or in the theater appeal to your lower or to your higher nature? Do they lead you into a greater love for Jesus, or for the world? Do they glorify Jesus, or satanic vices? In our day even secularists and non-Christians are speaking out against many of the TV and film productions. Satan has captured the eyes and ears of billions and, as a result, is rapidly turning the world into a cesspool of immorality, crime, terror, and hopelessness. One study said that without TV "there would be 10,000 fewer murders per year in the United States, 70,000 fewer rapes, and 700,000 fewer assaults."³ Jesus, who loves

you, asks you to take your eyes off Satan's thought- controllers and put them on Him. He says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Isaiah 45:22.

1 Newsweek, "Mick Jagger and the Future of Rock", Jan. 4, 1971, p. 47. 2Circus magazine, Jan. 31, 1976, p. 39.

3Newsweek, "Violence, Reel to Reel", Dec. 11, 1995, p. 47.

A safe guideline for TV viewing is to ask, "Would I feel comfortable inviting Jesus to watch the program with me?"

11. What clear-cut list does Jesus give us that we could use as a guide for watching television? "Anyone can see the kind of behaviour that belongs to the lower nature: fornication, impurity, and indecency idolatry and sorcery quarrels, a contentious temper, envy, fits of rage, selfish ambitions, dissensions, party intrigues, and jealousies drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who behave in such ways will never inherit the kingdom of God." Galatians 5:19-21, NEB.*

Answer: Scripture is too clear to misunderstand. If a family should ban all TV programs that exhibit or condone any of the above sins, there would be very little to watch. If Jesus came to visit you, what TV shows would you feel comfortable asking Him to view with you? All other shows are probably unfit for Christian viewing.

*(C) The Delegates of the Oxford University Press and the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, 1961, 1970. Used by permission.

My choice of TV programs and, in fact, all of my conduct must be guided by the words of Scripture, and not by my own feelings.

12. In this day of determined, independent thinking, many feel totally capable of making spiritual decisions without input from anyone, including Jesus. What does Jesus say about such people? Answer: Listen to Jesus' unequivocal statements: "Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes." Deuteronomy 12:8. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Proverbs 16:25. "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise." Proverbs 12:15. "He that trusteth in his own heart [mind] is a fool." Proverbs 28:26.

13. What solemn warnings does Jesus give us about the example and influence of our lives?

"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Matthew 18:6. Let "no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." Romans 14:13. "None of us liveth to himself." Romans 14:7.

Answer: We all expect leaders, people of influence, famed athletes, and other widely known figures to set a good example and use their influence wisely--to pay a so-called "debt to society". But in today's world, we are often disillusioned at the repugnant and irresponsible actions of prominent individuals. Jesus clearly states in Romans 1:14 that Christians, who represent Him and His kingdom, do indeed owe something to others. And He solemnly warns that Christians who disregard their influence and example, and thereby lead people astray, will not enter His kingdom.

God asks His people to put ornaments and jewelry aside.

14. What are Jesus' principles of conduct regarding clothing and jewelry?

Answer: A. Dress modestly. See 1 Timothy 2:9. Remember that the world is brought into our lives through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Immodest dress involves all three and is off-limits for a Christian.

B. Lay ornaments and jewelry aside. "Pride of life" is the big problem here. Jesus' followers should look different. Their appearance witnesses and sends light to others (Matthew 5:16). Jewelry draws attention to and exalts self. In the Bible, it is a symbol of backsliding and apostasy. When Jacob and his family rededicated their lives to the Lord, they buried their jewelry in the earth (Genesis 35:1, 2, 4). When the Israelites were about to enter the promised land, the Lord commanded them to remove their ornaments (Exodus 33:5, 6). In Isaiah chapter 3, God clearly says that in wearing jewelry (bracelets, rings, earrings, etc. as listed in verses 19-23), His people were sinning (verse 9).

In Hosea 2:13, the Lord says that when Israel forsook Him, they began to wear jewelry. In 1 Timothy 2:9 and 1 Peter 3:3, Paul and Peter both inform us that God's people will not adorn themselves with gold, pearls, and costly array. Please notice that Peter and Paul did speak of the ornaments God wants His people to wear: "A meek and quiet spirit" (1 Peter 3:4) and "good works" (1 Timothy 2:10). Jesus sums it up by symbolizing His true church in Revelation 12:1 as a pure woman clothed

with the sun (Jesus' brightness and righteousness) and the apostate church as a harlot bedecked with gold, precious stones, and pearls (Revelation 17:3, 4). God asks His people to separate from Babylon (Revelation 18:2-4) and all it stands for - including the jewels that draw attention to self - and instead clothe themselves with the righteousness of Jesus. When we fall in love with Jesus, it is a sheer joy and pleasure to live His lifestyle.

Anything that lessens my love for spiritual things becomes an idol.

15. How do conduct and obedience relate to salvation?

Answer: Obedience and Christian conduct are the proof, or evidence, that I have been saved by Jesus Christ (James 2:20-26). The fact of the matter is that unless one's lifestyle changes after conversion, the conversion most likely was not genuine. A converted person will find his greatest joy in discovering Jesus' will in everything and in joyously following where He leads.

Beware of Idolatry

The first epistle of John talks of Christian conduct. At its close (1 John 5:21), Jesus warns us through His servant John to keep ourselves from idols. The Master is referring to anything that interferes with or lessens my love for Him, such as music, fashion, possessions, adornment, evil forms of entertainment, etc. The natural fruit, or result, of a true conversion is to follow Jesus happily and adopt His lifestyle.

People who have not fully given themselves to Jesus will never understand a Christian's lifestyle, and we should not expect them to.

16. Should we expect everyone to look with favor upon the Christian lifestyle?

Answer: No. Jesus said that the things of God are foolishness to the natural man because they are not spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14). When Jesus refers to conduct, He is laying down principles for those who are seeking to be led by His Spirit. His people will be grateful and will joyously follow His counsel. Others may not understand or approve.

A person who rejects Jesus' lifestyle would be miserable in heaven.

17. How would a person who rejects Jesus' standards for Christian conduct view heaven?

Answer: Such a person would be miserable in heaven. He would complain that there were no nightclubs, no liquor, no pornographic material, no prostitutes, no sensual music, no lewd books, no profanity, and no gambling. Heaven would be

"hell" for those who have not formed a true love relationship with Jesus. This is why Christian standards make no sense to them (2 Corinthians 6:14-17).

18. How can I adopt and follow these Bible guidelines without appearing pharisaical, judgmental, or legalistic?

Answer: Everything we do should be with one thought in mind: to express love and esteem for Jesus (1 John 3:22). When Jesus is lifted up and shown to people (John 12:32), they will be drawn to Him.

Our one question should always be, "Will this honor Jesus? Would I listen to this, sing this, do this, watch this, drink this, buy this, read this, say this, or go there if Jesus were here, in person, with me?"

Jesus is with you and me (Matthew 28:20), and He sees everything we do. I must sense Jesus' presence in every facet and activity of life. When I consciously spend time with Him, I become like Him (2 Corinthians 3:18). Then when people are with me, they will respond as they did to the disciples of old: "They marvelled and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Acts 4:13. Christians who live like that will never become pharisaical, judgmental, or legalistic.

In Old Testament days, God's people were in almost constant apostasy because they chose to live as their heathen neighbors rather than follow the distinctive lifestyle God outlined for them (Deuteronomy 31:16 Judges 2:17 1 Chronicles 5:25 Ezekiel 23:30). It is true yet today. No one can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). Those who cling to the world and its lifestyle will be slowly molded by Satan to adopt his feelings and desires and, thus, be programmed to be lost. Those who follow Jesus' principles for Christian conduct will be changed into His image and prepared for heaven. There is no middle ground.

19. I want to love Christ so much that to follow His principles for Christian living will be a joy and delight.

Answer:

Thought Questions

1. I know what God would have me to do, but I just don't feel that I'm ready to begin doing it. What do you suggest?

Begin doing it at once! Never depend on feelings. God guides through the words of Scripture (Isaiah 8:20). Feelings often lead astray. The Jewish leaders felt they should crucify Jesus, but they were wrong. Many will feel saved at Jesus' second advent, but they will, instead, be lost (Matthew 7:21-23). The devil influences feelings. If I depend on my feelings, he will lead me to destruction.

2. I'm troubled. I want very much to do a certain thing. I realize, however, that because of its appearance, some might feel I am doing evil. What should I do?

The Bible is clear. It says, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." 1 Thessalonians 5:22. And the apostle Paul said that if his eating of flesh foods offended somebody, he'd never touch those foods again (1 Corinthians 8:13). He also said that if he ignored the offended person's feelings and continued eating flesh foods, he would be sinning.

3. It seems to me that churches list too many things I must do and too many things I must not do. It drives me up the wall. Isn't following Jesus what really matters? Yes, following Jesus is what matters. However, following Jesus means one thing to one person and something quite different to another. The only safe way to know what following Jesus means is to discover what Jesus says in the Bible on any question regarding right doing. Those who lovingly follow Jesus' commands will one day soon enter His kingdom (Revelation 22:14). Those who follow man-made rules will go astray and could be led away from His kingdom (Matthew 15:3-9).

4. A few of God's requirements seem unreasonable and unnecessary to me. I can't understand why they are important. What do you suggest?

Children often feel that some of their parents' requirements (e.g. "Don't play in the street") are unreasonable. But in later years, the child will thank the parents for the requirement. We are "children" in dealing with God, because His thoughts and actions are as high above ours as the heavens are above the earth (Isaiah 55:8, 9). We need to trust our loving heavenly Father in the few areas we may not understand and stop "playing in the street", if He so requires. He will never withhold anything good from us (Psalms 84:11). When I am truly in love with Jesus, I will give Him the benefit of the doubt and do His will even if I do not always understand why. The new birth is the key. The Bible says when I am truly born

again, overcoming the world will not be a problem because a converted person will have the faith and trust to happily follow Jesus in everything (1 John 5:4). Refusing to follow Him because I am not clear on His reasons displays a lack of trust in my Saviour.

5. Will I benefit from Jesus' loving principles, laws, and commands?

Absolutely! Every principle, rule, law, or command of Jesus provides unbelievably outstanding blessings. The biggest lottery win in history pales into insignificance when compared to God's rich blessings to His obedient children. Here are just a few benefits that come from following Jesus' rules:

1. Jesus as a personal friend.
2. Jesus as a partner in business.
3. Freedom from guilt.
4. Peace of mind.
5. Freedom from fear.
6. Indescribable happiness.
7. Longer life.
8. Assurance of a home in heaven.
9. Better health.
10. No hangovers.

Talk about riches! The true Christian receives benefits from his heavenly Father that even the richest people on earth can never purchase.

6. In regard to standards and lifestyle, do I have a responsibility to lecture other people about them? The best rule for us to follow is to be concerned about our own lifestyle. "Examine yourselves", the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 13:5. When our lifestyle is as it should be, our example serves as a silent witness and we don't need to lecture anyone. Of course, parents do have a special responsibility to help their children understand how to follow Jesus.

7. What are the greatest dangers for Christians today?

Among the greatest dangers are divided loyalties. Many Christians have two loves that divide the heart: love for Jesus, and love for the world and its sinful practices

and pleasures. Too many, it seems, wish to see how closely they can follow the world and still be considered Christians. It won't work.

Jesus clearly warned that no one "can serve two masters." Matthew 6:24.

8. But isn't it legalism to follow these Christian rules of conduct?

Not unless a person is doing it in order to be saved. Salvation comes only as a miraculous, free gift from Jesus. Salvation by works (or conduct) is no salvation at all. However, following Jesus' standards of conduct because I have been saved and love Him is never legalism.

9. Are Christian standards involved with Jesus' command to let our lights shine?

Assuredly! Jesus says a true Christian is a light (Matthew 5:14). He also said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:16. You don't hear a light; you see it. People will see a Christian's light shine by his conduct, dress, diet, conversation, attitude, sympathy, purity, kindness, and honesty (Jesus' standards). They will inquire about his lifestyle and, thus, often be led to Christ.

10. Aren't Christian standards cultural? Shouldn't they change with the times?

Customs may change, but Bible standards endure. "The word of our God shall stand for ever." Isaiah 40:8. The church must lead, not follow. It must not be programmed by culture, humanism, or the trends of the day. We are not to bring the church down to erring human standards, but rather, up to Jesus' standards. When a church lives, speaks, looks, and behaves like the world, who would ever go to it for help? Jesus sends a clarion call to His people and His church, saying, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate ... and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." 2 Corinthians 6:17. Jesus' church is not to imitate the world, but rather to repudiate it. The "world" has ravaged billions. The church must not join in its mayhem. The church must stand tall and with a gracious but firm voice call people to listen to Jesus and come up to His standards. When a hearer falls in love with Jesus and asks Him to control his life, the Saviour will work the miracles needed to change him and safely escort him to God's eternal kingdom. There is no other way to heaven.

11. Surely not all dancing is evil. Didn't David dance before the Lord?

True, not all dancing is evil. David leaped and danced before the Lord as an expression of praise for His blessings (2 Samuel 6:14-16). Also, he was dancing by himself. David's dance was similar to that of the lame man who leaped for joy after being healed by Jesus (Acts 3:8-10). Such dancing, or leaping, is recommended by Jesus to those who are being persecuted (Luke 6:22, 23). Dancing with those of the opposite sex (which leads to immorality and broken homes) and lewd dancing (such as strippers) are the kinds condemned by the Bible.

12. What does the Bible say about people condemning and judging each other?

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." Matthew 7:1, 2. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things." Romans 2:1. How could this be clearer? There is no excuse or justification for my judging anyone other than myself. Jesus is the Judge (John 5:22). When I pass judgment on others, I usurp Christ's position as judge and become a miniature Antichrist (1 John 2:18)--a solemn thought, indeed!

Quiz Questions

1. Jesus' loving principles for conduct become a pleasure to follow when I fall in love with Him. (1)
Yes.
No.
2. Following Jesus' standards of conduct because I have been saved and love Him is legalism. (1)
Yes.
No.
3. The real author of the Bible is Jesus. (1)
Yes.
No.
4. "Love not the world" means that we shouldn't love (1)
Our country.
The world as our planet.
The sinful, wicked, and ungodly ways and things of this world.

5. Why does Jesus give us specific commands, laws, and rules? (5)
- For our good always.
 - So we will know how to set a good example for others.
 - To take away our freedom.
 - So we can follow in Christ's footsteps.
 - To safeguard us from sin.
 - To keep us under His thumb.
 - To bring us true happiness.
6. Two good rules for deciding what is proper Christian conduct are as follows: (2)
- Discover what the Bible says.
 - Watch to see what church members do.
 - Consult a ouija board.
 - Go by your feelings.
 - Ask yourself what Jesus would do.
7. Satan has access to us only through our five senses. (1)
- Yes.
 - No.
8. For which facets of Christian conduct listed below does Jesus provide some specific counsel and guidelines? (5)
- How we dress.
 - Healthful living.
 - Ornamenting the body.
 - Olympic skiing.
 - Eating and drinking.
 - Flying a plane.
 - Buying a house.
 - Example and influence.
9. How do conduct and obedience relate to salvation? (1)
- We are saved by our conduct and obedience.
 - A saved person can ignore conduct and obedience and still be ready for heaven.
 - Conduct and obedience are the evidence that one has been converted, or born again.

10. If I refuse to forsake something Jesus asks me to forsake—such as jewelry, rock music, or watching evil TV shows—God considers that unforsaken thing an idol. (1)

Yes.

No.

11. A Christian life is like a good marriage in that success comes when our aim is to please the one we love. (1)

Yes.

No.

12. Satan leads people into sin by which three of the avenues listed below? (3)

Hiding their Bibles from them.

Pride of life.

Writing messages in the sky.

Lust of the flesh.

Lust of the eyes.

13. Guarding our thoughts is crucial, because thoughts become actions. (1)

Yes.

No.

14. Some promised benefits of faithfully following Jesus are as follows: (7)

You will know how to prophesy.

You will live a longer life.

You will enjoy indescribable happiness.

You will have better health.

Your hair will not turn gray.

You will be a millionaire.

You will be assured of a home in heaven.

You will have freedom from fear.

You will have Jesus as a personal friend.

You will enjoy peace of mind.

15. If my conduct offends a Christian brother, what should I do? (1)

Ignore it. No one can please everybody.

Fight it out, one to one.

Try to get the brother disfellowshipped.

Tell everybody so church members can choose sides.

Stop doing the offending thing.

16. What does Jesus call a person who is determined to have his own way rather than listen to Bible counsel? (1)

An independent thinker.

A wise person.

A fool.

17. A person who rejects Jesus' standards for Christian living would (1)

Suddenly begin to love spiritual things when he gets to heaven.

Be repentant for his hardness of heart after a few days in the holy city.

Be miserable in heaven.

No Turning Back

Lesson 27

When a skydiver steps to the edge of the aircraft door and leaps away from the plane, he knows there is no turning back. He's gone too far, and if he should forget to strap on his parachute, nothing can save him and he will certainly plummet to a frightening death. What a tragedy! But there is something even worse that can happen to a person. Indeed, it is far worse to come to the point of no return in your relationship with God. Yet millions are approaching this point and have no idea! Is it possible that you are one of them? What is the awful sin that could lead to such a fate? Why can't God forgive it? For a clear and penetrating answer, yet also full of hope, take a few minutes with this fascinating Study Guide.

1. What is the sin that God cannot forgive?

"All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." Matthew 12:31.

Answer: The sin God cannot forgive is "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost." But what is "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost"? People have many differing beliefs about this sin. Some believe it is murder; some, cursing the Holy Ghost; some, committing suicide; some, killing an unborn child; some, denial of Christ; some, a heinous, horrible, extremely wicked act; and others, worshipping a false god! The next question will shed some helpful light on this crucial matter. Murder, though terrible, is not the sin God cannot forgive.

2. What does the Bible say about sin and blasphemy?

"All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Matthew 12:31.

Answer: The Bible clearly says that all kinds of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven. So none of the sins listed in the previous answer is the sin that God cannot forgive. No single act of any kind is the unpardonable sin.

Sounds Contradictory; Yes, it sounds contradictory, but both of the following statements are true:

A. Any and every kind of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven.

B. The blasphemy or sin against the Holy Ghost will not be forgiven.

Jesus Made Both Statements

Jesus made both statements in Matthew 12:31, so there is no error here. To harmonize the statements we must discover the work of the Holy Ghost. By the way, the word "ghost" comes from "ghast", the Old English word for "spirit". The Holy Spirit guides people to Bible truth.

3. What is the work of the Holy Ghost, or Spirit?

"He [the Holy Spirit] will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." "He will guide you into all truth." John 16:8, 13, NKJV.*

Answer: The work of the Holy Spirit is to convict me of sin and to guide me into all truth. The Holy Spirit is God's agency for conversion. Without the Holy Spirit, no one feels sorrow for sin, nor is anyone ever converted.

*The Holy Bible, New King James Version, (C) 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.

God will forgive any sin that I confess to Him.

4. When the Holy Spirit convinces me of sin, what must I do to be forgiven?

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9.

Answer: When convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit, I must confess my sins in order to be forgiven. When I confess them, God not only forgives me but He also miraculously cleanses me from all unrighteousness. God is waiting and ready to forgive me for any and every sin I may commit (Psalms 86:5), but only if I confess and forsake it.

Those who cover up sin rather than confessing it will not be blessed of God.

5. What happens if I do not confess my sins when convicted by the Holy Spirit?

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Proverbs 28:13.

Answer: If I do not confess my sins, Jesus cannot forgive my sins. Thus, any sin that I do not confess is unpardonable until I confess it, because forgiveness always follows confession. It never precedes it.

Terrible Danger of Resisting the Holy Spirit

Resisting the Holy Spirit is terribly dangerous because it so easily leads to rejection of the Holy Spirit, which is the sin God can never forgive. It is passing the point of no return. Since the Holy Spirit is the only agency given to bring me conviction, if I permanently reject Him, my case is thereafter hopeless. This subject is so important that God illustrates and explains it many different ways in Scripture.

Watch for these different explanations as you continue exploring this Study Guide. When convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit, I must respond at once.

6. When the Holy Spirit convicts me of sin or leads me to new truth, when should I act? Answer: The Bible says:

A. "As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me." Psalms 18:44.

B. "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." Psalms 119:60.

C. "Behold, now is the accepted time behold, now is the day of salvation." 2 Corinthians 6:2.

D. "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Acts 22:16.

The Bible repeatedly states that when I am convicted of sin, I must confess it at once. And when I learn new truth, I must accept it without delay.

God warned the people in Noah's day that His Holy Spirit would not keep pleading with them forever; nor will it today.

7. What solemn warning does God give about the pleading of His Holy Spirit?

"My spirit shall not always strive with man." Genesis 6:3.

Answer: God solemnly warns that the Holy Spirit does not indefinitely continue pleading with a person to turn from sin and obey God.

Shutting off an alarm clock instead of getting up will bring me to the place where I no longer hear it. In the same way, shutting off the Holy Spirit will cause me to become deaf to His voice.

8. At what point does the Holy Spirit stop pleading with a person?

"Therefore speak I to them in parables: because ... hearing they hear not." Matthew 13:13.

Answer: The Holy Spirit stops talking to a person when that individual becomes deaf to His voice. The Bible describes it as hearing, but hearing not. There is no point in setting the alarm on a clock in a deaf person's room. He won't hear it. Likewise, a person can condition himself to not hear an alarm clock ring by repeatedly shutting it off and not getting up. The day finally comes when the alarm goes off and he does not hear it.

Don't Shut Off the Holy Spirit

So it is with the Holy Spirit. If I keep shutting Him off, one day He will speak to me and I will not hear Him. When that day comes, the Spirit sadly turns away from me because I have become deaf to His pleadings. I have passed the point of no return. What a solemn, disquieting warning against resisting the Spirit's voice!

When I receive new light from God's Word, I must follow it at once without delay.

9. God, through His Holy Spirit, brings light (John 1:9) and conviction (John 16:8) to every person on earth. What must I do when I receive light from the Holy Spirit?

"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness." Proverbs 4:18, 19.

"Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you." John 12:35.

Answer: The Bible rule is that when the Holy Spirit brings me new light or conviction of sin, I must act at once--obey without delay. If I obey and walk in the light as I receive it, God will continue giving me light. If I refuse, even the light that I have will go out, and I will be left in darkness. The darkness that comes from a persistent and final refusal to follow light is the result of rejecting the Spirit, and it leaves me without hope.

Judas' unpardonable sin was covetousness because he refused to confess and forsake it.

10. Can any sin become the sin against the Holy Spirit?

Answer: Yes, if I steadfastly refuse to confess and forsake any sin, I will eventually become deaf to the Holy Spirit's pleading and thus pass the point of no return. Following are a few Bible examples:

A. Judas' unpardonable sin was covetousness (John 12:6). Why? Was it because God could not forgive it? No! It became unpardonable only because Judas refused to listen to the Holy Spirit and confess his sin of covetousness. Eventually he became deaf to the Spirit's voice.

B. Lucifer's unpardonable sins were pride and self-exaltation (Isaiah 14:12-14). God can forgive these sins. Lucifer could have been pardoned and cleansed, but he refused to listen until he could no longer hear the Spirit's voice.

C. The Pharisees' unpardonable sin was refusal to accept Jesus as the Messiah (Mark 3:22-30). They were convinced repeatedly with deep, heartfelt conviction that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God of heaven. But they hardened their hearts and stubbornly refused to accept Him as Saviour and Lord. Finally they grew deaf to the Spirit's voice. Then one day, after another great miracle by Jesus, the Pharisees told the multitude that Jesus received His power from the devil.

Christ at once told them that attributing His miracle-working power to the devil indicated they had passed the point of no return and had blasphemed the Holy Ghost. God could have, and joyfully would have, forgiven them. But they refused until they were stone deaf to the Holy Spirit and could no longer be reached.

I Cannot Choose the Consequences

When the Spirit makes His appeal, I can choose to respond or refuse, but I cannot choose the consequences. They are fixed. If I consistently respond, I will become like Jesus. The Holy Spirit will seal, or mark, me in the forehead as a child of God (Revelation 7:2, 3), and thus assure me of a place in God's heavenly kingdom. If I persistently refuse to respond, I will grieve the Holy Spirit away and He will leave me forever, thus sealing my doom. What a solemn warning against ignoring the Holy Spirit! King David knew that if the Holy Spirit forsook him, he would be lost. That is why he asked God not to remove His Holy Spirit.

11. After King David had committed a terrible double sin of adultery and murder, what anguished prayer did he pray?

"Take not thy holy spirit from me." Psalms 51:11.

Answer: He pleaded with God not to take the Holy Spirit away from him. Why? Because David knew if the Holy Spirit left him, he was doomed from that moment. He knew that only the Holy Spirit could lead him to repentance and restoration, and he trembled at the thought of becoming deaf to His voice. The Bible tells us in another place that God finally left Ephraim alone because he was joined to his idols (Hosea 4:17) and would not listen to the Spirit. He had become spiritually deaf. The most tragic thing that can happen to any person is for God to have to turn away and leave him alone. Don't let it happen to you!

Sin is like water. Continuing in sin puts out the fire of the Holy Spirit.

12. What serious, weighty command did Paul give to the church in Thessalonica?

"Quench not the Spirit." 1 Thessalonians 5:19.

Answer: The Holy Spirit's pleading is like a fire that burns in a person's mind and heart. Sin has the same effect on the Holy Spirit as water has upon fire. As I ignore the Holy Spirit and continue in sin, I pour water on the fire of the Holy Spirit. Paul's awesome words to the Thessalonians also apply to us today. Don't quench the fire of the Holy Spirit by repeatedly refusing to heed the Spirit's voice. If the fire goes out, I have passed the point of no return.

Any Sin Can Quench the Fire

Any unconfessed or unforsaken sin can ultimately snuff out the fire of the Holy Spirit. It could be refusal to keep God's holy seventh-day Sabbath. It could be use of tobacco. It could be failure to forgive one who has betrayed or otherwise injured you. It could be immorality. It could be keeping God's tithe. Refusal to obey the Holy Spirit's voice in any area pours water on the fire of the Holy Spirit. Don't put out the fire. No greater tragedy could take place.

13. What other shocking, almost inconceivable statement did Paul make to the Thessalonian believers?

"And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned [lost] who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12.

Answer: What powerful, shocking words! God says that those who refuse to receive the truth and conviction brought by the Holy Spirit will (after the Spirit departs from them) receive a strong delusion to believe that error is truth. Talk about a sobering thought!

The Lord will shut many professed Christians out of heaven because they refuse to obey Him.

14. What wrenching experience will some who have been sent these strong delusions face in the judgment day?

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matthew 7:22, 23.

Answer: Those who are crying "Lord, Lord" will be shocked and stunned that they are shut out. They will be absolutely positive that they are saved. Jesus will then doubtless remind them of that crucial time in their lives when the Holy Spirit brought new truth and conviction. It was crystal clear and obviously true. It kept them awake nights, troubled and wrestling over a decision. How their hearts burned within them! Finally, they said, "No!" And they refused to listen further to the Holy Spirit.

Then came a strong delusion that caused them to feel saved when they were lost. Could a human being face any greater tragedy?

Assurance that disobeys God is a false assurance that will doom many.

15. What special words of warning does Jesus give to help us avoid believing we are saved when we are actually lost?

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 7:21.

Answer: Jesus solemnly warned that not all who have the feeling of assurance will enter His kingdom, but rather, only those who do His will. All of us desire assurance of salvation. It is a divine imperative. However, there is a false offer of assurance sweeping Christendom today that promises people salvation while they continue living in sin and manifest no changed lifestyle whatever.

Pastors Alarmed

More and more prominent church leaders are alarmed that so many church buildings are packed with people who have the feeling of "assurance", yet really have not been changed by Jesus Christ. Nor do they obey Him.

Jesus Clears the Air

Jesus says that true assurance is only for those who do His Father's will. When I accept Jesus as Lord and Ruler of my life, my lifestyle will change radically. I will become a completely new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17). I will gladly keep His commandments, do His will (John 14:15), and joyously follow where He leads (1 Peter 2:21). His fantastic resurrection power (Philippians 3:10) transforms me to His image (2 Corinthians 3:18). His glorious peace floods my life (John 14:27). With Jesus dwelling in me through His Spirit (Ephesians 3:16, 17), "I can do all things" (Philippians 4:13) and "nothing shall be impossible" (Matthew 17:20).

Fabulous True Assurance Versus Counterfeit Assurance

As I follow where the Saviour leads, He promises that no one can take me out of His hand (John 10:28) and that a crown of life awaits me (Revelation 2:10). What amazing, glorious, genuine security Jesus gives His followers! Assurance promised under any other conditions is counterfeit. It will lead people to heaven's judgment bar, feeling certain they are saved when they are, in fact, lost (Proverbs 16:25). If I make Jesus the Lord of my life, He promises to save me in His kingdom.

16. What is God's blessed promise to His faithful followers who crown Him Lord of their lives? "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Philippians 1:6; 2:13.

Answer: Praise God! Those who make Jesus the Lord and Ruler of their lives are promised the miracles of Jesus that will see them safely through to His eternal kingdom. Nothing could be better than that!

Jesus promises to enter my life when I open the door to Him.

17. What additional glorious promise does Jesus make to us all?

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Revelation 3:20.

Answer: Jesus promises to enter our lives when we open the door to Him. It is Jesus who knocks on the door of your heart and mine through His Holy Spirit. He--the King of kings, the Saviour of the world--takes time from superintending the universe to come to you and me for regular loving visits and friendly, caring guidance and counsel. What folly, what an unbelievable calamity, that we should ever be too busy or too disinterested to form a warm, loving, lasting friendship with Jesus. Jesus' close friends will be in no danger of being rejected on the judgment day. Jesus will personally welcome them into His kingdom (Matthew 25:34).

Plan to be part of that joyous group who will meet in the clouds on the day of His appearing.

18. Will you decide to always open the door as Jesus knocks at your heart and be willing to follow where He leads you?

A Parting Word

This is the final Study Guide in our series of 27. Our loving desire is that you have been led into the presence of Jesus and have experienced a fantastic new relationship with Him. We hope that you will walk closer to the Master every day and will soon join that joyous group who will be translated into His blessed kingdom at His appearing. If we do not meet on this earth, let us agree to meet in the clouds on that great day.

Thought Questions

1. The Bible says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 9:12). That doesn't seem fair. What does it mean?

The Holy Spirit pleads with all people (John 1:9), just as the sun shines upon everyone and everything. The same sun that hardens clay also melts wax. The Holy Spirit also has a different effect upon our hearts depending upon how we relate to His pleadings. If I respond, my heart will be softened and I will be changed completely (1 Samuel 10:6). If I resist the Spirit, my heart will be hardened (Zechariah 7:12).

Pharaoh's Response

Pharaoh actually hardened his own heart by resisting the Holy Spirit (Exodus 8:15, 32 9:34). But the Bible also speaks of God hardening his heart because God's Holy Spirit kept pleading with Pharaoh. Since Pharaoh kept resisting, his

heart hardened as sun hardens clay. Had Pharaoh listened, his heart would have softened as the sun softens wax.

Judas and Peter

Christ's disciples Judas and Peter demonstrated this same principle. Both had sinned grievously. One betrayed and the other denied Jesus. Which is worse? Who can tell? The same warm Holy Spirit pleaded with both. Judas steeled himself, and his heart became like stone. Peter, on the other hand, was receptive to the Spirit and his heart melted. He was truly repentant and later became one of the greatest preachers in the apostolic church. Please read Zechariah 7:12, 13 for God's sobering warning about hardening our hearts against hearing and obeying His Spirit's pleadings.

2. What do you think about asking for "signs" from the Lord?

In the New Testament, Jesus speaks decidedly against it. He said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." Matthew 12:39. He was teaching truth and supporting it from the Old Testament, which was the Scriptures then available. They understood all too well what He was saying. They also saw His miracles, but they still rejected Him. Later He said, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Luke 16:31. The Bible tells us to test everything by Scripture (Isaiah 8:19, 20). If we commit to do Jesus' will and follow where He leads, He promises that He will help us discern truth from error (John 7:17).

3. Is there ever a time when prayer is not helpful?

Yes. If a person knowingly disobeys God (Psalms 66:18) and yet asks God to bless him (though he does not plan to change), that person's prayer not only is worthless, but God says it is an abomination (Proverbs 28:9).

4. I'm deeply concerned that I may have rejected the Holy Spirit and cannot be forgiven. Can you help me?

You have not rejected the Holy Spirit. You can know that because you feel concerned or convicted. It is only the Holy Spirit who brings you concern and conviction (John 16:8-13). If the Holy Spirit had left you, there would be no concern or conviction in your heart. Rejoice and praise God! Give Him your life now! And prayerfully follow and obey Him in the days ahead. He will give you victory (1 Corinthians 15:57), uphold you (Philippians 2:13), and keep you until His second advent (Philippians 1:6).

5. In the parable of the sower (Luke 8:5-18), what is meant by the seed that fell by the wayside and was eaten by fowls?

The Bible says, "The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." Luke 8:11, 12. Jesus is pointing out that when we understand what the Holy Spirit is asking us to do regarding some new light from the Scripture, we must act at once. Otherwise, the devil has the opportunity to remove that truth from our minds.

6. How can the Lord say "I never knew you" to the people He is addressing in Matthew 7:21-23? I thought God knew everybody and everything!

God is referring here to knowing someone as a personal friend. We get to know Him as a friend when we commune with Him daily, follow Him gladly, and freely share with Him our joys and sorrows as with an earthly friend. Jesus also says, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." John 15:14. The people being addressed in Matthew chapter 7 have rejected His Holy Spirit. They have embraced a theology of salvation in sin or salvation by works--neither of which needs Jesus. They are self-made people who did not take time to become acquainted with Jesus. Hence, He explains that He did not really get acquainted with them or know them as His personal friends.

7. Can you explain Ephesians 4:30?

The verse says, "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Paul is here clearly implying that the Holy Spirit is a personal being, because only persons can be grieved. Even more important, he is affirming that the Holy Spirit of Christ can be grieved away by my rejection of His loving appeals. As a courtship can be ended forever by the repeated refusal of one party to the other's wooing, so our relationship with the Holy Spirit can end permanently by our persistent refusal to respond to His loving appeals.

Quiz Questions

1. Any sin may become the sin that God cannot forgive. (1)
Yes.
No.
2. The sin against the Holy Ghost is (1)
Murder.

- Cursing God.
Rejecting the Holy Spirit.
3. The Holy Spirit must sometimes sadly withdraw from a sinner because (1)
The Holy Spirit has other things to do.
The Holy Spirit has righteous indignation over the sinner's bad attitude.
God tells Him to do something else.
The sinner has become deaf to His entreaties.
4. The Holy Spirit may be "quenched" by continuing in sin when you know better. (1)
Yes.
No.
5. Any sin or blasphemy will be forgiven if I (1)
Pray enough about it.
Sincerely confess it to Jesus.
Fast for several days.
Witness faithfully.
6. Without the Holy Spirit, no one ever feels sorrow for sin, nor is anyone ever converted. (1)
True.
False.
7. Assurance of salvation can sometimes be counterfeit. Some people who are certain they are saved are actually lost. (1)
Yes.
No.
8. Check the items that are the work of the Holy Spirit according to John 16:8, 13: (2)
Teach me how to sing.
Give me the gift of prophecy.
Keep me happy.
Convict me of sin.
Lead me to truth.
9. When the Holy Spirit convicts me of a new truth or points out a sin in my life, I should (1)
Ask the pastor about it.
Go see a psychic.
Ask God for a sign.

Follow the Spirit's guidance without hesitation.

Flip a coin.

10. Why did David plead with God not to remove the Holy Spirit from him? (1)

Because the Holy Spirit helped him play his harp.

Because he was afraid the Holy Spirit might take his life.

Because he knew he would be a lost man if the Spirit departed from him.

11. According to Matthew 7:21-23, for a person to have worked miracles, cast out devils, prophesied in Jesus' name, and claimed Him as Lord will not be enough in the judgment day. What else did Jesus say was absolutely essential?

(1)

Doing a lot of witnessing.

Praying often in public.

Fasting often.

Attending church regularly.

Doing the will of the heavenly Father.

12. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12, what will happen to those who refuse to receive the truth? (1)

They will be saved anyway.

God will ask them to reconsider.

God will send them a strong delusion, and they will believe that a lie is the truth.

13. When the Lord says "I never knew you" at the judgment, He means (1)

He does not know who the person is.

The face is familiar, but He has forgotten the name.

The person never took the time to get acquainted with Him as a personal friend.

14. Jesus, in the New Testament, taught against asking for signs. (1)

Yes.

No.

May the Lord Bless you Dear friend, May these Lessons be a blessing in your life, this Manual for Lay people.