






Garlands of Grace

...wisdom to live by.



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Introduction

Federation of Colleges Ex-students of Christian Association is the youth fellowship that God used to build a lot of the women who were instrumental in this devotional becoming a reality. During a discussion on the Sista2Sista forum (a WhatsApp forum for female senior friends of FECA Enugu), we found ourselves wishing we had been taught a lot of things earlier which we had to learn the hard way especially during our teen and young adult years. And thus, this vision was born. Having not had the opportunity, we decided to make available the things that God has taught us and the things we had learnt over the years, to our younger sisters out there (Titus 2:3-5). It is our hope that these pages will help provide counsel, guidance, knowledge, wisdom, and understanding for all the beautiful young blossoms whom God loves deeply. May they be a garland of grace around your heart reminding you always whose you are.

*Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and
do not forsake your mother's teaching.
They are a garland to grace your head
and a chain to adorn your neck.
Proverbs 1:8-9.*

If you are yet to give your life to Christ, don't miss this opportunity. Turn to page 8 to say the sinner's prayer.

The Invitation

But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" Genesis 3:9

When Adam sinned, mankind lost everything - the life that God had in mind for us, dominion over the earth, and most importantly our relationship with God. In that instant, all mankind died, and sin entered the world and with sin came judgement (Romans 5:12-19). From the very first pages after the fall to the law and the prophets, to the coming of Christ, we see God reaching for his lost sons and daughters showing us the way back to Him. God knew that no matter how hard we try, we can't save ourselves from sin (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:10) and in His love for us He sent His son to save us (Romans 5:8). All He asks is that we believe in and accept the sacrifice of Jesus in our place (Romans 10:9). This means

1. To accept that we are all sinners and lost without God.
2. To accept that God has made a way out for us through Jesus Christ.
3. To believe in our hearts and confess Jesus as our Lord and personal savior.

It's the most important decision you could ever make and the moment you do Heaven rejoices at the fact that another lost son/daughter has been found (Luke 15: 7,10).

To accept Jesus as your personal Lord and savior, say this prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, I confess that I am a sinner and I believe you sent your son to die for me. I accept Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior; come into my heart and take control. Thank you because my name is now in the book of life in Jesus Name - Amen

Now that you have made this decision, you need to get involved in a Church that believes the Bible in its totality and carefully study the Word of God so that you can grow and become all that God intends for you to be - an asset to God's Kingdom.

Week 1 Studying the Word

January 1

The Creation Story

Every word of God is flawless; He is a shield to those who take refuge in him.
Proverbs 30:5

Text: Genesis 1

What better place to start but at the very beginning. When we read the creation story, we see the Word of God in action. We see the power displayed through the Word of God. This should cause us to desire to know this Word. If it can introduce order to chaos, if it can give form to a formless thing, if it can bring into existence something that was lacking, if it can sustain a blessing, if it can bring companionship and fruitfulness and dominion, then it is worth your time.

When you look at your life and you do not see all you desire; when you want to bring a change but seem helpless to do so, when you want to put a stop to the works of the enemy in your life or in the life of your friend, the only place to look is in the direction of the Word of God. It is a goldmine that when searched out will transform any life or situation.

Further Study: Hebrews 1:1-3; Acts 17:10-11; Psalms 105:19

Prayer: *Dear Lord, birth in me a deep desire to study your Word because in them, I will find life, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Pick up your Bible every day and pick up a treasure to enrich your life.

January 2nd

Two Sharp Edges

'For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword...'
Hebrews 4:12a

Text: Hebrews 4:12-13

The word '**alive**' means currently existing or possessing importance. The word '**active**' can mean participating in a positive and lively way. These two words have been used to define the Word of God. In other words, the Bible which is the Word of God is not a dead piece of historical literature which may no longer be relevant in the world today. The Word of God is relevant today.

The Word of God has also been described as sharper than any double-edged sword. The sword is sharp, active and alive. You can use it to cut off whatever is in your life that was not planted by God like a bad character. You can also use this powerful sword for any battles that you might be facing by speaking out the word of God over any struggles or battles you might have. You can pray the word of God so sometimes, instead of using your own words, use the word of God as your prayer.

Further Study: Ephesians 6:17; Psalms 119:168-170; John 17:17

Prayer: *Father I ask that you open the eyes of my heart to understand your word, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Read the bible from cover to cover and use it to stop the attacks of the enemy in your life.

January 3rd

The Lit Path and the Portable Lamp

'Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.' Psalm 119:105

Text: Psalm 119:99–106

Have you ever stood at a crossroad with seemingly identical and equally good paths before you? When you have to choose between two good options, life can become confusing.

I have been at crossroads too. I used to worry that I would make the wrong decision that would cost me until I felt the Lord say to me 'Never make a decision based on fear and/or guilt but faith and love.' Sometimes, it takes me a little while of prayer, research, and honest thinking to recognise where the faith and love path is. It is wonderful that God's Word doesn't only light our paths, it also lights specific steps for us, answering our questions. If you have ever carried a lamp to help light your way, you would know that you keep it really close so that you can see. You would also know that although the lamp might not light ten steps ahead, it lights your next steps. Therefore, we should search the scriptures for what it says on any issue or topic.

Further Study: 2 Peter 1:19; Zechariah 4:1-6; John 11:9-10

Prayer: *Lord, give me the courage to honestly seek your face through your word always, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Wait for God's light and learn to move by faith in His Word

January 4th

Hot as Fire

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. John 17:17

Text: Jeremiah 23:29

The word of God is like fire as described in Jeremiah. When God uses synonyms, it is to give us a clearer understanding of what His Word is meant to do in our lives and situations. Think about all we can do with fire and all fire has the potential to accomplish; these are all indications of what His Word can and should do. A quick list is shown below:

- ✿ It destroys; consumes; burns up anything not pleasing to Jesus.
- ✿ It warms – comforts; protects/shields; lifts our spirit.
- ✿ It cooks/prepares edibles – changes any life and makes it attractive and appealing.
- ✿ It preserves/purifies - it cleans up our thoughts, words, and deeds.

It is amazing how potent the Word of God in our hands is, only if we would take advantage of it. But you cannot take advantage of what you do not know. How much of the Word of God is in you?

Further Study: Genesis 1:2; Psalms 119:133; Hebrews 12:25-29

Prayer: *Lord, give me the grace to fill my mind with you by memorizing scriptures.*

Tip of the day: Apply the Word of God and let the fire in it do its work.

January 5th

Breaking Free

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. John 8:32

Text: Jeremiah 23:29

Have you ever felt like your life was chained to a pole and your growth or movement restricted? There is hope for you today. The enemy moves about like a roaring lion looking for whom to destroy. He tries to steal, kill and destroy what God intends for us. We can only come in the name of Jesus and with His Word for that is where our victory lies. A hammer is a tool used to perform three major functions:

- ✿ It hits a nail on the head - it gives insight and clarity to issues.
- ✿ It puts things together - it can mend broken walls and families.
- ✿ It breaks through - it breaks down every high thing that exalts itself; hindrance; walls and challenges your thoughts, habits, and choices in life.

When you pick up your Bible, imagine that you have in your hands the tool you need to break through and push ahead in life. The journey may be a painful one, but it is a worthwhile one.

Further Study: 1 John 2:24-27; 2 Corinthians 10:3-6; Jeremiah 1:9, 17-18

Prayer: *Lord, I have realised that you want to do a great work in my life. I, therefore, submit myself to you to use your Word to chisel out everything that dishonours you.*

Tip of the day: Persistently allow the Lord to speak to you about everything (not just the things you want to hear).

January 6th

Water

'to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.'
Ephesians 5:26

Text: Ephesians 5:25-27

Most people who have access to water would normally have showers or a bath every day. I know that there are people who would inconveniently travel lengths and breadths to fetch some water in order to have a bath. There are people who pay dearly for water to drink, wash, bathe and keep the environment clean. I don't know anyone who does not drink water at all especially in very hot weather. Water is important, and we cannot do without it. It refreshes, quenches thirsts and cleanses. So does the word of God.

As the word of God has been described as water, we will need to:

- ✿ Read it every day in the same way we take a bath daily for cleansing.
- ✿ Read it at least 2 – 3 times a day, as we would drink water lots of times to quench thirst.
- ✿ Read it constantly so you can flourish like the trees planted by the waters.

Further Study: John 4:4-15; 2 Timothy 3:15; Psalms 1:1-3

Prayer: *Father, I ask that you fill my heart, soul and being with a hunger and thirst for your word, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: It would be highly costly to neglect the scriptures. Whatever you do, make time every day to read the bible.

January 7th

Seed

'This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God.' Luke 8:11

Text: Luke 8:4-15

I like the way the Lord has used the things we know to describe His Word. It makes it more relatable to us. The Word of God has been described as a

hammer, fire, sword, light, lamp, water, and seed. Today, we will consider the Word of God as a seed.

From our text, the seed was not to blame for the different harvests produced. Seeds don't grow by themselves. They need water, the right temperature, and location (soil). Therefore, they need to be planted (in the right soil) and tended (with water and the right temperature) in order to grow. God expects us to:

- ✿ Till the soil of our hearts to soften it through prayer. Pray before you read, asking the Holy Spirit to help you understand and see what He wants to show you.
- ✿ Plant the seed by reading it without distraction. Set aside times daily to read without interruption.
- ✿ Tend the seed by thinking about it. After reading, re-read and think about what you have read to get the revelation from it
- ✿ Then use the harvest produced to improve your life and that of others.

Further Study: Mark 4:1-20; Ecclesiastes 11:6; Matthew 13:31-32

Prayer: *Father make my heart tender towards your Word, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Always engage with other Christians in bible studies.

Week 2 Time Management

January 8th

The Author of Time

*"... with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."
2 Peter 3:8b*

Text: 2 Peter 3:8

To manage time, it is important that we first understand the concept of time, how it came to be and God's view on time. In the beginning, God commanded, "Let there be light"—and light appeared. This light He separated from darkness; He called the light, 'Day' and the darkness 'Night' (Genesis 1:3 GNB). And so there came about day and night as we know it, and over the centuries, the Roman calendar as is used today.

But unlike our perception of time, God is not limited by the boundaries of day or night. This points us to His supremacy and our total dependence on Him. He expects us, His children, to live our lives with eternity in our hearts, redeeming and making the best use of the time that is given to us, as we await His return.

Further Study: Psalm 139:12; Ecclesiastes 3:9-13

Prayer: *Father, teach me to live out my days with the knowledge of the limited years I have, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Time is your most precious gift because you only have a set amount of it—Rick Warren.

January 9th

The Time Thief

*"Hard work will give you power; being lazy will make you a slave."
Proverbs 12:24 (GNB)*

Text: Proverbs 12:24

If I had a penny for every time I said, "I will do this tomorrow" I'd be a millionaire today. For many, finding the right time to do what needs doing, and being disciplined to perform a task at the right time is a constant struggle. How often have we put off that house chore for later because our favourite program is on the television, or postponed homework because some friends came over?

Procrastination is the greatest time thief. It is putting off for tomorrow what can be done today. Like a tiny voice in our head, procrastination tells us there is always some other time to deal with our duties when really there isn't any time left. Our battle is about discipline—doing what needs doing even when we don't feel like it.

Can we manage that? Procrastination can make us slaves by encouraging laziness, stealing our integrity and peace; while discipline is the first step to getting things done. Remember, tomorrow never comes.

Further Study: Proverbs 12:27; 13:4; 1 Corinthians 6:12

Prayer: *Dear Lord, give me the strength to overcome the temptation to leave for tomorrow what can be done today. I know that by your grace I am an overcomer, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Make this declaration: *Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.*

January 10th

What's the Plan?

"All things are done according to God's plan and decision..."
Ephesians 1:11a (GNB)

Text: Genesis 41

Every worthy outcome began with a plan. Plans are simply a series of steps to be carried out, geared towards achieving a goal. After Joseph, filled with wisdom from God, interpreted Pharaoh's dream, he also advised that a wise man with insight be placed in charge of the country. This man was to gather up food in the years of plenty and store for the years of famine. This way the Egyptians would not have to suffer hunger. We don't need any reminders that he got the job.

We see that a well-laid plan is the first step to mapping out a defined action. It also helps clarify our goals. Are we trying to become the best student in class? Having a study timetable is a good plan. Is our goal to own a business when we turn twenty? Then holiday internship is a good place to start. Remember the popular saying: The one, who fails to plan, plans to fail.

Further Study: Ephesians 1:11-14; Proverbs 21:5

Prayer: *Thank you, Father for the spirit of wisdom like you gave Joseph to make plans and provide solutions, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Think of your goals. Draw a plan that will help achieve your goals in good time.

January 11th

Priority First

*"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise."
Ephesians 5: 15*

Text: Ephesians 5:15-17

We've probably learned about a scale of preference in Economics class. It's a list where we write our preferences in their order of importance. The basis of a scale of preference is founded on the limited availability of resources. Simply put, time is scarce.

On the average, we have twelve out of twenty-four hours to do something productive. How much time do we allot to different activities and what task do we handle first? A good exercise is to make a list of everything we need to get done, preferably the night before, by placing the most important activity first. It's possible we won't get everything done, but at the end of the day, we would have accomplished the important things.

The end result of our little exercise will yield: less idle time; more work done; and best of all, satisfaction.

Further Study: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; Matthew 6:33

Prayer: *Teach me, Lord, to number my days that I may apply wisdom.*

Tip of the day: Write a scale of preference for the next day's task, apportioning time to each task.

January 12th

Finding Balance

"...You are not doing it the right way. You will wear yourself out and these people as well..." Exodus 18:17-18 (GNB)

Text: Exodus 18:13-27

Ever so often there are many activities competing for our attention— school and house chores; time for our family and friends; and time for us. It can get overwhelming when we have to deal with so much at a time.

However, we are not alone. Many years ago, Moses was faced with similar circumstances. He was leading the Israelites to Canaan, acting as the mouth-piece of God, and handling disputes. And Moses had the experience of age! When Jethro, his father-in-law, visited he saw what Moses had to deal with every day and advised him to appoint judges. By getting rid of the clutter, Moses was able to focus on more important assignments without wearing himself out.

We can take a leaf from Moses' book by asking for help when we feel overwhelmed. God, our ever-present help, is there as well as caring people He has surrounded us with who are available every day. We should not be ashamed to ask for assistance or too proud to take advice when it's given.

Further Study: Psalm 90:12; Proverbs 19:20

Prayer: *Thank you, Lord, for wise counsel when we need it. Incline my heart to listen when you speak to me, and my feet to follow directions, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: There is always an easier way to do a task.

January 13th

Memory Banks

"A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls."

Proverbs 25:28 (ESV)

Text: Daniel 1:1-21

Studies show that it takes 21 days for a persistent activity to become a habit. Think about this: If we spend an hour each day going through school work, studying the bible or engaging in a physical fitness exercise, in roughly 2 weeks we'd have formed new productive habits.

Daniel and his friends could withstand the temptation of eating the King's food because as young Hebrew men they had been trained to eat right and their regular meals had been tested and proven over time to work. Our muscles and minds are memory banks. God created us a fully functional machine and our minds can be trained to perform tasks efficiently. But training our mind requires a huge dose of self-discipline and diligence to achieve desired results. Once we can get past the first few weeks, we'll find doing our duties becomes effortless.

Always remember God has promised us help when we need it. By grace, we can do all things.

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Jeremiah 35:6; 2 Timothy 1:7

Prayer: *Dear Lord, thank you for the grace to lead a disciplined life. By your strength, I have the power to form useful habits and shun idleness, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and self-control.

January 14th

God Rested

*...He said to them, "Come with me to a quiet place and get some rest."
Mark 6:31b*

Text: Genesis 2:1-4

After spending six days creating the world, on the seventh day God saw that all He had done was good, so He blessed that day and rested. God didn't rest because he was tired, but because he understood how easy it is to get preoccupied with work and wanted to set a precedent for us.

When the Israelites were given the Ten Commandments, God set the Sabbath as a mandatory day of rest. In agriculture, we employ a system of rotational farming, by leaving land to lie fallow so they can rest and encourage the growth of good bacteria that help plant growth (Leviticus 25:4). All through the scriptures, God points us to the necessity of taking time off to be still.

By taking time off, we allow ourselves the opportunity to review how much work has been done, what has been achieved, and like God, to see that it is good. The next day can be faced with a fresh perspective and a refreshed body.

Further Study: Exodus 20:8-11; Mark 6:30-32

Prayer: *Thank you, Father, for teaching me to take time off to rest. May I not in my rush to get things done forget that in your infinite wisdom you have ordained that man works for six days and rest on the seventh.*

Tip of the day: Resting is an important part of time management.

Week 3 My God And I

January 15th

God's Original Plan for Man

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth and over all the creatures that move along the ground" Genesis 1:26

Text: Genesis 1:26-29

What is God's original plan for me? It is said that the purpose of any product can only be defined by the producer. God has a strong reason for creating you; that is why in all creation, only man is made in God's image and likeness. He thought and reasoned with the Trinity on how you and I will look to fit his intention. Everything about you (skin colour, height, smiles, etc.) is for a purpose.

He wants you to utilize all He has given you to be His ambassador on earth, serve Him and take charge of all that He created. You can see that God's plan for man on earth is very great. He wants you to live as a god/king on earth (Psalms 82:6). Are you living as a slave rather than a king?

Further Study: Genesis 1; Jeremiah 29:1; 2 Corinthians 3:18b

Prayer: *Father, forgive me and restore your original plan for me so that I can fulfill my purpose and be your true representative on earth, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Take a moment to evaluate if you are living as God's representative here on earth.

January 16th

Man's Separation from God

"So, the Lord God banished man from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken" Genesis 3:23

Text: Genesis 3

In Eden, we see God's ideal relationship and intimate friendship with us. God decorated Eden with everything that man needed to live a glorious life. However, after the fall (man's disobedience), we lost that friendship with God and became separated from Him. The serpent deceived man with 3 destructive arrows stated in 1 John 2:16:

- ✿ Lust of eye – Eve saw that the fruit was good and pleasing to the eye.
- ✿ Lust of flesh – She wanted to gain wisdom and knowledge like God.
- ✿ Pride of life – She desired the most elevated position at all cost.

The enemy is still using these arrows to destroy Christians today. Are you battling with any of these arrows or perhaps, you have not accepted Jesus into your life? Here's the good news - Christ came and died to reconcile you back to God so that the union, friendship, and intimacy can be restored.

Are you ready to surrender to Him now? Turn to page 8 and let us pray.

Further Study: Genesis 2; John 1:29; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Prayer: *Dear Lord, I receive grace to live above every device of the enemy, nothing shall keep me from enjoying intimate friendship with you, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Write down practical choices you'd make today to keep you from the destructive arrows of the enemy.

January 17th

Abiding in God

"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." John 15:5 (NKJV)

Text: John 15:1-7

To abide simply means to live with, dwell or stay in a place. It also means acting in accordance with a rule/command. Abiding in God's presence is the only way we can be fruitful (spiritual and physical) as Christians. Christ made it so clear to us that except we abide in Him and He in us, we can never bear any good fruit. Can a branch bear fruits on its own without getting nutrients from the tree? No. We need to access 'nutrients' from God daily by spending quality time in His presence. This is done through prayers and the study of God's Word.

What are the benefits of abiding in God?

- ✿ You will be fruitful and productive.
- ✿ You will not be cast away, thrown into fire and burned.
- ✿ Your joy will be full and complete.
- ✿ You will remain and grow in God's love.
- ✿ God will give you whatever you ask in His name.
- ✿ The lust of the flesh dies. Etc.

Further Study: 1 John 2:27-28; 1 John 2:3-6; John 6:56

Prayer: *Give me the grace to continually abide in you Lord.*

Tip of the day: Make a commitment today to daily seek God through His word and prayer.

January 18th

Pleasing the Master

"And without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him". Hebrews 11:6

Text: Hebrews 11:1-6

Faith is defined as being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Having faith in God simply means to trust Him above all. This makes it clear why it is impossible to please God without faith. If we could please God without faith, it means we could please God without trusting Him. If after all God has done for mankind, someone does not trust that He exists then God cannot be pleased with such a person. In order to please God, we must trust that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Life is full of uncertainties, we often allow doubt, worry, fear and erroneous beliefs occupy the place that God should occupy in our lives. We must learn to put our trust in God and live a life of total dependence on Him – this is the only way we can please the master.

Further Study: Hebrews 11; Romans 4:16-21; Habakkuk 2:4

Prayer: *Father help me to build my faith in you alone, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: God has a lot of things He wants to give you. Turn away from the obstacles that hinder you from trusting Him so the windows of heaven can be open to you.

January 19th

Walking with God

"Enoch walked with God and he was no more, because God took him away."
Genesis 5:24

Text: 1 John 2:5-6

Walking with God is like the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep, where the sheep are expected to follow the shepherd 'sheepishly'. As it is impossible to walk with someone and not arrive at the same destination, you cannot walk with God and your character will not reflect His.

Walking with God simply means to carefully follow all His commandments and to align ourselves with His ways/thoughts which are far higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9). When we walk with God consistently, His nature rubs off on us, we get more transformed into His image and likeness, our flesh dies, gradually we stop conforming to the standards of the world and we start acting like Christ.

Further Study: Deuteronomy 28:1-14; Psalms 23; Romans 12:1-2

Prayer: *Father give me the grace to walk with you all the days of my life. I pray that I shall experience positive turn around in all areas of my life, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Choose to walk with God today in order for your purpose to find full expression here on earth.

January 20th

Vessel Unto Honour

*"But in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour."
2 Timothy 2:20 (KJV)*

Text: 2 Timothy 2:20-21

As a young girl, I always thought to myself that vessels of gold and silver are the 'superior vessels' and as such, vessels unto honour. However, a closer look at the above text made it clear to me that the type of a vessel does not matter, what matters is the ability of the vessel to purge himself of dishonour, then it shall be unto honour, sanctified, and suitable for the master's use.

For a cordial relationship to be established between you and God, you must resolve to become a vessel to be used by Him. The decision of what vessel to be is in your hands. You are the one that will consciously and deliberately abstain yourself from all forms of impurity. Your background does not matter, your source can be wood or earth and you'd still be used by God more than those whose sources are silver and gold. The question is – are you willing to purge yourself and surrender totally to Him?

Further Study: Psalm 15; Psalm 24:3-6; Colossians 3:1-17.

Prayer: *Father, I receive grace to purge myself daily and be a vessel unto honour ready to be used by the master.*

Tip of the day: Say, "I am righteous and sanctified, prepared for every good work".

January 21st

Love, The Pathway

"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love"
1 John 4:8

Text: 1 John 4:7-8, 20

Love is not just an attribute of God, it's His very nature. It is only in Him that love can gain its full expression. Love is made perfect in Christ.

As followers of Christ, we are created in His image and after His likeness. Since God is love, it means that we also have that nature of love inherent in us. As a Christian saved and filled with God's love, we must live in love towards God and one another for "If anyone says, 'I love God' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen cannot love God, whom he has not seen." (1 John 4:20).

Love is the true test of Christianity. The nature of God is rooted in love. We receive God's love in our relationship with Him and we experience God's love in our relationship with others. Remember God gave all for you, you can do the same for His sake. Your reward is surely in heaven and even here on earth.

Further Study: 1 John 4:7-21, John 15:17, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

Prayer: *Lord, please stir up the fruit of love in me, give me the grace to always walk in love.*

Tip of the day: Your services to God will be a waste if you do not have love.

Week 4 Understanding Purpose

January 22nd

The God of Purpose

*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works,
which God prepared in advance for us to do.
Ephesians 2:10*

Text: Psalms 139:13–16

God does not do things without a reason; He does not beat about the bush aimlessly. He thinks a thing through before embarking on it. If I were to ask you the purpose of some of God's creations like the light, the waters, the birds and the flowers, you can easily tell. If these seemingly insignificant things have a purpose, then how much more the whole of creation. It is clear then to see that our God is a God of purpose. Everything He has made, He made to serve a purpose. Every step He requires you to take, He does for a good reason.

Is it too much to imagine that since you were created in the image and likeness of God, there was a purpose for which you were created? There is something you are to achieve while on the planet earth. That something is the purpose for your life.

Further Study: Genesis 1; Isaiah 43:6–7; 1 Corinthians 9:26

Prayer: *Lord, you created me for a good reason and I thank you because no more will I live aimlessly, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Every morning, wake up with an agenda.

January 23rd

Where I Fit

*"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born
I set you apart; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."
Jeremiah 1:5*

Text: Luke 4:19–22

Have you ever tried to work on a jigsaw puzzle to make everything fit as it should? It is not an easy task but if you were the designer, it would be a work over. We have already established that God is the designer of life and yours in particular. You were not just an after-thought even if you are one of those called a mistake by your parents.

If the world feels like a jigsaw puzzle and you need to know where you fit, go to the potter and ask. Be rest assured that He will point out where you fit and not only that, He will fit you there Himself and give you all you require to function effectively in your place.

Further Study: Isaiah 64:8; Romans 9:20–21; 2 Peter 1:3–9

Prayer: *Thank you Lord because I understand that I am not a misfit or a mistake. Give me the grace to function effectively in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: When you do not know what to do, check out the designer's manual (Bible).

January 24th

Aligning to The Pattern

Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. 1 Corinthians 9:26

Text: Genesis 6:14–16

We had earlier established that there is a place you fit in God's big plan. When God approached Noah to build an ark, He gave His specifications. If Noah had gone outside of it, he would have displeased God and the ark would not have survived the flood.

You need to understand that God has a pattern for you, because of His purpose for your life, which is important for you to follow. Do not live as if you have no destination/purpose. There is a pattern that the world introduces in every aspect of life. BE CAREFUL you do not fall into that pattern. Listen to Him and get His pattern (especially from the Bible) and align yourself to it so that all His good plans for your life will come to pass.

Further Study: Psalms 139:14–16; Jeremiah 29:11; 2 Kings 5:9–14

Prayer: *Lord, it is a joy to know that you have my life all planned out. Help me discover your plans and grant me the grace to live it out, in Jesus Name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Read a chapter of the Bible a day because therein lies your pattern and of course your success.

January 25th

Courage to Achieve

Rise up; this matter is in your hands. We will support you so, take courage and do it. Ezra 10:4

Text: Jeremiah 29:11

God has just the perfect plan for you! He says His plans are good ones and He intends to give you your desired future. But there is a condition- you must be willing and obedient. I like the way the key verse puts it; you need to arise because the matter is in your hands.

God has the best plan, He has given you all you need to accomplish it but He would not move you into action. You have to move into action yourself; things remain at a stationary spot until force is applied. Be courageous because ahead of you lies a beautiful future.

Further Study: 2 Timothy 1:7; Numbers 33:53; 1 Corinthians 16:13

Prayer: *Lord, you have given me all I need to achieve great things. Thank you for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, wisdom and grace for accomplishment, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Believe all God says and step out in faith.

January 26th

Seeing Well

Then the Lord said to me "You have seen correctly for I am watching to see that my Word is fulfilled." Jeremiah 1:12

Text: Daniel 5:5-17

Have you ever seen a blind man walking down a street? His steps are slow and unsure. Without the help of a guide, the man will grope about and encounter obstructions and not make any meaningful progress.

The King saw a writing on the wall but he *could not really see it* because it made no sense to him and would not determine his next step. The importance of seeing well, therefore, cannot be overemphasized. You can be put in slow motion and grasp at nothing in life. You could even get on the wrong path and not end at the good life God has planned for you. God is interested in you seeing clearly so He would know that His instructions for your life would be correctly carried out and His Word can be accomplished in your life. You can only see clearly when you take advantage of the Spirit of God in you and “wash your eyes” with the Word of God.

Further Study: Isaiah 55:10–11; Acts 9:8–9, 22:11; Revelations 3:18

Prayer: *Lord, may understanding and clarity come to me as I study your Word so your purpose for my life can be accomplished, in Jesus Name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Always look at things from the spiritual point of view.

January 27th

Speed Bumps to Fulfilling Purpose

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith. 2 Timothy 4:7*

Text: Romans 8:35–39

Speed bumps, that is just what they are, bumps specially built to slow you down or reduce your speed. They are not meant to stop you; only delay your arriving at your destination. In fulfilling purpose, speed bumps can be introduced either by you, family and friends or the devil.

What is important is not who or what introduces it but your ability to recognize it and remove it, so you experience no hindrance in your pursuit of the good and abundant life God promised. Abundant? Yes, when you are able to accomplish God's call or purpose in your life, which is **the** abundant life. Examples of speed bumps are trouble, hardship, anger, doubt, fear, procrastination, contention, ignorance, danger and so on. Nothing should deter us. Let us keep our eyes on the finish line.

Further Study: Philippians 3:12–14; 1 Corinthians 16:9

Prayer: *Lord, grant me the wisdom to spot speed bumps and grace to remove them out of my journey in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Rather than be stopped in your tracks, overcome that obstacle and keep your eyes on the finish line.

January 28th

Balanced and Focused

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man
Luke 2:52

Text: 1 Corinthians 9:24 – 27

This is one of my best scripture verses in the Bible. I could re-frame it to read *...and Jesus excelled mentally, physically, spiritually and socially*. In as much as Jesus understood why He came, in as much as He was clear about

His assignment on earth, He did not relegate these four (4) cardinal aspects to the background.

Paul also understood that and had his eyes on the price; arranging every part of his life to gain that price. This has to do with balance and focus. Imagine a four-legged chair sitting properly on the ground unlike when it has one or more legs missing. You need to carefully monitor your growth in the four mentioned areas to ensure balance. This would also add credence to your discovered purpose in life as well as hasten you to the finish line.

Further Study: John 4:34; 1 Kings 20:37–40

Prayer: *Lord, if I am here and there, I will miss the mark. Grant me the wisdom to stay focused until I hear you say, 'well done, good and faithful servant', in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Keep your eyes on the finish line.

Week 5 The Gifts of God

January 29th

The Gifts of The Spirit

'Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed' 1 Corinthians 12:1

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:1-7

The gifts of the Spirit are so essential that no Christian should be ignorant of what they are and are supposed to do. However, we cannot fully discuss what each gift is here but there are two points that are really important to note today.

First, all the gifts irrespective of what they are, should point to the truth that 'Jesus is Lord'. No one else is Lord and no one else should draw the attention to themselves through these gifts. Second, the gifts are for the good of all and not for any self-gratification.

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 12:1-28

Prayer: *Jesus, may I be careful to point all attention to you. Let my heart worship you alone.*

Tip of the day: Find and read a sound book on the gifts of the Spirit and all the Bible passages on this topic.

January 30th

Eagerly Desire

'Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy'. 1 Corinthians 14:1

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:31a

We are allowed and encouraged to want and crave for the gifts of the Spirit and to do so enthusiastically. We should not stop at just wanting and craving. Let those desires for these gifts lead us to prayer. Ask God for them – whichever ones you want. He will then give to you according to His will.

When I was thirteen, I learnt that I could ask God for a gift of the Spirit. I really wanted one of them and so I asked God for it. I had also learnt that I should believe that I have received the gift and to begin to use it. So, I did. Soon after, people began to say to me, 'it seems that you have this gift'. God used that to encourage me to carry on using the gift.

Further Study: James 4:2; Matthew 7:9–11.

Prayer: *Thank you Lord that you give good gifts to us. We receive them by faith in Jesus name.*

Tip of the day: If you want the gift of the Spirit, ask for them. If you already have one, use it often for the good of others.

January 31st

According to Their Abilities

'Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.' 1 Peter 4:10

Text: Romans 12:6

In relation to our use of our gifts, God does not expect the same thing from all of us. He knows the abilities, grace, and type of gift He has given to each of us. Therefore, it would be futile to be looking at someone else and copying how they express their gift or to be puffed up at how we are using our gifts in comparison to someone else.

What is required of us is to use the gifts given to us according to the measure of grace we have. That grace could be more or less than the next person but it does not matter. It is a personal race and we will each answer to the Lord alone.

Further Study: Matthew 25:14–30

Prayer: *Help me Lord to be a good steward of the gifts you have given me, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: In using your gift, focus on the Lord's approval and not on the praise or criticism of people.

February 1st

He Won't Take Them Back

'For God's gifts and his call are irrevocable'. Romans 11:29

Text: Romans 11:29, 33

God means business. He wants His church to grow to become like Jesus. Then, we will no longer be like little children swayed by every teaching. So, when He gives us His gifts, He does not take them back. When He calls us to do something, He does not 'un-call' us. He does not change like shifting shadows following the direction of the light.

This is both exciting and sobering. It is exciting because we do not have to wonder whether the gifts are still in us. We are sure that we always have them and can always use them. It is sobering because we cannot depend on the presence of the gifts of the Spirit to determine whether we are pleasing God. We must ensure that our hearts are always sincere towards the Lord.

Further Study: Ephesians 4:8–13; James 1:17

Prayer: *Thank you Lord because you are ever steady and generous towards us. Let me use the gifts you have given me to your glory, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: If you have ever received a gift of the Spirit, it is still in you today. It might be dormant from lack of use but it is still there.

February 2nd

Fan into Flame

'For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands'. 2 Timothy 1:6

Text: 2 Timothy 1:6–7

God will not be pleased if we do not use the gifts He has given us. Ask the servant with the one talent of gold.

The Lord expects us to fan our gifts like hot coal until it becomes a lively and useful fire. We can fan it in three ways:

- ✿ By allowing our gift to be expressed through the power of the Holy Spirit. Commit it in prayer to the Holy Spirit and ask for His help.
- ✿ With love (in patience, kindness, humility and not out of anger, selfish interest or revenge).
- ✿ Through self-discipline, not using the gift in a disorderly and disrespectful manner. Know when to stop and when to go.

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 15:10; Matthew 3:11

Prayer: *Jesus, help me not to be timid but to use the gift you have given me no matter how small I may think it is.*

Tip of the day: Ask the Lord to show you how you can use your gift today.

February 3rd

The Most Excellent Way

'...And yet I will show you the most excellent way'. 1 Corinthians 12: 31b

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:31, 13:1-3

The gifts of the Spirit are amazing. It is awesome to see miracles, hear prophecies, sit under inspiring Bible teachers and read about missionaries. We respect these things and so we should but Paul says that there is something more excellent. We may hear more about an anointed Bible

teacher who can expound mysteries than we hear about a patient and kind bible teacher.

Paul says that without love, that great gift of prophecy, faith or teaching etc. is nothing.

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 12:29–31; 1 Corinthians 13:4-10

Prayer: *Father, may I know and express your love always, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Express your gifting through love. Always.

February 4th

Bezalel

'...and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills.' Exodus 31:3

Text: Exodus 31:1–5

The Lord gives all kinds of gifts. Not everyone is an apostle, prophet or teacher and not everyone has the gift of healing or working miracles. Let us not assume that these are the only 'spiritual' and necessary gifts.

Look at the example of Bezalel. God wanted a job done and so enabled a man to do it. Today, there are musicians, artisans, and accountants called by God to be so. They are neither greater nor lesser than the apostle or teacher.

All are called to build up the body of Christ until we all reach maturity.

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 7:7; 1 Corinthians 14:12

Prayer: *Lord, help me to discover and accept your gift and call on my life, wherever it is, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Whether you work inside or outside the church building, we are all God's servants.

Week 6 Purity

February 5th

Sexual Purity

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. 1 Corinthians 6:18

Text: 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

In the culture of today, challenging yourself to remain pure in all areas is an excellent goal. Sexual purity may be expressed by what you do with your body, but it is ultimately rooted in your mind, your heart and your soul. One of the lies that youths today believe is that *Sexual purity is only about whether you have sex or not.* We must understand that:

- ✿ Jesus made it clear that sexual integrity is not just about the body but about what we feed our minds and senses with.
- ✿ Engaging in sexually stimulating movies, websites, romance novels, and television shows is willingly giving Satan a piece of your mind and heart.
- ✿ Pornography stimulates the brain storing lasting memories as if one is actually having sex.

The best news is that you can win this battle by purging your minds of the filth that permeates our media and environment and replacing it with the Word of God. Renew your mind daily with the Word of God.

Further Study: Matthew 5:27-30; Job 31:1; Romans 12:2

Prayer: *Father, show me what it means to be holy and give me the courage to stand for the truth in this world, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Do not treat yourself like a trash can; you are worth much more.

February 6th

Set an Example of Purity

Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. 1 Timothy 4:12

Text: 1 Timothy 4:11-12

Our text says we are not to allow anyone look down on us. This means that it doesn't matter what our friends, social media, that trendy television station or movie is saying. It is our responsibility to set examples for our friends and the world at large to follow. Always remember we are not living for ourselves. We are living for God who paid a high price that we might live. It is also important to remember that people are watching us. The scripture says we are living epistles.

Do not be moved by that mockery or those words spoken in jest. There is dignity in standing out in purity. Some people are admiring you secretly and they will glorify God because of your life.

Further Study: Titus 2:5; 2 Corinthians 3:2

Prayer: *Lord Jesus grant me the grace to be an example for the world to see.*

Tip of the day: Start a trend: talk about and encourage sexual purity among your friends.

February 7th

Purity: A Virtue for All

*Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.
Matthew 5:8*

Text: Matthew 5:3-12

Purity is more than just saving sex for marriage; it is a way of life. Purity is the virtue of generosity which makes us act without any trace of evil or selfish motives. Our intentions are pure only when they are free of self-interest, egoism, desire, envy, cruelty, spite, greed, malice, lust, trickery and dishonesty. Motives are pure only when they are free of power, control, and manipulation. Pure love is giving, not taking; it is a longing to see another happy as we sacrifice our own pleasure for their sake.

Purity is an important factor if we are to establish an intimate relationship with God because He is pure and wants us to be pure in speech, heart, body, and all areas of our life. This is the only way we can really and truly see God

both here and after we are gone from this earth. Don't be bothered about being different, everyone admires someone who dares to be different, especially in a godly way.

Further Study: Matthew 5:1-end

Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, I want to be pure in every way like you. Please help me to be pure. Amen.*

Tip of the day: Dare to be different in a PURE way today

February 8th

Purity of Heart - Guarding the Heart and 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.
Philippians 4:8.*

Text: Philippians 4:6-8

We often hear the words "what is on your mind"? or "have a change of heart". Thoughts are seeds buried in the hearts and in the minds of every individual.

It is important that when we think of a pure heart, we must think about it in line with scriptures. It is speaking about the heart of one whose sins have been forgiven and whose heart has been made new, whose purity comes not from their struggles but from the presence of Jesus in their lives.

Jesus does not want us to struggle to do the right things. This can only be avoided when we ask Him to come into our hearts and help us in this race thus making us truly pure.

Further Study: 1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 12:34; Proverbs 22:11

Prayer: *Jesus, I humbly ask that you come into my life and make me like you, a true child of the Father. Amen.*

Tip of the day: Ask Him to help you today, and see how much of a changed person you will be.

February 9th

Purity of Speech-The Way to Win

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Ephesians 4:29.

Text: Ephesians 4:25-32

God spoke the world into being by the power of His words. Our words can build or destroy the spirit of another causing violence, hatred, bitterness, timidity or joy, love, happiness or boldness. Have you ever seen friends who felt bitter towards a teacher or each other? Negative words such as “you are so dumb” or “can you not do anything well?” are usually the root of these negative feelings.

One can be pressured to conform to the ways of the society in order not to be called a “Jew”. They may begin to use vulgar and demeaning words or crack dirty jokes. Being pure and Christ-like means we do not use dirty or foul language. As Christians whose lives have been changed by the power of God, our words reflect that change. Our words are an outflow of our hearts, if we fill our hearts with the love of Christ, our words would be marked by truth and purity.

Further Study: Hebrews 11:13

Prayer: *Dear Lord, let your Word be in my mouth as I make this journey towards purity, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Study God's words today and learn how the Father speaks to His children.

February 10th

Purity in Relationships - Choosing the Right Friends

*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.
Proverbs 27:17*

Text: Proverbs 27:6-10

Relationships can bring a lot of pleasure into our lives so it is important to ask ourselves what the purpose of a relationship is; our pleasure, theirs or God's? We will always find ourselves in uncomfortable positions when we look for our pleasure or that of another in relationships above that of God, who wants the best for us. God's desire is for our relationships to promote our relationship with Him. Keep this in mind while evaluating your relationships. Honestly consider if they are drawing you closer to or far away from God.

Ask God to guide you through the process of choosing friends; to give you courage and wisdom to set boundaries in your relationships and to protect yourself from people who would lure you to sin. Never pursue heart to heart friendships with an unbeliever, no matter how nice they may seem.

We may be unable to choose the family into which we are born, but we have the power to choose our friends. Choose wisely.

Further Study: Job 15:34; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Psalms 14:5

Prayer: *Dear Lord, you see the hearts of all men, lead me to friends who will help me to be who you want me to be, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Before saying yes to a friendship, ask yourself if this friend honours God?

February 11th

Stay Pure

*How can a young person stay on the path of purity?
By living according to your word. Psalm 119:9*

Text: Psalm 119:9-11

Purity can be defined as freedom from contaminants. It means you have chosen to center your life around what is pure, true, genuine, righteous and good. How can this be done?

✿ *Avoid Contamination:* What kind of things do you allow to enter your mind and stay there? What are the lyrics of the music on your playlist, what sort of movies do you watch, how about your interactions on social media? Would God and your accountability partners be proud of you in these areas?

✿ *Establish Boundaries:* You must not be everywhere; you must not honour every invitation and everyone must not be your friend. Decide to abide by the principles of God which will protect you. Establishing boundaries in what you do will help you avoid tragic mistakes.

✿ *Learn to say 'NO':* Learn to say "no" to those cravings to make the wrong choices. Wrong choices lead you down the wrong path. This can be a shattering experience.

Further Study: Philippians 1:9–10; Habakkuk 1:13; 1 John 3:3

Prayer: *Lord, I have decided to follow you and align myself to your Word. Holy Spirit help me to stand by that decision, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Let God's word guide your choices every day.

Week 7 Managing Your Emotions

February 12th

God Has Emotions

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27

Text: Genesis. 1:26-27

We are created in God's image, emotions and all. Our emotions may have been corrupted by Adam's sin but from the start, emotions were part of God's design. Throughout scripture we see God show various emotions: Love (John 3:16; 1 John 4: 8), Anger (Deuteronomy 9:22), Laughter (Psalm 37:13), Compassion (Psalm 135:14; Isaiah 49:10), Grief (Genesis 6:6, Psalm 78:40), Hate (Proverbs 6:16, Psalm 11:5), and Joy (Zephaniah 3:17; Isaiah 62:5).

So, if emotions were part of the plan before the fall, we need to understand them and why they were given to us in order to truly live life to the fullest.

Further Study: Matthew 8:10; Luke 7:13

Prayer: *Precious Lord in whose image I am, help me understand this essential part of me and so truly be all you have created me to be in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: How does the thought that God has emotions make you feel?

February 13th

Why Emotions?

*I was glad when they said unto me, "Let us go into the house of the Lord."
Psalm 122:1 (KJV)*

Text: Psalm 149:1-9

Emotions are often an indicator of our state of mind, about a person, situation or circumstance. A lot goes into our emotions but the most fundamental part is our thoughts. You think someone is nice and fun to have around and you're happy to see them. You think someone is difficult to get along with, you become apprehensive when you see them. Our emotions are fed by our thoughts. What then should we do with our emotions? We should acknowledge them and then decipher the thoughts that led us to feel that way.

Why emotions? They add colour to life.

Further Study: 1 Samuel 1:1-10; Jonah 3:10-4:1

Prayer: *Heavenly Father thank you for the gift of emotions. Help me to learn to understand and master my emotions and use them to my best advantage and to the glory to your name today and always in Jesus name, Amen*

Tip of the day: When you worry, what do you think that says about your trust in God?

February 14th

Inside Out

Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. James 5:13b

Text: James 5:13-16

So, what do we do with our emotions? The first step to being emotionally balanced is to acknowledge our emotions. Our text says if anyone is happy, which means you have to acknowledge what you are feeling first. Happy, sad, anxious, scared, ashamed, hopeful, excited, when we have acknowledged our emotions then we can know the next step to take.

Remember the movie 'Inside Out'? That whole drama resulted because Joy did not want to acknowledge that Riley was feeling sad. When we don't acknowledge our emotions, we set the stage for all sorts of trouble.

Further Study: 2 Samuel 12:13-25; Job 6:1-3

Prayer: *Lord you are a God of truth, help me to be truthful to myself and to you about my emotions at all times, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: How are you feeling about your day so far?

February 15th

Now What?

But David found strength in the Lord his God. 1 Samuel 30:6b

Text: 1 Samuel 30:1-25

Having acknowledge how you are feeling the next step would be to examine the reason for those feelings. Are they based on reality, truth, assumptions, the word of God?

Let's assume you feel you're in love with Kunle, but what do you know about Kunle? Close to nothing. You set out to find out more about him and you discover that while he's cute alright, he's also not a very neat person, he's a tad impatient and tends to be rude to those whom he feels are not in his social class. Suddenly all those warm tingling sensations begin to fade.

David acknowledged how he and his men were feeling but he didn't stop there. He encouraged himself with what he knew about God then sought to take the next step. Wisdom and knowledge should guide our actions. Emotions add spice to our life but they should not be in the driver's seat of your life.

Further Study: Genesis 4:3-12

Prayer: *Father, help me to keep a level head as I live as your ambassador today in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: It may feel good but is it the right thing to do based on the word of God?

February 16th

Negative Emotions

...because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."
Mark 6:50

Text: Mark 6:45-51

Negative emotions warn us of danger and tell us that something deep inside needs correction. For example, fear is a sign that we perceive something to be threatening or dangerous. Like in our text for the day, when the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water, they thought it was a ghost and got frightened.

Anger often suggests that we regard a situation as causing injury to our self-esteem. Shame or guilt indicates we view something that has happened as a moral failure on our part. Most times the intensity of the emotion tells us how much importance we attach to an event.

But the question to ask is, what importance does God attach to that event? How does God see it? While Jesus was in the boat sleeping, his disciples were afraid for their lives thinking they were about to die (Matthew 8:23-27). Jesus knew it was nothing to worry about but the disciples thought their lives were over. Wouldn't our lives be so much better if we looked at things from God's point of view?

Further Study: 2 Chronicles 32:16-23; Daniel 4:32-37

Prayer: *Holy Spirit help me to view every situation as you would view it in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Always try to isolate the thoughts that led to a negative emotion. Hold those thoughts up to the standard of God's word. Do they pass the test?

February 17th

Positive Emotions

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things, there is no law.
Galatians 5:22-23

Text: 1 Corinthians 13:4-13

Love, joy, peace, kindness, hope are all examples of what are often called positive emotions. But for us as Christians, they are much more than positive emotions. They are a promise from our Father. Our key verse tells us that these are the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives, meaning that as we yield ourselves more to God and experience more of God, we know and experience these emotions. It also means that if we are in a situation which would naturally steal our joy, our peace, our love, we can ask God for his own to guard and uphold our hearts, to be at work in us. We have an anchor, a bank in God of all the positive emotions we could ever need.

Further Study: John 14:27; Philippians 4:4-7; Romans 5:5

Prayer: *Thank you for being there for us Father, a sure hope in every situation. Today I draw on your love, your hope as I walk out into a very wounded world. Let me do as you would do in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Sing to the Lord a new song, a song of praise, love, and worship.

February 18th

Not A Slave

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear..."
Romans 8:15a

Text: Romans 8:12-17

It is possible for one to be a slave to fear. As a matter of fact, it is possible to be slaves to our emotions. Not doing anything unless we 'feel' like it. Women feel deeply and that is a beautiful thing. God made it so. But our emotions do not have to control us. They should not. The Bible tells us of several things that can and should guide our actions; the word of God, the Holy Spirit but certainly not our emotions.

There are other times when the devil attacks us through our emotions, fear, rage, lust, depression. Often in these circumstances, there is no logical reason for the depth of the emotion being experienced. That is not the time to understand that emotion but rather to rebuke the devil, to resist him and he will flee from you.

So, acknowledge your emotions, understand them but don't let them run you.

Further Study: 2 Timothy 1:7; Numbers 14:1-end.

Prayer: *Lord I do not want to be a slave to anything other than righteousness. Help me to rise above my emotions at all times and walk by the light of your word, in Jesus name Amen.*

Tip of the day: Who runs your life?

Week 8 Crush

February 19th

What Is a Crush?

*How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes are doves.
Songs of Solomon 1:15*

Text: Proverbs 30:18-19

A crush is a brief but intense infatuation for someone especially someone deemed unattainable. It is a burning desire to be with someone whom you find very attractive and extremely special. Infatuation in itself is a state of being carried away by unreasoned passion or feelings of love which are shallow and transient.

The characteristics of a crush are very clear. It is sudden; does not give a notice before it arrives and can vanish without notice. Anything can end it; change of location, a flaw, a better person, etc. It is effortless and time-consuming.

Further Study: Proverbs 20:6; Matthew 5:28

Prayer: *Help me, Father, to be alert to when I am having a crush and show me how to deal with it, in Jesus Name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: You might not necessarily choose whom you have a crush on but you can choose how you respond to it.

February 20th

Are Crushes Okay?

*Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of
the field:*

*Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.
Songs of Solomon 2:7*

Text: Songs of Solomon 3:5; 8:4

Crushes are actually inevitable. It is something that almost every young person will experience at one point or the other but it is not okay to allow yourself to be enveloped by these emotions for the following reasons;

- ✿ It is of the flesh: It is completely physical. It is only rooted in the physical attributes of the person you have a crush on; the looks, perfume, mannerism, gesticulation, etc.
- ✿ It is transient: A mere feeling that can pass. It is just like a tree without a proper root system. It might grow for a season and then fade away on to someone else.
- ✿ Distraction: A Crush can lead to serious distractions. You can't seem to concentrate on anything productive. This can drastically affect your studies because you spend the time meant for reading and lectures thinking of the person.

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Prayer: *Dear Lord, help me to avoid all emotions that are not rooted in you alone, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Crushes often do not produce any beneficial result.

February 21st

What Do I Do?

*How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to
your word.
Psalm 119:9*

Text: Psalm 119:9- 11

We have seen and understood what crush means and why it must not be allowed to abide when it comes. The question now is how do we handle this crush and still retain our purity and sanctity?

- ✿ Spend time with God: Jesus has walked through every pathway we could ever come across. The more time you spend with Him in prayer and the study of the Word, the more strength you will receive to live the life God wants you to. Be ready to share everything with Jesus, make him your closest confidante.
- ✿ Get close to your parents or guardians: Your parents or guardians play an important role in your life now. Those who make fewer mistakes are those who cultivate a close relationship with their guardians. Apart from having been where you are, God gave them to you to guide you. Even if your parents are not available, ask God to direct you to a good mentor who you can always come to for help and He will.

Further Study: Colossians 3:2-5; Acts 6:4; Proverbs 15:22

Prayer: *Dear Lord help me to look up to you alone for emotional satisfaction today and always, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: The devil preys more on those who don't have an authority over their lives.

February 22nd

What Goes In...

*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.
Philippians 4:8*

Text: Proverbs 4:23

Jesus told us that what we allow into our minds is important. Reading novels and watching movies are good ways to relax. However, if you spend most of your time watching and reading romantic movies and novels, it will be almost impossible to handle a crush wisely. It is important to guard your heart. What you watch, what you hear form the foundation of your thoughts.

You have a responsibility to ensure that only the right thoughts are allowed to dwell in your heart. You cannot control all the thoughts that pass through your mind, but you are responsible for what you entertain as a thought.

Further Study: Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Matthew 6:22

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, I understand that the light of the body is the eye, cause me to always focus on things with eternal value in your name I pray, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Spend your time focusing only on information that adds value to you.

February 23rd

Focus on Your Future

Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.
2 Timothy 2:22

Text: Jeremiah 29:11

God has a lot in store for us but the devil wants to fill us with distractions to deter us while en route the future God has for us. I'm sure you do not want to spend half of your young life drifting from one form of emotional stress to the other. Whatever level you are in today; secondary school or the university, set goals for each level and focus on achieving your goals. When you do that, you won't have time for any other frivolity. Your head will be too full of the plans for achieving your goals that there will not be any room left for infatuation.

As you continue on this journey of life, it's important you study yourself honestly. If you find you are drifting in the wrong direction concerning the opposite sex, tell yourself the truth immediately and call yourself to order.

Further Study: Colossians 3:2-5; Ephesians 5:3.

Prayer: *Father, in Jesus name, help me to make choices based on the truths in your word and not my feelings, Amen.*

Tip of the day: You are absolutely responsible for the outcome of your life.

February 24th

Separation

*Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards,
our vineyards that are in bloom. Songs of Solomon 2:15*

Text: Hebrews 12:1-3

Do you remember when you were younger and you were attached to a particular toy such that it was impossible for you to do any other thing? Your parents probably had to hide the toy from you or give it out. But in no time, you actually forgot about that toy, like it never existed. This is exactly what a crush is like. All you need to do is separate yourself from whoever you have a crush on. Because a crush doesn't have a proper root system, before you know it, you would forget about that person and move on.

Time heals wounds and you will heal from the stress it took to untangle yourself from that person. Don't be afraid, just keep trusting God and focusing on more important things; your house chores, school work, church activities, etc. and with time, you will indeed heal.

Further Study: Ecclesiastes 11:9-10; Proverbs 31:30

Prayer: *Dear Lord, help me to sieve out thoughts, emotions, and actions that will jeopardize my future in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Begin to separate yourself. Don't send that text message or make that call.

February 25th

In Good Time

God sets the lonely in families Psalm 68:6a

Text: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

God wants each one of us to have family and friends. He created us that way, for relationships. First with himself then with other human beings. Like our text says there is a time for everything. The time for love will come. True love, the type that stands the test of time will also come.

Your duty is to cherish your relationship with God. Study and get to know yourself. Discover the purpose for which God created you and work towards fulfilling it. While you are doing this, staying busy as Adam was in the garden, God will bring your help mate your way.

Further Study: Proverbs 18:22; Songs of Solomon 2:16

Prayer: *Father, I trust you to place me in my own family when the time is right in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Start learning how to recognize the right spouse God has for you.

Week 9 Loving Myself

February 26th

God's WIP

Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you — guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. 2 Timothy 1:14

Text: Psalms 139:13–16

Have you ever stood in front of a mirror and smiled/ cried as you critically examined yourself? How would you react if you could view your inner self/ character? A lot of people do not like what they see and wished they looked different or were born into a different family.

A dislike of yourself is a distrust of God's deep love and best desires for you. God has deposited a lot of good in you which you need to keep safe by appreciating and treasuring it dearly. There may be certain unprofitable characteristics or traits that you may need to get rid of but always remember you are God's work-in-progress (WIP). Be patient with your transformation process while loving all of you.

Further Study: Genesis 1:31; Hebrews 2:6–7; 1 Peter 2:9

Prayer: *Lord, you put a lot of thought into creating me and I am grateful for this display of love. Please help me love all of me as you transform me into your image, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Pick up a character-building material every day as you appreciate the work done so far.

February 27th

Spirit of Mediocrity

"Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities" Daniel 6:3

Text: 2 Timothy 1:7

Mediocrity is a place between 'not so good' and 'good'. It occurs when great care is not taken in the conduct of affairs; where work is done sloppily, excuses are the order of the day, and the mind is not stretched or pressured to release all the good stuff inside.

Daniel was a young boy taken captive to a distant and unfamiliar land. He could have chosen to live a less-than-excellent life, he could have succumbed to fear, decided to bemoan his 'misfortune' and become depressed, expecting everyone to understand. Instead, he chose to be directed by the spirit of excellence in him.

You are the creation of the Almighty; His look-alike carrying His breath in you! You are expected to soar with wings like eagles and show forth His glory and excellence in everything you do. Life must know that you passed its way. Do not accept anything less!

Further Study: Philippians 4:13; Romans 9:22–24; 2 Corinthians 4:7

Prayer: *Lord, you have invested so much in me; please help me display excellence in all I do, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Make up your mind to work on your mind every day.

February 28th

Forgive Thyself

"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors". Matthew 6:12

Text: Matthew 18:21–35

Have you ever felt like giving yourself a kick when you made a mistake or said to yourself: "how could you have been so foolish?". If your plea is guilty, it is time to release yourself from the prison of unforgiveness. You have actually become one of your own debtors. If you do not believe that you are a good and wonderful person, you will not be able to love yourself in a healthy way.

A lot of us are hard on ourselves and impatient with our progress in life. This affects the way we handle the mistakes of others. Be a little kinder to yourself and you will find out that you are creating the right environment for you to excel in life. When you forgive yourself, you let go of weights in your life. Remember that the proof of love is in the ability to forgive and offer a second chance.

Further Study: Mark 11:25; Hebrews 8:12; Daniel 9:19

Prayer: *Lord, please help me forgive myself for my errors so I can truly soar with wings like an eagle, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Cut yourself some slack; everyone is striving towards perfection.

March 1st

Fragrance of Love

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. 2 Corinthians 2:14

Text: 2 Peter 1:5–8

Certain perfumes and body lotions appeal to us partly because of the fragrance they produce. Once we apply them, the fragrance goes wherever we go, impacting anyone we encounter.

This is also true of attitude and presence. What fragrance is produced from you, especially when you are under pressure? This is proof of what you contain. It can affect your environment and people around you positively or negatively. So, nurture the love of Christ in you so that you can have a healthy love for yourself and others. This is necessary to build the right environment (of trust, grace, peace, forgiveness, and love), which ensures your continuous growth and establishment as a Christian.

Further Study: Ephesians 3:18–19; Psalm 119:64; John 12:3

Prayer: *Dear Lord, I receive your love into my heart and the grace to release that love to all I meet in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Store God's Word in you and practice it so that your fragrance can be beautiful to all.

March 2nd

Selfishness

"The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'." Galatians 5:14a

Text: Philippians 2:1–7

What does it mean to be selfish? It is equal to a lack of consideration for other people or a concern primarily for one's own interest. It sounds harsh, right? But think about it. When the world screams 'survival of the fittest' and loudly proclaims that life is a rat race, it is easy to forget who you are and what you carry.

When you make your decisions, do you give due consideration to the effect it would have on your neighbor? Does it matter to you that another could get hurt or disappointed? When you come before God's mercy seat, is it only for yourself? Anyone who thinks the world revolves around him is myopic and unable to see that such is a limited world.

Further Study: Proverbs 11:24–27; Romans 13:8–10; Ephesians 4:31–5:1

Prayer: *Lord, the world is more than I, me and myself. Help me to consider others in any decision I take in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Wear your neighbor's shoes as you make your decisions.

March 3rd

Staying in Harm's Way

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy". John 10:10a

Text: Psalms 1:1–3

To walk, stand and sit are three growth processes expected in the life of a Christian. Where and with whom you walk, stand or sit has a great impact

on your life; they either keep you safe or place you in harm's way. You are valuable and created for honor. Are you walking, standing or sitting where thieves dwell?

Thieves come only to steal, kill and destroy the treasures deposited in you by God, intended to bless your world. Examples of thieves in your path, which could expose you to danger, are bitterness (steals joy), envy and worry (steal peace), laziness and procrastination (steal time), spendthrift (steals money), bad habits and carelessness (steal health). When you interact with the wrong human company or display the wrong attitude, you place yourself in harm's way and compromise your safety.

Further Study: Isaiah 56:7; Mark 11:7; Luke 19:46

Prayer: *Father, if I have placed myself in harm's way show me and help me on the right path.*

Tip of the day: Give a quit notice to all the thieves lurking around you.

March 4th

A Time Away

*"Do not stare at me because I am dark, because I am darkened by the sun.
My mother's
sons were angry with me and made me take care of the vineyards;
my own vineyard I have neglected". Song of Solomon 1:6*

Text: Psalm 127:1-2

Have you ever felt drained and boxed in? Does it sometimes feel as if life has thrown more than you can chew and you need more than 24hrs? If you answered yes to any of these questions, be kind to yourself and take out time to recharge. Even the best of cars need to stop over to refuel else it may stop en route, in the middle of nowhere.

The key verse highlights the consequences of neglecting **your own vineyard**. Every organization knows employees need time away from work, to rest, refresh and birth new ideas. This is why different kinds of leave are provided. Do not be caught neglecting yourself or you will burn out and not be useful for anything good!

Further Study: Ecclesiastes 3:1; John 9:4; Hebrews 4:4

Prayer: *Lord, help me follow the example set by you, and take time away to refuel, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Learn to say no to some activities so you can REST.

Week 10 Growing Spiritually

March 5th

A New Creation, A New Man

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

Text: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

When we become born again, we have a new nature that we do not know much about. Growing up spiritually is about discovering who we are in Christ. The way we think, act, speak, relate to others and to circumstances needs to be relearned.

It's like being a baby and needing to learn to walk, talk, dress etc. Truth is we need to learn the way of life of the new kingdom we belong to. Thankfully our loving heavenly Father has made provisions for us to be able to learn what we need to know.

Further Study: Romans 6:17-23, 8:1-4

Prayer: *Heavenly Father help me to grow into the daughter you have called me to be, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: What areas of your life as a Christian do you need to grow in?

March 6th

Food

*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word,
that ye may grow thereby: 1 Peter 2:2 (KJV)*

Text: 1 Peter 1:23–2:3

For us to grow physically we need food. Similarly, for our spirits to grow and become strong we need spiritual food. Our text for the day tells us that our spiritual food is the word of God. How do we eat this food? By reading, studying, memorizing and meditating on the word of God, just like you are doing now.

Reading the word would be like eating, taking in the word of God. While taking time to meditate on it would be akin to digesting the word. Often as we meditate (think on, ponder) on the word of God, hidden meanings which we may not have seen spring up. It should be a part of you, to daily spend time studying and meditating on the word of God.

Further Study: Ephesians 4:11-16; Acts 20:32

Prayer: *As we eat daily from your table Lord, cause us to grow to be more like you, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Memorize our key verse for today.

March 7th

Exercise

*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves.
Do what it says. James 1:22*

Text: James 1:22-25

It's not enough to know the word of God. It is more important to know and do what the word of God says. Romans 6:16 tells us that whoever we yield our bodies to by obeying becomes master over us. As we yield ourselves to obeying God (the word of God) every day, in every way and in every area of our lives, we grow stronger in our new nature and Christ truly reigns in our lives.

Still, in the book of Romans, God lets us know that if we sow to the Spirit, we reap life but if we sow to the flesh we reap death. The sowing there refers to investing your time and energy in obeying or doing the things, either of the Spirit or of the flesh. Obeying the word of God is like exercise as we do it we become stronger and healthier. We grow in our spirits.

Further Study: Hebrews 5:13-14; Romans 6:11-14

Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, thank you for the opportunity to be your child. As I go through today I choose to exercise in your word. I choose life over death. I choose to obey your word, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Commit to doing what the word of God says, in whatever situation you find yourself in.

March 8th

Abiding in Prayer

*Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will
rest in the shadow of the Almighty. Psalm 91:1*

Text: John 15:4-11

If you have done agriculture or know anything about growing plants, you would know that it's not only nutrients that plants need to grow. They need the right environment. The type of soil, the amount of water and sunlight create the right environment for each plant.

Prayer creates the right environment for us to grow spiritually. Prayer is not just talking to God. It is hearing from Him also. In this environment of love, we are nourished and cherished and we cannot help but bloom and grow. Praying in the words that we know and understand and praying in the Spirit (in tongues), all play a part in making our spirits grow as we are bathed with the sunlight of God's presence. Abiding in the vine does not refer only to studying the word of God but also to dwelling in the secret place of the Most High. Dwelling in prayer.

Further Study: Mark 1:35; Matthew 14:23; Luke 6:12

Prayer: *Father give me the grace to learn to abide in your presence. May I always long for more of you, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Create a regular quiet time. When you can talk to God and hear Him speak.

March 9th

Nutrients for Growth

But you, dear friends by building yourselves up in the most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit Jude 20

Text: John 16:7- 15

Jesus promised us the Holy Spirit and for good reasons. It would be difficult if not impossible to live the life expected of us as Christians without the Holy Spirit.

He teaches us, leads us, empowers us. He convicts us, helps us pray, leads us into all truth. You cannot have any growth or make progress as a Christian without the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Further Study: Acts 1:4-8; Romans 8:14-17

Prayer: *Lord Jesus you promised us the Holy Spirit to be our helper and guide. I come to you now with an open heart ready to receive your promise. Lord baptize me today with the Holy Spirit, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Are you baptized in the Holy Spirit?

March 10th

Growing Pains (Pruning)

He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that bears fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. John 15: 2

Text: John 15: 1-2

Part of the process of growth is change. This change can sometimes be in the form of losing things we no longer need, in order for what we do need to grow. Like how we lose our milk teeth for the permanent ones.

As growing Christians, we are constantly letting go of the old ways of the flesh and learning the ways of the Spirit. This means letting go of lying, stealing, envy, malice and taking on truthfulness, contentment, kindness, love. In gardening, this is called pruning, the gardener prunes the tree to make it more fruitful; removing the old growth to make way for the new.

Further Study: Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 12:1-2; Songs of Solomon 2:15

Prayer: *Prune me, Lord, it may not be pleasant, but I will be more fruitful, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: What little habits are holding back your growth?

March 11th

Growing Pains (Discipline and Trials)

*Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.
2 Timothy 2:3(NLT)*

Text: 2 Timothy 2:3-5

A diamond is formed from coal that has been under such a high degree of pressure that one cannot imagine. Gold is purified by fire. The hotter the flame, the purer the gold will be. Precious pearls are formed when oysters get hurt.

My point? Trials come to bring out the best in us. When we pass through trials they help us grow. In trials, we discover how patient we are, how kind

we can be, how strong we are. In essence, the untapped riches in us. Trials may be hard but God allows them for us to grow.

Discipline, on the other hand, is something we have to apply to ourselves if we are to grow. We will not always feel like praying or reading our bible or telling someone about Jesus, but discipline involves putting our body under. Telling the truth even when it may get us into trouble, and doing what God wants irrespective of what our flesh is screaming for us to do, these all require discipline. Training in godliness is profitable in all things.

Further Study: James 1:2-4; Hebrews 12:1-7; 1 Timothy 4:8

Prayer: *Lord teach me to hold on through trials and discipline as they bring forth your life in me, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Examine yourself, in what areas can you use some discipline?

Week 11 Soul Winning

March 12th

What Is Soul Winning?

*He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.
Mark 16:15*

Text: Mark 16:15-18

Think of how your life was before you made Jesus Christ your friend. You were a sinner, separated from God and on your way to hell. But when you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour, you found peace, joy, and hope, your sins were forgiven and you are now on your way to heaven! This is every believer's story - a story of total transformation.

Now that we have received the love of God into our hearts, God wants us to tell everyone all that He has done for us because He wants to do exactly the

same thing in their lives! He is counting on us to be the ones to tell them about this.

Soul winning is the heartbeat of God. His greatest desire is that all men will know Him as friend. If we truly love God, we will show it by being instruments through which He can fulfill this desire. We will talk about Jesus and His salvation to everyone-family, friends, classmates, colleagues and neighbours.

Further Study: Mark 16:15–18; Proverbs 11:30; Matthew 28:18-20

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, thank you for giving me a new life and this wonderful responsibility. Grant me the grace and strength to win souls in Jesus' Name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Tell your transformation story to someone today

March 13th

What Is the Gospel?

*"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!"
Romans 10:15b (NKJV)*

Text: John 3:16

It is our responsibility to tell everyone about Jesus but we must know what to say. The gospel means 'good news'. It is the good news of the benefits we gain from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When Adam sinned against God, our relationship with God became severed and we were plunged into darkness. Man could no longer relate with God and was condemned to die but God so desperately wanted our relationship with Him back that He did the unthinkable...He gave His only child and son, Jesus Christ, to die in our stead!

By His death, Jesus paid the price for our sin once and for all and anyone that believes in this sacrifice is restored to a loving fellowship with God. Whoever believes receives grace to live a life that pleases God and will go to heaven to be with Jesus forever. The gospel is not a message of condemnation or hate, but of hope, forgiveness, and love. That is why it is called the **GOOD NEWS!**

Further Study: Luke 4:18–19; 2 Corinthians 5:17–21; Acts 8:4–8

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, help me to let people know that your shed blood is available to bridge them back to you, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Your message to the world should bring freedom and joy.

March 14th

Why Should I Win Souls?

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. John 3:18

Text: John 3:17-18

There are several reasons why we **MUST** win souls and they include:

- ✿ It is a commandment. Jesus gave us the **COMMANDMENT** to go out into the world and win souls. It is an instruction we must obey and disobedience to this instruction is a sin. **NOT** winning souls is a sin because Jesus expressly told us to go and win souls.
- ✿ There is the danger of going to hell for any soul that is not won. This means that the person will spend eternity in hellfire. Hell is a very horrible place that you would not even wish for your worst enemies. It is a place of eternal torment, pain, and separation from God.

Take out a minute and think of all your unsaved friends and family members. Do you want them to end up in hell? Bring them to Jesus now, tomorrow might be late.

Further Study: Mark 16:15; Ezekiel 18:4, 20

Prayer: *Dear Lord I pledge to win souls for you by your grace from today onwards in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Talk to at least one person about God every day.

March 15th

How Do I Win Souls?

Come; see a man who told me everything I ever did. John 4:29a

Text: John 4:6-30

Winning souls must be done deliberately and consciously. Below is a practical guide to soul-winning.

- ✿ Have a target. Focus on someone or a group of people, probably your friend, class, a family member etc.
- ✿ Pray. We have to pray intensely for whoever we want to win. Prayer is like rain that softens the soil to receive the words you speak which are seeds. If the ground (i.e. the heart) is not tilled and soft, the seeds would not penetrate and take root.
- ✿ Share the good news with your target. Make an oral presentation of the gospel, encourage that person to make a decision and lead him in the 'Sinner's Prayer'. This is a prayer of repentance that involves confessing the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
- ✿ Live the life. We have to be an example of what we preach. We cannot afford to live carelessly. When our character and lifestyle do not match what we preach, no one will listen to us.

Further Study: Romans 10:9-10; 1 Timothy 4:12-16

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, make me an effective witness. May my life, not just as my lips, preach the gospel in your name I pray, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Publicly declare Christ and let your life win souls to God

March 16th

Prayer and Soul Winning

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Matthew 16:19

Text: 2 Corinthians 4:3-4

Soul winning is warfare. The devil wants people bound so that he can eventually take them to hell. He has placed a veil over the spiritual eyes and minds of many so that they will not embrace the gospel despite hearing it severally.

To get people saved, we must tear off this satanic veil over their hearts in the place of prayer, bind the hands of the devil over them and ask for utterance and boldness to say the exact Spirit-inspired words that will convict our friends or family members as we witness to them. God can only touch our tongue in the place of prayer.

Do not stop praying or witnessing to the person until the veil is destroyed and the light of salvation shines through. Prayer and soul-winning are intertwined. We cannot do one without the other.

Further Study: Ephesians 1:15-19; Luke 21:15; 1 Timothy 2:1

Prayer: *Sweet Holy Spirit, pour upon me the grace of prayer right now. Make me an intercessor and a warrior. Give me the strength and tenacity to pray until I see the salvation of those I am praying for in Jesus name, Amen!*

Tip of the day: Pray for the people around you to get saved.

March 17th

After Soul Winning, What Next?

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, 1 Peter 2:2

Text: Galatians 4:19

Salvation is not an end but a beginning of a new and beautiful journey with Jesus. Getting saved can be likened to being born. After a baby is born, the baby is expected to grow and mature else everyone gets worried because it is a sign that something is wrong. Just like a mother that just gave birth to a new baby, our responsibility as soul winners is to ensure that the souls we have won grow and abide in the kingdom. What do we do?

- ✿ Take your baby home. We are to take our converts along with us to church.
- ✿ Make sure they study the Bible. The Word of God is the milk and meat they need to grow.
- ✿ Ensure they register in a foundation school in a church where they get mentorship from mature brethren.
- ✿ Encourage them to join a department in church which serves as a platform for discipleship.

Never stop praying for your converts until Christ is formed in them.

Further Study: 1 Timothy 1:3-5; Acts 18:7-11

Prayer: *I thank you, Father, for this awesome privilege to disciple men. I trust you for grace to get the job done effectively in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Ask your convert for a memory verse each day.

March 18th

Benefits of Soul Winning

*Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens,
and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and
ever.*

Daniel 12:3

Text: Proverbs 11:30

Every instruction obeyed attracts wonderful blessings from God; this applies also to soul winners. Some of the blessings are

- ✿ Favour with God. The salvation of souls is God's greatest heartbeat.
- ✿ An answer to prayers. Once you go about bearing the fruit of souls, the heaven over you is open and your prayers are answered speedily.
- ✿ Angelic backup. Soul winners enjoy a higher level of angelic ministration because they are busy with the Father's business. They are doubly secured.
- ✿ The manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit. The gifts are given as equipment to help people and come into play during soul winning.
- ✿ A special reward in Heaven. Soul winners will shine like stars

What are you waiting for? Join the Father's business today and be blessed beyond measure.

Further Study: John 15:16; Matthew 6:33

Prayer: *Lord I thank you so much for all these blessings of soul winning. I pray that as I go forth to win souls in obedience to your command, I will partake of all these beautiful blessings in Jesus name I pray, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Get involved with the Father's core business.

Week 12 Guarding your heart

March 19th

Of Great Value

*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.
Proverbs 4:23*

Text: Proverbs 4:20-27

To guard means - to defend, protect, shepherd, act as a chaperone or watch over. You only protect something that is precious and valuable. When I travel and have to stay in a hotel, I put my valuable items in a safe place like the hotel safe. Why? Because losing these could cost me a lot.

God considers our spiritual hearts to be of great value because it is the very essence of who we are and the source of all we say and do. The condition of our hearts is important because it can help or hinder our walk with God. Because it is of such great value, we should place it in a safe and secure place - in His hands.

Further Study: Proverbs 23:26; Romans 12:2

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, today I give my heart to you. I know you will keep it safe and bring your good plans for me to come to pass in my life. Amen.*

Tip of the day: Do not lock your heart away, leave it with Jesus.

March 20th

Time for A Deep Clean

"Search me, God, and know my heart ..." Psalm 139:23

Text: Psalm 139:23-24

I keep my home clean every day by tidying up and flicking a cloth around often used areas in the home. Sometimes, I do a deep clean by cleaning and scrubbing hard-to-reach areas inside and outside. This takes more time because the dirt has accumulated over time and become difficult to get rid of.

In our key text, King David asks the Lord to examine his heart. This is called a God-examination and is different from self-examination. When we examine our hearts, it is similar to me flicking a cloth around my kitchen. It looks tidy but does not get the hidden dirt below the surface.

When God examines our hearts, He shows us areas where secret sins, including pride and self-righteousness, have hidden. We need to confess these and receive the help of the Holy Spirit to think and live right.

Further Study: Psalm 119:59; Psalm 51:10

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, examine me today and show me what needs to be uprooted from my heart. Amen.*

Tip of the day: Daily God-examination through prayer keeps your heart spotless.

March 21st

Feed Yourself

*"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you".
Psalm 119:11*

Text: Psalm 119:9-16

Our human bodies need fuel in the form of food for us to survive on earth. The foods we eat provide us with a range of nutrients: vitamins, minerals, water, fat, carbohydrates, fibre, and protein. If we feed our bodies with healthy food, they grow stronger; if we feed them with junk food, they grow weaker and susceptible to diseases.

In the same way, our spiritual hearts are nourished by the Word of God we read, hear, memorize and practice. This helps us to do the good God wants us to do and to stop the bad habits He wants us to stop.

Further Study: Luke 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, give me a hunger and a thirst for your Word. Help me to hide it in my heart. Amen.*

Tip of the day: A balanced diet of the Word of God is the secret to a healthy heart.

March 22nd

You Are What You Think

For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. Proverbs 23:7a (NKJV)

Text: Proverbs 23:1-8

To think means to have something in mind, have an opinion or an intention, reflect or ponder on something. To succeed in life, it is important to think the right thoughts, have the right opinions and form the right mindset.

God tells us in Proverbs that we have the power to determine what we become by what we think in our hearts. The complete picture of who God wants us to become is revealed by Jesus who is the Word of God. Therefore, the more we study the Bible and reflect on it, the more we become the girls and young women He wants us to be; bold, confident young women who love God and allow His nature (Galatians 5:22) to shine through us.

Further Study: Psalms 19:7-14; 1 Peter 3:3-4

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, help me keep watch over the thoughts of my heart. Let them always be in line with your Word. Amen.*

Tip of the day: Find out what God has said about you in the Bible. Think on it. Pray about it

March 23rd

Where Is Your Treasure?

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also". Luke 12:34

Text: Luke 12:22-34

As young girls in today's world, there are lots of things that demand our attention e.g. friends, boys, fashion, personal image, the number of likes, friends or followers on social media etc. What you focus on every moment becomes your treasure.

In our key text, Jesus wants us to focus our attention on God and the things of God; to make Him the priority in our daily lives. Someone once said, "What you focus on becomes bigger, what you neglect becomes smaller". The more attention you give to God's Word, the more you come to value your relationship with Him and the greater the influence He has on your heart, life and decisions.

Further Study: Psalm 1:1-3; Colossians 3:2; Matthew 6:33

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, help my attention to be focused on You. Let Your word be the key influence in my life. Amen.*

Tip of the day: Set time aside at the start of the day to speak to God and to hear from Him through His Word.

March 24th

Forgiveness-A Daily Obedience

"...and a serpent will bite him who breaks through a wall". Ecclesiastes 10:8 (ESV)

Text: Ecclesiastes 10:8-9

Why do I need to forgive? For my own good! God has surrounded my heart with His love and protection. When I refuse to forgive, my heart becomes hardened and I am walking in disobedience to Him (Mark 11:25). This creates a hole in the wall of protection He has surrounded me with and the devil can sneak in and attack me and my family.

So, what should I do when I have been hurt? Immediately pray and tell God that I forgive the other person. Each time I remember the offence, I pray again. If I can and if it will not expose me to harm, I can go out of my way to do something nice for the other person. I will keep asking God to help me and to take away the hurt and anger in my heart. And He always does!

Further Study: Luke 6:27; Colossians 3:13

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, help me to forgive from my heart, anyone that has hurt me. Amen.*

Tip of the day: Has anyone offended you? Forgive immediately!

March 25th

Let Peace Rule

*And the peace of God, which surpasses all
understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in
Christ Jesus.
Philippians 4:7 (ESV)*

Text: Philippians 4:6-8

Peace comes from God (John 14:27) and refers to the calmness in your inner man despite any chaos in your external environment. Your confidence in God's ability to meet your daily needs, despite what you may see or hear, results in peace in your heart.

When peace is on guard, you have entered a secure fortress from which nothing can dislodge you. The name of the fortress is Christ, and the security guard is peace. The peace of God stands guard and keeps worry from destroying your heart and unworthy thoughts from tearing up your mind.

Further Study: Colossians 3:15; Philippians 4:8

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, fill my heart with your peace which passes human understanding and let it secure my heart in your promises for me. Amen*

Tip of the day: Think on God's promises. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He never fails.

Week 13 Dealing with Guilt

March 26th

The Sin Complex

"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" John 3:17

Text: Genesis 3:6-7

What happens when we commit sin after we have accepted Jesus? Can a believer, lose his/her salvation and require salvation again?

Sin is a separator, it separates us from God! Though our relationship with God cannot be broken, our fellowship with Him can! Have you noticed that when you feel guilty because of sin, you avoid praying, reading your Bible, going to church, or even your Christian friends! These are pointers to a damaged fellowship with God.

Adam and Eve had been naked and unashamed since creation, feeling no guilt. They freely fellowshiped with God with nothing to hide until they ate the fruit (sinned) and their eyes were opened! With eyes wide open now, they had stepped into the 'sin complex'. Often, we do not follow God's directions towards redeeming us. Sometimes we delay before accepting that we have sinned. And time is all guilt needs to eat its corrosive way into our conscience.

Further Study: Romans 8:1-2; 1 John 1:9; 2:1- 2; Romans 3:25-26

Prayer: *Have mercy on me Oh Lord and forgive my trespasses. Give me the mind of Christ that I may run to you when I fall.*

Tip of the day: When it comes to sin and confession, do not procrastinate! Confess now!

March 27th

The Cover-up

"Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy" Proverbs 28:13

Text: Genesis 3:7; 2 Samuel 11:1-end

Adam and Eve sinned and tried to cover it up! They did not want God's 'cover'. Sin is bad in itself and when we try and cover it up, it begets another sin. Guilt then comes in as we begin to struggle under the weight of all the cover-ups!

David's story is an excellent example of the cover-up process. He slept with another man's wife who became pregnant. He ordered her husband Uriah to come home so it would look like the child was his; cover-up number one! That did not work, so David gave instructions to put Uriah on the front battle lines so he would be killed; cover-up number 2! Uriah died in battle, and David married her - the perfect cover-up...or so he thought!

Sin let off a chain reaction of cover-ups; from adultery to trying to get him drunk to murder! Wisdom says confess your sin instead of covering it up. We would never do a good job of it anyway!

Further Study: Micah 7:8-9, 18- 19; Psalm 51:1-19; 32:1-5

Prayer: *Help me not to cover my sins Lord that I may obtain mercy, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Always stop to think about the consequences of that cover up and ask, 'Is it worth it?'.

March 28th

Enter the Accuser of The Brethren

*Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret,
but worldly sorrow brings death 2 Corinthians 7:10*

Text: Job 1:9-11

How the devil must have hated the sight of Job! To see the righteous man surrounded by his children, wealth and all-round prosperity must have been a little too much for him. Then, God boasted about him! So, he did the only thing he is good at, he accused Job of worshipping God for gain!

The nature of the devil is to accuse us even when we have not sinned! Job was being accused while he had no sin, so you can imagine what a field day the devil would have if Job had sinned.

The nature of the devil has not changed; he still takes pleasure in reminding us of past sins confessed and unconfessed. We have an enemy whose main purpose is to keep us from serving the Lord. In Scripture, he is called the "accuser" of the brethren. If you continue to feel guilty for forgiven sins, that is the devil, not the Holy Spirit.

Further Study: Ephesians 6:11; James 4:7; Revelations 12:10-11

Prayer: *Lord, restore to me the joy of salvation, and uphold me with a firm spirit, immune to the accusations of the devil, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Reject the fiery darts he shoots at your mind by holding up the shield of faith and the finished work of Christ.

March 29th

The Sea of Forgetfulness

*For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember
their sins no more. Hebrew 8:12*

Text: Micah 7:19

What could be more reassuring than knowing that no matter how many times we sin, we can arise like the prodigal son, go back to our Father who takes us back and hurls our sins into the sea! Now if a Holy God who cannot stand sin (He turned His back on Jesus on the cross) forgives us always, we need to forgive ourselves too!

I have met people who carry a burden of guilt over a past sin. They have confessed it but do not think they deserve to be forgiven and so beat themselves up every chance they get. Accepting God's forgiveness is an act of will; it takes conscious effort!

Jesus, by his life and death, purchased our forgiveness and provided our righteousness. We can add nothing to the purchase or provision except share in the forgiveness and the righteousness by faith alone. In view of God's holiness and sin's evil, it is fitting that we appropriate and apply what He bought for us by prayer/confession anytime we err.

Further Study: Micah 7:8, 18; 1 John 1:8-9; Matthew 6:11-12

Prayer: *Teach me to forgive myself as You have forgiven me that I do not make the blood of Jesus of non-effect by my guilt, Amen.*

Tip of the day: God has forgiven you; it's now left to you to forgive yourself!

March 30th

Guilt: The Good

*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit
within me. Psalm 51: 10*

Text: 2 Samuel 12: 20

Finally, David rises from the fasting and place of guilt after the death of his child. David's guilt drives him towards God. Passionately committed to being changed, He asks God not to cast him away from His presence. Some may disagree with this prayer because of the finished work of Christ on Calvary as it may imply one has lost salvation. I could not agree less.

David prays for a heart and a spirit that are new and right. He knew he was guilty of sin, displeasing God but his guilt was good as it drove him into the forgiving arms of the Father. Guilt can drive us towards or away from God. Towards: leads us back to a right relationship with Him, more convinced of the Father's love thereby making us more effective in our work for Him. Guilt can be a merciless taskmaster that drives us far from God. How we respond to guilt determines if we go the 'good' or 'ugly' way.

Further Study: Romans 8:1, 33; Hebrew 9:14; 10:19-20, 22

Prayer: *Holy Spirit I ask that as you convict me of sin, the guilt I feel will drive me towards the love of the Father, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Don't allow the devil rob you of the opportunity to teach others from your experiences.

March 31st

Guilt: The Bad

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:8-9

Text: Luke 22:60-62

Peter denied Jesus 3 times! The guilt and shame Peter must have felt can only be imagined. The enemy of our soul tries to use guilt to keep us from the Lord with accusations that leave us feeling unforgiven. This brings shame, anger, bitterness, and depression driving us from God's presence, this is bad guilt!

Peter probably dwelt in this shame because we find him abandoning the charge of feeding the flock and returning to fishing with some disciples! He allowed the burden of guilt to affect those he had been entrusted with. It is no surprise then that he did not recognize Jesus when He appeared to them after the resurrection; jumping into the sea in shame when he finally did!

If you have repented of your sins but still feel the accuser lurking in the shadows, confront the accusations with God's Word.

Further Study: Psalm 32, John 8:36, Revelations. 12:10

Prayer: *Holy Spirit may I not lead others away from you by focusing on my guilt, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Do not allow the enemy prey on your guilt; walk in that freedom and grace for which the price has been fully paid!

April 1st

Guilt: The Ugly

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. 2 Corinthians 10:5

Text: Matthew 27:3-5

Judas changed his mind when he saw Jesus was going to die but he did not repent though he had the opportunity to ask for forgiveness. His sorrow led

him to destruction and not repentance because it was not godly sorrow. He allowed the thoughts of guilt to fester and the birds of condemnation to nest in his mind.

We feel guilty when we struggle with sinful thoughts, addictions or habits. I struggled with pornography even as a Christian! The psychologists said it was as a result of being sexually molested. I always felt dirty and unworthy!

Unlike Judas, I did not allow the birds of condemnation nest in my mind. Whenever I fell, I went on my knees despite the 'whisperings' and how filthy I felt. Soon, I had no pleasure in those things and the "whisperings" stopped! You cannot stop the accusations from coming but you can stop it from taking permanent residence in your thoughts!

Further Study: John 10:10; Proverbs 4:21-23; Hebrew 9:14

Prayer: *I bring my thoughts under subjection to the Word of God which says he whom the Son of Man has made free is free indeed. Amen!*

Tip of the day: Seek the Lord in prayer asking His help to overcome guilt.

Week 14 Grace

April 2nd

What is Grace?

And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. Romans 11:6

Text: 2 Peter 1:2-3

Understanding grace can sometimes be difficult for us Christians. We find we are often confused about what grace means and we tend to mistake mercy for grace. What exactly is grace? Grace is the undeserved favour of God. Mercy, on the other hand, is withholding the judgement and punishment we deserve for our sins because of the blood Jesus shed on the cross. We have

all sinned and deserve punishment. Mercy says no. It is, however, grace that gives us access to this mercy. Let me explain: our sins cut us off from God, we do not deserve access to him. Despite this, God gives us access to Him and all He has- that is grace! Hallelujah!

So, while mercy sets us free, we are not saved by mercy, we are saved by grace. First God released grace, then he extended mercy. Grace, therefore, is this access that we have to God that comes to us undeserved and unmerited that allows us to obtain mercy and be forgiven.

Further Study: Romans 5:1-8; Romans 3:20-24; Ephesians 2:8-9.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, thank you for your grace that saved me from my sins and set my feet upon the solid rock that is Christ to stand, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Let His grace turn your weakness into something beautiful.

April 3rd

Everything Through Grace

From the fullness of his grace, we have all received one blessing after another.
John 1:16

Text: Titus 2:11-12

We live our everyday lives as Christians by the grace of God. Grace is the favour of God which enables us to access the power of God for everything we need for life and godliness. In other words, God's grace is at the very root of everything in our lives. Grace empowers us to live the Christ-life.

- ✿ We are saved by grace. Ephesians 2:8.
- ✿ We obey by grace. Romans 1:5
- ✿ We grow spiritually through grace. 2 Peter 3:18
- ✿ We receive our inheritance through grace. Acts 20:32

- ✿ We stand before God through grace. Romans 5:2
- ✿ We receive spiritual gifts through grace. Romans 12:6
- ✿ We live a holy life through grace. 2 Timothy 1:9

Even our manner of speaking is touched and seasoned by grace (Colossians 4:6). Our walk with God is all about the grace of God. The Bible itself is a proclamation of the grace of God.

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 12:8-9; Romans 1:1-5.

Prayer: *Dear Father, I thank you for your grace by which I live my everyday life. Help me Lord to take this gospel of grace to the world as I live a grace-filled life every day. Amen.*

Tip of the day: God's grace is God's love in action.

April 4th

Transformed by Grace

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Corinthians 5:17

Text: 2 Corinthians 3:18

What has the power to make us say no to sin? Is it the fear of getting caught? Not really. It is not living in a nice environment, it is not even the laws of God or the laws of the land where we live. All these play a role but there is something more- Grace. We see this clearly in Paul's letter to Titus in Titus 2:12, the grace of God teaches us that denying ungodliness we should live sober and godly lives (paraphrased).

It is grace, only grace that can teach us to say no to sin and ungodliness. It is grace, only grace that can make us renounce sinful desires. It is grace, only grace that enables us to live a life that is pleasing to God. Only grace can transform sinner to saint, unbeliever to believer. Only grace has the power to transform lives, this is the sanctifying power of the grace of God.

Further Study: Galatians 2:20; Psalm 51:10-12; Romans 5:6.

Prayer: *Thank you, dear Lord, for your grace that has transformed my life; thank you because I live above sin and ungodliness all the days of my life, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Grace meets us where we are but does not leave us there.

April 5th

Grace Is Not Fair

So, when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. Matthew 20:10

Text: Matthew 20:13-14

There is a natural instinct in man, a desire to earn or deserve or merit God's grace. Here is the reality: God's grace is not something that can be earned by working hard or by fasting or by keeping all Ten Commandments. Grace has absolutely nothing to do with earning.

In the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, Jesus demonstrates to us that grace is not fair. The labourers who started working at the beginning of the day naturally assumed they would earn more than those who came towards the end of the day, it is only fair that they earn more, right? But the master paid everyone the same amount! So, whether your sins are much or little, grace applies to us all. Yes, grace is not fair!! Praise God!

Further Study: Esther 2:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Matthew 20:1-15

Prayer: *Dear Father, thank you because I do not have to be special or do anything special to earn your grace, you give it to me freely. I receive it, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Grace is not achieved, grace is received

April 6th

The Power of Grace

With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. Acts 4:33

Text: Romans 1:16

The Greek word translated as gospel in today's text means *news nearly too good to be true*. The Gospel is not just good news, it is news so awesome it is almost unbelievable. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation and that is grace. (Romans 1:16; Acts 20:24)

Grace is not just a part of God's redemption plan, it is the power of God's redemption plan. The entire work of Christ in coming to earth, dying on the cross, rising from the dead and ascending to glory is by the power of the grace of God. (Hebrews 2:9)

When you have come to understand the grace of God, it will release the power of God into your life because when all is said and done, every aspect of our salvation is the work of God through the power of grace.

Further Study: Romans 3:20-23; Acts 11:22-24; Galatians 1:6.

Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, I thank you for the power of your grace which brought salvation to all mankind. Help me, Father, to know this power more and more and to walk in it, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Grace calls us to change and gives us the power to change.

April 7th

What Grace Is Not

For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. Romans 6:14.

Text: Romans 11:6

Grace can be kind of hard to understand and this is because it runs contrary to the system of the world. The world's system is a merit system: if you study and make good grades, you win prizes and receive awards. This continues as one gets into the labour market. Good performance gets you promoted, bad performance gets you fired.

Unconsciously we begin to equate merit with grace. There are also Christians who feel that grace means we can do as we please, that we can sin and disobey God without consequences. These ones do not want to hear of the need to obey God's commandments. They say, "we are under grace, we are not under the law". This is not so because grace is NOT a license to sin, grace is NOT lasciviousness (Jude 4).

So, grace is NOT merit, grace is NOT a license to sin, what then is grace? Grace is that unmerited favour of God that brings salvation to all people. (Romans.5:8)

Further Study: Jude 4-7; Ephesians. 1:5-7; Romans 5:12-6:1.

Prayer: *Dear Father, I thank you for your grace that walks with me in every season of my life. Help me Lord to grow daily in this grace, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Grace is the beauty of order under the influence of freedom.

April 8th

Grace - God's Character

*You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.
Titus 2:1*

Text: Hebrews 4:16

Grace is not only something that God bestows on us, it is also a character of God. In other words, God is a God of grace and it is His desire that everyone knows that. In Him, we have redemption through the blood of the Lamb, according to the riches of His grace. We were all dead in sin but God's character - grace picked us up even in our dead state and made us alive together with Christ.

Grace- God's character is not just a New Testament character. It is clearly seen in the Old Testament as well. See Psalm 78:38, Nehemiah 9:17. The story of David is a story of a man who clearly understood God's grace and character. See his response when he sinned by numbering the people of Israel in 1 Chronicles 21:13; *"let me fall now into the hand of the Lord....but let me not fall into the hand of man"*. (paraphrased). In Christ, this grace character of God was made flesh and dwelt among men. God is a God of grace and since God does not change, His grace remains sufficient for us.

Further Study: 1 Chronicles 21:1-13; 1 Peter 5:10; John 1:14,17

Prayer: *Dear Lord Jesus, I thank you for your grace. Teach me to live a grace-filled life, may my utterances and everything about me be full of grace, in your name I pray. Amen*

Tip of the day: Grace is God's power, not just God's pardon.

Week 15 Believer's Authority

April 9th

The Believer's Authority

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Matthew 28:18

Text: Luke 10:19

The Greek word translated "power" in our text scripture actually means authority/right. We may not understand it properly because just about anyone can exercise power but the question is; is it right? Is it legal?

Authority rules over power any day because authority is legal power, the right to exercise power. Here Jesus is saying, I have given you legal power (authority) over all the power of Satan and it cannot hurt you. And all means all, so the devil has no power over you and whatever he tries to bring your way is illegal and so not right.

You are the one with authority. Stand on that and run him off!

Further Study: Matthew 8:9; Luke 9:1-2; Ephesians 1:18-23

Prayer: *Thank you for the authority I have in Christ Jesus. Because of this, devil you have no power over me!*

Tip of the day: In Jesus name, command every situation to align with the Word of the Lord.

April 10th

The Seal

*...set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a
deposit,
guaranteeing what is to come. 2 Corinthians 1:22*

Text: Ephesians 1:11–14

Have you ever seen a traffic officer on duty?

He/she can be small in size yet command a very big truck to stop, and the driver will come to a standstill. Now the truck stops not because the traffic officer is bigger or more powerful but because the traffic officer is wearing a uniform (a symbol of authority) given to him/her by the government and so the truck driver actually stops in respect to the nation.

Likewise, when we command the devil to flee, he does not do so because we have gotten everything right but because we carry the Holy Ghost who is the seal of divinity and as such the devil has no alternative than to stop.

Further Study: 2 Chronicles 16:20–22

Prayer: *I confess that I have the Holy Ghost in me! I represent God's Kingdom, therefore, I am a terror to the kingdom of darkness.*

Tip of the day: Do not entertain any thoughts of defeat in the battle of life.

April 11th

The First Step

However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Luke 10:20

Text: James 4:7

Yesterday we saw that a teeny-weeny traffic officer could command a big truck (which by the way could crush him in seconds) to stop, and the truck would stop immediately. Why? He has the Government's seal (his uniform).

Likewise, as believers, we have our own seal -the Holy Ghost. Jesus told His disciples that the first step towards casting out the devil is to believe in Him, Jesus, accepting Him as your personal Lord and saviour i.e. to be born again (paraphrased).

If you are not yet in Him or born again, there is no way you can cast out devils because you do not have this seal yet. Do you feel threatened by the devil in any area of life? Then this is for you, submit yourself to God then you can have the legal power and authority over the devil and just like Jesus promised, the devil will flee from you.

Further Study: Mark 16:15-18; John 3:3-6; Luke 10:18-20

Prayer: *Lord thank you for the seal of the Holy Ghost in my life, therefore, the devil has no power over me!*

Tip of the day: Ask Jesus into your heart today.

April 12th

The Responsibility

*"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth
will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth*

will be loosed in heaven." Matthew 16:19

Text: James 4:7

Yesterday we saw that to be able to resist the devil, the first thing is to belong to Jesus i.e. born again. Then today we will be looking at the fact that it is our responsibility to resist the devil.

We are God's children and He has given His authority to us. We can use it wherever the need arises and the devil will flee. Just as my car key will unlock my car, when I hand it over to you, it will do same without question. Likewise, God's authority in our mouth will do the same thing or produce the same result as God's authority in God's mouth.

It has been given to you. It is now your responsibility to use it. If you do not, God will not come down from heaven to use it for you. Whenever there is a challenge, step out in faith and command it to comply in Jesus name and victory will be yours.

Further Study: Galatians 5:1; Luke 10:18-19

Prayer: *Lord, you have given me all the authority I need to have a victorious life. Help me make use of that authority in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Say to yourself "I have authority in Christ Jesus and devil obeys me just like Jesus!"

April 13th

The Main Key

*...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven
and on earth and under the earth. Philippians 2:10*

Text: Philippians 2:6-11

The main key to exercising authority is the name of Jesus! Why is that so? It is so because Jesus brought this victory for believers with His death and resurrection. It is therefore on this premise that we can stand boldly to speak to devil and situations.

In the Bible, it is recorded that Jesus triumphed over the devil and his demons. He rendered him powerless over us and made a public spectacle of him in the presence of his own demons! Praise God!!! He went ahead to hand over that victory to you and I. So, the next time the devil comes or any situation challenges you, remind them that Christ has defeated them; In the name of Jesus resist them and they will respond!

The name of Jesus is a potent force anywhere, any day because the devil lives in fear of what Jesus did to him many years ago!! Use the Name of Jesus, it is yours.

Further Study: Revelation 1:18; Colossians 2:15

Prayer: *Thank you because the name of Jesus is mine. I use it at will and devil and his cohorts will obey me!*

Tip of the day: Think of the most powerful weapon on earth; the name of Jesus is many times more powerful.

April 14th

Things

*...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven,
and things in
earth, and things under the earth; Philippians 2:10 (KJV)*

Text: Philippians 2:6 - 11

Did you notice that the Bible used the word “things” three times? Most times we assume that the only valid place for our authority to be exercised is when there is a demonic manifestation or when an accident is about to happen.

No, the bible says things and that means things, if there is anything, anything at all that is troubling you or you are not comfortable with, tackle it in the name of Jesus! Ranging from difficulties in academics to challenges at home to even pimples on your face!

God loves you and is interested in every area of your life, even to the minutest detail. He said that even the hairs on your head are numbered, so He is aware when one falls. If any challenge at all comes, confront it in Jesus name and it will bow.

Further Study: Mark 11:23–24

Prayer: *Thank you Lord because I have the Name of Jesus and every challenge obeys me when I call His Name.*

Tip of the day: Look at everything through the eyes of Jesus and see them under your feet.

April 15th

Knowledge

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.
John 8:32

Text: Hosea 4:6

Did you notice in our opening scripture that God did not say that His people perish because the devil is powerful or because He (God) cannot help us? No, He didn't say that! God is powerful; His people (you & I) are powerful.

However, lack of knowledge on how strong we are or what is available to us leaves us defeated. If you have money in the bank but do not know about it, you can die of starvation or fail to buy that new dress. Your dying of hunger or not being able to get what you want is not as a result of lack of money but as a result of LACK OF KNOWLEDGE!

Today I say to you, pick your bible, study it, find out what God has said concerning you, find out the authority you have in Christ. You cannot make use of what you know nothing about. The devil prides in your ignorance because your knowledge of God's Word places you at an advantage over him.

Further Study: Hebrews 2:14–15

Prayer: *Dear Lord, you have revealed all in your Word, give me understanding that I may apply them in Jesus Name.*

Tip of the day: Make this confession today; "I know who I am, I know what I have and I function in the reality of them"

Week 16 Prayer

April 16th

Defining Prayer

*It is written," he said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer"
Matthew 21:13a*

Text: Genesis 25:22–23

Although prayer may sometimes seem mysterious, the scriptures have simplified it and made it easy to understand. In our text, Rebekah went to ask God about issues in her life and stayed to get a response from Him. We will define prayer in five ways:

- ✿ A conversation between you and God in which you speak and listen.
- ✿ An opportunity to continue in the creative work under the leadership of the Holy Spirit because there is power available for creating what you desire.
- ✿ A time instructions and direction are given by God so that you would have a fulfilling and enjoyable life.
- ✿ A time to bring God's Word to bear in your circumstance to effect a change.
- ✿ An expression of thanksgiving to the Almighty from a heart full of love and gratitude.

God desires to spend time with you because He literally trips over you and there is a lot you can do together.

Further Study: 1 Samuel 30:8; Proverbs 18:21; John 15:16

Prayer: *Lord may I truly become a house of prayer in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Talk to God like you would your best friend.

April 17th

Why Pray?

*Pray without ceasing. 1 Corinthians
5:17*

Text: Luke 18:1-8

This was a question I battled with for years as a teenager. I was told that God was everywhere, knew everything and could do all and yes, I believed all that. So, if He was all they said He was and knew everything, why do I have to pray again? You can imagine my confusion. Listed below are the answers I found which gave me peace:

- ✿ It is an opportunity for God to 'spend time with me' discussing and giving me a glimpse of His nature and plans.
- ✿ Prayer sharpens my spiritual senses so I can stand well for God.
- ✿ It is a time I get charged up to be able to exercise my authority as a believer.
- ✿ The devil does not want me to have a good life and this, I can change when I pray.
- ✿ It is in the place of prayer that I get transformed to look like God.
- ✿ When I pray, I am able to release my bottled-up emotions and get my acts together.
- ✿ It is a commandment from God that I am to obey.

Further Study: Exodus 34:34-35; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Matthew 6:8

Prayer: *Lord help me to love to pray, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Get into a discussion with God every day over everything.

April 18th

The Ideal Place to Pray

And when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen... Matthew 6:6a

Text: Matthew 14:23, Matthew 6:5-6

Have you ever wondered about the best place to commune with God? Is there a perfect place to steal away to where you can pour out your heart and know that you have been heard by God? Is it a physical place away from everyone? What if you had to say a quick prayer while busy with other things? Can you pray in the midst of 'noise'?

Jesus is our best example so we will take a peep at where He went to each time He wanted to pray. Most of the times, Jesus would pull away from the crowd but some other times, when the need arose, he prayed in the midst of people. The conclusion of the matter then is to pull away to a quiet place in your heart where you can communicate with God without distractions.

Further Study: Matthew 6:5; Luke 9:16; Psalm 139:7–10

Prayer: *Lord, teach me how to go to the quiet place of my heart to pray, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Search out the place (even in your heart) where you can stay with God and be refreshed with no distractions.

April 19th

Praying Effectively

*The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.
James 5:16b*

Text: Matthew 6:9–13

I am sure that when you set out to do something, you want to succeed in it. This also applies to prayers. We want to pray and see the effect of it. We want to pray and get the answers as desired. There is a way to pray and be heard. Two things make our prayers able to stir up and make available great power to change events and ourselves - we come in the Name of Jesus and we make requests based on the Word of God.

To come in the Name of Jesus, you have to be in right standing with God (devoid of sin in all forms- unforgiveness, bitterness, envy and the works) else the Name would not be able to stand for you as a guarantor to be heard by God; it is only the prayer of a **righteous** man that is effective. Then, you need to know God's promise or Word concerning any matter because your request will lean on that Word to obtain an answer.

Further Study: Isaiah 55:10–11; Hebrews 12:15–16; Mark 11:25–26

Prayer: *Lord, may I understand what your Word says about every request I will make of you, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Come with a forgiving heart and based on God's Word, make your request.

April 20th

When Answers Are Not in Sight

*However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."
Matthew 17:21 (NKJV)*

Text: Hebrews 6:12

Imagine placing an order for an item and it does not arrive on the expected date. You will check to be sure that you met all the criteria needed to receive the item and also call the company to inform them of the delay. When you place orders with God and they do not arrive when you expect, you will need to check your faith level, ensure no weights are hindering its flight to you, add fasting to your prayers and patiently wait.

Fasting is important because it helps your spiritual antenna to be properly directed and sharpened making you more receptive to God's Spirit. This makes you clearly see the strategy to use to get the answers you desire. Do not give up or think it is not God's will for you to have what is clearly written out in scriptures. Take that extra step and deprive yourself of pleasure for what is ahead of you.

Further study: Ezra 8:21; Esther 4:15; Acts 14:23

Prayer: *Lord, help me to cultivate a habit of fasting as I wait for answers to come, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Skip breakfast at least once a week to pray.

April 21st

The Priest's Office

I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none. Ezekiel 22:30

Text: Revelations 5:9–10

Do you know that you can stand and say no to a flood that wants to destroy your family, friends, and country? This is because of what Jesus did on the cross of Calvary. You became a priest of God by His blood.

A priest's duty is to stand between God and man, offering sacrifice on behalf of man for God's mercy. So, next time, when things are not going as it should in your classmate's life, stand up, wear your priestly garment and plead on her behalf. In the place of prayer, do not have only your needs in mind; also come bearing the burden of others, as the priests of old bore the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, because that is the true mark of one whose life is modeled after that of Jesus Christ.

Further Study: 1 Peter 2:9; Leviticus 4:25-35; Revelation 1:6

Prayer: *Father, I thank you for the privilege of serving as a priest in your Kingdom. Show me how to effectively carry out my priestly duties, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Who has a need around you? Bring it to the attention of the Master.

April 22nd

Thanksgiving

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. Psalms 100:4

Text: 1 Chronicles 16:8-35

Prayer cannot be complete without thanksgiving. There is nothing as refreshing as a grateful heart. Think of what a glass of cold water would do to your thirst. If your younger sibling would always have time to make requests from you, have time to pick it up but have absolutely no time to say thank you; very soon, you will turn a deaf ear to her requests. We are so much like God in this regard.

A heart full of appreciation will always draw more blessings from the Most High. Thanksgiving is the key to the gates and courts of God. This also seals your blessing and ensures it is not taken away from you. It shows you understand that it was not by your strength that you obtained your answers.

Further Study: Mark 8:7-9; Psalms 107:1-9; Luke 17:15-19

Prayer: *Father I thank you for the many answers to my prayers; let your name be highly exalted forever, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Sing a song of gratitude to God today as you approach Him for your needs.

Week 17 Walking Through with My Parents

April 23rd

The Solitary in Families

*God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.
Psalm 68:6 (NKJV)*

Text: Psalm 68:3-10

At certain points in our lives, depending on what we are going through, we may find ourselves resenting our parents, brothers, and sisters. This is especially the case if the pain, hardship or unkindness we are experiencing is coming from those we expect to be our channels of succour and love such as our immediate family.

The scripture verse for today reminds us that it is God that sets the solitary in families. It is God who set us in our families and He (God) is able to support us through each and every situation we find ourselves in with our parents, lifting us out of it and giving us victory. The Bible tells us that children are a gift from the Lord and the fruit of the womb is His reward. We are both a gift and a reward in our families, it is not by chance nor mistake that we are where we are.

Further Study: Psalm 127:3; Ephesians 6:1-2; Mark 10:27

Prayer: *Thank you God for the blessing of being part of a family. Grant me wisdom and grace to do what you will have me do and trust you to help me through the rough times.*

Tip of the day: Think of godly responses and ways you could respond to any affront that you face.

April 24th

Jesus Already Prayed

"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; John 17:20-24 (NKJV)

Text: John 17:20-24

It is easy to begin to feel less in worth on the basis of the difficulty one may be going through in their relationship with their parents. The devil will aim to make you feel depressed and even worthless because of the many wrong things you may have been told and even been accused of. It would be good at such times to remember that long before you were ever even born, someone had thought of you and prayed for you. You and your future have already been negotiated for and secured. Be encouraged by the fact that the Son of God Himself loved you and prayed for you.

So, the next time unkind and painful attitudes or words are directed at you. Take a deep breath and spare a moment of prayerful thought; say to yourself Jesus already prayed for me, am not in this on my own.

Further Study: Colossians 2:10; Romans 8:17, 32

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, thank you for loving me and for praying for me even before I existed. Help me to remember this always and to rejoice in it, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Refuse to dwell on the painful words and experiences that may have been.

April 25th

Releasing the Burden

*And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord,
if You are willing, You can make me clean."
Matthew 8:2*

Text: Matthew 11:28-29

It is particularly delighting that Jesus did not only just pray for us ahead of time. He invited us to come to Him with our heavy burdens. He promised that he would give us rest. He also said that He would never leave us nor forsake us. He would be with us always. This is a great resource and one that must be extensively utilized.

So, when the weight of words spoken and the pain of wrong assumptions made come weighing; it is okay to find a solitary moment and pour it all out to Jesus. To cry if you must, rage at it all if you feel like; committing it all and casting it all on Jesus. Like the leper who even though so ill and ostracised still came, worshiped at the feet of Jesus and received his healing, you and I should come to Jesus with our burdens and cast it all on Him, over and over again.

Further Study: Mark 1:40; Matthew 11:28

Prayer: *Lord, I bring to you my pain, anger, bitterness, and all. I cast all these cares upon you. Help me to truly let go of them and receive your healing touch, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Think of kind words you can speak to those around you.

April 26th

Forgiving Your Parents

"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."
Mark 11:25

Text: Colossians 3:12-14

It would be of no benefit if in spite of all that God has done, much is lost through unforgiveness. It is only in releasing all who have hurt us through forgiveness that we find and will earn our own forgiveness - the grace to move on and excel.

Today we come to the crust of the matter: the need to forgive – our parents and all who have caused us pain. There is no way that anyone will be able to stand victorious in life if they are holding on to unforgiveness. It is clear that this process can be painful and difficult hence the reason why so many avoid it. It is even more so when we have been hurt so much by those we love; but we must take steps in accordance to God's word, to forgive in order to attain our own high potentials. In doing this, our prayers (heart desires, dreams, goals, aspirations) will be answered.

Further Study: Matthew 6:15, 18:22; Psalm 32:1

Prayer: *Father it is difficult for me, but I choose to obey you. I forgive my parents and all who have caused me pain. Help me to stay forgiving, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Think of practical ways to go about forgiving and staying in the place of forgiveness.

April 27th

Praying for The Hurt Caused

Now, this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 1 John 5:14

Text: 1 John 5:14-15

A key aspect of walking through with our parents as you may have realised is prayer. It cannot be overemphasised; especially if the relationship has been fraught with misunderstandings, confrontation, and pain. There is a need to continually talk to God about our feelings, as well as pray for good things to come the way of our parents and loved ones. The Bible encourages us to pray even for our enemies and do good to those who hate and spitefully use us. How much more our family and friends despite any hurt and pain they may have caused us.

Sometimes, long after the pain has been caused and the forgiveness granted, hurts arising from past events continue to linger. We must come to God with these in confidence and pray that there would be healing and a washing away of all the pain. This way we are able to live, learn and continually share the love of Jesus with all and sundry, especially our parents.

Further Study: Philippians 3:13; Matthew 5:44

Prayer: *Lord I pray in accordance with your word, that you wash me by the water and the blood and cleanse my heart of every bitterness and pain.*

Tip of the day: Utter a word of prayer, any time a painful thought goes through your mind.

April 28th

A Soft Answer

*A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.
Proverbs 15:1 (KJV)*

Text: Proverbs 15:1-4

It seems like a generally accepted practice to talk back when you are being shouted at or told off. However, we see from today's reading that there is a much better approach than that. Next time you are being yelled at, put down, and the like, decide to follow the approach recommended in the word of God.

We are to let our light shine before men that they may see our good deeds and praise our father in heaven. A soft answer in the midst of a turbulent situation will work wonders and ensure that you shine and come out on the top for Jesus. Jesus did the same thing you know. The Bible tells us that when he was facing trial to be crucified, His very few answers were tactful and thereafter, He answered them not a word. Try it and see, bearing in mind the scripture that tells us to honour our fathers and mothers so that it may be well with us in the land of the living.

Further Study: John 19:9; Proverbs 25:11

Prayer: *Lord it may not be the easiest thing, but it is your word, help me to offer a soft answer each time and not lash back or be bitter, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Meditate on the scriptures that teach on the tongue and a soft answer.

April 29th

Staying Focused on Love

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.
1 Corinthians 13:3

Text: John 13:12-17

The only way to remain victorious at all times, in all situations and through all things, is to ensure that our focus remains on God and his love. It is through love, that the forgiveness given will abide, through love that the soft answer needed will come.

Irrespective of how we feel, what we may have been through or are going through, it is only when we continually offer our parents services, responses and acts of love that the indelible mark of the new creature in Christ will dawn on them and form in their hearts.

Wash their feet. Make a resolve, that in all things your focus and response will be via the route of love. Faith, hope, love may abound but the greatest of these is love.

Further Study: 1 John 4:10,19; John 13:34-35

Prayer: *Lord I offer my heart to you, everything I have been through, use it for your glory, help me to continually walk in love, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Think of the many ways God has shown you his love and mercy, resolve to do same.

Week 18 Learning to Stay Alone

(Maximising 'Me' Time)

April 30th

A Thousand Voices ...

From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. Psalms 61:2 (KJV)

Text: Psalm 61:1-8

Mum, dad, church, school, study groups, social media, entertainment, culture... the list goes on and on. These are the many voices that speak to us in today's world. Their voices can often be much louder than ours and cause us to feel unheard and perhaps insignificant to the big picture. Guess what? The great king David also felt the same way. He had moments when all around him was just plain ugly and nasty but here was his solution; to come up even higher than where he was standing. He asked God to lead him to the rock that is higher than his overwhelming circumstances.

So, the next time we feel the walls closing in, let's escape to our secret place in prayer and cry out like David. God hears and He answers.

Further Study: Mark 6

Prayer: *Lord I give every second, minute and hour of my day to you. Help me to hear you over the many voices that speak to me daily. And after hearing, give me the courage to obey in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Take time to weigh all voices against the voice and will of God.

May 1st

R-E-L-A-X, You Deserve It.

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones."
Proverbs 17:22 (KJV)

Text: Proverbs 17:22

A great way to get the best out of your "me " time is to RELAX. Here are a few things you can do.

R is for READ ... did I hear you say, "here we go again"? LOL. Well, yes it has been said before and I'll say it again READ. Get as much information about all the topics that interest you. Read a cookbook, newspaper, your bible, your little sister's nursery rhymes can even bring out the poet in you.

E is for EAT. Yes, you have God's permission to but do so in moderation. Try cooking and reward yourself with your meal.

L is for Laugh. Its proven to be a great way to relieve stress. You would know that if you read.

A is for Appreciate. If something is good be thankful and more of it will come your way.

X is not for a word, it's for an activity. Make a list of the things that make you feel less than who God says you are and draw a big fat X over them.

Further Study: 1 Kings 8:56

Prayer: *Father I thank you because you love and care about me. Nothing good do you withhold from me. Hallelujah.*

Tip of the day: Make another list of who God says you are.

May 2nd

The Devil's Playground

*Idle hands are the devil's workshop; idle lips are his mouthpiece.
Proverbs 16:27 (TLB)*

Text: Proverbs 16:27-28

It's not news that an idle mind is the devil's workshop but I like to also see it as his playground. He sits in such a mind having fun, as he feeds us lies and paints deceptive pictures. He takes what God created as a beautiful mind, filled with possibilities and slowly destroys it. As children of God, we must not give the devil even an inch of space to take up residence in our minds. Feed on the word of God and your mind will become a NO PLAY ZONE to Satan.

Having read the word, keep busy, help out at home, help a friend in need, think of ways to be a blessing to others and you will find that you are so busy fulfilling purpose that the devil cannot distract you.

Further Study: Proverbs 15

Prayer: *Dear Lord, help me to resist the devil so that he will flee from me. I ask this in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Pray for someone else today and not yourself.

May 3rd

Have A "Me" Retreat

*Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him.
Psalm 62:5*

Text: Psalm 62:1-12

I recently asked my preteen daughter what she likes to do to relax and she gave me a list of 5 activities. Some had to be done alone e.g. reading story books and watching TV, while others needed an occasional partner or two, swimming and hanging out with friends. I considered these answers and realized that to have some sanity in your life you need to have a balance of time with others and time alone.

So, let's take a moment to think ... Are all the things you like to do dependent on someone else being involved? If the answer is yes, then you need to begin to find ways to enjoy your life even when you are alone. Having good friends is a blessing. However, you need to be alone sometimes and still love those moments because they help to make you an even better friend and not a clingy needy one.

Further Study: Proverbs 11; Mark 1:35; Matthew 14:23

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, you often spent time on your own away from your disciples, sometimes to pray. Help me Lord to discover the joys of quality time spent on my own, in your name I pray Amen.*

Tip of the day: Make a list of things you could do, if you had the whole day off to spend on your own.

May 4th

Health Really Is Wealth

*...you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.
1 Corinthians 6:20*

Text: 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

An amazing fact about the human body is that it was created to function like a well-oiled engine. With the right combination of food, exercise physical and spiritual well-being we should have no reason to feel down or ill. Ever wonder how the guys in the bible seemed to live so long, well they didn't eat their meals out of a can or a box or plastic wrapper. They also did quite a bit of walking since there were no cars and planes at the time.

Now as I point at you I have four fingers pointing back at me, I also need to keep a close eye on making the right choices about my body. When I get a beautiful gift, I polish it, place it in a safe place, keep it clean etc. We need to treat our bodies as the living temple that we are.

Further Study: Romans 12

Prayer: *Dear Lord, help me to glorify you in my thoughts, words, and actions in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Examine your meals and be sure 80% of it came from the ground and not a can. Get that body moving for exercise.

May 5th

On Your Mark...Get Set...Go for It

*"I can do all this through him who gives me strength."
Philippians 4:13*

Text: Philippians 4:10-13

One of the benefits of taking time out for yourself is that it helps you think long and hard about what you would like to be or do as you get older or during the holiday or on your next trip to grandma's. Pretty much anything that lies in your future.

Let's try taking some steps towards planning purposefully for that future you see in your mind's eye. This is called goal setting.

First, write the goal. Next comes the actions needed to accomplish the goal and finally implementing the plan. For example, to go to grandma's I have to first find out what day she and my parents would be available. The action point would be to call grandma and then talk to mum and dad. Do you get where I'm going? It's a great way to achieve both big projects and little things like Granny visits.

On your mark is the thought, *get set* is the writing, while *Go for it* are the calls, other actions taken and the final outcome. Hurry!!! Success is sweet!!!

Further Study: Philippians 3

Prayer: Lord as Proverbs 16: 3 says, *I commit to you whatever I do, and you will establish your plans. Thank you, Lord, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Try out the step by step goal setting exercise for your term project.

May 6th

Hello Josephine!!!

"A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream. And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged." Genesis 41:12-13.

Text: Genesis 41:1-14.

Another amazing thing that happens during our alone time is we dream. Call it a daydream or some will say it's fantasizing but our text today says differently. Joseph was a dreamer, though he wasn't blessed with the right people to share his dreams with. It didn't make him shut up about his dreams or his gift of interpretation of dreams. He did what he knew was right in God's eyes and kept getting in trouble for it but one day, literally overnight, his story changed. He became the 2nd most important man in Egypt after Pharaoh. No one could have a meal without his approval.

That's what God can do if you trust him with your hopes and dreams.

Further Study: Genesis 37 & 38

Prayer: *Thank you, Father, for giving me a hope and future in Christ Jesus.*

Tip of the day: Dream and never stop dreaming, Josephine.

Week 19 Friendship

May 7th

The Value of Friendship

If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Ecclesiastes 4:10

Text: Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Have you ever embarked on a journey alone before? Compare the experience with when you embarked on the same journey with a companion. The distance seems shorter and the experience better. God created us to be social creatures, that means we relate to others and have others relate to us.

In the journey of life and the Christian race, we need friends that can lift us up when we are down, friends we can share our life experiences with. Jesus Himself had close friends that He shared deep experiences with. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were all friends of Jesus whom He loved. If Jesus needed friends, so do we. Proverbs 18:24 says 'A true friend sticks closer than a brother.' A friend stands by you in the hard times and good times, rejoices with your successes and helps you in this journey called life.

Further Study: Luke 8:51-52; Mark 9:2-3; John 11:3-5

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, thank you for the friends you have placed on my way on this journey called life, in your name I pray, Amen!*

Tip of the day: Who are your friends?

May 8th

Can I Be Trusted?

*Many claim to have unfailing love, but a faithful person who can find?
Proverbs 20:6*

Text: Proverbs 18:24

Have you had struggles in building and maintaining friendship in the past? Are there friendships you regret losing? Before you start blaming the other party, hold on and think about the role you played. Can you boldly say you put in your best?

One of the keys to long-lasting, successful relationships is being a trusted friend. Trustworthy means to be reliable, dependable and honest. Think of the following questions carefully and be sincere to yourself as you answer them. Can my friends trust me to be honest and truthful at all times, even when it may hurt? Can I be counted upon to be there when I say I will? Do I stand up for my friends especially when they cannot stand up for themselves? Am I loyal to my friends? Can I keep a secret or do I spill the secrets of my friends or gossip about them? Am I genuinely supportive and happy when my friends are succeeding? Am I supportive of my friends when they are faced with life's challenges?

God is trustworthy and we, His children must follow His footsteps.

Further Study: Proverbs 17:17

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, please teach me to be a trustworthy; reliable, honest and dependable friend.*

Tip of the day: Decide today to be trustworthy, reliable and honest.

May 9th

Choosing the Right Friends

Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.
Proverbs 13:20

Text: 1 Kings 12:1-11

Friends are one of the greatest influences we have in our lives. The Bible teaches us in 1 Corinthians 15:33 that when we associate with the wrong people, our character is corrupted. Friendship should be deliberate and by choice not of convenience and should be done bearing your future in mind. Your friends should share your values and beliefs. As Proverbs 13:20 says if you want to be wise, you walk with the wise. If you value God, your friends should be people who value God.

Proverbs 27:17 says iron sharpens iron, the people whom you choose as friends should be people who would improve you, challenge you, encourage you when you are down, tell you when you are wrong. Do your friends meet these criteria? If not, it's time to go friend- shopping with these principles in mind. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 15:33; Psalm 1:1

Prayer: *Dear Holy Spirit, please help me to choose the right friends. Help me to let go of some friendships, and make new ones that will help me fulfil my destiny, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Have you checked your friend list?

May 10th

Friends, To Have or Not To Have?

*A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.
Proverbs 18:24*

Text: I Samuel 18:1-4

For some of us, making friends is easy, a breeze, we don't even think about it twice. For others, well... it's a bit of a challenge. What do I say? How do I keep the friendship going? What if he/she rejects me? These questions and more can plague one and keep one paralyzed, unable to take that first step. But nothing in life is without some risk.

Our text doesn't exactly say who approached whom first, but Jonathan could have thought, 'with all of David's battle successes would he talk to me? Or David, 'He's the son of the King, it's probably not a good idea to try talking to him.' Whoever took the first step doesn't really matter, what resulted was a beautiful friendship that lasted beyond their lifetimes.

We can have such too. Ask God to bring the right friends your way, to guide your feet to the people he has destined to help you on this journey. But when He brings them you still have to take that step and reach out. A true friend is a treasure, a rare gem. It is a gift from God and makes your journey on earth memorable.

Further Study: Judges 11:37-38; Proverbs 18:1-2

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, please bless me with true friends this month.*

Tip of the day: One of the most beautiful qualities of true friendship is to understand and to be understood. *Lucius Annaeus Seneca*

May 11th

A Friend Like No Other

*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners,
Christ died for us. Romans 5:8*

Text: John 15:13-14

Have you desired a close, personal friendship where you can be loved, heard, appreciated and accepted? Maybe you're still looking for that one person you can connect with. Jesus is the best friend you can ever have. He loves, cares, listens, encourages, gives, and forgives like no one does. He is the only one that truly understands your feelings desires and innermost secrets (Hebrew 4:15).

Guess what? He wants to have a close friendship with you. He wants to fill that emptiness in your life with so much love and joy. He hurts when we reject Him and go our own way. He hurts because He knows He has the answers we are looking for, yet we reject him. Ask Him to be your closest friend. Once you do, He accepts you and begins a loving relationship with you. Make Jesus your friend today.

Further Study: John 15:13, James 4:4

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, I thank you for giving up your life for me. I am sorry for hurting you in the past. Please forgive me and come into my life as my closest friend.*

Tip of the day: Jesus thinks you are to die for, of a truth He already died for you.

May 12th

Honouring God in Friendship

*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.
Philippians 4:8*

Text: Romans 12:10

Making friends is one thing, honouring God through that friendship is another. Many friendships do not honour God. Our friends can become our gossip partners, competition, and 'partners in crime'. What we do in friendship matters a lot. The activities we engage in with our friends determine whether our friendship honours or dishonours God. Are there friends whom after spending time with them you feel a need to go to God for repentance? You need to rethink those friendships.

Aim to create godly memories with your friends, carrying out projects that put a smile on God's face like outreaches, street evangelism, sharing the love of God with those who are less privileged and so much more. Carry out projects that challenge you and cause you to grow. Your friendship with people should leave them desiring more of God. It all begins with a decision to honour God.

Further Study: Psalm 1:1-3

Prayer: *Oh Lord, please help me to honour you in all my friendships.*

Tip of the day: Think of a God-worthy project for you and your friends.

May 13th

Dealing with Conflict in Friendship

*"If a brother sins against you, go to him privately and confront him with his fault. If he listens and confesses it, you have won back a brother.
Mathew 18:15*

Text: Matthew 18:15

In our dealings with our friends, conflict and offense will occur. The way we handle it, often determines how long our friendships last. Sometimes, it may seem easier to walk away from a friendship rather than addressing a serious conflict. But, working/walking through such problems and making amends is vital to maintaining worthwhile friendships. The Bible encourages us to talk to people that hurt us. Here are a few tips to keep in mind when doing that:

- ✿ Give yourself time to calm down, so that you can think, talk and act rationally.
- ✿ Treat/speak to your friend with respect.
- ✿ Listen to what your friend has to say with the aim of understanding them rather than with the hope of defending yourself.
- ✿ Choose your words wisely. Avoid accusatory phrases like "you never," "you always."
- ✿ Always be ready to apologise sincerely.
- ✿ Let it go; if you can't find common ground, agree to disagree and let it go.

Further Study: Proverbs 15:1,18; 1 Peter 4:8

Prayer: *Dear Holy Spirit, help me to forgive my friends that have hurt me and help me repair friendships that have been lost due to unresolved conflict, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Conflicts can make your friendship stronger or drive a wedge between you. The choice is yours.

Week 20 Developing A Reading Culture

May 14th

Daniel And His Friends

'... showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand...' Daniel 1:4

Text: Daniel 1:3-4

Before these young people (probably teenagers) were selected for training, they had to show that they already knew a few things-- that they had the ability and talent to learn and they could understand concepts quickly.

They would not have developed these in one day. You too can start today.

If you want to be distinguished, you will need to develop the aptitude for **every** kind of learning – including sciences, arts, business and current affairs.

Further Study: Daniel 1:17; Proverbs 9:9

Prayer: *Lord, I ask that you help me develop an aptitude for every kind of learning, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: It's never too early to start becoming well informed. Read wide. Perhaps you could set yourself a challenge to read at least 10 books (not just fiction or Christian books) in the next 12 months.

May 15th

Store Up Knowledge

'The wise store up knowledge...' Proverbs 10: 14

Text: Proverbs 10:14

God made the brain in an amazing way. It is like a muscle, a sponge, and a store. Like a muscle, it gets stronger with use and exercise. Like a sponge, it takes in and gives out information. Like a store, it can keep information for later use.

The younger you are, the more the brain is able to grow, absorb information and store them.

There is so much knowledge available from books, journals, and the internet. The wise would seek out knowledge and absorb it. If you wish to be wise, read your school books and your bible but also read other books, journals, and other informative materials. The brain will store them for later use.

Further Study: Proverbs 8:12; Proverbs 18:15

Prayer: *Lord, help me find the books and other reading materials I need, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Read for the fun of it - you never know when the knowledge you store up would come in handy.

May 16th

Add to Your Learning

'...and they will add to their learning' Proverbs 9:9b

Text: Proverbs 9:9

Do you know any 'Mr or Miss know-it-all?' It is really difficult to teach them anything because they think they know it all. However, everyone knows

that they don't know everything. The bible says the wise add to their learning.

So, there is always more to learn about a subject matter and there is more than one side to any matter. It is wise to try and read up different views and opinions on an issue for a balanced knowledge. For example, one person might say that 'this glass is half full' and another says that 'it is half empty'. If you only know about the 'half full' view, you may not bother to go and find more water for a fill-up and if you only read about the 'half empty' view, you may be discouraged. However, if you read and consider both sides, you would have a more realistic perspective.

Please note that the bible is the final authority in all things.

Further Study: Ecclesiastes 12:11

Prayer: *Father, give me a desire for knowledge, in Jesus name Amen.*

Tip of the day: Don't be a 'know-it-all'. Keep your mouth shut and read.

May 17th

Reading Right

*"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble,
whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is
admirable
– think about such things'. Philippians 4:8*

Text: Philippians 4:8 – 9

As a teenager, I loved reading (still do) and would spend hours with my nose buried in a book. I remember getting rid of a particular fiction because it was unhealthy for my mind. It took all my will because I really wanted to know what happened next but the Holy Spirit had been nudging me to get rid of it. After much struggle, I made a decision and burnt the book - I didn't want to leave any room for temptation.

Be picky about the books you read (especially if they are fiction). Let their final message be noble, right, pure and admirable. Avoid pornographic books. There are plenty of other good books.

Further Study: Proverbs 20:15; Proverbs 19:2

Prayer: *Father, help me to honour you in the things I read, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Mind the authors! Not every author is worth reading and some will need a good pinch of salt.

May 18th

The Dull Axe

'If the axe is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed...'
Ecclesiastes 10: 10a

Text: Ecclesiastes 10:10

My brother once told me that if I need force to open something or fit a plug in, I am probably not doing it the right way. He was right! Since then, I have always first studied the parts before trying to fit them.

Sometimes, more strength is used because there is a lack of skill (ability and knowledge). For example, if you wish to communicate clearly to a large audience, you need to have a good understanding of your subject, know how to speak your chosen language of communication and then practice and practice until your speech comes naturally (without much struggle). Reading will expand your knowledge of your subject. Reading will improve your language skills. Then the rest is down to practice.

Further Study: Proverbs 22:2, 9; Proverbs 12:24

Prayer: *Father, help me to be diligent in study, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: If you are struggling in any area of learning or school subject, pick up the books and study them at least one hour every day.

May 19th

The Example of Ezra

*"For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord..."
Ezra 7:10a*

Text: Ezra 7:10

I heard about a young person who grew up in their village but went on to a university in town. He would study a whole chapter of the Bible every day before beginning his academic reading for the day. At the end of his course, he obtained a 1st Class and the second 1st Class in the history of his department! And the only 1st class in his department for that academic year! He had a really excellent result and he also gained a really good grasp of the scriptures.

Like Ezra, he devoted himself to the study of God's word. He is a worthy example to emulate.

Further Study: Colossians 2:3; Jeremiah 3:15.

Prayer: *Lord, I ask for the understanding to enable me to give myself to the study and observance of your word, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Read the bible cover to cover at least once in your youth. With the help of the Holy Spirit, you will find Christ, in whom are hidden **all** the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

May 20th

Discipline and Knowledge

'Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge...' Proverbs 12:1a

Text: Proverbs 12:1

There are several ways we can interpret the scripture above:

- ✿ If you wish to obtain knowledge, you would need to apply discipline (self-control and focus).
- ✿ In order to learn, you need not be afraid of correction (of your work). Look at any comments the teachers have made on your work and revise it accordingly.
- ✿ If you don't like correction, you will remain stupid (the Bible tells it like it is!).
- ✿ If you don't do so well in an exam, don't despair. See if you can find out why. Then read up and practise to cover any gaps in your knowledge.

- ✿ Read through books even if they make you uncomfortable by addressing some of your weaknesses or faults.
- ✿ When you study the bible, don't gloss over quickly or ignore parts that feel like a rebuke or correction. Submit yourself to them and you will increase your knowledge of God.

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 1:5

Prayer: *Lord, please help me to be humble to receive correction. Teach me to apply discipline.*

Tip of the day: Try reading through your reading list for each term. Ask your teachers for one if they have not provided it.

Week 21 My Health; My Wealth

May 21st

Your Health Is Important to God

"Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, and raise the dead"
Matthew 10:8a (KJV)

Text: Matthew 10:5-8

When Jesus was on earth He healed many sick people and was moved with compassion whenever He saw someone suffering from an illness. God is concerned about our spiritual and physical health. To be in good health is His will for us because it brings Him glory. In addition, we have better energy when we are healthy, and we can be available to carry out His purpose and plans for our lives.

If it is important to God, it should be important to us. We cannot go each day treating our bodies with no care when God desires that we should care for it. If our bodies are sick or injured, we are unable to live the vibrant life

that God desires for us. Remember how bad you feel when you are sick? God doesn't want that for you.

Further Study: Matthew 8:16-17; Jeremiah 33:6; 3 John 2

Prayer: *Lord help me to prioritize my health. Let the things that are important to you, be important to me too, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Book a physical check-up today!

May 22nd

My Body; His Home

"Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?" 1 Corinthians 6:19

Text: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

God lives in you. You are like a mobile home for the power and Spirit of God. It is important that this home reflects the Person who lives in it. Have you ever seen a picture of the Buckingham Palace or maybe you've been there? That is where Queen Elizabeth of England lives. It is a royal dwelling. Imagine if the Queen lived in a hut, beside a muddy swamp. That isn't royal, is it?

God desires that His new home be royal and representative of Him. It is our responsibility to take care of this home. God wants you to feed your body right and treat it right. He wants when people see you they will see a temple fit for a King. If you know putting certain things into your body will harm it, damage it or make it sick, whether it is the food you put into it, the things you watch that goes into your spirit or even your thoughts, then put them aside.

Further Study: Ephesians 2:10

Prayer: *Lord help me to honour my body as you have honoured it by making it Your temple, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: What you cannot bring to the King's (God's) palace, do not put in your body.

May 23rd

Your Life Is God's Witness

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth". Acts 1:8

Text: Acts 1:1-8

A witness is one who gives evidence of something. God desires that our lives should give evidence of His nature, His love, and His power. When people encounter you, a message is passed before you even say a word. Part of being His witness is in the choices you make. Do you feed your body with healthy food options or junk food, drugs and alcohol? Do you feed your spirit with uplifting, inspiring material or negative, demeaning and depressing material?

When you neglect your spiritual or physical health, you are killing your spirit and body slowly. Jesus came to give us abundant life. God is saddened when we hurt ourselves by neglecting our health and many lives have been cut short because of this.

Further Study: Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Prayer: *Lord, let the choices I make for my body and my spirit reflect Your nature and Your goodness, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: If unbelievers were to emulate how you took care of your health, what would they learn?

May 24th

Healthy Eating

But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.
Daniel 1:8

Text: Daniel 1:3-8

Wrong food choices can make you sick! In today's text, Daniel decided not to defile himself with the food from the king's table. This was because the food had been prepared based on Babylonian rites and included certain food types which Jews were not allowed by God to eat.

In Genesis 1:29-30 and Genesis 9:3, God gave man as his food, everything that lives and moves, in addition to green plants. However, under the law of Moses, He makes a distinction between the clean and unclean animals. This is because there are health consequences of eating certain types of food and God wants to keep us from these negative consequences.

Today a lot of the foods we eat are processed junk and chemical laden foods, which clog arteries and cause diseases. Choose foods that nourish your body and cook these foods in healthy ways. God cares about your health, and you should too!

Further Study: Isaiah 55:2; 1 Corinthians 10:31

Prayer: *Lord, help me to choose foods that are healthy to nourish my body, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Fill half your plate with vegetables at each meal.

May 25th

Exercise

"For physical training is of some value....". 1 Timothy 4:8

Text: 1 Timothy 4:6-15

Centuries ago, before the invention of cars, bicycles etc., people would often either ride horses and donkeys or walk long distances to get to their destination. Walking is great exercise. In modern times, there are various inventions e.g. cars, scooters, elevators, escalators etc. which do not encourage much physical exercise. But physical exercise is important for good health.

When we don't move, our muscles wean and become less disciplined. Your body reflects the lifestyle you choose and it reflects your health. Today, choose an activity you enjoy. It could be walking, skipping, swimming, dancing, netball, basketball, or even training in the gym. Commit to being regular with this activity. Not only would your health improve, but you'll also learn to be more disciplined.

Further Study: Philippians 4:13

Prayer: *Lord teach me to be disciplined with my exercise plan, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Design an exercise plan for yourself. You can get a friend to be a buddy on your plan.

May 26th

The Health of Your Mind

A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.
Proverbs 17:22

Text: Proverbs 17:1-28

Many people suffer because of the things they have let into their minds. Depression, anxiety disorders, personality disorders etc. are actual medical conditions. As a young girl who had the habit of overthinking issues and sometimes obsessing about them, I fell into bouts of extreme sadness because I felt misunderstood and isolated. Thank God for Jesus and the friends He sent me who helped me overcome this.

We all need to guard our hearts and constantly assess the state of our mind to identify when we may be slipping into dark or unhealthy thoughts. Speak to someone you trust about it. You have the power to turn your thoughts from things that are not praiseworthy or helpful to positive, uplifting thoughts.

Finally, be sensitive to other people who may be battling an unhealthy thought life. Reach out to them, encourage them with the Word of God and prayer and help the person find help.

Further Study: Philippians 4:8; 2 Timothy 1:7; 3 John 2

Prayer: *Dear Lord, please teach me to oversee all the activities that happen in my mind. Let my mind be healthy, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Your emotions reflect the state of your mind. Focus on God's promises. He has given you a SOUND MIND.

May 27th

Living A Healthy Life

"So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

1 Corinthians 10:31

Text: 1 Corinthians 10:23-33

Your life should be lived to the glory of God and your health should also glorify Him. 5 excellent healthy habits that you can adopt are as follows:

- ✿ Eat more fruits and vegetables like watermelon, oranges, carrots and less of processed foods like bread, cakes, noodles etc.
- ✿ Get physically active. Start an exercise plan, stay consistent and share this healthy routine with your friends and family!
- ✿ Keep your clothes and your environment clean.
- ✿ Listen to your body. Have regular check-ups and do not ignore aches and pains. Get seen by a medical professional as soon as possible.
- ✿ Be positive, cast your cares on God (Psalm 55:22), and practice being thankful (Philippians 4:8).

Jesus paid a high price for your life, and He wants you to live life to the fullest. So, put aside unhealthy habits today!

Further Study: John 10:10; Romans 12:2

Prayer: *Lord, bless my plans to live healthily and help me to be committed to it, in Jesus name, Amen*

Tip of the day: Connect with people and look out for things that will inspire you and motivate you to stay healthy.

Week 22 Money Management

May 28th

Medium of Exchange

For wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter... Ecclesiastes 7:12a

Text: 2 Kings 5:19–27

Man used to trade by barter during the Stone Age. This meant that goods and services are exchanged for required goods or services. With civilization creeping in, this style of trading gave rise to cowries being used to obtain goods and services. Advancement in technology has brought us to the place where money as we know it, is used as a means of exchange.

Take a few minutes, reach into your purse for any naira note, preferably, the highest denomination available, take a hard look at it and call it a mere medium of exchange. That is what and all it is! So do not attach more importance to it. The catch, however, is what you are exchanging it with. You are meant to exchange it with what would promote you and ultimately the Kingdom of God for it is a shelter. Do not be like Gehazi who chose to exchange his for evil by choosing a path of destruction thereby exposing himself to harm. The choice is yours; choose wisely.

Further Study: Genesis 47:14–20; 2 Corinthians 8:9; John 2:14-16

Prayer: *Lord, money was created by man as a means of exchange. May I exchange it for worthwhile things in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: See money as a necessary piece of paper to assist in achieving your goals.

May 29th

Only A Caretaker

*'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the Lord
Almighty. Haggai 2:8*

Text: Matthew 25:14-18

Have you ever been put in charge of the house, watching over your younger siblings until your parents or guardian return? Did you start to act as though it was really your own house and the kids your children? I am sure your mother has sent you to buy things for her. Did you get to the shops and buy what you wanted? I am sure the answer is a big NO. You followed her list because you understood that the money was not yours and you were only sent on an errand.

Any monies that come into our hands are not ours, even if we *earned* it; they belong to God and He only gave us an opportunity to run errands for Him even though it would impact positively in our lives. We should feel highly honoured to be entrusted by God and so carry out our responsibility with dignity and all sense of seriousness.

Further Study: 2 Kings 12:15; Proverbs 17:16; Matthew 24:45-51

Prayer: *Lord, thank you for making me worthy of such responsibility. May I be a faithful caretaker in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Handle any money that comes into your hands with a high sense of responsibility.

May 30th

Principle of Seed

*She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands
to the needy. Proverbs 31:20*

Text: 2 Corinthians 9: 10-13

It is necessary at this point of your life to understand that there are two parts to any money that gets into your hands; one of which is the seed part. We all know what we should do with seeds; we plant them! It is only a foolish farmer that eats his seeds because when the time of harvest arrives, he will have nothing since he did not plant his seeds. A river that does not let out its waters will become stagnant and unhealthy. So also, a man that does not let out his own waters through acts of service will become unhealthy and experience stagnancy in life.

There are opportunities every day to do an act of love; to bring a smile; to lift a burden; to plant a seed. Specific seeds include tithes and offerings. God expects you to pay one-tenth of your allowance or profit if in business. He also expects that you will eagerly be part of His Kingdom builders financially and not close your arms to the ones who lack.

Further Study: Malachi 3:8–12; Galatians 6:9; Ecclesiastes 3:1–2

Prayer: *Lord may I open my heart and my arms and plant seeds in the lives of men as opportunities come, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Make sure you do not spend all monies on you and your needs; give out some.

May 31st

Principle of Bread

*Of what use is money in the hand of a fool, since he has no desire to get
wisdom?
Proverbs 17:16*

Text: 2 Corinthians 9:10-13

When God blesses us in terms of money, there are two sides of the coin- the seed and the bread. The bread is to be spent on your needs and this is where budgeting comes in very handy. A lot of us spend money on the go instead of sitting down under God's leadership to map out how to effectively utilize the resources available. Bread is meant to give strength and sustain life; therefore, the bread portion God brings your way is able to sufficiently give strength and sustain life.

One advice would be to have budget heads which are calculated in percentages and drawn down as funds are used. This means that you could possibly have money but not have the money to fund a need. This requires wisdom, discipline and yielding to the Holy Spirit's dictates but the dividends are numerous.

Further Study: Matthew 14:17-21; Numbers 3:51; Isaiah 55:2

Prayer: *Lord, again, it is clear to me that you have given me all I need if only I would handle it judiciously. Grant me the wisdom I need in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Let God guide your spending.

June 1st

Contentment Versus Push

Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. Ecclesiastes 5:10

Text: 1 Timothy 6:6–11

I recall my desire to get to the next class while a student. It was like that would be my ultimate but to my dismay, each time I made it to the next class, I got bored quickly and wanted to get to the very next one. It made me realise that we can never really be satisfied or content with our attainments except by the help of God. Our main text states that godliness requires an attitude to be highly profitable. The scriptures implore us to pursue more important and durable riches because money is fleeting.

There is a thin line between desiring more of God's monetary blessing and greed – the desire to acquire more for selfish reasons. You need to clearly watch your motive, which is an indicator of when you have crossed that line.

Further Study: Ecclesiastes 1:5–10; Matthew 6:19–21, 24–33; Hebrews 13:5

Prayer: *Lord only you can help me not to tilt over to lack of contentment when all I really desire is more of your blessing. Please keep me on track in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Always ask yourself "why do I want what I want?"

June 2nd

Wisdom for Multiplication

*The Lord shall increase you more and more, you and your children
Psalms 115:14(KJV)*

Text: Genesis 26:1–2, 12–22

The key verse speaks the mind of God concerning us. He wants us to increase in every aspect and this desire or promise extends to our generation. In our text, we find that despite the famine in the land, Isaac increased and multiplied in land, cattle, crops, and servants. He had what people would term 'multiple streams of income' and this was honestly gained. If God desires for all His children to prosper and increase, why is it not happening? All God's promises are conditional. The principles Isaac applied to get to this point in his life are clear:

- ✿ Isaac sought God's direction in the place of prayer.
- ✿ He obeyed even though it did not make logical, common or professional sense.
- ✿ He chose to start small.
- ✿ He was hardworking and not a waster.
- ✿ He did not engage in fights and quarrels.
- ✿ He kept a tight connection with God and His Word.

In summary, we cannot multiply without the Word of God for in it we have life in its fullness.

Further Study: Luke 5:1-6; Luke 19:13; Psalms 1:1-3

Prayer: *Lord, I have been commissioned by you to go ahead to multiply. I lean on you for direction and grace in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Listen to the master and keep your hands busy.

June 3rd

Rendering Account

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Text: Matthew 25:19–30

If you understand that you have been given charge over money that is **not really yours**, then it would not be strange or difficult to be told to give an account of how it was disbursed and put to use. It would be a great error to go to market without making a list; you will either buy some things you will regret later or spend more than you would have liked to. Anyone who has been handed over a business should be prepared to render account. That understanding introduces caution in the way we handle what has been freely given to us because nothing can escape His eyes.

We are going to face a just judge who would check our motives, our obedience level, our love, our integrity in handling what was committed into our hands, how aligned we are to His instructions amongst other things. Our just judge does not expect us to operate beyond the grace given unto us neither does He expect us to operate below that capacity.

Further Study: 2 Kings 22:4–7; 2 Kings 12:13–16; Ecclesiastes 9:10

Prayer: *Lord, I shall give an account of what I did on earth which includes finances, I want you to be able to say 'well done, good and faithful servant' in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Be worthy of trust; be faithful with money.

Week 23 Bullying

June 4th

Spot the Bully

"When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem..." Matthew 2:16

Text: Matthew 2:12–18

The word "bully" brings certain words to mind, including aggressive, strong and arrogant. We rarely associate that word with godly, considerate or helpful but bullies exist everywhere. A bully is someone who verbally or physically inflicts harm, pain or distress to another's property or person with the intention of upsetting or influencing them to act in negative or self-harming ways.

In today's text, Herod lets his anger and insecurity turn him into a bully who commands the killing of children and the destruction of property. This type of bullying still occurs. However, social media has created bullies who attack and destroy people's public image. All these are wrong in God's sight.

Further Study: Isaiah 41:11–13; Psalm 138:7

Prayer: *Lord, help me control my emotions, to respect the property and personality of another, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Let your actions be motivated by positive, not negative emotion. Always consider how you would feel in another's position.

June 5th

What Makes a Bully?

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

Text: Genesis 37:1–36

Psychologists who work with victims of bullies and former bullies have identified various reasons behind the actions of bullies. Amongst these are low self-esteem, jealousy and a desire to belong.

In today's text, Joseph's brothers displayed all these qualities. They were jealous of his multicolored coat, they felt insulted by his dreams, which showed him as someone favored by God and they acted as a group to sell him into slavery.

Reuben's behavior is especially interesting. Throughout the entire process, he did not wholeheartedly support his brothers' actions. However, the need to belong outweighed his sense of right and wrong. Have you ever been in such a situation?

Further Study: Galatians 5:19-21; Exodus 23:2; Philippians 2:3

Prayer: *Father teach me to guard my heart against these emotions, to find my peace and contentment in you, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Be careful to separate yourself from these three traits.

June 6th

Victims of A Bully

"...Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before". Daniel 6:10

Text: Daniel 6:1–16

A farmer kept poultry with 1,400 chickens, all free to roam about the farm. One day he decides to expand his range of birds and introduces a full-grown turkey. The immediate response of the chickens was to flap their wings and isolate the newcomer. If you could understand chicken speech, you would have heard them clucking about the arrogance of the newcomer, the color of its feathers etc.

Bullies always pick on people who are different from them, just like the administrators and satraps in our text today picked on Daniel. You may never know why a person picks on you but it is important to act like Daniel and focus on staying true to your values in line with God's Word.

Further Study: 2 Timothy 2:20–26; Psalm 141:9

Prayer: *Father, help me to remember that my behavior should not be dependent on how people treat me but on your Word, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Stay true to your values.

June 7th

Finding Inner Strength I

"...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace..."
Daniel 3:17

Text: Daniel 3:4-30

Sometimes life poses difficult questions at us, making us wonder who and whose we are. Facing a bully is one of those situations where knowing our identity is important and prevents us from becoming bitter or giving into fear.

We are God's children and His promises for us are good and pleasant, but it does not mean we will not face troubles or challenges. In fact, identifying ourselves as His children can mark us as targets for troubles.

Nevertheless, God has great plans for His children; plans to deliver and to save. This fact is true even when you are dealing with a terrifying bully. Like the three Hebrew boys, we must remain sure of whom we believe in. He will deliver and save.

Further Study: Romans 8:30–39; 1 Corinthians 10:10–15

Prayer: *Father, we pray that you give us the grace to patiently become mature sons in deed and in words, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Give yourself time to grow in confidence and identity just as a child grows in stature.

June 8th

Finding Inner Strength II

*...But David found strength in the Lord his God.
1 Samuel 30:6b*

Text: 1 Samuel 30:1–10

When we feel, worried or upset, it is encouraging to hear a friendly voice that knows the right thing to say to make it all better. However, our lives and those of others around us get busier as we get older. Thus, it becomes important to learn to draw strength from the Lord who knows us better than anyone else.

David looked within him and remembered his past victories and trials. He also remembered the God who had stood by him through them all. You might say “but I have no victories”. Well, remember the God who has kept you thus far from every trouble and determine in your heart to hold onto Him through every storm of life.

Further Study: Psalm 27:1; Isaiah 40:29-31

Prayer: *Father, please grant me wisdom to know what battles to undertake and strength to fight them your way, in Jesus name Amen.*

Tip of the day: When you face intimidating situations, ask for strength to face them boldly and overcome.

June 9th

Speak Up for Others

*Blessed is the man that walks not ...nor sits in the seat of the scornful.
Psalm 1:1 (NKJV)*

Text: Psalm 1:1-6

Bullies need an atmosphere of fear and the lack of godly advice to thrive. It is interesting that the scripture does not separate the person who is scornful from the person who sits with the scornful. God assigns the same fate to both.

By being silent or ignoring the act, we act like the person who sits in the seat of the scornful. I am not asking that you put yourself in harm's way without caution. Sometimes physically being there for a victim can push the

bully a little step away. This can cause others to begin questioning the bully's authority.

We should never accept a bully's way of doing things as right, or share in the benefits of such actions.

Further Study: John 8:1-11

Prayer: *Father, give me the grace to speak up for myself and for all those who cannot speak for themselves.*

Tip of the day: Be respectful, be dignified; speak up for others. When we do not make a stance for justice, we indirectly/silently support injustice.

June 10th

Staying True

"...he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them...."
Genesis 42:7

Text: Genesis 42:1-20

Someone upset me at work and for a while, I kept imagining how best to get even. Thankfully, I remembered whose I was and how He would expect me to behave in that situation. Consider an ant that collides with a misplaced stick in its path. It can choose to climb over the stick and continue on its path, stronger than before or go around the stick, off the path.

Joseph was like that ant. He was initially tempted to seek revenge, an action that would take him off his destined path. However, he remembered that God had been with him and he chose to carry on with God as he had always done. God will always be there for us even though we might not think so.

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 10:5-13; 2 Timothy 1:10-12

Prayer: *Father, help me never to lose sight of my identity in the midst of life's struggles, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: No matter the situation, always stay true to the nature of Christ in you.

Week 24 Virtues

June 11th

My Utmost Desire

'Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth'.

Psalm 73:25 (NLT)

Text: Psalm 73:25-26

Certain things require serious attention in life and desire is one of them. It is a longing or craving for something that brings satisfaction or enjoyment. An addict may easily be identified by a deep craving that must be addressed quickly anytime it hits them.

From the passage above, David acknowledged that God is his ultimate desire and that he earnestly desires Him above any other thing. His priority in life was to know the Lord, seek and search Him out diligently. No wonder he was called a man after God's heart.

Anyone who seeks the Lord persistently finds Him. Unfortunately, we have allowed mundane things to becloud and occupy us. We channel our desires wrongly and the effect is usually disastrous. Any desire that does not draw you closer to God should be discarded with urgency. Don't let that momentary 'enjoyment' destroy your future. There is a God spot in you which can only be filled by Him.

Further Study: Philippians 3:8

Prayer: *Oh Lord, occupy every fiber of my being I pray you in Jesus name! Amen.*

Tip of the day: Shun distractions and be satisfied in Him.

June 12th

The Diligent Rule

'Be lazy and become a slave' Proverbs 12: 24b (NLT)

Text: Proverbs 12: 24

If there is one thing that makes success more attainable, it is diligence. Diligence is a constant and earnest effort to accomplish a task. For some students, studying hard and burning the midnight candle is an insurmountable task. Some of these students would prefer to cheat, procrastinate and be lazy. Unfortunately for them, diligence is the one attitude which we need to excel in life spiritually, financially, in education and otherwise.

Examples abound in different fields, like the founder of Facebook Mark Zuckerberg, Bill Gates and Dangote. The same principle applies too to those who wish to seek God fervently. These diligent God-seekers are not devoid of insight or wisdom rather they are beams that shines forth the light for others. With hard work and excellence, elevation is inevitable!

Further Study: Proverbs 10:4-5; Romans 12:11

Prayer: *Father, remove slothfulness from my life so that I will be useful to you and humanity, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Diligence breeds success. Pursue it!

June 13th

Don't Be a Lazybone

'Learn from their ways and become wise.' Proverbs 6:6b (NLT)

Text: Proverbs 6:6

There are few things that hinder success like slothfulness, excuses, and procrastination. These are avoided by successful people.

A good illustration is that of a certain man who became physically challenged as a child as a result of Polio. He was taunted and mocked; rejected and isolated but in the midst of rejection, he discovered himself, became his own friend and vowed to make a mark on earth. He decided to set goals for himself and pursued it with all vigor. Along the line, he found Christ and his life turned around. Today, he has attained an eminent position in a Nigerian University and is highly sought after as a motivational speaker.

In all areas of our lives, we need to set achievable goals and put in some effort to actualize those goals. We must also not neglect our need for intimacy with God. We must set aside some time to study the Bible, pray and fellowship with others. Yes, people excel in life even as unbelievers but you have an edge over them with God by your side.

Further Study: Psalm 90:12; Romans 12:2-12

Prayer: *Father, saturate me with the wisdom that comes from above that I may excel above my peers, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Pursue your dream passionately and nothing will stop you with God on your side.

June 14th

The Battle for Your Soul

'Let the Holy Spirit guide your lives.' Galatians 5: 16a (NLT)

Text: Galatians 5:16

Life is a battle and it is the battle for the soul. The flesh and the spirit are always at war and the one you yield to controls you.

A boy in my neighborhood kept feeding his mind with all sorts of junk - provocative videos, arousing music and immoral pictures. To cut a long story short, before long, he decided to practice what he had been learning. The result was an unwanted pregnancy of a girl and a lot of heartache and pain.

Our consistent ability to say no to deadly appetites that confront us daily will distinguish us as people of God. Self-control, a fruit of the spirit simply means control over self. We are enjoined to meditate on the word of God day and night to enable us to triumph and to hide the word of God in our hearts so that we will not go astray. The challenges of this age are quite enormous and should be confronted headlong with the wisdom and knowledge that comes from the presence of God. Sexual immorality is very destructive. Free your mind from such garbage.

Further Study: Galatians 5:16-24; Romans 6:6

Prayer: *Cause me to hide your word in my heart oh Lord, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Refuse to be a victim of this world's pollution.

June 15th

What Is Your Label?

'For anger labels you a fool.' Ecclesiastes 7: 9b (NLT)

Text - Ecclesiastes 7:9

I had the opportunity to visit a remand home and heard some shocking stories concerning the inmates. These are children below 18 years who were remanded as a result of various vices. Some of them ended up there because they had killed somebody whilst fighting. Their story was that they had no initial intent to kill anybody but having been overtaken by anger, they ended up being murderers! Anger is such a powerful emotion!

Whatever comes your way, note that you are responsible for your reaction and not for the way you are treated. Anger is the work of the flesh and should be dealt with severely. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit and God is happy when such fruit abounds in us. Don't be a fool. When you are confronted with situations that could result in outbursts of anger, cry out to God for help, restrain yourself and keep calm; then and walk away from the scene.

Impulsive actions always lead to regret, avoid them! The righteousness that God desires from us can never be produced through anger.

Further Study: James 1:19-20; Colossians 3:8

Prayer: *Help me Lord to be quick to hear and slow to anger in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Resolve to be calm no matter what confronts you today.

June 16th

Bowels of Kindness

*"You must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness."
Colossians 3:12b (NLT)*

Text - Colossians 3:12

Children often emulate their parents and as God's children, we are meant to take after Him. Kindness is one of the attributes of God. It is a part of the fruit of the Spirit that showcases us as God's own. It means to care about someone, to be useful and helpful to others; to be generous, compassionate and hospitable.

We have been chosen by God to reflect His image through the way we relate to people. According to the passage, we are to wear kindness as a cloth, which means everything about us should speak kindness. Just as a sane person cannot step out of the house without covering his body, in the same way, we are enjoined to dress ourselves up with kindness.

What are we known for? The story of Dorcas in the Bible readily comes to mind. She was incredibly kind to people such that when she died, people wailed and cried and could not imagine her dead and she was brought back to life. Kindness makes you attractive!

Further Study: Ephesians 4:30-32; Proverbs 19:22

Prayer: *Lord, make my life a pleasing aroma to you as I showcase your love in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Express God's kindness through your smile today.

June 17th

A Smile Is Infectious

'Don't look out only for your own interest.' Philippians 2:4a (NLT)

Text - Philippians 2:4

Everyone you meet in life is fighting a hard battle and something as simple as a smile might give them the courage to conquer their battle. One universal language of kindness is a warm smile and even babies know how to speak this. Putting a smile on someone's face ignites love. Compliments

like, 'You are so beautiful; I love the way you laugh; that dress fits you etc.', does amazing things to others.

You can also put a smile on someone's face by lending a helping hand to those in need of help, for example, volunteering to babysit for that mummy who needs it; visiting somebody in the hospital; washing somebody's clothes; giving up your seat for an older person. These are pockets of kindness that please God and do not go unrewarded.

Come to think of it, God is always putting smiles on our faces. He is so mindful of us in every way. His hands are wide open reaching out to us and working for our good.

*The world knows enough hell; let's show them a little more heaven
(Anonymous)*

Further Study: 1 John 3:16-17; 1 Thessalonians 4:9

Prayer: *May your light in me spring forth ripples of love to others in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Leave footprints of love and kindness wherever you go.

Week 25 Understanding Mentorship

June 18th

Who Is a Mentor?

Having such deep affection for you we were delighted to share with you not only God's good news, but also our own very lives because you had become so very dear to us. 1 Thessalonians 2:8 (AMP)

Text: 1 Thessalonians. 2:6-12

Growing up, the concept of a mentor was that of a tall, domineering, old man in long white robes, reciting ancient proverbs to me, in the hope that these would straighten me out. Fast forward a few years. I had an actual experience being mentored by an aunt and to my greatest surprise, she was actually fun to be with. Visiting her home, watching how she lived and ran her business while keeping a healthy relationship with her family and friends helped to shape a lot of my present beliefs.

A mentor is one who guides a less experienced person, by building trust and modeling positive behavior. Such a person's love for God directs him or her to teach others to love God and to surrender to his will and watch him transform their lives daily.

Further Study: Galatians 5:23-24

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank you for giving me the Holy Spirit to be a friend and teacher. Help me to find the right role models and mentors who will help bring out the best in me, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Thank God for those who have positively influenced your life so far.

June 19th

What's the Point in Having a Mentor?

*And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do.
Exodus 18:20 (KJV)*

Text: Exodus 18:5-27

As a superhero movie buff, I quite enjoy watching behind the scenes clips of my favorite movies. It makes me feel like I'm part of something huge. The actors seem more real and less perfect, just like me.

Having a mentor gives you this rich dose of reality 24\7. You get a sneak peek into their lives, to see the good, the bad and the ugly. Their past and present experiences are used to guide you through the many pitfalls of life.

Our text shows Moses mentored by Jethro, his father in law. His wise advice when obeyed saved Moses from looking like an ineffective leader to his people. It showed him a much better and easier way to do things. This is why mentors are a blessing.

Further Study: 1 Kings 19:19-21

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, guide me to people that will show me the truth of your word and correct me in love when I am wrong, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Make a list of possible mentors.

June 20th

How Do I Pick a Mentor?

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.
2 Timothy 2:2

Text: 2 Timothy 2:1-7

In some cases, a mentor finds you and in others, it's you who goes searching. The first thing to do when searching is to pray. Ask the one who knows you better than you know yourself to show you the best mentors for you. It is important to do this because we often do not see the struggles of those whom we look up to. It's not everyone with a fairytale life that is a candidate to mentor you.

Mentors come in different ages, gender, and nationalities. One's spiritual mentor may not be their career mentor. Paul, if he lived in these days, would have been the kind of guy who graduates from Harvard law at the top of his class. He was super smart. Paul picked Timothy and was his spiritual and ministry mentor. Till this day, the techniques that Timothy learnt about running the ministry, are still used to run many multinational organizations and churches.

Further Study: Philippians 3 vs 13

Prayer: *Dear Lord, help me in my decision making to put you first. You know me better than I know myself and you alone know what is best for me. I ask this in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Prepare yourself to be someone worth mentoring.

June 21st

What Should I Expect as A Mentee?

*My son attend to my words, listen closely to my sayings, let them not depart from thine eyes. Keep them in the midst of thine heart.
Proverbs 4:20 (KJV)*

Text: Proverbs 4:20-27

A mentee is someone who is being trained by a mentor so the relationship goes two ways. It is a give and take relationship. Which means your mentor may be the recurrent giver but you are also expected to give back. Picture this: you wake up, browse for 3 hours, play games then chat on WhatsApp with school friends, then grandma calls to tell you she has discovered imo video chat and she keeps you on a call for 1 hour ... the next notification you get is a low battery warning. It's time to either stop to recharge or lose out

on all the fun you are having. Mentors are natural givers and this trait qualifies them to serve you, but they too are flesh and blood and they need to recharge.

The greatest reward or recharge you can give back to your mentor is to succeed at what they have taught you. So be sure to give time and effort to tasks given to you by your mentor and give feedback.

Further Study: Acts 16:1-5; Acts 25:36-39.

Prayer: *Jesus, keep me humble.*

Tip of the day: Take notes when being taught and make your own footnotes too. This helps when you need to make reference.

June 22nd

Can I Also Be a Mentor?

Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven. Matthew 5:16 (NKJV)

Text: Matthew 5:13-16

We mentor our siblings every day without even knowing it. Living by example is the simplified meaning of mentorship. So when your baby sister begins to talk like you and tends to pick out the same style of clothes you like to wear, it's all a byproduct of your unconscious mentoring.

This should make you reflect on what exactly you are modeling for your family and friends and the whole world to see. What is your daily routine? Do you make a habit of greeting? Do you spend some time praying? Do you litter? Do you study and share the word of God with your friends or do you act ashamed of Jesus?

Think about this ... “if what I do can either make someone fall into sinful living or make them live to please God, have I done a good job so far?” If the answer is NO, then it’s time to reset.

Further Study: 1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Corinthians 11:1

Prayer: *Dear Lord, help me to glorify you in my thoughts, words, and actions in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Pause and ask yourself WWJD? What Would Jesus Do?

June 23rd

Age Doesn’t Always Mean Wisdom

*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he shall lift you up.
James 4:10 (KJV)*

Text: James 4:7-10

We talked earlier about the fact that mentors can come from various walks of life. Today we discuss age and wisdom in relation to mentoring. As the topic states “Age does not always mean wisdom”. Your mentor may sport some grey hairs or they may still be in elementary school while you are in high school. We select mentors based on their level of expertise in the areas where we are less capable and need assisted growth.

A 10-year-old musical prodigy could make an excellent mentor to a 19-year-old music student. I for one would like Chef Ramsey (master chef junior) to send one of his junior chefs to mentor me. They definitely cook and understand food better than I do. Whoever mentors you or whoever you get to mentor, always remember to be humble so you can be lifted higher.

Further Study: Job 33

Prayer: *Father your word says that you resist the proud and give grace to the humble. I drop every trace of pride today and receive your grace Lord in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: To know what things you enjoy doing, try out new things when the opportunity arises.

June 24th

Just Do It

Lord remind me of how brief my time on earth will be, remind me that my days are numbered how fleeting my life is. You have made my life no longer than the width of my hand. My entire lifetime is just a moment to you. At best each of us is but a breath. *Psalms 39:4-5 (NLT)*

Text: Psalm 39:1-5

Laziness is one of the things that mentorship helps us to conquer. If we stand alone we could procrastinate. We end up pushing what should be done today into tomorrow and the next day. 2 years later it's still not done. A good mentor gives you attainable tasks and deadlines so that you develop the right sense of urgency needed to complete projects and assignments.

Procrastination is not the same as Patience; it's the direct enemy of progress. Completing tasks, sitting with your mentor to review and evaluate them is a sure way to measure your progress and develop the strength of character that is required to lead or succeed.

Further Study: 1 Samuel 9; Acts 4:36-37

Prayer: *Thank you, Jesus, for coming that I may have life more abundantly. Help me to live out that abundant life that you have blessed me with, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Don't take the back seat in life. Life is short like Nike says "JUST DO IT". Bake a cake or fly a kite, so long as it glorifies the Father in heaven.

Week 26 Fashion

June 25th

Fashion- A Lifestyle

"but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God".
1 Timothy 2:9-10

Text: 1 Timothy 2:9-10

Fashion! One word used to capture a prevailing style of clothing, hairstyle, decoration, appearance, and way of behaviour. It is a strong non-verbal means of communication because your fashion style tells a story (intentional or not) about your personality, to the people around you.

There is a popular saying "dress the way you want to be addressed". Our choices regarding our appearance and behaviour should be influenced by the Word of God. The choices we make can provide avenues to interact with people around us; to enlighten them as to our identity in God and the influence behind our fashion style. Let godliness be your **lifestyle** and the **language** of your fashion choices.

Further Study: 1 Peter 3:3-4; John 17:16

Prayer: Lord, please let my choices reflect my identity in You, in Jesus name, Amen.

Tip of the day: Let your fashion style give you access to evangelise.

June 26th

Clothed in Love

*"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him".
Colossians 3:17*

Text: Colossians 3: 1-17

Ever heard the phrase "dressed to kill"? It means to wear glamorous clothes intended to create a striking impression or to attract attention and admiration, especially of the opposite sex.

When choosing what to adorn yourself with, ask the following questions: does this please God? Does it cover body parts which are meant to be hidden? Does it ensure that I am addressed respectfully? Will it bring disrespect to my Father, the King? Will my clothing attract undue attention to myself? The answer to those questions should determine what you wear.

In 1 Corinthians 16:14, we are urged to do everything in love. If what I wear will cause someone else to sin in their hearts, then love demands that I do not wear it. Our Father the King would rather have us clothed in love than dressed to kill. So, ask the Holy Spirit to help you choose your clothes and adornments. He has been my personal stylist and He gets it right first time, all the time!

Further Study: Romans 13:8, 14: 1-23; 1 Corinthians 10:23

Prayer: *Dear Lord, help me to adorn myself in a way that pleases you and reflects your love, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Dress in love.

June 27th

The Style of A Princess

*But you are a chosen people, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:9*

Text: 1 Peter 2:4-9

As a child, I was always fascinated by the way princesses dressed. They looked so elegant, modest and beautifully dressed. I often wished I was royalty. After I accepted Jesus as my Lord, I learnt that in Christ Jesus, I am royalty! This royalty is greater and higher than that of the ladies of this world because your Father is God, the King of Kings.

My awareness of my royal heritage inspires my fashion choices not the popular trend of the day. My aim is to be elegant and stylish, without unduly exposing anything which should be hidden. My dressing should turn heads but not break necks!

Further Study: Esther 5:1

Prayer: *My Father and my King, help me to always remember that I am your princess and to reflect that in my dressing, adornment, and behaviour.*

Tip of the day: Dress to please the King.

June 28th

My Father Is A Fashion Guru

*"They shall also make the ephod of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen, the work of the skilful workman."
Exodus 28:6*

Text: Exodus 28:1-10

Our heavenly Father is creative and loves beauty. We can see this creativity in the level of attention and detail that He put into creating the beautiful world we live in. When the Israelites built a tabernacle to God in the wilderness, God provided detailed descriptions of how the tabernacle should be built, decorated, even down to a detailed description of the clothing to be worn by the priests!

You don't have to be a fashion expert to know how to dress, combine clothes, accessories, and hairstyles for various occasions. You are a child of God and you have the creativity your Daddy has. As a chip off the old block, you see the way God sees. Ephesians 2:10 says "For we are God's **masterpiece** (*a work of outstanding artistry, skill, or workmanship*). He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago". When you remember that you are God's masterpiece – a work of outstanding artistry, your fashion sense kicks in; you scrub up and dress up!

Further Study: Ephesians 2:10; Psalm 139:14

Prayer: *Dear Father, please guide my fashion choices today, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Ask your fashion guru- your Father God.

June 29th

Is It Right for Me?

*"I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial.
"I have the right to do anything"—but not everything is constructive.
1 Corinthians 10:23*

Text: 1 Corinthians 10:23-33

Your fashion statement as an individual is a combination of your jewellery, clothes, accessories, and hair. It should suit you as a person and should suit the occasion. You have the right to pick any fashion style you want.

However, as a daughter of the King of kings, I ask myself several questions when putting together a fashion style: does this choice present me in the best light, as a representative of the King? Does it give a true picture of who I am? Does my total outlook create a lovely effect (complimenting colours and accessories) which is pleasing to the eye and gives God praise? Or do my choices have a jarring effect on the eye with colors clashing, causing people who see me to cringe?

Further Study: Matthew 5:16; Philippians 4:12

Prayer: *Dear Lord, thank You for the gift of Your Holy Spirit. Please help me make the right fashion choices that bring You glory, in Jesus name. Amen.*

Tip of the day: Pick complementing colours.

June 30th

Dressing 101

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. James 1:5

Text: James 1:1-5

Putting together an excellent and godly outfit requires much wisdom. Thank God that He promises to give us wisdom if we ask! 10 key points to remember are:

- ✿ Dress the way you wish to be addressed. First impressions are important.
- ✿ Dress in a neat and tidy manner.
- ✿ Dress for the occasion. You do not wear a trouser suit to the beach. Every occasion has an appropriate dress code.
- ✿ Dress for your body type and use accessories like belts, scarves etc. to enhance your dressing.
- ✿ Undergarments are meant to be under our clothing. Avoid exposing them.
- ✿ White or light-coloured undergarments should not be worn under white tops or bottoms.
- ✿ Combine your colours and wear appropriate colours for your skin type. E.g. If you are dark skinned, bright colours are recommended.
- ✿ Exposing our bodies does not make us fashionable.
- ✿ Dress like a princess remembering that you are the much-loved daughter of The King of kings.
- ✿ You are not your own; your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Further Study: Proverbs 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Philippians 4:5-7

Prayer: *Father thank you for wisdom on how to dress from head to toe.*

Tip of the day: Remind yourself "I have Christ, I have wisdom".

July 1st

Time for Everything

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens. Ecclesiastes 3:1

Text: 1 Chronicles 12:32

God is a God of order. He has ordained a time and season for everything and every activity. There is a time to be a baby; a time to be a toddler; a time to be a child; a time to be a teenager and a time to be an adult.

Wisdom is knowing the time you are in and the appropriate way to express yourself for every activity within your season of life. When a young person dresses like an adult, straining to look and act years older than their actual age, it is a sign that they do not understand their season.

Enjoy each season of your life and make appropriate fashion choices for that season! It will soon pass and you will have years in the next season.

Further Study: Proverbs 9:10; Ecclesiastes 3: 2-8; Ecclesiastes 8:5-6

Prayer: *Dear Lord, please help me to enjoy my days as a young person and make the best of my days, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Live life one day at a time and make each day count.

Week 27 Understanding Puberty

July 2nd

The Beautiful Swan

"I made you grow like a plant of the field. You grew and developed and entered puberty. Your breasts had formed and your hair had grown,"
Ezekiel 16:7

Text: Ezekiel 16:6-14

You know the story of the ugly duckling that became a beautiful swan? You know what really happened? I'll tell you: It went through puberty! Like the

young girl referred to in our text, the ugly duckling developed into a beautiful swan. This process of transforming growth which God takes us through is called Puberty.

Puberty is when adolescents reach sexual maturity and become capable of reproduction. In the coming week, we will discuss the myriad of changes that occur at this time. Till then, start this week with one thought: *puberty and all that surrounds it is a natural process designed by God for our good!*

Further Study: Psalm 139:1-18

Prayer: *Thank you, Father, for the care and love you invested in making me, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Walk with a bounce and a swing in your step, God made you beautiful.

July 3rd

What Is Going On?

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb".
Psalm 139:13

Text: Psalm. 139:13-16

Do you realize that what happens in your body during puberty was established when God formed you in your mother's womb? Most girls start puberty between 9 and 11 years; some start at 12 or 13. At the right time, the pituitary gland produces hormones that begin to act on your ovaries. The ovaries respond by producing large amounts of several other hormones, including estrogen and progesterone.

These 2 hormones along with a lot of others produced by the pituitary and other glands orchestrate the symphony known as puberty. And like a

symphony, they not only have physical effects but emotional ones too. But don't get worried, it is an interesting ride and usually worth all the effort.

Further Study: Ephesians 2:10

Prayer: *Dear Lord, because every phase of my life is planned by you, help me trust you to guide me through puberty to adulthood, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Look at yourself in the mirror, smile and say, this is all part of God's plan.

July 4th

Metamorphosis

The fig tree forms its early fruit; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance.

Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with me."

Song of Solomon 2: 13a

Text: Song of Solomon 2: 11-13

Puberty is a time of blossoming. Under the effects of the hormone - estrogen, several physical changes begin to occur. The breasts begin to develop, hair begins to grow in the pubic region and the armpit, the hips begin to widen and of course menstruation and vaginal discharge occur. These are all normal. They may seem messy and uncomfortable but there's nothing to fear and you will adjust to all the changes in no time.

Another all too common occurrence in puberty is acne, also part of the body's response to the large amount of hormones it's being bombarded with.

All these physical changes make it extremely important that you maintain good personal hygiene.

Further Study: Song of Solomon 4:6-7

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, thank you for this time of change. Throughout this process, I remain beautiful because that is how you created me, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Form the habit of bathing twice a day.

July 5th

Roller Coaster Emotions

*He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on
a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.
Psalm 40: 2*

Text: Psalm 40:1-5

A very wide range of emotions is often experienced daily during puberty. One moment you're feeling that all is right with the world, your energy level is high, the world is sunny; the next moment you're down in the dumps. The hormones released during puberty take a toll on our emotions. They may make you feel self-conscious and unsure.

Be encouraged through all the changes. Remember that you are a wonderful young lady, made in God's image and worthy of His love and care. Depression may tug at you. Resist it! Let the sunshine of God's love lift you out of any pit.

Further Study: Psalm 23

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, help me keep my eyes on the truth in your word in spite of my feelings, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Enjoy the roller coaster when it's high and shake it off when it's low. The lows do not last!

July 6th

Self-Image

We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them." *Numbers 13: 33b*

Text: Numbers 13:26-33

The 10 spies felt intimidated by the size of the Nephilim (giants). Note that the Nephilim did not say the spies were grasshoppers. The spies compared themselves to the giants and arrived at that conclusion. But Joshua and Caleb kept their eyes on the truth, which was that God was with them and therefore they were stronger than the opposition.

The process of puberty can make you feel awkward, clumsy, and unsure of yourself. But what you think of yourself should not depend on the changes going on in your body or around you. Keep your eyes on the truth of God's Word. You are blessed, you are loved, you are cherished and you are beautiful!

Further Study: Jeremiah 31:3; Proverbs 23:7

Prayer: *Dear Lord, I draw my worth and confidence from who you are and who you have made me to be, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Tell yourself the truth today: "You are a confident, competent, strong daughter of God!"

July 7th

Social Bonding

Keep on loving one another as brothers and sister.
Hebrews.13:1

Text: Hebrews 13:1-4

The desire for social inclusion, to be part of an intimate social circle is a strong human desire but it is often strongest at puberty. Unfortunately, this is often a time when young ladies can be cruel to each other. As you seek to build friends and grow with them, don't let this desire push you to the wrong group or type of friends.

Make friends who share your values and love for God. And when you see others who are excluded or bullied by the popular girls, reach out to them in love and compassion knowing you are representing your heavenly Father.

Further Study: 1 Peter 4:8-10; 1 Corinthians 15:33

Prayer: *Thank you, Father, for being there for me; you are a sure hope in every situation. Today I draw on your love, your hope as I walk out into a much-wounded world. Let me do as you would do in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Reach out to that girl who is at the edge of the social circles in your class today.

July 8th

Running with The Pack

"Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." John 8:7b

Text: John 8:1-11

During adolescence, most girls move in cliques, having fun and growing together. Sometimes this can take a negative turn i.e. gossiping, exclusion and mocking others who are seen as 'less cool'. The woman caught in adultery had clearly sinned and should have been stoned in line with the law. But Jesus did not condemn her. He offered her kindness, compassion, and forgiveness.

There may be a girl who is overweight or shy or has a disability or speaks poor English. She may clearly be different. But, which of us is without an embarrassing secret? Which of us is perfect? Reach out in kindness today. Start a trend of compassion instead of cruelty. Dare to run against the pack.

Further Study: Romans 12:1-2; Daniel 1:3-8; Psalms 34:13

Prayer: *Dear Lord, help me show kindness always; to boldly defend those who can't defend themselves, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: If your friends badmouth someone, let them know it is an unkind thing to do.

Week 28 Academic Excellence

July 9th

Spirit of Excellence: Daniel

Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. Daniel 6:3

Text: Daniel 6

The dictionary defines excellence as the quality of being outstanding or extremely good. The spirit of excellence was upon Daniel which made him stand out among his peers. He was extremely good in all he did especially in his studies, that he was elevated in the kingdom.

Today that same spirit is upon every child of God. All we need to activate it is simply prayer. God wants us to stand out amongst our peers so that His name will be glorified. He likes to be identified in our success. Like Daniel, let us strive at all times to be the best.

Further Study: Matthew 5:16

Prayer: *Dear Lord, please let the spirit of excellence rest upon me so that your name may be glorified through me, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Like Daniel, God has poured into us the spirit of excellence.

July 10th

Spirit of Excellence: Joseph

*When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that
the LORD gave him success in everything he did,
Genesis 39:3*

Text: Genesis 39:2-4

Joseph was another young man in the bible who had an excellent spirit. He stood out among all the servants in Potiphar's house. We are called as light to be outstanding in all we do.

God is glorified when we are excellent and good students. Our father is a God of excellence; therefore we cannot be anything less. We carry a supernatural nature as children of God hence we have no excuse. We must attain heights never before attained. The sky is our starting point and the earth our oyster. Let us, therefore, arise because the earth is waiting for our manifestation as sons of God.

Further Study: Romans 8:19

Prayer: *Help me, dear Lord, to be the best that you have created me to be, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: What should you be doing academically that you have left undone?

July 11th

Need Help?

*So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with
my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10*

Text: Isaiah 41:10

Excellence in academics and indeed any other aspect of life is difficult. You will not always feel like studying, the topics and subjects may be difficult, in fact sometimes it may sound like Greek to you or seem like rocket science. But guess what? Our loving father has promised to help you.

Wow! Imagine being helped in that mathematics sum by the greatest mathematician of all times. God created everything so there is no subject or topic that He goes "Oops, I don't know this one." Our Father is all knowing and all knowledge comes from Him. So, feel free to elicit His help anytime, any day. He is our ever-present help in times of need.

Further Study: James 1:6; Psalm 46:1

Prayer: *Thank you, dear Lord Jesus, because I can always count on you to help me, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Always remember to call on God before every class or study period.

July 12th

Ingredients for Excellence

*Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings;
he shall not stand before mean men. Proverbs 22:29 (KJV)*

Text: Proverbs 22:29

Diligence, consistency, and discipline are the major ingredients of excellence. Let us define them:

- ✿ Diligence is careful and persistent work or effort.
- ✿ Consistency is acting or doing in the same way over time, especially so as to be accurate.
- ✿ Discipline is to train oneself to do something in a controlled and habitual way.

We, therefore, cannot do without these if we must excel academically. Excellent students are studious and hardworking. They are consistently studying and finding out new ways to gain knowledge, which is why the bible says such students (diligent ones) will stand before Kings. They are disciplined and do the right things at the right time. For instance, every good student should study for at least two hours every day.

Further Study: Proverbs 12:24

Prayer: *Dear Lord Jesus, please help me to become a diligent student.*
Amen

Tip of the day: Write down ways you think you can improve your study habits.

July 13th

Preparing for Exams

*But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name,
will teach you all things and will remind you of everything
I have said to you. John 14:26*

Text: John 14:26

The word examination is one that gives the creeps to a lot of students, but for children of God that should not be the case. Our text today tells us that the Holy Spirit will teach us all things even the most difficult of subjects, so why fear exams? Steps that can help us in preparations:

- ✿ Study like all depends on it.
- ✿ Start your revisions early.
- ✿ Form or join a study group because iron sharpens iron.
- ✿ Get good sleep and rest
- ✿ Pray and commit it all to God

Further Study: Proverbs 2:6

Prayer: *Dear Holy Spirit, help me to remember always that you are able to teach me all things, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Write down other things you need to do while preparing for examinations.

July 14th

Shortcuts?

There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end, it leads to death.
Proverbs 14:12

Text: Proverbs 14:12

We live in a world today that is fast paced and seems to want everything to happen instantly. We are always looking to find shortcuts for everything. Well, the shocker is, there are no shortcuts to academic excellence. Children of God don't engage in examination malpractices, writing exams in special

centres, etc. God frowns at such acts. He wants us to study and use our brain. His grace is always available to us.

Even if every other person is doing the wrong thing, we should stand out for God. We should be the voice of reason. Let us activate the grace upon our life and show the world that success God's way is possible and the best.

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 12:9

Prayer: *Help me dear Lord to always do right by you especially in my academics, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: What other forms of academic wrongdoings have you seen in your school; what can you do to correct it?

July 15th

Failure: Stepping Stone to Excellence

*Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise.
Though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light.
Micah 7:8*

Text: Micah 7:8

The story is told of Thomas Edison who invented the light bulb. He failed 10,000 times and when asked, **'how did it feel to fail 10,000 times?'** **Edison replied, "I haven't failed. I have just found 10,000 ways that won't work."**

In our academic pursuit towards excellence, there will be tests we will not ace or exams we may fail, but not to worry, failure is just a stepping stone

to excellence. Do not be discouraged. We must rise immediately, learn from our mistakes and move on. Here are some actions that will help:

- ✿ Study harder.
- ✿ Find out the reason you failed and what you can do differently.
- ✿ Do more research on the subject.
- ✿ Ask questions.
- ✿ Always remember to invite the Holy Spirit to help you.

Further Study: 2 Chronicles 15:7

Prayer: *Help me, dear Lord, to always rise when I fall; to remember at all times that you are my light and help, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Write down other ways you can improve on your past failures.

Week 29 Understanding Sex

July 16th

Let's Talk about Sex

Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the Does of the field:

Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.

Song of Solomon 2:7

Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

Sex is a gift from God, designed as part of the unique relationship of marriage. The Bible describes the pleasure that husbands find in marriage with these words: "Rejoice with the wife of your youth... Let her breasts intoxicate you always (Proverbs 5:18-19).

When we are talking about sex, we are talking about kissing, smooching, necking, romancing, whether fully clothed or not! Any of that outside marriage is wrong! The world would try and tell you 'it doesn't matter' but it does! If it didn't the bible wouldn't ask us to flee sexual immorality! As Christians and to keep from hurting ourselves, sexual desires and activities must be placed under Christ's control.

Further Study: I Corinthians 7:3, 4; Hebrews 13:4

Prayer: *Lord, I want to be pure in body and spirit, renew my mind daily and help me to flee when I need to, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Don't go kissing and necking; arousing emotions that you are unprepared for.

July 17th

It Is Not Good for Man to Be Alone (1)

"Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral". Hebrews 13:4

Text: Genesis 2:24

Sex is a *unique, exclusive, and wonderful* thing, a powerful bonding agent that shapes and affects the relationship between a man and a woman as nothing else can. That's why God wants it reserved for marriage. To take it outside of marriage is like taking the wine consecrated for Holy Communion and using it for a party!

Sex in marriage is not just for recreation but also procreation. Thus, for a couple to engage in sex before marriage is doubly wrong—they are enjoying pleasures not intended for them and taking a chance of creating a human life outside of the family structure.

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 6:16; Mark 10:6-9

Prayer: *Lord help me to realize that I am accountable to you as it concerns my body, help me not to give in to the pressure to follow the crowd, in Jesus name I pray, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Opening up your body and mind to sex outside marriage invites a myriad of problems into your life.

July 18th

It Is Not Good for Man to Be Alone (2)

"Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So, she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death".
Genesis 24:67

Text: Ephesians 5:31

When God spoke of two people being joined as one, He was referring to something we're only beginning to understand in a real, physiological way. When two people are intimate, the brain releases chemicals that induce feelings of attachment and trust.

Having sex outside of marriage results in forming an attachment to, and trusting someone with whom one does not have a committed relationship. Trust becomes befuddled and misplaced. However, when it is part of the commitment and love in marriage, then it is safe to allow the intimacy that releases these chemicals. Sex outside of marriage creates bonds that tear apart people's hearts instead of joining them together.

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 7:19; Genesis 1:28; 2 Timothy 2:22

Prayer: *Holy Spirit my body is your temple, come and dwell within and keep me from anything that defiles, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Allowing anyone access to your body before marriage is allowing all the demons that person struggles with into your life!

July 19th

Abstinence: Myth or Reality

*"It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality
1 Thessalonians 4: 3*

Text: 1 Corinthians 7:8

The old testaments refer to unmarried women as virgins, no matter their age. Death was the penalty for not remaining a virgin while unmarried. People will say 'that's the Law, we are under grace' but was Paul who wrote the scripture above under Mosaic Law? Of course not! He's saying, 'you should abstain just like me'. If this were impossible, would Paul be advocating it?

Abstinence is God's only policy when it comes to sex before marriage. It saves lives (protecting you from sexually transmitted diseases and from emotional and psychological stress), protects babies, gives sexual relations the proper value, and, most importantly, honors God.

Further Study: Acts 15:20; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20; Ephesians 5:3

Prayer: *Father, make me a sanctuary, pure, holy and true. Teach me to bring my body and emotions under subjection to the Word, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: It is possible to control your body and emotions; the bible says your will is subject to you. Control is key!

July 20th

Lust versus Love

"How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.
Genesis 39:9-10

Text: Esther 2:2-4

In the past, women were viewed as sex objects, to be acquired for their beauty and disposed of when they have outlived their usefulness. Today, women are often still treated as objects of men's lust.

We must learn not to be deceived by lust masquerading as love. Love is patient, love is kind, it does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth, it always protects (1 Corinthians 13). 'He' says, 'it's okay to have sex if we love each other.' Please remind him that love is not self-seeking and while at that, remind him that love does not dishonor and pre-marital sex dishonors both you and your parents!

Further Study: Galatians 5:19-24; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Daniel 1:8

Prayer: *Lord give me the discernment I need in matters of the heart, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Pre-marital sex is trending, so are drugs, prostitution, and gangs! That something is fashionable does not make it right!

July 21st

Fleeing Youthful Lusts

*Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. 1
Corinthians 6: 18*

Text: Genesis 39:11-12

Joseph is a perfect example of what to do in the face of temptation. No tongue speaking, no binding, casting, just flee! Potiphar's wife (a cougar) enticed Joseph "day after day" (v. 10). That means she attempted to seduce him when he was weak as well as when he was strong.

Joseph had a choice, he could stay and justify himself by saying she initiated it, or flee. In our sex-saturated culture, lots of people feel pressured to be sexually active. However, the Bible consistently teaches self-control rather than self-gratification. So, flee from friends with questionable lifestyles; flee from places that promote casual sex; flee from television programs and music that arouse feelings that you are unprepared for! Just flee!

Further Study: Matthew 15:19-20; Ephesians 5:3-5; Colossians 3:5-6

Prayer: *Dear Father, help to pick my friends carefully and to surround myself with people that would keep me on the straight and narrow path, in Jesus name, Amen*

Tip of the day: Have an older Christian that you would be accountable to and run any 'harmless' suggestions from 'friends' off her.

July 22nd

But I Already Had Sex

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved"
Ephesians 2:5

Text: Isaiah 1:18

Tamar had sex with her father-in-law and even had sons for him. Rahab? She was a prostitute! Yet God forgave them! No matter the past, you can begin abstaining today. You may have struggled with sexual sin and you think, there's no way out. I am here to tell you there is! I've been there, struggled with all manner of sexual sin, but here I am today, totally free and saved!

The first step is to ask God to help you. Next step is to open up to a matured Christian. Sin thrives when it is hidden. Step 3; End that relationship now! Remember the instruction to flee. God is neither anti-fun nor anti-sex, rather He is anti-pain! When we pursue anything outside of His guidelines, we will suffer consequences.

Further Study: Ephesians 1:7, 2:1-4; Psalms 32:1-11

Prayer: *Thank you, Father, for the blood of Jesus that speaks forgiveness, healing, and new beginnings, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Take that needed step today.

Week 30 Understanding Beauty

July 23rd

Whose Perspective Matters?

*But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height,
for
I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at.
People
look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart".
1 Samuel 16:7*

Text: 1 Samuel 16: 1-12

There is a popular phrase that goes "beauty is in the eye of the beholder". This is an indication of how subjective comments on beauty can be. When I buy a car, the car specifications as listed in the car manual would determine the value I place on the car and influence my perception of the car.

It is the same with beauty. For us to truly understand it, we need to consider it from the viewpoint of the Maker of beauty – God. Over the next few days, we will consider beauty through God's eyes and understand how to develop and display true beauty, the kind which pleases the Lord.

Further Study: Genesis 1:31; Ecclesiastes 3:11; 2 Corinthians 5:16

Prayer: *Dear Lord, let me see beauty through Your eyes, let my thoughts align with Your thoughts, that my ways may align with Your ways, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Look beyond the external.

July 24th

True Beauty

Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Proverb 31:30

Text: Proverbs 31:10-31

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, a pioneer of the hospice care movement, said, "People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within". Your true beauty goes beyond what can be seen with the natural eyes. It is who you are on the inside. It stands the test of time and sets you apart.

Is there anything wrong with looking good externally? Absolutely not! However, God places greater importance on the development of His nature in me than how coordinated my makeup is. The fear (respect, reverence) of God in a young lady causes her to let God's nature be displayed in her character and her personality. This happens through daily obedience to God's Word. The more I do what He wants (as revealed in the Bible) and less of what I want (as demanded by my flesh), the more of His nature is revealed in me.

Further Study: 1 Peter 1:24-25; Matthew 23:27; 2 Corinthians 4:18

Prayer: *Dear Lord, help me to develop my inner beauty, my character under the tutelage of your Spirit, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Focus on God. He will mould your character and cause His nature to reflect in you.

July 25th

Beauty Defined

"I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes." 1 Timothy 2:9

Text: 1 Timothy 2:9-10

True beauty radiates from your inner self. It is the beauty of character which is far better sought after than mere physical beauty.

You may ask " where can this beauty be found?" It is found in God. True beauty is not defined by anything in this world but found in something that is beyond this world. It is God himself. God is beautiful, captivating, and fascinating. Instead of looking at what the world calls beauty, look at the One who is beauty Himself. You are created in His image and likeness. As you focus on His beauty as revealed in the Word, you grow to be as beautiful as He is.

Further Study: Genesis 1:31a; Psalm 139:14; Song of Solomon 4:7

Prayer: *Father, help me to daily understand the beauty you've made me and help me to live a beautiful life that gives glory to your name.*

Tip of the day: Study the word of God to understand what true beauty is and how to live a beautiful life.

July 26th

Dress It Up Inside and Out

"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 3:4

Text: 1 Peter 3:3-6

It is very easy to focus on the external and forget the internal. As a daughter of the King, my standard of beauty is completely different. Inside and out is important to God as we see in our key verse for today. The Bible refers to robes of righteousness and to garments of praise and salvation(Isaiah 61:3-10). This is what God wants us to be adorned with. These make us look beautiful in His sight and in the sight of others.

Fear and insecurity tell me that I need to add another layer of makeup, use more expensive accessories, and wear revealing clothing to be glamorous and fashionable and to measure up to the world's standards. Focusing on the external alone makes me a temporary attraction. Wisdom means that I choose beauty that lasts.

Further Study: 1 Samuel 16:7; Isaiah 61:3-10

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, please dress me in the beauty of Your holiness. Help me not to rely on the temporary adorning that the world sees as attractive, but on the lasting beauty of a life yielded to You. Amen*

Tip of the day: Work on your inner self and be confident!

July 27th

Complete the Outfit

*"When the Lord takes pleasure in anyone's way, he causes their
enemies
to make peace with them." Proverbs 16:7*

Text: Ephesians 6:10- 20

Today we are going to learn how to dress up in God's recommended outfit for us! Start by covering your chest with righteousness. Righteousness is

right positioning with God. For your ways to please God, it means you are in right standing/ positioning with Him.

Now cinch in that waist with the belt of truth, God's truth as written in His Word! It is a lamp for our feet and it brightens our path, leading us to make the right decisions. A good belt pulls your entire outfit together and keeps it from falling. Add to that a priceless (paid for by blood) salvation beret! When salvation crowns your head, it affects your mindset and puts your priorities in divine order.

But that's not all! The sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith are fabulous accessories that make a power statement. Wrap yourself in the zeal for God as a cloak and you, my dear will be unstoppable. Now that's an outfit!

Further Study: Isaiah 52:7

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, let your glory rest on me and cause me to reflect Your beauty, as I walk obediently before you. Amen.*

Tip of the day: Do not leave home without your God-recommended outfit!

July 28th

How Beauty Is Perceived

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.
Colossians 3:12

Text: Colossians 3:12-14

To feel beautiful is to feel attractive based on attributes that we possess as individuals. The world's definition of beauty is based on physical attributes, a wondrous combination of donated genes; accessories, fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, beautiful clothes with designer labels. However, all these no matter how good they seem are temporary.

True beauty is based on the virtues and values displayed by a person. It manifests in the character of a person. 1 Peter 3:4 declares that the beauty which comes from a gentle and quiet spirit is unfading. Thus, an old man or woman with facial wrinkles, leathery skin and not very fresh breath can be called beautiful, because of the goodness that radiates from their spirits.

Further Study: Proverbs 31; Proverbs 7

Prayer: *Dear Lord, help me to work on my inner man so that I will radiate your glory for all to see, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Let God's word be your guide. It has amazing abilities to change ugly ducklings into beautiful swans.

July 29th

Beauty of The God-Kind

*"You are altogether beautiful, my darling; there is no flaw in you."
Song of Solomon 4:7*

Text: Song of Solomon 4:1-7

Do you sometimes struggle with feelings of inadequacy or inferiority? Do you look at yourself in the mirror and dislike your image, your size, the acne or freckles on your face, the hair that refuses to grow full and luxuriant? Do you dislike taking pictures of yourself because you think you do not fit the conventional definition of beauty?

God says to you today "Stop letting others manipulate your self-esteem by defining beauty by their standards!". He looks at you, clothed in your robe of righteousness, covered completely by the blood of Jesus and He says to you today "You are altogether beautiful my darling daughter and there is no flaw (blemish, imperfection) in you".

Today, choose to believe Him. Put Him first and practice His Word even when it seems difficult. And soon, your beauty will be manifest for all to see.

Further Study: Isaiah 55:8-9

Prayer: *Dear Father, thank You because You are the One who sees me. You truly see me as the beautiful young lady that I am. Let Your nature shine through me every day of my life and transform every life I meet, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Choose to believe God's report about you.

Week 31 Teen Pregnancy

July 30th

Wake Me Up When September Ends

"Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."
Matthew 26:39

Text: 2 Corinthians 12:8-9

Jesus, seeing the suffering that He would face and the separation He would experience by the death on the cross prayed for a reprieve. This is just like the reaction of any unmarried young person at the thought of pregnancy; a wish to wake up and find the whole thing was just a bad dream. The longing for things to be "the way they were" may delay acknowledging the issue and seeking appropriate help for weeks or even months.

I know this because I too lived in denial for about 5 months and because my tummy 'miraculously' was not showing, my mother did not know. I made a

lot of mistakes because I had no one to guide me, mistakes I am here to make sure you do not make too.

Further Study: Jeremiah 29:11; Psalm 27; Isaiah 41:13

Prayer: *Lord I am scared! Help me! But I know that You will never leave me nor forsake me and You will always be with me to help me.*

Tip of the day: Talking to your baby eases the fear and reminds you that another human being depends on you.

July 31st

Why Abortion Is Not an Option

*"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb."
Psalm 139:13*

Text: Psalm 139:13- 18

Every life (born and unborn) is precious to God, despite the circumstances surrounding their conception. Abortion should not be an option, even where it is legally available. Pregnancy may not be a bed of roses, but your body will adapt **and** God will take care of you. Don't try to cover it by opting for an abortion. Talk to your parents or to someone you can trust who would tell them eventually.

As grievous as it is to be pregnant out of wedlock, the situation is compounded if the act of abortion is committed. Realise that it is not a sin to be the child of an unmarried teen so your child has a good future under God who can make the most of any situation. He is gracious and He is a God who restores. So, trust Him for yourself and your baby.

Further Study: 1 John 1:9; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Corinthians 6:19

Prayer: Heavenly Father I know I brought this on myself, have mercy on me and help me not to sink further into sin by deciding to abort this precious life.

Tip of the day: Talk to your parents or a mature Christian friend and do it fast before you give in to the temptation to abort.

August 1st

Dealing with The Guilt and Shame

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14

Text: John 8:3-11

We all make mistakes; we all fall sometimes choosing to follow our carnal desires over following God. But despite your flaws, God loves you and does not hate you for being pregnant. You may feel guilty and ashamed, but do not remain in that state or the devil will take advantage.

God is the One you can run to; He will wrap you in His arms and fill you with strength. He will meet all your needs whether physical or spiritual. He has a perfect plan for you and this baby and in His time He will make all things beautiful.

So, lift your head and walk in guilt-free confidence that your sins are forgiven! The perfect love of God will cast out every fear, and condemnation and loathing you may have. Let go of it all and let God's love in!

Further Study: Psalm 46:1; Psalm 91:1-2; Romans 3:23

Prayer: *Heavenly Father I accept your forgiveness and I refuse to listen to the lies of the devil anymore, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Keep declaring to yourself: "The Son of Man has set me free. I am free indeed!"

August 2nd

Dust Yourself Up and Move On

Though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with His hand.

Psalm 37:24

Text: Isaiah 43:18-19

You may be frightened, and your first instinct may be to go into self-preservation mode. But this is no longer just about you. The decisions you make now will affect more than just your life. Do not dwell on past mistakes. Move on! God is holding your hand to help you.

Pregnancy is not something you have to go through on your own. The baby's father is just as responsible for the pregnancy as you are and you may be able to involve him and his family too. Ask your parents to pray with you and discuss what support they would be able to offer you if you decide to raise the baby or if they can help you through the adoption process if that is what you decide. Find out with the help of your parents or pastor what help is available for pregnant teens.

Tough times may lie ahead, but you will make it through this! Nothing is beyond God's power, and He will never leave you.

Further Study: Isaiah 55:8-9; 1 Samuel 30:6

Prayer: *Lord I need your strength. Help me to be strong because I can't do this on my own, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Search the Bible for God's promises to you and encourage yourself by meditating on them.

August 3rd

Dealing with The Changes

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "You are worried and upset about many things...."
Luke 10:41

Text: Luke 10:38-42

The first few weeks of pregnancy are the hardest and easiest. The easiest since your condition is not yet visible and the hardest because of the disappointment you may deal with when you tell your parent while struggling with unfamiliar changes going on in your body.

When pregnancy occurs due to the disregard of moral values held since childhood, your growing abdomen seems to be a constant reminder of your failure, paraded before the disapproving stares of friends and strangers! You may also feel confused and frightened as you watch your stomach distend and your legs get occasionally swollen; as you experience the waist and backaches and discover the need to sleep a certain way because of the baby. Finding clothes that fit is often an uphill task. At this point, 9 months seems too long!

But when you place your trust in Him who said, 'I would never leave or forsake you' the months ahead suddenly do not look so bleak anymore.

Further Study: John 14:27; Romans 8:38-39; James 5:13-15

Prayer: *Lord help me to focus on the only things that matter right now; Your love and compassion and my baby.*

Tip of the day: Focus totally on God in worship and praise and watch Him work all things out for you.

August 4th

Dealing with Depression

"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit."
Psalm 34:18

Text: Isaiah 41:10

Psalms is filled with songs and prayers made by David most of which were written at a time he was passing through difficulties, depression and failure. Through praise and worship, David changed his focus from his circumstance to His circumstance-changing God. As a pregnant teenager, my situation turned me into a worshipper as the feeling of being isolated caused me to focus on God in worship.

Let God be your focus. Refuse to magnify your present circumstance. Satan does not want a confrontation with strength; he's a coward who preys on our weakness. Don't analyze your problems as it would only deepen the depression. Instead, magnify the Lord! Sing of His awesomeness, His greatness, His love, His power, His might. Magnify God and watch your problems diminish in comparison. Paul and Silas choose to praise God in the midnight hour instead of giving into depression at the thought of execution and God showed up, shaking the very foundations of the prison!

Further Study: Matthew 10:29-31; Philippians 4:8; Psalm 3:3

Prayer: *Lord my heart is overwhelmed. Please stretch out Your loving hand and enfold me in Your love, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Rejoice in the Lord and do not let the devil steal your joy.

August 5th

Before Signing the Dotted Lines

"Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, "It is because the Lord has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now." Genesis 29:32

Text: Isaiah 61:1-3

When faced with a teenage pregnancy, many parents attempt to redeem the situation by arranging for the couple to wed. This is not a good idea and could worsen an already bad situation. Don't sign those dotted lines as a ticket out of the hell-hole your home has become. You may just find yourself in a loveless marriage much like Leah's. Marriage is not an institution to be taken lightly. It is a lifelong journey that only death can rescue you from if entered for the wrong reasons.

Ask God for the strength you need, depend on Him wholly to guide your decision. Remember Ruth. She was a widow and a foreigner! Yet God settled her in her own home and she even became an ancestress of Jesus! Hand over the reins of your life to the Master planner and watch Him give you beauty for ashes!

Further Study: Psalm 27:14; Isaiah 26:3-4

Prayer: *Dear Lord, you promised to give me beauty for ashes. I trust You and will wait patiently for the fulfilment of Your promise, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: It is better to be happy as a single unwed mother than, a miserable married woman!

Week 32 Understanding Integrity

August 6th

What is Integrity?

'The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart;' Psalm 15:2

Text: Psalm 15:1-5

Our society is in dire need of men and women of integrity who exhibit moral courage and treat people fairly and honestly. Integrity is the parent of character; character, the guard of reputation and the necessity for success in any sphere of life. Without integrity, businesses fail, nations crumble, churches disperse, and families are in disarray.

A number of people in the bible were described in one way or the other as people of integrity including King Abimelech, David, Job, Hegai, Hushai, Abraham, and Jesus. These men intentionally resolved to make decisions on truth. We too can do the same.

Further Study: Daniel 5:13-17

Prayer: *And this I pray, that my love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and in all discernment so that I may approve the things that are excellent in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: A good reputation is as good as gold, but the person with integrity owns the gold mine.

August 7th

Fruits of Integrity

*'...he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.
And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me
against him to ruin him without any reason.' Job 2: 3b*

Text: Job 2:1-3

Integrity is like a seed and when sown in our hearts produces fruits visibly seen by the people around us. People of integrity keep their words and their promises. Sadly, we live in an age where a person's word doesn't mean much anymore unless it is in writing with lawyers to back it up.

People of integrity maintain their values, they don't allow the latest poll, latest headline or circumstances determine their values. Job is a great example of this. People may attempt to take your money, your job, reputation, fame or your life but they cannot take your character from you. Only you can throw that away. People of integrity attract God's protection. The person of integrity walks securely and is guarded by righteousness.

Further Study: Psalm 7:8; Proverbs 6:16-18

Prayer: *Help me O Lord to sow great seeds of integrity in all that I do today and beyond so as to produce fruits that will be visible for all to see, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Whatever a man may build, a business, a nation or an empire, if he doesn't build his own character, he will eventually fail.

August 8th

Sexual Integrity

'Don't go near the door of her (immoral woman's) house! If you do, you will lose your honour and hand over to merciless people everything you have achieved in life. Afterward, you will groan in anguish when disease consumes your body.' Pro 5:8-9 (MSG)

Text: Genesis 39; 2 Samuel 11

Sexual integrity means reserving sex only for one's spouse within the bounds of marriage. This applies to both the young and old, single and married. All are called to reserve sex for marriage and to be faithful in mind and body. It also means attitudes and habits that make abstinence from premarital sex possible and that help to reinforce fidelity.

Sexual integrity can be maintained in the following ways:

- ✿ Quickly and fully repent of any moral failure and trust God for deliverance (1 John 1:9; 2 Corinthians 1:10);
- ✿ Fill your mind with things that are pure (Philippians 4:8);
- ✿ Never allow your mind to pursue stimulation through perverse materials – nudity, indecent TV programmes, and internet articles, etc. (Psalm 101:3; Romans 12:2) and;
- ✿ Never look lustfully at the opposite sex (Job 31:1).

Further Study: Hebrews 4:16; Proverbs 6:30-33

Prayer: *Father, forgive me and heal me from sexual sins which have kept me separated from your love. Help me to flee from influences which cause me to sin in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Maintain objectivity. Intelligently evaluate dating relationships, run away from sexual temptation, and make friends with people who reinforce godly values.

August 9th

Integrity in Friendship

'The words of the mouth are deep waters, but the fountain of wisdom is a rushing stream.' Proverbs 18:4

Text: 2 Samuel 15:32-37

Integrity is the foundation on which all successful relationships are built. Integrity in friendship means that your friends do not have to worry about your motives. They know who you are when they are not present.

In 2 Samuel 15 – Hushai, David's friend represented David in Absalom's cabinet, overthrew Ahithophel's counsel and was instrumental in the restoration of the throne. If you say something behind your friend's back or divulge confidential information, then you lack integrity. To maintain integrity with your friends, do the following:

- ✿ Keep your promises: Follow through with the things you said you would do.
- ✿ Don't talk about your friends in a derogatory manner.
- ✿ Be a vault: Lock away confidential information given to you in trust.

Further Study: Galatians 6:1-3; Romans 12:9-10

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, give me the courage to say no, face the truth and do the right thing at all times, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: You are a person of integrity when the life you are living on the outside matches who you are on the inside.

August 10th

Integrity in Speech

'Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.' James 3:5

Text: James 3:2-6

There are plenty of verses in the bible to remind us that our speech has an intensity of power and impact. The Proverbs 31 woman had evidently overcome in this area (Proverbs 31:26). Several significant areas come to mind when talking about integrity in speech.

- ✿ Gossip: It is so easy to fall into the gossip trap. The first successful strategy to deal with gossip is to walk away. Not participating in juicy gossip builds trust and integrity.
- ✿ Inappropriate Talk: Keep your speech pure at all times.
- ✿ Response to Insults: A couple of deep breaths and a quickly muttered prayer can make the difference between an all-out conflict and a brief encounter that fades away.

Christ treated the tongue as an instrument. The Holy Spirit can infuse power into this instrument and cause our conversation to be full of grace.

Further Study: Colossians 4:6; 1 Peter 3:10; Proverbs 18:21

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, give me the grace to bridle my tongue and let my speech be always seasoned with grace, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Personal jabs or funny insults can get a laugh but do little to build up a person or help a situation.

August 11th

Integrity in Worship

*'The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous,
who speaks the truth from their heart.'* Psalm 15:2

Text: Psalm 15

Most discussions on worship focus on its meaning or the elements of a worship service, yet Psalm 15 shows that there is something else involved. As written in Psalm 15, the one who practices personal integrity as a way of life enters God's presence. Proper worship involves speaking the truth in our hearts.

A few character traits of this person are:

- ✿ Loyalty to the Lord as a basis for true worship.
- ✿ Loves God with the whole of his being.
- ✿ Rejects behaviours which dishonour God.
- ✿ Does not divorce outward actions from inward character.

Further Study: John 4:23-24; Matthew 22:37

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, let my worship to you always be born out of the integrity of my heart Amen.*

Tip of the day: Attempting to worship God without integrity will make our worship unacceptable.

August 12th

How to Become a Person of Integrity

A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of'. Luke 6:45

Text: Daniel 6:3-10

Integrity starts in the heart. It is developed as we learn and practice certain skills which we will briefly look at below.

Radical Self-confrontation: A person of integrity does not make excuses or blame others for his short-comings. They take responsibility for their actions and reactions.

Proper moral standards: This is based on God's character as revealed in His word and reinforced in our consciences by the Holy Spirit.

Accountability: They decide to be personally accountable to others for their moral and spiritual development. They could be accountable to responsible friends or appropriate adults.

Further Study: 1 Peter 3:16; Psalm 41:11-12.

Prayer: *Dear God, give me the grace to put into practice all it takes to become and remain a person of integrity, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: The best way to guard our integrity is to decide in advance that you will never sell or surrender your integrity.

Week 33 Verbal Abuse

August 13th

The Abused

*"See what great love the Father has lavished on us,
that we should be called children of God!"
1 John 3:1a*

Text: 1 John 3:1-5

At some point in our lives, most of us have been spoken to in a negative light, either by a parent, teacher, sibling etc. Verbal abuse is not a one-off event of negative speech but a constant onslaught of verbal battering. It includes yelling, name-calling, accusing, threatening, humiliating, ridiculing, criticising, trivialising your desires or your person. The aim is to control; it can lead to low self-esteem and it leaves no visible evidence.

If you have experienced this, remember: what was said does not define you. What God has said about you is more important. Understand that God loves you, so much that He sent Jesus to die for you (John 3:16). He has shown everyone including the devil that He loves you. Do not accept anything less.

Further Study: Romans 8:37-39; Psalms 139:1-24

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, help me to understand how deep and wide your love for me is. Amen*

Tip of the day: Sing "Jesus loves me this I know" and believe it!

August 14th

Sticks and Stones

*"But You, Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my
head high". Psalm 3:3*

Text: Psalm 3:1-8

There is a popular quote which says, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me". However, the fact is that words **hurt**. As a young girl, I always wished my mum would spank me rather than yell or call me names. In Psalm 42:10 (AMP), David said "As a crushing of my bones [with a sword], my adversaries taunt me, while they say continually to me, "Where is your God?"

When you have been a victim of verbal abuse, the negative words weigh down on you. But remember, God has called you His child, His friend, and righteous. So, when your confidence is knocked low because of negative words, what God says about you should always take precedence!

Further Study: Psalms 121:1-2; 27:6; 42:5

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, please help me remember that my identity is defined only by what your Word has said about me, in your name I pray, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Be confident! Hold your head high! You are the daughter of THE King!

August 15th

No Vacuum

The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.
Proverbs 18:21

Text: Proverbs 18:1-24

Studies have shown that when a frog is placed in hot water, it jumps out immediately. However, when a frog is placed in cold water and the temperature increased slowly, it does not perceive any danger and is slowly boiled to death. Ouch!

When you experience constant verbal abuse, you unconsciously believe the negative words you hear. This is very dangerous. Nature abhors a vacuum. When negative words are spoken to you, do more than reject them. Speak God's words of life to yourself! Spend regular time studying and speaking His word to yourself. At times, you may not have anyone to build you up. You need to learn to do it yourself.

Further Study: 1 Samuel 30:6; Galatians 4:7; Ephesians 1:4-11

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, thank you because Your Word has power over every negative pronouncement made against me. I know you will bring your good plans to come to pass in my life in your name I pray, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Read aloud the passages listed above, inserting your name.

August 16th

Confronting the Abuser

"If your brother or sister sins go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over".

*Matthew
18:15*

Text: Matthew 18:15-17

Confronting the abuser is probably the last thing on your mind. It might be an older person, someone in a position of authority, or even a peer. Sometimes the abuser has no idea they are causing harm to you as they may have grown with so much verbal abuse that it's become part of them.

To confront an abuser, you must understand that the intention is not to have a hostile face-off or an argument but to restore a relationship. Keep calm, state clearly how the person's words have made you feel; the impact on the relationship if it continues and give the other person a chance to respond.

Further Study: Job 32:4-12; 1 Timothy 5:1; Leviticus 19:32

Prayer: *Jesus, thank You for the courage to confront abuse; help me chose the right words and speak in love, in your name I pray, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Pray for anyone who has verbally abused you. Write down what you need to discuss with them.

August 17th

Take it to God

*"In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly".
1 Samuel 1:10*

Text: 1 Samuel 1:3-10

In 1 Samuel 1, we see the story of a young woman who was verbally abused for many years and its effect on her. Hannah's co-wife verbally provoked her to the point where she was in anguish and lost appetite. You may find yourself in a situation, like Hannah where you can't remove yourself from the same environment as the abuser. Hannah did what she could do at the time i.e. take it to God and trust Him to justify her.

You may feel helpless when facing constant verbal abuse, but God is ever present and willing to help you. Weeping may endure for a night but God promises that the morning will bring you joy. So take it to Him, lay it all at His feet. He will deliver you! He will save you!

Further Study: Psalm 55:22; Romans 12:19; Psalm 46:1

Prayer: *Lord, you are the helper of the helpless. Turn things around for my good, in Jesus name. Amen.*

Tip of the day: Pray about that situation; keep praying until things change.

August 18th

Keep the Peace

"Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing." 1 Peter 3:9

Text: 1 Peter 3:9-12

When someone speaks to me harshly or unkindly, I am tempted to reply in the same way. For people who have been exposed to days, months and years of unkind, negative and belittling speech, the temptation to retaliate may bubble beneath the surface like a volcano waiting to erupt.

In 1 Peter 3:11, God wants us to proactively seek peace with Him, ourselves and others. You cannot control others but you can control your reaction to other people. So be proactive and respond in love. When you respond in love, they lose the power to hurt you. Also, take steps to avoid possible triggers of the verbal abuse. This may mean coming home earlier to prevent an outburst by an angry parent or taking a different route to school.

Further Study: Romans 12:17-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; James 3:18

Prayer: *Holy Spirit, help me to pursue peace, to repay evil with good, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Repay the insult with a blessing, either in words or actions.

August 19th

Could It Be Me?

*"Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing.... this should not be."
James 3:10*

Text: James 3:3-12

When a person grows up with a background of abuse it becomes a normal way to communicate. If I am constantly criticising, threatening, yelling, name-calling, blaming, mocking, accusing and undermining another person(s), I am a verbal abuser. Even if I constantly choose not all, but a few of the behaviours listed, as my way of communicating with a particular person(s), I am a verbal abuser and a verbal bully.

What should I do? Recognise the problem and repent; apologise to the person(s) I have hurt (Job 42:7-9). Fill myself with God's word because the mouth speaks out of what the heart is filled with. Keep the right company i.e. disassociate myself from people who communicate using negative hurtful speech. Seek the help of the Holy Spirit, who is my Helper (John 14:16).

Further Study: 1 Peter 3:10; Luke 6:45; Ephesians 4:29

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, help me to speak words that improve others, not hurt them in your name I pray, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Before you speak, consider if it is helpful to the other person.

Week 34 Graceful and Seasoned Speaking

August 20th

Graceful and Seasoned Speaking

We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check. (NLT) James 3:2

Text: Luke 4:22; Colossians 4:6

I think everyone knows someone who it seems always says the right thing. How do they do it we may wonder? To speak with **grace** means to say what is spiritual, wholesome, fitting, kind, sensitive, purposeful, complementary, gentle, truthful, loving, and thoughtful.

Not the easiest feat but our Heavenly Father always knows what we need at each moment, a word of caution, a word of encouragement or just a word to say hello. We can learn from him and with a few tips, we could be closer to that point than we ever were.

Further Study: Psalm 141:3; Proverbs 25:11

Prayer: *Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to you heavenly Father, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Take a few moments to think through your words before speaking them.

August 21st

The Power of Words

Death and life are in the power of the tongue... Proverbs 18:21a

Text: Genesis 1:3-25

Words can be so light, so airy; they can also be powerful, liberating, heavy, cutting, blunt. Our passage today is replete with "And God said". By His words, God created everything, both seen and unseen.

In addition, He has exalted above all things His Name and His word (Psalm 138:2). He not only created everything by His word, He sustains it by His word (Colossians 1:17). As we are His children, we have the same creative power and the same Spirit at work within us.

Further Study: John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16-17

Prayer: *Heavenly Father thank you for the gift of words. Help me to use this gift to bring glory to your name today and always.*

Tip of the day: In all your words today, aim at creating life, create the future God wants for you, create the sibling God sees, create the circumstances that are in line with God's word. Speak life.

August 22nd

Speak Life to Your Circumstances

*for they are life to those who find them and health to one's whole body.
Proverbs 4:22*

Text: Proverbs 4:20-22; 18:21

There are often things that come up to trouble us; a challenge or obstacle in our way, subjects that seem difficult to understand, mean classmates, a troubling home situation... you know what I am talking about. We all have them. And no doubt we are praying about them but what are we saying about those situations? What is God hearing us say? God's word is life to all who find it.

We already know our words can have creative or destructive power. So, the question is what have we been saying about those situations? Life or words filled with fear, worry, and death? Speak God's word about that circumstance. His word is life, choose to speak life.

Further Study: 2 Kings 4:8-37

Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, today I commit myself to speaking life in every circumstance I find myself in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Search the word of God for His counsel concerning that situation and begin to speak that word until you see it manifest.

August 23rd

Feathers in The Wind

Text: Proverbs 18:8

There once lived a woman who loved to gossip – every single day. "Can you believe he did that?" "Can you believe she said that?" "And did you see what he was wearing? A man of his age..." On and on and on she would gossip with her friends.

One day the Rabbi asked to see her. "I need you to do something for me," he said. He gave her a cushion and told her to go outside, cut it open and release all the feathers. "But why?" she pleaded. "Just do as I ask," he said.

The woman went outside, slit the cushion open and released all the feathers. The wind quickly blew them far and wide and out of sight.

'Now,' said the Rabbi, "Go and bring back all the feathers."

"But, they've been blown from pillar to post, down the street, over the hill. I'll never be able to bring them all back." She pleaded.

The Rabbi looked at her sternly and said, "And so, it is with words and idle gossip." "Words once spoken can never be taken back. There is no telling how far they will travel and what harm they could do. From now on, I want you to think before you speak."

And she did. *Culled and adapted.*

Further Study: Proverbs 16:28; 20:19

Prayer: *Father, help me to mind my business and avoid idle gossip.*

Tip of the day: Meditate on the moral of the story above

August 24th

Speak Life to Those Around You

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.
Ephesians 4:29

Text: James 3:9-11

Have you ever said something to a friend either as a joke or in anger and watched their face drop or felt them withdraw? Our key verse says we should say only what is needful for building others up. Have you ever put in your best and then watched someone destroy your efforts and confidence with a few careless words?

With our words, we can build up or strike down those who hear us. We should stop and consider our words in every circumstance.

Further Study: Proverbs 10:11,20-21; Proverbs 11:9,12

Prayer: *Father of light in whom there is no shadow of turning, I ask that you teach me to through my words today build those around me.*

Tip of the day: Think about it, have you created anything with your words lately? Happiness, confidence, hurt, confusion. Determine to create life with the words you speak to someone today.

August 25th

Multitude of Words

In the multitude of words, sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.
Proverbs 10:19

Text: Proverbs 21:23; Proverbs 10:19

It's fun to be the life of the party, to always have an opinion on all subjects and to share it. But like our key verse says, when you talk too much, sin will often not be lacking. A coarse joke, a little lie to spice up the story, a hurtful word or a gossip spread. There is a reason God gave us one mouth and two ears. To listen more and speak less.

Further Study: James 1:19,26; Proverbs 20:19

Prayer: *Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O God.*

Tip of the day: If what you have to say will take many words, give it more thought.

August 26th

Speaking the Truth in Love

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. Ephesians. 4:15

Text: 2 Samuel 12:1-10

There are times when what we must say may be unpleasant to someone, what should we do in those situations? Perhaps a friend has a body odour, another is making wrong choices and another is being deceived by someone she trusts. These are not the moments to shy away from the truth but neither are they times to go in guns blazing.

Our key verse speaks of speaking the truth in love. Stopping to consider how our words will affect our friend is a good start to this. It should not, however, keep us from speaking the truth. Bearing in mind the other person's feelings means we will do what we can to spare him/her unnecessary hurt while passing across our message.

Further Study: Acts 18:24-26; Galatians 2:11-14

Prayer: *Lord use my words at all times and in all seasons to speak your message and your message alone.*

Tip of the day: Try talking to your friend in a private place where you both won't be overheard. That way she won't be embarrassed by the presence of other people.

Week 35 Skill Acquisition

August 27th

What Is Skill Acquisition?

You have many workers: stonecutters, masons, and carpenters, as well as those skilled in every kind of work, in gold and silver, bronze and iron—craftsmen beyond number. Now begin the work, and the LORD be with you.
1 Chronicles 22:15-16

Text: 2 Chronicles 34:10-13

Skills refer to abilities and capabilities of people to perform tasks as demanded. The business dictionary considers it as an ability and a capacity that involves **a deliberate, systematic and sustained** effort to smoothly and adaptively carry out complex activities or job functions involving ideas, things or people.

In the past, in Eastern Nigeria it was the norm for a young person who picks an interest in a particular trade or craft, to be sent as an apprentice to someone involved in that business or craft. He would work, live and serve that man for a number of years. In this length of time, it is assumed he has learnt the rudiments of the trade and thus can set up and sustain his own.

Verse 10, 11, and 12 laid emphases on the fact that when there is work to be done, in this case, repair and restoration of the temple, it is delivered to skilled workmen.

Further Study: Proverbs 22:9; Ephesians 2:10

Prayer: *I roll my works on You and trust you. You will cause my thoughts to agree with your will and make my plans succeed, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Every artist was first an amateur. Start today.

August 28th

Why Is It Important to Acquire a Skill?

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'" Matthew 25:21

Text: Matthew 25: 14-30

Everyone one on earth has at least one talent, unfortunately not everyone uses theirs. A talent is generally useless until it is put to use, incidentally, most talents have to be harnessed. God has placed each one of us on earth for the express purpose of using our skills for the glory of God not primarily for our self-gain.

Few points for us to think about from the passage we read;

- ✿ We have lots of opportunities brought our way by God but we seem to have personal limitations which are largely limitations of our minds.
Matthew 25:25
- ✿ We will be held accountable. For every opportunity presented by God that is wasted, we are being unfaithful.

Further Study: I Samuel 17:32-51

Prayer: *Lord, let me be found faithfully doing that which you have placed in my hands, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: When you have been faithful, at the end, you will hear Him say "Well done".

August 29th

What Skills Can I Acquire as A Young Person?

*To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to
another one bag,
each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.
Matthew 25:15*

Text: Exodus 35:30-35

It is important for us to see that God has given each person different gifts to be used for the benefit of the whole of humanity and especially the body of Christ. There are as many skills and talents in the world as there are people, the confusion begins when we try to copy and attempt to be like someone else instead of embracing and celebrating the skills and talents we have.

Listing the skills one could acquire might just be an endless task, however, you should bear in mind that whatever skill you choose to acquire, you are an innovator, you should argue status quo and create new ways of doing things. Nurture creativity in anything your hands find to do.

We become what we think about and thus we must learn to think like God.

Further Study: Exodus 31:1-6; Romans 12:6-8; Isaiah 50:4

Prayer: *Lord, make my heart and mind big enough to accept all you have for me.*

Tip of the day: Where the mind goes, the man follows.

August 30th

How Do I Know Which Skill to Learn?

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.
James 1:17

Text: Jeremiah 29:11-14; Genesis 25:24-27

God has an amazing plan for each of us and that plan gives us a great hope for our future. Choosing a skill to acquire should be done bearing in mind that

- ✿ God has my best interest at heart more than I have for myself.
- ✿ God is leading me in the path of righteousness for His namesake.
- ✿ Competition is a killer, we all have all individual assignments and endowments.
- ✿ Excellence is expected.
- ✿ The more I learn about God, the more I find myself.

It becomes easier to choose the skill to learn when I know what I do with ease and what things I am passionate about.

Further Study: Deuteronomy 8:18; Revelation 3:7; Ecclesiastes 9:10

Prayer: *Father I know all things work together for me, for I love you and my calling is according to your purpose.*

Tip of the day: I am rightly positioned and I am at the centre of God's will for my life

August 31st

Levels of Skill Acquisition

David also said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD God, my

*God, is with you... and every willing person skilled in any craft will help
you in all the work..."*
I Chronicles 28:20-21

Text: Ezekiel 47:3-6

The stages of skill acquisition could be likened to the requirements of an athlete training to be a pro athlete. In the first stage, you're a novice in the skill and a lot of mistakes abound. Depending on the difficulty of the skill in question this could take some time.

At the next stage relating it to our text, the water level has risen to the abdominal level and requires quite an effort to keep moving. Continuous training and practice become your watchword at this point. Remember:

✿ Good is the enemy of best and we must always dare to keep launching out.

✿ There is more to whatever level of expertise you enjoy at the moment.

Further Study: 2 Chronicles 2:13; Ecclesiastes 10:10

Prayer: *Lord take me deeper, in your name I pray, Amen.*

Tip of the day: I press forward daily to the finish.

September 1st

Discipline: An Integral Part of Skill Acquisition.

In everything he did he had great success because the LORD was with him.
I Samuel 18:14

Text: I Samuel 18:5

Correction/discipline is probably one of the most difficult things to accept especially from someone else. David was a man who was anointed to be King, yet he was put in the household of Saul for some training and crucifixion of the flesh. God seems to always put us around people or things like Saul to smoothen out the rough edges till we have learnt discipline.

Just because David was skilled in playing the harp and was a great warrior would not have automatically input discipline into his life. There is always more to learn. Discipline prepares us to be greatly used of God.

Further Study: I Kings 7:14-15; Proverbs 23:12

Prayer: *Lord prepare me a workman not ashamed. I pray that I will act wisely in all my ways. I thank you that you will be with me causing me to succeed.*

Tip of the day: If I keep at it, I'll get better at doing it.

September 2nd

Stay Motivated

Every skilled woman spun with her hands and brought what she had spun—blue, purple or scarlet yarn or fine linen. Exodus 35:25

Text: Psalm 143:3-10

For some of us getting into university after leaving secondary school was or has been a challenge. This can be very discouraging but it is not the time to

give up on your dreams. Rather it is a time to stop evaluate and re-strategize. Get help where you need help and work towards your goals.

While doing this discover, learn and develop as many skills as you can. Don't waste this time. Learn to bake, sew, write, organise events execute projects, be part of and lead a team. The skills you learn and perfect in this golden opportunity would be of immeasurable help later on in life.

Further Study: Philippians 4:6-7

Prayer: *Father may my strength never fail in times of difficulty. May your joy keep my mind and soul in Christ, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: I will encourage myself in the Lord.

Week 36 Standing for Jesus In College

September 3rd

Why Bother with College?

To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. Daniel 1:17

Text: 2 Timothy 1:6-10

Paul in the scriptures above spends time admonishing Timothy, encouraging him to live the best life possible. In our main text, He encourages Timothy to fan the flames of the gift within him. He admonished Timothy on how to sustain this gift impacted by faith; he encourages him to study the word. Fanning the flames of a gift can only be done through a process of exploring, practicing and refining our knowledge of that gift.

We all have gifts, talents, and skills but unless we put in the effort to harness them through diligent study we might lose them or underutilize them. God gave an understanding of all kinds of literature and learning to the Hebrew boys and He can do the same with us. Going to college is not a guarantee that all things will fall into place, but it is certain to increase your knowledge base and open your eyes to opportunities further afield.

Further Study: Daniel 1:11–21; 2 Timothy 2:15

Prayer: *Dear Lord help me to lay aside every restless or distracting thought. Give me the strength to discipline my mind so I may apply it to knowledge, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: There is nothing to be lost from positively improving our knowledge base; apply your mind to studying.

September 4th

Finishing Strong Starts at The Beginning.

But he who stands firm to the end will be saved. Matthew 24:13

Text: Luke 14:28–35

I suspect everyone has heard about Ussain Bolt, one of the best, if not the best athlete to have emerged in this decade. It is amazing to watch him on the tracks. He never seems ruffled or scared and once that signal is given, his concentration and attack of the racing track are intense.

Sports commentators constantly marvel at how fast he leaves the starting line, stays focused and does not waver till the end. When you look at his face at the finish line it is almost as relaxed as it was at the starting line. This tells me that the race is not just about that day but all about the hours of practice put in ahead of time. To finish strong, you must start strong; pick the right friends, the right fellowship, and a good study plan.

Further Study: Luke 9:50–62; Ecclesiastes 9:11; 1 Corinthians 9:24–27

Prayer: *Dear Lord, grant me the grace not to look back or waiver in my pursuit of your will for my future, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Take the time to set a goal for yourself, spiritually, academically and socially; choose how you want to finish now.

September 5th

Standing for Christ In My Studies

*Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings;
he will not serve before obscure men. Proverbs 22:29*

Text: Proverbs 1:28–33

Study as though your success in life solely depends on your study and pray as though your success in life solely depends on your prayers. I found this saying very helpful through my university days. It made me trust God for grace over things I just could not understand and appreciate Him more for the things I easily breezed through. It also made me aware that I could never expect God to do things for me that I should do for myself.

When we excel in our academics, we attract men to Christ because we will prove that an excellent spirit dwells in every born-again child of God. From the main text, God expects us to stand by the principles of His Word even as we gather knowledge. This includes not cheating, not ignoring our lectures or assignments; being diligent and as consistent as possible with our studies.

Further Study: Daniel 6:3; Exodus 36:1–2; 2 Chronicles 2:13–14

Prayer: *Lord may I understand that to excel as a student is one of the ways I can preach the good news to my classmates, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Ensure you have good grades and when you are asked the secret, point to Jesus!

September 6th

Standing for Christ In My Relationships

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. Hebrews 12:14 (NKJV)

Text: Matthew 5:13-24

I would like you to consider the following words: A bitter virgin, an abusive priest, a neglectful mother. These are words that should not exist together. They are indications that the individuals involved do not understand the value of their position or the trust placed on them by God, society, their followers or beliefs. In this same manner is a Christian who does not speak or demonstrate the life of Christ in their relationships.

Regardless of the relationships on campus, we must endeavor to live out the principles of holiness, forgiveness, love, and honesty in all that we do. To get it right in one area but fail in another is to light a lamp (your faith and good deeds) but hide it under a bushel (areas of neglect). However, remember not to trust in the arm of your flesh but rather in the grace of God.

Further Study: Isaiah 41:8-22; 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15, 22; 2 Corinthians 5:20

Prayer: *Lord thank you for the gift of people. May I represent you well and be a true ambassador for you on campus and beyond, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: The Bible encourages us to live in peace with everyone, but it does not mean we should compromise God's standards at any point.

September 7th

Standing for Christ In My Environment

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16

Text: 1 Peter 2: 10 – 15

The Queen of England remains one of the longest living monarchs of the century. A lot of people regardless of their wealth consider it a privilege to meet with her, even if it is just for a handshake. When I look at my wardrobe or check the words I speak I often ask myself if I was going to meet the queen, would I feel dignified enough in this and if the answer is no then I reconsider my actions.

In a similar manner, we must reconsider our conduct wherever we find ourselves on campus; is the action, this business deal, this study plan, this relationship, this election worthy of a princess on an ambassadorial visit? Is my conduct aligned with the Bible's standards? Is it worthy of display in the public and private places? God expects me to represent Him in thoughts, word, and deed.

Further Study: Matthew 5:13-18; 1 Peter 2:19-23; Ruth 2:11-12

Prayer: *Heavenly father help me to do your word in all my daily interaction, help me to stand even when it seems like no one is around, in Jesus name I pray, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Do not be like the electric pole with wires that supplies no current, fully release the Christ in you.

September 8th

A Well-Rounded Adult

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom. Ecclesiastes 9:10

Text: Luke 2: 39 -53.

I went to a birthday party last summer; the cake was one of the most elaborate princess themed cake I had ever seen. The three-tiered castle cake served as a wonderful home to Princess Elsa, Anna, Olaf and other fondant characters from the Disney classic Frozen. However, when it was time to eat the cake we were advised not to eat the middle as it was not fully baked. The cake tasted lovely and I thoroughly enjoyed it but looking back now I cannot help thinking that this is how the life of some Christians are; perfect on the outside but lacking within.

God does not want us to be that way, He wants us to be the same within as without, nothing lacking or missing. Does this mean we should lose hope and give up? No. it means we keep trusting in God's grace to get us where He wants us to be.

Further Study: 1 Samuel 2:26; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Prayer: *Dear Father, help me not to grow not only in stature but also in inner strength, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well, so whatever life you choose to live is worth living well in line with God's word.

September 9th

Staying Strong

*Finally, brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.
Ephesians 6:10 (KJV)*

Text: 2 Peter 1:1-9.

Never judge a book by its cover or an ant by its size. As tiny as they are, ants can carry things that are ten times their size. Inner strength, a

confidence that comes from within; from knowing whose you are is what we need to survive the various changes we face in college.

This includes grades that do not measure up to our efforts, financial constraints, failed relationships we had hoped would endure and reward us, etc. Staying strong means never thinking you have 'arrived'. It means focusing on God because His joy is our strength. We will only attain perfection when we stand before the throne of grace, until then we must continually add to our love patience, and to patience knowledge, and to knowledge kindness etc. There are no 'old Christians' before God; we all still have room to grow and blossom and that we should.

Further Study: Zechariah 4; Philippians 3:12-16; 1 Corinthians 10:12-13

Prayer: *Father I pray that your grace will hold me through good days and bad days, learning to celebrate every day because You are with me, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Daily reaffirm the blessings and opportunities God has given you; build up your confidence bank.

Week 37 Understanding Contentment

September 10th

Thorns

"and the cares of this world; the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things entering in, choke the word and it becomes unfruitful."
Mark 4:19(NKJV)

Text: Mark 4:10-20

A few years ago, a friend of mine told me about an agricultural business he invested in. He excitedly anticipated the large profits that would come in after the planting season. A few months later, he was telling me about his overwhelming losses which he attributed to different factors including the soil environment of his choice of crop. This story brings to mind the queen of parables: the parable of the soils.

Our study today brings our focus to the seed that fell among thorns. What are these thorns? Which of us has never felt the prick of any these thorns of *discontentment* in our hearts at one point or the other in our Christian walk? Our Arch-enemy knows how to use even the pressures of legitimate needs to choke our faith and growth in the word of God, but thank God, we are not ignorant of his schemes.

Further Study: Luke 12:22-26.

Prayer: *Dear Father, You are the gardener. Please search my heart and take away the thorns that would hinder my growth in You, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Guard your heart against the thorns – search God’s word to remind yourself of His promises to you.

September 11th

More Thorns

"Then Jesus said to him, 'Away from me, Satan! For it is written...'"
Matthew 4:10

Text: Matthew 4:7-10

This was the last in the series of temptations that Satan brought to our High Priest and Role Model during His wilderness retreat. Picture the physical environment of Jesus: a wilderness with wild animals (Mark 1:13) and Satan bombarding His mind with temptations. Doesn’t life feel like that sometimes?

I imagine Jesus taking a little break from this scene to the top of a mountain, the cool evening breeze greeting his skin and the breath-taking slideshow of the most beautiful tourist sites in the world combined with the treasures and glories they had to offer rolling before His eyes.

I remember explaining to a younger sister that Satan's offer was actually for Jesus to replace him as the god of this World so that instead of "worldliness" we would have "Jesusness". She stared at me wide-eyed and said "Oh! Why didn't He take it?" I replied, "Because He was **content**; He didn't want to sell His future". Don't sell yours!

Further Study: Revelation 11:15.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, give me the wisdom to recognize the thorns that Satan brings so that I would overcome like you did.*

Tip of the day: Write down the thoughts that steal your joy when you think of them and begin to thank God for them instead.

September 12th

Contentment-101

*"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me".
Philippians 4:13(NKJV)*

Text: Philippians 4:10-13

A few years ago, I watched a movie about a wealthy man who treated his guests to a sumptuous feast. Each was to request whatever they wanted. He himself requested a bowl of garri and some groundnuts. He noticed their surprise and explained that "true wealth is being alive and healthy enough to choose what to eat." Paul revealed in our passage today that Christian contentment goes beyond the movie's definition. It is a skill that must be LEARNT by conscious effort and practice.

Our key verse is one of the most quoted-out-of-context motivational verses in the Bible. Imagine us using it in its right context; motivating ourselves in the building of this great virtue. It is the product of a trained spirit; the spirit that enabled Paul to sit in a Roman jail and write to the Philippians with words like "Joy" and "Rejoice" filling the lines of this Masterpiece from his grateful heart. Let's get into God's Classroom; it's time to learn how to ABOUND and to ABASE. Let's get into God's Gym; it's time to shed the weights of discontentment. YES, WE CAN.

Further Study: James 1:9-11.

Prayer: *Sweet Holy Spirit, You are the greatest teacher. Teach me everything I need to be the best I should be for You, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Write all the blessings you can think of that money cannot buy.

September 13th

The Lying Lion

"Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith..."
1 Peter 5:9 (NLT)

Text: 1 Peter 5:6-10

In my Primary School days, an elder told us that when a lion wants to hunt, he marks a territory and roars. The smaller animals (who on a normal day are smarter and faster) are struck with fear, so they are too weak to escape and they end up on his dinner plate. I have grown enough to know the finer details (including the fact that the lioness actually does most of the hunting) but the principle still holds true.

Our elder in the faith – Peter, tells us that Satan uses the same principle. He roars around *like* a lion to fill our hearts with anxiety (the greatest enemy of

contentment). I have sat at the counselling table long enough to observe that a great percentage of the things we cry about are rooted in anxiety: It could be night-dreams, career, relationship or family issues. How many lionesses of Zion have lost their purity because of the anxiety of losing a guy? How did Peter teach us to handle this fake-lion? (Resist him steadfastly in the faith). Roar back!

Further Study: Mark 4:35-40.

Prayer: *Lion of the tribe of Judah, I am your daughter and I know You always take care of your own. Help me never to forget this!*

Tip of the day: Write down the things you are most anxious about. Thank God for them and tear them up.

September 14th

Deceptions

But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless. It was like chasing the wind. Ecclesiastes 2:11(NLT)

Text: Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

Solomon had the means to experiment with the kind of pleasures that some of us can only fantasize about. He wrote down his findings in Ecclesiastes. In Secondary School Practical Chemistry, we were taught to summarize our experiments in a three-column table: TEST, RESULT, and INFERENCE. Solomon's practical sheet would have looked like this:

TEST: All the pleasures of life.

RESULT: No Satisfaction.

INFERENCE: Meaningless/Chasing after the wind.

One of the lies that trigger untamed pursuit of material possessions is that these possessions provide satisfaction. On the contrary, the road of material possession is an endless road; the more you acquire them, the more you see the need to get more. The natural man is an insatiable being, so one of the ways to put *a knife to our throat* is to always remind oneself that satisfaction is never attained through multiple possessions, but instead, it is a character that is cultivated in Christ.

Further Study: 1 Kings 10:1-13.

Prayer: *Lord, help me to always remember that satisfaction is only possible in you, in Jesus name I pray, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Compare the things you believe define achievement and satisfaction with the things Solomon achieved.

September 15th

Jesus' Legacy

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you... Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. John 14: 27

Text: John 14:25-29

I lost my dear mother a few months ago, and the pain of the vacuum she left is still fresh in my heart. I miss her deeply, but she left a legacy. Living her godly legacy gives me a blessed feeling like she lives in me every day.

Jesus was about to leave and like a departing father, He had things to say to His children. Nothing seemed right about this period of their lives. They had left everything to follow Him in hope of a better future. He had taken care of their physical needs for three years but what next now? They knew He had no money stacked up in a foreign account somewhere. Lately, He had started to look burdened (Matthew 26:38). Judas had started to think of a way out (his discontentment eventually opened the door for Satan – Luke 22:3). Jesus had something for them. It was what sustained Him all His years on earth. It was the secret of His ministry success; it was the key to

everything: PEACE and Jesus added a clause "...not the type the world gives."

Further Study: Luke 12:15-26.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, You are my shepherd. I receive Your peace, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Jesus said, "Consider the birds of the air; Consider the lilies."

September 16th

Great Gain

"...some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." 1 Timothy 6:10 (NKJV)

Text: 1 Timothy 6:5-12

Yesterday we read about the legacy of the Prince of Peace. I am sure you would not be surprised to learn that Paul had a legacy too. It was Paul's secret which he shared with his Philippian children (Philippians 4:6-7). The Peace of God that passes all mental understanding. It is an impregnable wall that **guards** our hearts and minds (where the issues of life spring from).

In our text today, Paul phrased it in another way to young Timothy. Warning him against the deceit of Mammon; and to stay away from people who think otherwise, he summarised with an exhortation to "**fight** the good fight of **FAITH**" (to overcome the roaring Lion). Reverse verse 6 and it would read "ungodliness with discontentment is GREAT LOSS..." Come to think of it, how did Lucifer lose his place of glory in Heaven? Isaiah 14 reveals that he was discontent with his position. Discontentment must be the seed of all evil!

Further Study: 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, speak peace to my heart, just like you did to the waves and the storm. Strengthen my faith in you today and always, in your name I pray, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Look up the word "Peace" in a concordance and note five other things the Bible says about peace.

Week 38 Anger Management

September 17th

You Can Master It

*Don't be quick to fly off the handle. Anger boomerangs. You can spot a fool
by the lumps on his head. Ecclesiastes 7:9 (MSG)*

Text: Ecclesiastes 7:1-14

Anger is a very strong emotion. Strong emotions like love and hate have the ability to make us act in unexpected ways. But we do not have to be a slave to our emotions. Through the power of God's word and by the help of the Holy Spirit, we can learn to master them.

For the next 6 days, we shall look at what the bible says about anger and how we can deal with it. Our key verse tells us that the result of an angry outburst is not pretty. It always bounces back.

Further Study: James 1:19-27; Galatians 5:22-23

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, you died to give me victory over sin and sinful emotions. I refuse to let anger control me. By your word and power, I will walk in victory. Amen.*

Tip of the day: Rather than saying or doing something you might regret later, walk away or, count to fifty until you feel calmer.

September 18th

Listening Helps

"In your anger, do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry". Ephesians 4:26

Text: Ephesians 4:17-32

Grace stopped in her tracks, staring at her bed in shock. Her favourite turquoise gown which had been borrowed for a wedding by her roommate lay on the bed, with a burn mark at the hem, possibly made by an iron. Anger welled up in her heart like a coiled snake preparing to strike.

At this point, Grace had a choice to make. Turn to her friend and shout all manner of insults at her including promising never to lend her anything ever again. Or calm down, find out what caused it, acknowledge that accidents happen and forgive her friend. What would Jesus want her to do?

Further Study: Proverbs 16:32; Psalm 37:8-9

Prayer: *Dear Lord, help me to refrain from anger and to be slow to speak especially when I'm angry, in Jesus name. Amen.*

Tip of the day: Remember you do not know the whole story. So, stop and listen before jumping to conclusions.

September 19th

Do Not Give It a Chance

"...and do not give the devil a foothold". Ephesians 4:27

Text: Ephesians 4:17-32

A mouse in a pet shop looks very cute. However, a pair of mice in the home can cause havoc when they reproduce. They nibble at everything, get into places they shouldn't and are a serious nuisance. At this point, your parents will need to pay an exterminator to get rid of the mice.

Unresolved anger towards a person is like mice infestation in the home. It gives the devil a foothold in your life where he can wreak all kinds of havoc. God wants us to quickly resolve and forgive people who offend us. Not just for their sake but also for ours. Forgiveness causes us to let go of our anger and trust God to turn the situation around for our good.

Further Study: Matthew 5:43-48; Ecclesiastes 10:8; Psalm 37:8-9

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, help me to let go of the anger I feel and to forgive just as you forgave me. Amen.*

Tip of the day: Pray for someone who has offended you and forgive sincerely.

September 20th

Keep the Right Company

Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person; do not associate with one easily angered. Proverbs 22:24

Text: Proverbs 22:24-25

A popular quote says "Show me your friends and I'll show you who you are." This is actually based on a biblical concept. In Proverbs 13:20, Solomon, the wise-guy, wrote: "He that walks with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

If your close friends are quick to take offence at every little thing, lose their temper easily, cannot control their tongues or their actions, raise their voices at the slightest offence, it becomes difficult for you to maintain a calm composure around them. Slowly but surely, you will adopt their bad behaviours. Choose friends, who encourage you to keep your cool, maintain a calm composure, practice patience, self-control and respond with kind words when faced with an offence.

Further Study: Proverbs 13:20; 1 Corinthians 15:33

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, please surround me with friends that encourage me to practice patience and self-control if I am tempted to lose my temper. Amen.*

Tip of the day: A true friend always encourages you to do what is right.

September 21st

Our Words Matter

*"... The simple moral fact is that words kill."
Matthew 5:22 (MSG)*

Text: Matthew 5:21-48

We are responsible for how we react when someone does or says something to offend us. We can either reply in anger or with a blessing. A word said in anger or hurt has the potential to cause months, even years of damage both to the speaker and the hearer.

When people offend you, focus on God instead of becoming angry. Remember that God wants you to keep your attention on Him and not on the situation. The words we speak in tense situations should reflect our trust in God. They should be words of blessing and not anger.

Further Study: Proverbs 15:1; Colossians 3:8

Prayer: *Lord, help me to keep my eyes fixed on you when I am tempted to lose my temper. Help me to speak words of blessing and not words that will stir up strife, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Try saying "God bless you" when you are tempted to say something negative in anger. Keep saying it until the anger subsides.

September 22nd

Practice Makes Perfect

"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. Matthew 7:24

Text: Matthew 7:24-29

God wants us to live right and has given us His Word (the Bible) which teaches us how to live right. When we read the Bible and we live the way it says we should, we are building a strong foundation of good habits and right living.

This foundation is what we need to help us when we are tempted to become angry and to lose our temper. The more you study God's word, meditate (think about) it, and do it, the better you become at controlling your temper.

Further Study: Psalm 119:9-16; James 1:19-27

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, Your Word is what I need to train me to live and act right. Help me to study your Word and put it into practice. Amen.*

Tip of the day: Read at least one chapter of your bible every day.

September 23rd

Help Is at Hand

"...And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever.
John
14:16 (ESV)

Text: John 14:16-17

For many of us, anger is our reaction to the dissatisfactions of life. We feel something and we react to it without thinking of the consequences.

If you have given Jesus control of your life, then you have the Holy Spirit living in your spirit. You can ask Him to help you deal with angry feelings and angry outbursts. And do you know what? He will help you because He loves you and wants you to be free to live a life filled with the love and joy of the Lord.

All you have to do is ask Him now. Yes, today! And He will help you put aside all the anger and every negative feeling which does not glorify God. He's your Helper!

Further Study: I Peter 5:8; Colossians 3:8

Prayer: *Holy Spirit, when I am tempted to get angry, help me be calm, to respond in love and not react in anger in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Ask Him for help today.

Week 39 Boy Meets Girl

September 24th

Living with Intention

*Be careful, then how you live—not as unwise but as wise.
Ephesians 5:15*

Text: Luke 14:28-35

We've heard the phrase 'live with intention' often enough, but what many are not aware of, is that it finds its roots in the bible. While Jesus was speaking to the crowd, he referenced following him to projects like building a house—*will a man not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? vs 28*

Likewise, our journey through this world should be treated as a long-term project. Everyone must keep in sight the finish line, which could be something as simple as getting through school with good grades or making it into heaven when our Lord comes. Every decision made should take us one step closer to that destination, rather than farther away from it. Even on this very vital and emotional issue whatever your decision, keep your destination in mind. Would that choice (person) draw you closer to God or away from him?

Further Study: Ephesians 5

Prayer: *Teach me to number my days, Lord, that I might apply my heart to wisdom, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Write down your goals (regarding relationships and family life) and set actionable plans and targets towards achieving them.

September 25th

A Slow Dance

...the way of a man with a young woman. Proverbs 30:19

Text: Songs of Solomon 2:8-9

Did it happen to you? Or it hasn't yet? It seems like you wake up one day and the boys in your neighborhood just seem to become more interesting. And not just in the regular we all love movies kind of way but in a do I look all right kind of way? Lol! It usually comes up right about the same time our bodies and emotions start changing, heralding the arrival of puberty. Relax, it's only natural a part of God's design but as Ecclesiastes tells us there is a time for everything.

Till we are of marriageable age we should focus on learning to build friendships that stand the test of time. The skills and experience you learn from these friendships become the building blocks for all meaningful relationships in the future.

Further Study: Genesis 24

Prayer: *Heavenly Father thank you for your plans for me, I give you praise because you will make even this beautiful in its time, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Make building strong and meaningful friendships a priority.

September 26th

Heartstrings

*Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you: Do not arouse or awaken love until
it so desires.
Songs of Solomon 8:4*

Text: Songs of Solomon 8:1-7

One of the most important questions we ask is “when is the right time to love?” There are some who posit that love simply happens to a person and others who consider it a more conscious effort. But whichever position we take, Solomon Songs admonishes us to hold back on awakening love until it so desires. This charge is in fact so crucial that it appears three times! Songs of Solomon 2:7; 3:5; 8:4.

Why are we charged to guard our heart against love until it is ready? The Song likens love to tending a vineyard (Songs of Solomon 2:15). It takes time and attention and hard work, and at the wrong time, rather than love being something to cherish, it could become a great distraction.

The right time to love then will be when we are most equipped to handle its needs—in other words when we are ready to pursue a relationship that leads to marriage.

Further Study: Proverbs 4:20-23; Proverbs 24:7

Prayer: *Thank you, Lord, for giving everything its own time. Help me to guard my heart and wait for the right time, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Don’t be someone in love with the idea of love. Wait until you understand what it entails.

September 27th

The Price of Love

Love never fails... 1 Corinthians 13:8a

Text: 1 Corinthians 13

To the one who receives, love is free. To the one who gives, love can cost a lot. A look at God's relationship with man paints a worthy picture of the demands of love. In Genesis, God made man in his own image and placed him in the Eden with an eternal supply of all his needs. Shortly after man sinned and got tossed out of the garden. Yet, because of His love, God began making plans of reconciliation through Jesus, who fulfilled our salvation through death on the cross.

Think about this in the context of romantic relationships among people. The bible teaches husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church, and wives to respect their husbands. Can you think of the work and sacrifice that love entails; can you imagine the price of love to a teenager—the distraction, emotional drama and possible temptations? The bible teaches there is a time for everything. When the time is right, love that leads to marriage is a beautiful thing to treasure but until then let's keep it as a dream to aspire to.

Further Study: 1 John 3:18; Songs of Solomon 8:7; Proverbs 20:6

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, help me to learn to love the way you love, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Have you shown love the 1 Corinthians 13 way?

September 28th

Can We Be Friends?

*Everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial. 1 Corinthians
10:23*

Text: 1 Corinthians 10:23

Most friendships between the opposite sexes start off innocently. Back in primary school, my best friend kept me on my toes academically same way I did for him. Eventually, our classmates would begin to call us a couple and even though that was not the original intention of our relationship, romantic feelings began to put a wedge between us.

These things are quite common for young children, however, like the scripture admonishes, not all things are beneficial to us. There are a number of challenges that go with close friendships with members of the opposite sex. Chief among these is unreciprocated feelings, which may be psychologically harmful to us.

We can prevent this by being truthful about our reasons for pursuing friendships with the opposite sex and judge those reasons against what is right. Certain kinds of relationships are better pursued with the experience of age and safety of wise counsel. And when the right time comes, we can be assured God will send the right person to lead us in this beautiful dance called love.

Further Study: Ecclesiastes 3; Songs of Solomon 2:7

Prayer: *Help me Lord to maintain relationships that give you glory, rather than that which pleases me.*

Tip of the day: Friendships that glorify Him are God's desire for us.

September 29th

Boundary Lines

... So that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ" Philippians 1:10

Text: Exodus 20:3-17

Boundaries are what define our identities. Every country has boundary lines on land, air and water bodies. These lines tell trespassers that they have walked into the property of another person.

Likewise, every relationship needs definition—this means setting boundaries and demanding that the other party respects them, as much as we are accountable to them. It also means refusing to tolerate actions that go against our personal identity. To do this, every child must know where they are headed as defined in God's word.

In our study text, because God knew his plans, He set boundaries for the children of Israel to define His relationship with them and expectations by giving the Ten Commandments. Just like God, we need boundaries that *clearly* define every form of relationship from the beginning in love and respect. Wisdom requires some no's in order to maintain safety and integrity that leads to life, and not the liberty that leads to sin.

Further Study: Mark 9:42-50; Galatians 5:22-23

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, I know I find my identity in you. Help me communicate this in the most loving way to others, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Present yourself to your friends as God sees you: holy and blameless. Ask God for wisdom to set godly boundaries.

September 30th

Honouring God in Our Relationships

Do not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Romans 12:2a

Text: Romans 12:1-2

Most of what we've talked about over the past few days center on having a godly relationship with one another. To do this we need wisdom that enables us to set focused targets, choose the right relationships and set godly boundaries that do not encourage the ambiguity that leads to sin.

So how do we achieve this? In our text Paul, encourages us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God (vs 1). We can do this by acknowledging the cost of our salvation and recognizing that now we live not for ourselves, but for God. The next step calls for a complete transformation by a renewal of the mind. We can change the way we think and mannerism by spending more time studying God's word. God's word is light and understanding to all who seek to know His will.

Further Study: 1 John 2; James 1:12

Prayer: *Father, thank you for setting me aside to lead a perfect life through grace. Let my relationships build godly communities that invite others to you, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: are there relationships that leave you feeling unworthy of God's presence? Some pruning is definitely in order.

Week 40 Making A Difference

October 1st

Developing the Right Value System

*Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. Proverbs
4:26*

Text: 2 Timothy 2:19–22

The main text gives a picture of how a vessel can determine its usefulness or value in a house. When a deliberate effort is made to have the right value system, you can be sure that you have attracted a high premium on yourself. In other words, you have made level and firm ways for yourself. A value system is your view, outlook, and definition of life. A few tips to set you on the right path are to

- ✿ Understand that you are nothing without God.
- ✿ Read to acquire knowledge and enhance your skills.
- ✿ Select good mentors; those you can positively learn from.
- ✿ Select right people, who fear and love God, as friends and companions.
- ✿ Make the Word of God your final authority.
- ✿ Pray about everything.

Remember that an eagle does not feed like a vulture.

Further Study: Jeremiah 9:23-24; 1 Corinthians 3:11–17; Proverbs 9:10

Prayer: *Dear Lord, I have realized that I owe myself a duty of being a vessel for noble use. Guide me as I build my character and outlook in life to reflect that, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Take a critical look at your view of life and adjust to the Word of God.

October 2nd

Acceptable Service

All nations will be blessed through you Galatians 3:8b

Text: Romans 12:1-3

You stroll into a restaurant really hungry and ready to eat a lion. You sit at a table and a waiter appears to take your order. You place your order and relax with a magazine, awaiting your food. Seemingly in 5 minutes, the waiter walks in with your order and you praise him for his swift service. He places your plate carefully and you pick up your cutlery to eat. 'What's this!' you cry out. On your plate was eba and soup but you were expecting rice and plantain! The waiter served you in record time but his service was not acceptable to you.

We may think we are serving God but if we are engaged in what He hasn't called us to or we handle it in a manner He did not direct, our service is not acceptable to Him. The first criterion is to be a living and holy sacrifice unto God.

Further Study: Matthew 25:21, 41–45; Matthew 7:22–27

Prayer: *Lord, I want to serve you; to be a vessel you use for your glory but more importantly, I want to do all that in a way that would be acceptable to you, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Choose God's way or no way at all.

October 3rd

Seeds of Love

*This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's
people
but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.
2 Corinthians 9:12-13*

Text: Luke 12:16-21

One of the gifts God places in our hands is a seed which has the power to produce a great harvest. One of such seeds is that of service with the following qualities;

- ✿ **The seed must be healthy** – your seed of service must be devoid of sin and damage (competitive spirit, envy, malice, eye-service).
- ✿ **The size of seed is immaterial** – ask the mustard seed or Iroko tree. It is not being everywhere that matters but the attitude and heart of service.
- ✿ **The soil is carefully chosen** – your seed cannot be planted anywhere. You must be guided by the Spirit of God. Locate your place and plant your seed.
- ✿ **The season of planting is important** – There is a time for everything and different seasons for different seeds.
- ✿ **The way it is planted counts** – It is only the service that is unto God that is acceptable.
- ✿ **Nurture is key to the survival of the seed** – watch out for neglect; keep up the good work.

Further Study: 1 Timothy 1:12; Ephesians 6:6–7; Galatians 6:9

Prayer: *Lord, may my seeds of love be services that would produce a great harvest in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Let your hands be guided by love
October 4th

Simple Arithmetic

*...how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power,
and how he went around doing good Acts 10:38a*

Text: Acts 9:36–41

Early school days introduced us to the concept of arithmetic. Where the functions plus and minus were applied in order to modify a figure or status

quo. Where there was no desire to bring a change, the number zero was applied. Little did we know that this concept was very applicable to our lives.

When Jesus was on earth, He made a difference and it was a positive one. Scriptures say that he went about 'doing good'. In other words, he went about being a plus. That was the same case with Sis. Dorcas who came back from the dead simply for being a plus! This means that we are mandated by God to make a positive or plus difference everywhere we go. You must decide which you want to be and work towards building yourself in that light because it definitely rewards.

Further Study: Genesis 12:2–3; Ephesians 4:1; Proverbs 10:7

Prayer: *Lord, you have set an example of doing good for me. Grant me the grace to have that testimony in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Go with this attitude, "how can I help you today?"

October 5th

Me? A Bench-Warmer?

Take up the cross, and follow Me." Mark 10:21b

Text: 2 Kings 5:1–10

Some people act like their eyes are only for looking up. They do not seem concerned with anything happening around them. They pass by and that path does not feel their effect; it's as if no one passed by. That is not the life God called us to.

In as much as we are not expected to be busy-bodies, meddling in other people's matters, we are not meant to live as if we were an island. You are

not supposed to sit and watch life pass you by; you are life because Jesus is life. Jesus was a cross-bearer; He got involved. Everywhere He went, He got involved in people's lives, making it better than He met it by the help of the Holy Spirit.

The unnamed little girl in our text also did. We are to do likewise; leave things and people better than we met them. It takes love, it takes grace, it takes wisdom, it takes patience and we have all that at our disposal.

Further Study: John 1:4; James 1:5; 2 Peter 1:3–8

Prayer: *Father, help me to keep being an extension of your arm here on earth, in Jesus name-Amen*

Tip of the day: Get involved!

October 6th

I Am Loved

Freely you have received, freely give Matthew 10:8b

Text: Luke 2:52

As a Christian, do you feel snuggled and warmed by God's love? Do you often strengthen your heart by recalling how much God must love you in sending Jesus to die on the cross of Calvary or do you feel that you are the only one really concerned about you? Do you often cry with your face stuck in the pillow so that no one would hear? If you do not feel loved, there is no way you can make a difference around you because it is only by love that lives can be touched.

Jesus grew even in favour with God and man and we are expected to have that as a lifestyle. If God could not withhold His best, Jesus from us, He cannot withhold anything good from us. Our temporary circumstances are not a proof of the depth of God's love. As we receive good, we are to distribute the good in the same measure we received.

Further Study: Romans 5:5; Nehemiah 9:19–25; Romans 8:32

Prayer: *Lord, there is no doubt that you love me and it is not based on the way I feel. Teach me how to share that love with others, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Accept that God loves you with all your heart and live from that point of view.

October 7th

Contacting Grace

...and God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.
2 Corinthians 9:8

Text: 2 Corinthians 9:10

Man was not wired to function without God. After all, he was created by God and it is the breath of the Almighty God that made him a living being. If he now chooses to separate himself from his maker, He cannot achieve much if anything because whatever he tries to do alone will be discolored by a selfish attitude.

As we wrap up the study on being a blessing, you need to understand that you cannot be such without the help of God- which is called grace. We

contacted grace through Jesus Christ when we received Him as our Lord and savior. Someone defined grace as **God's resources at Christ's expense**. God does not expect that we receive the grace and it would have no effect on our lives. However, to be effective, we need to grow in grace and that growth is directly proportional to the depth of revelation or knowledge of God's Word that we attain.

Further Study: John 15:5; Romans 5:15; 2 Peter 1:2

Prayer: *Lord, I really want to be a blessing. Release your grace upon me through your Word in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Study and meditate on God's Word every day

Week 41 Violence

October 8th

The Lap of Fools

'Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools'. Ecclesiastes 7:9

Text: Ecclesiastes 7:8-9

Think about it – strangers do not sit on the laps of strangers. You might see a child on the laps of the mother, a friend 'lapping' a friend when the bus is full or a sibling carrying a younger one, but normal people do not generally sit on the lap of strangers.

The Bible encourages us in the verse above not to be familiar with the emotion of anger. It can cloud our judgement and may often lead to violence. Instead, wait. The end of the matter is better than its beginning. The matter

we are tempted to be angry about today may resolve itself tomorrow or we may find a better way to deal with it.

Further Study: James 1:20; Ephesians 4:31

Prayer: *Holy Spirit let your presence bring calm to my spirit today in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Whatever you do today; whatever is said to you, do yourself a great favour, count to ten (or twenty) and KEEP CALM.

October 9th

Speak Up

'Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves'. Proverbs 31:8a

Text: Proverbs 31:8-9

When that bully in your school or workplace comes again to harass that scared boy or that timid girl, what should you do? The bible says you should speak up. You can stand up for that 'voiceless' person. You can get some of your classmates or work colleagues to stand up for that girl or boy – there is strength in numbers.

If that bully is in your own home, please speak up. Tell an older and wise person – an aunt, uncle, pastor or someone of good standing in your community. Be wise about how you speak up but **do not keep quiet** because sometimes silence is all a bully needs to keep on bullying or to be violent.

Further Study: Malachi 2:7; Revelation 1:6

Prayer: *Lord, please give me the courage and wisdom to speak up for the voiceless. Give me a voice of influence today in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: God has made you a royal priest. Act like it – with courage laced with wisdom and humility.

October 10th

Don't Go Along

'...My son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths.'
Proverbs 1:15

Text: Proverbs 1:10-15

Sometimes, to show bravado or that they are cool, people might dare others to do something that they ordinarily would not do. If the person refuses, they might be mocked for being weak or boring; they might be promised all sorts of goodies – all in the attempt to goad them into doing something wrong, dangerous or harmful.

Don't go along with such people because they only ambush themselves and their ill-gotten gain takes away their lives.

Further Study: Proverbs 1:16-19; Daniel 1:8, 12-15

Prayer: *Father I ask for the ability to say no to people who invite me to do violence – in any form, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Peer pressure is only good for doing things that will help you succeed in the present or future!

October 11th

Be Wise and Harmless

'I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves' Matthew 10:16

Text: Matthew 10:1-26

A snake is not an easy prey but it is dangerous. A dove is peaceful but is a prey. Jesus asked his disciples to be shrewd (clever, discerning, not easily caught) like the snake but not dangerous and also to be innocent and harmless like a dove but not to be an easy prey. Jesus knew that the world can be dangerous.

Do you know any wolves? Do you sometimes feel like you are a sheep surrounded by wolves? Jesus is asking you to be shrewd but pure in heart. He will make a way for you. He always does.

Further Study: James 1:5; Luke 16:8; Proverbs 4:7

Prayer: *Lord, help me to be harmless and peaceful but also to be confident, assertive and shrewd. Give me the grace to stand up for myself against evil, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Research the snake and the dove – I doubt that your biology teacher will! Your findings might help you get out of or totally avoid sticky situations.

October 12th

Don't Be an Avenger

'... but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written; "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.' Romans 12:19b

Text: Romans 12:19-21

It might seem rather foolish to repay evil with good however it depends on whose perspective you consider. The world thinks that evil should be repaid with evil to teach the evildoers a lesson. This is foolish because it is like trying to use darkness to drive out darkness.

Everyone knows that only light can drive away darkness. Therefore God says 'Turn on your light – use good to repay evil'. Besides, He alone has the right to avenge and He does!

Further Study: Psalm 94:1; Proverbs 24:17-18

Prayer: *Lord, I forgive those who have hurt me. Help me forgive them from my heart, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Do not gloat (even in your heart) when someone who has done you harm stumbles or else the Lord will see and disapprove and turn his wrath away from them.

October 13th

Pregnant Desire

'...but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed'. James 1:14

Text: James 1:14-15

Have you ever said or heard someone say 'You made me do this?' In the passage above, we learn that we cannot be tempted by something we have no interest in. For example, if we don't like eggs, we are unlikely to be enticed by eggs, no matter how lovely the aroma is.

In the same way, violence happens when an evil desire for example of hurting someone else, is allowed to grow. When that desire is fed by giving it attention in our thoughts, it conceives and then it gives birth to the action (sin). If we repeat that sinful action, again and again, it leads to death – of our conscience, our joy in the Lord or some other valuable thing.

Further Study: Hebrews 12:4; Galatians 5:19-21

Prayer: *Dear Jesus may the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to you. Amen.*

Tip of the day: Take responsibility for your actions by taking control over your thoughts.

October 14th

Human Anger

*'...because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires'.
James 1:20*

Text: James 1:19-20

Think about this for two seconds - 'why' is usually answered with 'because'. When James in our key verse says 'because...' he was answering a 'why' – *because* human anger does not produce the righteousness of God. That's why.

That's why we should be eager to listen, wait before speaking and be slow to get angry. That's why – because no matter how much we speak and get angry, it will not produce the righteousness that God desires.

Sometimes, we need to know why we are doing something. If human anger is pointless, then it is pointless. God is slow to anger, you know. There are at least 6 passages of the scripture I know which use the phrase 'slow to anger' in reference to God.

Further Study: Psalm 103:8; Joel 2:13; Proverbs 18:2-13

Prayer: *Father, teach me to be slow to anger like you, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Before you get angry, listen.

Week 42 Discipline - the Attitude of Happy Teens

October 15th

What is Discipline?

'No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.' Hebrews 12:11

Text: Hebrews 12:11-12; 1 Corinthians 9:27

The purpose of discipline is to train for maturity and correct behavior. This can mean acting against your feelings because you have a higher goal. Discipline also involves discarding hindrances including things that may be all right in and of themselves but don't help as you grow towards godliness. In addition, discipline often entails managing your time in line with your goals. It is an ongoing process and not a quick fix. This means you can never say, "I have arrived" in the school of discipline.

Discipline is something in which both God and you must be involved. You have a responsibility in the matter. It boils down to the question, 'are you willing to pay the price'? If athletes put themselves through years of hard work and training to get a gold medal, shouldn't we be willing to pay the price to be godly?

Further Study: Proverbs 6:23; 25:28; 29:17.

Prayer: Prepare me Lord for the journey of discipline ahead of me, in Jesus name, Amen.

Tip of the day: If we are ever going to be disciplined, we must be prepared to pay the price.

October 16th

The Necessity of Discipline

'They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.'
Hebrews 12:10

Text: Hebrews 12:4-12

The necessity of discipline is to deter destruction. A part of becoming successful is being disciplined. Governments, schools, and individuals need discipline to function successfully. This is expressed through skill, perseverance, tenacity, self-control, and resistance to temptations and distractions.

Discipline allows a person to act according to thoughts and not feelings and to sacrifice instant gratification in favour of long-term goals. Lack of discipline can cause failure, health issues, relationship problems and even death. Discipline helps a person to overcome addictions, negative habits, laziness and procrastination which can all lead to destruction now or in the future.

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Philippians 3:12-14.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, don't let me continue putting off until later what I can do today in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Discipline works best when it is self-imposed rather than externally imposed.

October 17th

The Means of Discipline

*'For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance.
Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.'*
Matthew 25: 29

Text: Matthew 25:14 30

One of God's principles for advancement is the requirement to be diligent with what we have and where we are before He will advance us to bigger and better things. Being faithful requires self-discipline.

God knows that if you are not disciplined to take care of that which you have right now; material things, your body, family, job, ministry and so on, then you will not be ready for God to bring you more responsibility and influence in your life. Jesus illustrated this exact point in the parable of the three servants in the main text for today and He summed it up in verse 29. The surest means of attaining discipline is faithfulness.

Further Study: Proverbs 13:4; 2 Timothy 4:7–8.

Prayer: *Please give me the motivation and willpower to be the best that I can be at all times in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: If you are faithful in little things, you will be qualified to handle bigger ones.

October 18th

Discipline in Sexuality

'...and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.'
2 Corinthians 10: 5b

Text: 2 Corinthians 10:5-6

The spiritual discipline of chastity is not just keeping the body pure from sexual sin, it's also keeping the mind and heart pure. When we separate ourselves from sexual sin, we can clear our thoughts and actions so that we can focus on God and His plan for our lives.

We live in a society where sexuality is a part of almost everything. We have movies, TV, billboards, magazines, books and more all promoting sex outside the bounds of marriage. We face sexual temptation everywhere we go. Sometimes, even when we just don't mean to, we may end up over our heads in a sexual situation. However, we can remain chaste by surrendering our thoughts and actions to God's will and avoiding sexually charged situations, including movies and people.

Further Study: Job 31:1; 1 Corinthians 6:18–20.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, help me to flee from sexual sin and lust.*

Tip of the day: Sex is about love, intimacy and marriage and not a mere self-indulgence of pleasure.

October 19th

Discipline in Time

'making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.'
Ephesians 5:16

Text: Ephesians 5:15-17

Every teen needs to be disciplined with time which is a very precious gift given to everyone to be spent for none of it can be stored. Each day, you receive 86,400 seconds. That may sound like a lot, but we all know they go by so quickly. Success in life will be dependent on what you do with them.

There are 168 hours in a week; the average teen spends 56 of those asleep and another 48 in school. That leaves 64 hours for cleaning up, chores and spare time. How much of that do you spend doing important things? Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:15-16 to walk not as the unwise but as wise men making the most of our time. He admonishes us to take advantage of every time available to us to be useful. Without discipline, opportunities are lost and time is squandered.

Further Study: Psalm 90:12; Colossians 4:5; Galatians 6:10.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, teach me to number every second I spend every day that I may be more productive than I am today, in your name I pray, Amen.*

Tip of the day: All the great things we want to accomplish tomorrow are impossible without the discipline of time today.

October 20th

Discipline in Money

'Dishonest money dwindles away, but whoever gathers money little by little makes it grow.' Proverbs 13:11

Text: Proverbs 13:11; 3:9; 22:7.

Discipline in money involves faithfully handling the resources that God has entrusted to us. It entails an understanding of God's ownership and our responsibility to manage His possessions. It helps us differentiate between wants and needs and the importance of living within our means.

A spending plan is important if we are to control our cash flow and it gives us power over our spending decisions. God's word teaches that debt enslaves, Proverbs 22:7. So we live debt free by planning ahead, learning contentment and spending according to plan. Discipline in money also involves generosity, shocking but true. This means giving should be a priority (Proverbs 3:9), consistent (1 Corinthians 16:2) and done with a cheerful attitude (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Further Study: Luke 12:15; Proverbs 22:7.

Prayer: *Father, teach me to always have the stewardship mentality to all you give me, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: God's ownership and our stewardship influence our spending decisions.

October 21st

Traits of A Disciplined Life

'Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.' Proverbs 13: 24

Text: Proverbs 13:18, 24

Discipline should come from natural consequences, for example, you become disciplined about your eating habits so that you can be fit and healthy; or from the law of cause and effect. It should not come from induced fear, humiliation, shame, yelling or any form of physical or emotional coercion. Disciplined people show the following character traits which last a lifetime;

- ✿ Self-control: the ability to delay gratification; doing the right thing even when you don't feel like it.
- ✿ Empathy: developing understanding and care by putting yourself in someone's shoes; helping people honestly rather than meeting your own agenda at all times.
- ✿ Responsibility: being accountable even when no one is watching or keeping records.
- ✿ Self-love: an internal sense of worth; confidence derived from within.
- ✿ Respect for authority: disciplined people are subject to constituted authority.
- ✿ Happy: happy and pleasant to be around.

Further Study: Revelations 3:19; Hebrews 12:5-6

Prayer: *Dear God, give me the grace to put into practice all it takes to become and remain a person of discipline, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Discipline is the key to true happiness.

Week 43 Dealing with Parental Divorce

October 22nd

When God is Quiet

"My Father and mother may abandon me, but the Lord will take care of me."
Psalm 27:10 (GNT)

Text: Psalm 27:10

Divorce is a difficult thing to deal with. For a child, experiencing divorce is akin to facing a violent storm—an internal storm.

Often, Christian children turn to God for help when parents are going through a divorce—we want them back together because a family should stay together, and because we've hoped, it is devastating when we feel that God is not going to grant our request. Hope deferred makes the heart sick (Proverbs 13:12) and this sickness can manifest in many ways, including a loss of hope.

Whether we hope for a reunion or stop asking for one, remember that God's love will always remain unchanged all through the years and He is able to make something beautiful out of every bad situation.

Further Study: Psalm 77; Romans 8:28

Prayer: *Dear Lord, while I pass through this period of trouble, help me remember that your love is boundless, and your faithfulness is forevermore, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Recall God's faithfulness in the past. He will see you through this.

October 23rd

Whose Fault is it?

"Love never gives up; and its faith, hope, and patience never fail"
1 Corinthians 13:7 (GNT)

Text: Romans 5:3-5

I was 7 years old when my parents got officially divorced. It began with the fights, then the long period of silence between family reconciliation meetings. Even though I did not understand what was happening, I felt every crack in our home long before it was final.

It's natural to wonder which parent is wrong if we are at fault or why God let this happen. Unfortunately, this can breed hatred for one parent, God and even self-hate. It helps to remember that while our parents' relationship may be on shaky grounds (or home broken), it is not God's desire that any of his creation should experience suffering. But even when this happens, His grace is ever sufficient for us (2 Corinthians 12:19). We might not have all the answers we seek, but we will always have God.

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 13

Prayer: *Dear Father, fill me with your Spirit that I may love as you have loved me, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Make a decision to forgive and love your parents despite your pain.

October 24th

Our Great Healer

"...the hard trials that come will not hurt you" Isaiah 43:2 (GNT)

Text: 2 Chronicles 32:9-23

Psychological warfare is not new, in our text, the Emperor of Assyria tried to destroy the confidence of the Israelites by an arrogant show of military strength and lies. Today, the devil still attempts to destroy God's children through lies.

Having gone through our parent's divorce, thoughts of unworthiness, guilt, and inadequacies plague us. We may even pretend that the whole ordeal had no effect on us. Like Henri Nouwen explains, *"What is forgotten is unavailable, and what is unavailable cannot be healed."*

So even though the pain of divorce may be overwhelming, God has shown Himself as our saviour and binder of the broken (Isaiah 61:1). He invites us to find healing and new life in Him.

Further Study: Philippians 4:11-13; John 17:13-19; Isaiah 43:1-2

Prayer: *Lord, thank you because You have begun a new work in us—healing, molding and shaping our future, in Jesus name we pray, Amen.*

Tip of the day: To intentionally face the reality of being broken is not to face defeat, but healing.

October 25th

A Perfect Creation

*"My frame was not hidden from you when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth."
Psalm 139:15 (ESV)*

Text: Psalm 139:1-18

Take a look at the patterns on your palm; no two persons have the same designs nor fingerprints. God shows his love for His creation in the intricacies of their design. Nature attests to His divine engineering, from the seasons of the year and cycle of the moon, to the composition of living cells. The One who has declared His love for the birds and lilies has professed His love for us (John 12:22-31). Little wonder the psalmist exclaimed, *"Your knowledge of me is too deep; it is beyond my understanding."* vs.6 (GNB)

We know that nothing in this world or beyond can separate us from God (Romans 8:39). We can take all our cares to our heavenly Father and believe He will give us peace in exchange for our fears.

Further Study: Psalm 104; Romans 8:31-39

Prayer: *Father, when life tries to overwhelm me, may your hand in creation point me back to you, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: If God takes care of even the tiniest ant, He will take care of you.

October 26th

More Than Enough

*"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with
power through his spirit in your inner being" Ephesians 3:16*

Text: Ephesians 3:14-21

Do I need to explain this feeling? The one we've so often faced over the years. Those times when you feel unwanted and pathetic; when you have questions and wonder if you will ever be enough. You remember everything wrong in your life and shrink a little more.

Can I tell you that everything you feel are lies from the devil because God's word declares the opposite? These words of truth are affirmed in His scriptures and the God of the Word desires that you know how much He has poured out His love on you. Feeling unwanted often points to our desire to be loved more. At such times, rather than find acceptance from men, turn to God whose fullness fills all in all.

Further Study: Jeremiah 31:3-4; Romans 8:16-17, 38-39

Prayer: *Thank you, Lord, for your Word is the sword that pierces through the lies of the devil.*

Tip of the day: You deserve to be loved and you are deeply loved by God.

October 27th

Hope in Future Grace

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness"
2 Corinthians 12:9

Text: 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

In the 2012 animation series, Avatar: The Legend of Korra, Avatar Korra having faced a life-changing trauma needed help to overcome her depressive state. I still recall how one advice she got reminded me of the Christian's walk with God: *when we hit our lowest point, we are open to the greatest change.*

Take a moment to think of the transformative power of change. Plants wither and die in the dry season, but bloom green again when the rain comes. But better than the plants is the child of God who has an everlasting spring of water flowing to renew. This is grace. It is past, present and future sufficiency from the Father in heaven, *always* available in whatever measure we may need.

Further Study: Hebrews 6:13-20

Prayer: *When I hit my lowest point, I know that your grace is sufficient for all my needs and I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Thank you, Father, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: In the darkest times, hope is what we give ourselves.

October 28th

Tell Your Story

"He helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help others who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God"
2 Corinthians 1:4 (GNT)

Text: 2 Corinthians 1:4

Ernest Hemingway wrote, "The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places." Experiencing the divorce of parents is difficult. It comes with tears, fear, anger, a bitter weight, and stigma. While no two persons have the same story, know that God knows your pain and will not let it consume you.

Paul realized that he went through affliction so that he may offer comfort to others. He was a man who once despaired of life but learnt to find strength for his weakness in God's grace, and today Christians find comfort from his story.

There is great joy in easing the pain of others and comfort in seeking help from people who have walked the same paths and found Christ. Just like Paul, you have been called to share your story.

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 4:1-12

Prayer: *Father, I know that with you the pain I feel today will not consume me. Thank you for deeply loving me, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Find fellowship with other children of God.

Week 44 Self Esteem

October 29th

In Our Own Eyes

*'We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes,
and we looked the same to them.'*
Numbers 13:33b

Text: Numbers 13:32–33

Self Esteem is the way we see ourselves and how valuable we think we are. It is possible that (like the Israelites above), the way we think that people see us (unless we have asked them) is not really how they see us but actually how we see ourselves. This may be why they said, *'we looked the same to them'*.

The problem was that the Israelites used their 'own eyes'. They forgot to see themselves through God's eyes. Let us move on from *'in our own eyes'* to **'in God's eyes'**.

Further Study: Isaiah 43:4; Galatians 6:4; Luke 16:15.

Prayer: *Lord, help me to see myself as you see me, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: From your bible, find out at least one thing God says about your looks, abilities, and worth. Write or memorise them and constantly recite them to yourself until you believe them.

October 30th

Clay Pots

'But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.' 2 Corinthians 4:7

Text: 2 Corinthians 4:6–7

Below is a small quiz for you.

1. Which of these is more valuable?
 - a. A worn-out raffia bag
 - b. A new cow-leather bag

You might change your answer if you knew that the raffia bag contains a banknote giving you all the funds you need for the next 15 years and that the leather bag contains a hundred pebbles.

Content matters.

Although we are clay pots, we carry Christ (the Anointed One and His anointing) inside us. A clay pot is just a clay pot after all. However, our value is based on the treasured Christ within.

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 1:26–29; Colossians 1:27

Prayer: *Thank you Lord for the value you have placed in me, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: When you think too low of yourself, remember who lives in you and when you think too highly of yourself, remember that you are only a clay pot!

October 31st

Thinking of Yourself

'For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought...' Romans 12:3a

Text: Romans 12:3-5

There are things that you are good at and others that you may not be so good at. There are people who are better than you in some areas and those you are better than in other areas. That is okay and necessary in life.

That is the way God made it – the eyes for sight, the ears for hearing and gifts for everyone. Recognise your gifts and that of others. Acknowledge your weaknesses and know that God's grace is made perfect in weakness.

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 3:5–6; 2 Corinthians 10:12–13

Prayer: *Jesus, help me to recognise and use the gifts that you have given me while acknowledging my weaknesses knowing that your grace is sufficient for me.*

Tip of the day: Be quick to notice something good about people. Give them a sincere compliment.

November 1st

You were Formed

'For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

Psalm 139:13

Text: Psalm 139:13–14.

As a teenager, I was a bit self-conscious until I understood that God made me. He made my legs exactly as it is, and I still think that they are a bit funny looking. He made my fingernails and I like them very much. When I understood that I was made by a very good creator, I began to appreciate myself better.

He designed you – your skin tone, your hair, ears and the parts of your body that you cannot see. The same God who made the lovely peacock and the scented rose, the shiny stars and the dog's nose made you.

He knit all of you together intentionally and then put His signature on you. That is why no two thumbprints are alike. There are about 7.5 billion people on earth and no two thumbprints are alike. What a God!

Further Study: Isaiah 49:5; Genesis 1:26–27

Prayer: *Thank you Lord because you made me just the way I am, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Allow yourself to be confident about how you look.

November 2nd

You are Perfect

'I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.'
Psalm 139:14

Text: Psalm 139:13-14.

You are perfect just the way you are.

Yes, you are and even the Lord will tell you that. His works are wonderful including you. You are the appropriate height – neither too tall nor too short. Your face is the right shape – whether it is oval, round or square. Whatever it is that is making you feel insecure about your looks, look at it again and know that God made it that way.

Even if a part of your body has been marred, still know that you are beautiful. Do not let another person who is also made, be the authority on what beauty is.

Further Study: 1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 10:29-31

Prayer: *Thank you Lord that you have designed me in the most wonderful and beautiful way. Open my eyes to see this in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Be yourself – just add a little bit of grooming and a smile.

November 3rd

Compare and Contrast

'When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.' 2
Corinthians 10:12b

Text: 2 Corinthians 10:12.

God expects you to be you – not anybody else.

He gave you your particular set of gifts, abilities and looks so that you have all you need to do what you are meant to do. When we are busy looking at and comparing ourselves to other people, we are busy wasting the time we should have used to do what we should be doing. However, when we begin to truly appreciate who and how we are, we will be liberated to discover the talents within us and to do what we have been created for.

Christ is the only perfect measure. Let us focus on the race set before us and run as well as we can through God's help.

Further Study: Galatians 6:4; 1 Peter 1:17; Hebrews 12:1-2

Prayer: *Father, please help me to be the best 'me' that you want me to be in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Find out one thing that you are good at (you could ask one or two trusted family and friends) and aim to get better at it.

November 4th

Not a Snob

'...They said ..."where are you staying?" "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So...they spent that day with him...'
John 1:38b-39

Text: John 1:35-39.

Some people get their sense of worth from the calibre of people they relate to or get attention from – how rich, smart, popular, talented or respected they are. Sometimes, these 'sought-after' people form exclusive clubs for people like them.

Not so with Jesus. He made everything, has numerous followers, can do amazing things and his name is famous on earth and beyond – yet He is not a snob. John's disciples asked for His address and He invited them to His house and spent time with them.

Even today, the Presence of Jesus is open to all sincere seekers. You can spend as much time as you want with the Lord and you are even allowed to

boast that you know Him. Your sense of worth should come from knowing Him yet this should humble you and make you not to snob people.

Further Study: John 6:37; Jeremiah 9:24

Prayer: *Lord, help me to respond daily to your invitation that I may know you better, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Talk to God simply – about the important and the mundane.

Week 45 Overcoming Peer Pressure

November 5th

Peer Pressure

So, then brothers, stand firm and hold on to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter...

2 Thessalonians 2:15

Text: Romans 12:1-2

What is peer pressure? As defined by Wikipedia peer pressure is *A direct influence on people by peers or the effect on an individual who gets encouraged to follow their peers by changing their attitudes, values or behaviours to conform to those of the influencing group or individual.* Another definition is the influence of your friends on your decisions. This means you allow others think for you and control your actions, which is just ridiculous if you think about it. For example, a young lady decides to get hooked up with a guy just because she doesn't want to be the only girl without a boyfriend.

The Bible says in Romans 12:2 *be not conformed to the pattern of this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*. That scripture tells us that the only influence we should submit to is the influence of the Word of God.

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 10:13; Genesis 37:18-36

Prayer: *Father help me to hold on to your word and to live only by your words, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Think about your actions, what are the strongest influences on your decisions?

November 6th

Overcoming Peer Pressure

Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.
Proverbs 13:20

Text: Proverbs 1:10-19

What does it mean to entice? The Merriam Webster dictionary defines the word entice as 'to attract artfully by arousing hope or desire.' The word entice is synonymous with allure, bait, betray, decoy, lure, tempt, seduce. These words all imply drawing into danger, evil or difficulty by attracting and deceiving. That is the reason God says, '*Do not consent*' and that is not a suggestion, it is a command.

Young people and in fact everyone at some point in their life, will be faced with pressure to take some action or the other but it is important to remember that there is positive and negative pressure. Negative peer pressure leads you down the wrong path while positive peer pressure leads to encouragement and growth. We should not go along with our friends' suggestions unless it leads to godly growth. The Bible is our standard for living and the only approval we should seek is God's approval.

Further Study: Psalms 56:11

Prayer: *Father lead me not into temptation, deliver me from evil, in Jesus name, Amen*

Tip of the day: How can you avoid putting negative pressure on your friends?

November 7th

The Influence

*Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."
1 Corinthians 15:33*

Text: Job 2:1-10

Peer pressure is not limited to adolescents only. It influences boys, girls, adolescents, teenagers, full grown adults. Someone might be wondering but who are my peers? People you find yourself spending a lot of time with. They may be people you go to the same school with, people you work with, your Church folk, your neighbors and to be honest sometimes you can't do away with them. Unless you want to keep jumping from school to school, job to job, they will always be around you. It becomes important therefore to learn to handle this pressure.

The common pressures young people face include the pressure to drink alcohol, experiment with drugs, pre-marital sex, disobedience to parents and to God in the name of being independent. We are however from a kingdom that lives by a different code of conduct.

Further Study: Proverbs 18:24; Proverbs 31:4-9

Prayer: *Father in the name of Jesus, I ask that you give me the wisdom to choose my friends carefully, help me to surround myself with godly people, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Discover for yourself what the bible says about pre-marital sex, alcohol and irresponsible behavior and decide to live by it.

November 8th

Why Give In?

Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.
Galatians 1:10

Text: Mark 6:17-29

Why do people give in to pressure? Most often it's insecurity and a desire to be accepted. We want to fit in, we don't want to be left out, we don't want to be mocked and sometimes we say yes because we just want to try something new. It is easy to give in if we have a low self-esteem, not knowing who we are or what we are worth. People also going through problems such as divorce, alcoholism, unemployment are often vulnerable. Well, no matter what it is, we can overcome peer pressure.

Like a wise man once said, '*Don't let your background cause you to put your back on the ground*'. The key is knowing who you are. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge, that's what the bible says. So, get into the Word, because everything you need to know about yourself is in the Word.

Further Study: James 1:13-15

Prayer: *In Jesus name, Father even as I meditate on your word, open my eyes to see in myself what you see in me, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Take a moment to consider your values, beliefs and attitude, are they in line with the word of God?

November 9th

Is Peer Pressure Good or Bad?

*A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart,
and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart.
For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. Luke 6:45*

Text: Psalms 122:1-4

Is peer pressure a good or bad thing? The answer is yes and no, it depends on what you do with it. Peer pressure can be a good thing if what you're being asked to do will bring positive results, that is what we term 'positive peer pressure'. Peer pressure is negative if taking that action will bring about negative consequences. For example, if saying yes to that Asoebi material will leave you broke before the month ends, yet you go ahead to buy the material because you don't want to be left out. Or young men roped into betting and gambling, that's one of the worst forms of addiction I have seen.

Wisdom is profitable to direct. When asked to do something or even think about an action, take a moment to consider the consequences of your actions, both short term and long term. Keep these in mind as you make your decision.

Further Study: James 1:5

Prayer: *Father I ask for wisdom to make decisions that will give you glory, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: If you find yourself constantly taking wrong decisions, ask God to give you wisdom, He is more than willing to do that.

November 10th

About Peer Pressure

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor

stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers.
Psalms 1:1 (KJV)

Text: Galatians 1:1-10

What does the bible say about Peer pressure? *Galatians 1:10 for am I now seeking the approval of man or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.* Understand that pleasing man here does not refer to doing your best to live a life that brings joy to others. We definitely should work towards that but make sure that God is glorified in your actions.

It's quite simple, look at the people you allow yourself to be influenced by, are they people whose lives please God? One thing is certain, if they seek to please God, they will not ask you to do anything that will not give God glory. When you're being pressurized to do something ask yourself, what I am being asked to do, does it glorify God? It may be a good idea but is it a God idea? With the help of the Holy Spirit, you can differentiate between the two.

Further Study: Acts 5:29

Prayer: *Lord, help me to seek to please you only and live my life for you, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Find a Christian mentor or coach, someone you are accountable to.

November 11th

How to Overcome Negative Peer Pressure

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.
Psalms 119:11

Text: Daniel 1: 1-15

Of course, peer pressure is great if it is positive but when it's negative we need to be prepared. Otherwise, we will find ourselves doing something we never imagined we would do and we will be left wondering, why ever did I do this? Here are few tips for overcoming peer pressure:

- ✿ Learn to say no. Say it and mean it.
- ✿ Look for positive role models, coaches, mentors, and friends.
- ✿ Think about what you're being asked to do and the consequences of your actions.
- ✿ If possible, avoid the situation.
- ✿ Study the word of God, hide it in your heart, that way you will come out victorious.

Further Study: James 1:22-24; Genesis 6:1-9

Prayer: *Father, I thank you for your Word with which I overcome every dart the enemy sends my way, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Write down the tips above, discover more tips on overcoming peer pressure and put it into practice.

Week 46 Sexual Molestation

November 12th

Looks Like a Dog, Barks Like a Dog

Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers...” Philippians 3:2 (NASB)

Text: 2 Samuel 13:1-21

Sexual predators choose places where they can exercise power over their victims. In today's text, Tamar was invited to her brother's room to prepare food. Food is prepared in the kitchen not the bedroom and this was the first sign that something wasn't right. Tamar probably felt nothing could go wrong in her palace home.

We have been blessed by God with an 'intuitive feeling'. In dangerous situations, it's that uneasy feeling (i.e. the Holy Spirit warning you) that tells you something is not right. Don't stop to analyze the feeling, just run! It could save you from being a victim of sexual molestation.

As someone who was molested sexually as a teenager, I will show you over the next few days how God brought me through it and turned me from victim to victor.

Further Study: Colossians 2:8; Titus 1:10-11

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, teach me to recognize the gentle prodding and warnings of Holy Spirit. Amen*

Tip of the day: Trust your instincts!

November 13th

He's My Brother!

"By their fruit, you will recognize them. Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. Matthew 7:16

Text: 2 Samuel 13:1-21

Tamar probably knew something was wrong but reasoned it away by saying 'he's my brother'. Sexual predators are usually familiar faces, people we trust. As Christians, we tend to be too trusting and let our guards down, forgetting that the Bible says we are like sheep in the midst of wolves.

At 17, I was raped by two 'brothers in the Lord'. Like Tamar, I felt safe with them because they were Christians. I ignored the promptings of the Holy Spirit and went to help my 'Christian brothers' clean up their uncle's house. Even in Church, we have sexual predators too, wolves in sheep clothing!

Further Study: Matthew 7:15-23; 2 Corinthians 11:14-15

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, please help me discern the sheep from the wolf; to always be sensitive to your Spirit, who reveals the intents of men's hearts. Amen*

Tip of the day: Be aware of your environment. Do not allow yourself to be isolated!

November 14th

Wisdom Is Essential

"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves." Matthew 10:16

Text: Matthew 10:1-20

Jesus uses the analogy of these four animals to show us what to expect in the world as Christians and what qualities we need; the meekness of sheep against the ferocity of wolves, the shrewd wisdom (discernment, sharpness, smartness, astuteness) of serpents, together with the innocent wisdom of doves.

Serpents are discerning, with keen eyesight. They need these qualities to catch prey and evade predators. A dove, which is a symbol also, used to represent the Holy Spirit, is innocent and gentle. In a world filled with potential wolves, Jesus wants you to acquire the pure wisdom of the Holy Spirit, through prayer and study of the Word. This wisdom is discerning and enables you to evade sexual predators who desire to prey on your innocence.

Further Study: 1 John 4:1; Proverbs 4:7; James 1:5

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, make me discerning and give me the boldness to speak up when required. Amen*

Tip of the day: If you see danger, speak out!

November 15th

The Guilt Trip

"You know how troubled I am; you have kept a record of my tears".
Psalm 56:8 (GNT)

Text: 2 Samuel 13:11-13

In Bible times and unfortunately in modern times, a woman who is raped lives in shame even though it's not her fault. The victim is blamed for dressing provocatively, being in the wrong place etc. The Bible requires us to act and dress decently. However, failure to do so does not justify sexual molestation.

If you have been a victim, do not let anyone put the blame on you, neither should you blame yourself. I went through a long period of shame, pain, guilt, and what-ifs. I raged against God and was angry with Him for not 'saving' me.

We don't worship an indifferent God! He feels our pain, weeps with us and can take our frustration. Mary and Martha vented, and so can we.

Further Study: Psalms 103:13; John 11:21-35; 1 Peter 5:7

Prayer: *Lord, please wrap your hand of love around my broken body and bruised spirit.*

Tip of the day: Give those negative feelings to God and don't take them back!

November 16th

Weeping May Endure for A Night

*"But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness
will rise with healing in its rays". Malachi 4:2*

Text: Malachi 4:1-3

Sexual molestation is a humiliating experience! The abuser reduces the victim to an object, dehumanizing them and taking away their dignity, just like Amnon did to Tamar, despising her after he had abused her. Tamar was damaged goods, no one would want her and she didn't like herself afterwards.

After I was raped, I didn't like myself, became depressed and tried to commit suicide. Sharing my ordeal with trusted brethren who loved me and supported me helped my recovery. The devil wants to isolate you so he can destroy you. Don't let him! Depression and suicidal thoughts thrive in secrecy. Let God's love in through the Word and the support of mature believers. You will be surprised at what God can do in you.

Further Study: Psalm 147:3; Isaiah 41:10; Romans 8:37-39

Prayer: *Lord, help me! Deliver me from the darkness and teach me to love myself again even as you love me, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Tell yourself daily "I am fearfully and wonderfully made!"

November 17th

Life's Not Fair

*"...so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort
we ourselves receive from God" 2 Corinthians 1:4*

Text: 2 Corinthians 1:3-6

Why did Jesus come too late to keep Lazarus from dying? Why did Mary and Martha have to experience grief? Why does a Christian get sexually molested? Why do we suffer? Why?

While we may not receive all the answers we want, we know Jesus weeps with us! He knows our pain. God comforts us in our troubles in order that we may encourage others with the same comfort we ourselves received.

Our sufferings do not equip us to comfort others but the experience of suffering ***and being comforted by God*** does! Whatever we pass through in life is always for a purpose and we trust God that it will work out for our good. So, though life may not have been fair, God is still good!

Further Study: Isaiah 53:4-6; Romans 8:28

Prayer: *Lord, help me trust you, to see your love and feel your presence even in my pain, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Count your blessings and trust in God.

November 18th

Let Go, Let God

".... Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." Acts 7:60

Text: Acts 7:54-60

When you have been sexually molested, letting go of the hurt, pain, anger, hate, bitterness, humiliation, suicidal and murderous thoughts is not easy. I

know because I struggled too! You need to forgive the abuser (and yourself) and release them from your heart, in order to complete the healing process. Let God's Word fill your heart with light and accept His love flowing from other believers.

God's ways are not our ways. He loves you too much to allow you destroy yourself with all these negative emotions. When you let go and let God, He helps you forgive, takes the hurt and pain away and steps in to right the wrong done to you.

Further Study: Colossians 1:13-14; 1 Corinthians 13:4-6; 1 Corinthians 10:13

Prayer: *Lord, give me the mind of Christ who died for me. Help me forgive because Christ also died for my abuser in your name I pray, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Meditate on Philippians 4:13 - "I can do all things through Christ" (including forgiving).

Week 47 Leadership

November 19th

A Man of The People/A Man of God

But now, forgive their sin – but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written. Exodus 32:32

Text: Exodus 32:9-14

Moses understood that his place as a leader was to seek the good of his people. God could have destroyed the Israelites and made Moses into a great nation but Moses stood in the gap. He not only stood in the gap, he offered to take the place of the people and have his name blotted out instead. Leadership is not about you. It's about the people.

There is no leader if there are no people to lead. A leader's focus should be his people at all times.

Further Study: Acts 20:28-37; 1 Peter 5:1-4

Prayer: *Lord by making us the head and not the tail, a light and a salt, you have made us leaders in our environments. Help us to learn how to do this your way, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Which one person in a leadership position do you or have you ever admired? What makes that person stand out for you?

November 20th

Responsibility or Privilege?

A good leader motivates, doesn't mislead, doesn't exploit.
Proverbs 16:10 (MSG)

Text: Proverbs 16:10-19(MSG)

Leadership, as we have often seen it, has become a means for people to get power and use it for themselves. But is that what leadership is about?

Leadership is both a responsibility and a privilege. It is a responsibility to God, a responsibility to those who have gone before you, to hold up or build the right legacy, and a responsibility to those coming behind you. It is a

privilege because those in positions of honour should be worthy of honour. It is also a privilege to be thought worthy and trusted with such a responsibility.

Further Study: 1 Timothy 4:11-16; 2 Corinthians 12:14-15

Prayer: *Give me the grace Lord not to fail in my responsibilities in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Thank God for the opportunity given you to serve as a leader.

November 21st

Earned Not Demanded

*But he refused to drink it; instead he poured it out to the Lord.
1 Chronicles 11:18b*

Text: 1 Chronicles 11:16-19.

David could have commanded his men to get him water from the well, if he was proud and had the notion that all they existed to do was serve him. However, because he had been a true leader, one who would and did go out of his way for the good of his people, his men were more than willing to risk their lives for him without being asked.

Respect as a leader should be earned not demanded.

Further Study: 1 Samuel 30:3-25; Romans 13:7

Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, help me to know humility as a leader Lord and earn the respect and trust of your people, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Look out for the interest of someone under your care today.

November 22nd

Servant Leadership

*I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.
John 13:15*

Text: John 13:1-17

Think about it, Jesus and his disciples walked to get to wherever they were going. So, the disciples' feet must have been very dirty. Historians tell us that in those days part of how you said welcome to a visitor especially a respected one, was to give him water to wash his feet. This was often done by the servants in the house. Yet the King of kings and Lord of lords donned the robes of a servant and bent to wash not just one but 12 pairs of very dirty feet.

As a leader, nothing should be too demeaning for us to do to reach out to or help those we lead (as long as it is not a sin). From sitting with our juniors to befriending the lonely or outcast, to going without a meal so that they can

eat. Each of you should look not only to your own interests (Philippians 2:3)—this is the mark of a Christian, more so the mark of a Christian leader.

Further Study: Luke 22:24-26; Matthew 20:26-28.

Prayer: *Lord, help me be more like you, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Think of unconventional ways you can be of service to someone today.

November 23rd

Qualities of A Leader

Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task.
1 Timothy 3:1

Text: 1 Timothy 3:1-10

Our text lists out rather stringent qualifications for a leader. Why is this so? A leader has loads of responsibilities and influence. A leader can also be called a shepherd. He clothes, feeds, protects and cares for those under him.

The responsibilities of a leader are also akin to those of a mother, father, and a mentor. A leader sees the potential in you and draws it out. Helps you become the best you can be. Being a leader also means a lot of people look up to you. Your life ceases to be just your concern but affects other people. This means you have to be more careful how you live. Leadership is a lot of work. Are you ready for it?

Further Study: Ezekiel 33:1-6; 34:1-12.

Prayer: *Give us leaders with your heart Lord and let me be one, in Jesus name I pray, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Stop and evaluate. Make a checklist of the qualities of a leader. How have you fared?

November 24th

Following

Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you. Hebrews 13:17

Text: Exodus 24:13; Numbers 27:15-23

It's easy to say, 'If I was the one in charge I would do this and do that. If I were the prefect, the president, governor, etc.' But how good a follower have you been?

Truth is if following is beneath you then leadership is above you. Before Joshua was appointed to lead Israel, he followed and served Moses and the Lord faithfully. In learning to follow he learnt and saw firsthand the ways of God.

Further Study: Matthew 4:19-20; Mark 3:13-14; 1 Corinthians 11:1

Prayer: *Lord, I repent of every time I have been a stumbling block to my leaders.*

Tip of the day: Say a prayer for someone in a position of leadership over you today.

November 25th

The Good Shepherd

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. *John 10:11*

Text: John 10:11-15

Jesus is the chief shepherd of our souls. He is the good shepherd. And He showed us the way by laying down His life for us. His love for us led to His death on the cross because it is not His desire that anyone should perish.

Do you know him? If you do not, this is as good a time as any to accept His sacrifice on your behalf and make Him Lord and Saviour.

Further Study: John 3:16-18; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, I come to you, I accept that I am a sinner. I accept that on my own I would never be able to make it back to you. Lord, I accept the sacrifice Jesus made on my behalf. And today I say Jesus come into my heart; I accept you as personal Lord and Saviour, come and reign in*

my life. Remove my name from the book of death and place it in the book of life in Jesus name I pray, Amen!

Tip of the day: Take the best decision of your life. Make Jesus the Lord of your life.

Week 48 Benefits of Service

November 26th

Why Is Serving God Important?

*"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship."
Romans 12:1*

Text: 1 Peter 4:10-11

A story is told of a young boy who was about to be crushed by a car as he dashed into the street to pick his runaway ball. He literally saw his death but suddenly he was on the sidewalk with nothing but a bruise. What happened? A woman had pushed him out of harm's way and died in his place. The boy decided he would find out who the woman was and live his life to honour her. This is what Christ did for us. Took our death that we might live. Having given His all for us, can we give Him less?

Ephesians 2:10 tells us that there are works God prepared in advance for us to do. This speaks about purpose. Serving God does not only honour God but gives purpose to our existence. It is why we are here. To do the good works God prepared in advance for us to do.

Further Study: Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:16

Prayer: *Thank you, Lord, for your sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. I promise to serve you with the gifts you have given me. Help me Holy Spirit in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Discover your purpose. It's why you are here.

November 27th

The Act of Service

'But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Hebrews 11:6(KJV)

Text: Romans 12:3-8

There is only one company that pays in this time and in eternity. There is also one company that even in an economic recession is constantly declaring that 'laborers' are few and wants to employ the services of as many as it can. This company has no downtime or redundancy period and it is the highest rewarder of service.

Our text tells us that God has given each one of us various gifts and these gifts are to be used in His service. We are part of the Kingdom of Heaven and we are to do our part to make His will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Our service to God must be deliberate that means it doesn't just happen. We must find out our gifts and use it to bring glory to His name.

Further Study: Exodus 23:25-33; Mark 10:29-30; Luke 10:2

Prayer: *Holy Spirit help me express my love to the Father through my acts of service and obedience to His words.*

Tip of the day: If you don't belong to any unit in your worship place, join a unit today and serve God with the skill He has given you.

November 28th

The Whole of Creation

*For the creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be
revealed
Romans 8:19*

Text: Matthew 5:14-16

Service to God is making sure that the burden on God is reduced. In Matthew West's song *Do something*, he writes of noticing all the problems and injustice around in the world. Disturbed by all he saw, He asked God, 'why don't you do something about this?' and God answered, 'I did, I created you.'

Romans 8 tells us that the whole of creation awaits our manifestation as the sons of God. God's answer to the problems in the world is you and I. Service to God does not end in the church building or church family. Jesus said we are the light of the whole world. We are to go out there and cause changes and provide solutions. In our schools, in our families, in our neighbourhood and our nation. Answers to the problems of poverty and disease, answers to the problems of injustice and inequity. God has given us what it takes.

Further Study: Romans 8:18-22; Isaiah 6:8

Prayer: *Father help me not to shrink back from being the light of hope that you have called me to be in this dark world, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Fetch water for an old woman living alone, volunteer at an orphanage. Let the world see Heaven in you.

November 29th

Divine Protection & Covering

*'Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue: neither shalt thou be
afraid of
destruction when it cometh. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh:
neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth. Job 5:21-22(KJV)*

Text: Isaiah 54:17

The greatest defense against death is purpose. A purpose filled life is that life that knows and understands the problem that she is here on earth to be a solution to and goes about her daily life fulfilling that purpose.

An easy way to secure divine protection is by living in your purpose on earth. Such a person is valuable to the kingdom of God. God pulls the resources from above to protect and shield the person so that no harm comes to her. We have testimonies of God's generals who were living and fulfilling God's purpose for them, saved from plane and automobile crashes.

Further Study: Deuteronomy 28:7

Prayer: *Holy Spirit help me identify my purpose on earth and start living in it as that is when I truly start living. Amen.*

Tip of the day: Identify those areas or things in which you find pleasure doing even if you are not appreciated or paid for doing them because it is in those things we often find our purpose.

November 30th

Establishment of Our Seeds and Generation

That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth: that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace:
Psalm 144:12

Text: 1 Kings 11:38.

One of God's promises to His servants is fruitfulness and fulfilling the number of our days especially on our seeds. One of the things our service to God does is that He establishes our seeds and ensures our seeds take root and grows and bears fruits. Service to God ensures that our children are taken care of, protected, and established in their different spheres of life.

The individual that serves God and worships gets that mark of honor that distinguishes them from other people and the extra anointing which separates them and their household. When we're working side by side with other people, a bond inevitably forms. This was part of God's plan for how the church is supposed to work.

Further Study: Deuteronomy 28:4, 11

Prayer: *Even as I serve you with all my heart, let the blessing of service be associated with me always in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Remain in service and be thankful as challenges come up because God is in your business as you are in His.

December 1st

Divine Blessing

*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(KJV)*

Text: Matthew 6:33-34

In Exodus 23:25 God commands, "worship the Lord your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you." God is more than able to take care of us and all our lives affairs when we are busy working for Him and helping those we meet become better people than we met them.

One beautiful song I know has this lyric, "*give and it will come back to you, good measure pressed down shaken together and running over, give and it will come back to you, when you give, give to the Lord.*" In other words, whatsoever you give, be it love, healing, restoration, kindness, shoulder to lean on, or even a helping hand to someone in need, surely these things come back to you in many folds. Indeed, serving God allows us to experience God's many blessings in our own lives!

Further Study: Mark 10:30; 1 Corinthians 2:9; Deuteronomy 28:12

Prayer: *Thank you Lord for blessing me with every good thing that pertains to life and godliness even as I serve you daily, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: As we encourage others and they find healing, we're encouraged. "*8 Blessings We Get from Serving*" by Veronica Sexton.
newspring.cc

December 2nd

Divine Growth

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.
Luke 2:52

Text: Luke 2:42-52

It is never too early to start serving God. Your love for God reflects in your act of service to His people, your neighbors, and your community.

When you involve yourself in selfless acts of service - caring for the sick, helping the homeless, showing hospitality, loving the unloved, giving to those in need, comforting those who mourn, or even displaying unusual kindness to everyone you meet, you are telling the world about Jesus and putting His love on display.

The beautiful and amazing thing about all of this is the priceless opportunity you have given yourself to grow! You grow in wisdom, love, and kindness. You also improve and develop the skills God has given you as you put them to use.

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 15:58; Hebrews 6:10

Prayer: *Lord, use me to bring joy to everyone around me, and cause me to grow in wisdom as I serve you wholeheartedly.*

Tip of the day: Write a note of encouragement to someone today.

Week 49 Dealing with Alienation

December 3rd

Find the Root

"He has alienated my brothers from me; my acquaintances are completely estranged from me" Job 19:13

Text: Job 19:13-19

Back in boarding school during manual labour, I learnt if I wanted the elephant grasses and shrubs to stop shooting up in my portion of the field that I had to take the effort to pull them out from the root. That meant switching my more comfortable cutlass to blisters-inducing hoe.

The feeling of alienation, like those grasses, can also be deeply rooted. To fix this we have to trace the origin of this feeling. Alienation could be personal or society-induced. The hero of our text, Job, had faced a great calamity in a short time. He lost his children, servants, and acquaintances. But because He knew the cause of the problem, he was able to channel his energy towards speaking to God for help. In like manner, we need to examine what our triggers are—separation from ourselves, other humans or God. Identifying the problem is the first step to finding a solution.

Further Study: Genesis 3

Prayer: *Merciful Father, I know that you have made all things known to me. Give me an understanding of my life and environment, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Feelings of alienation have identifiable causes. Can you identify your trigger?

December 4th

The Power of Expression

For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth, one confesses and is saved. Romans 10:10 (ESV)

Text: Colossians 1:21-23

One of my favourite movies is Pixar's *Inside Out* because of its beautiful depiction of the power of human emotions. Learning to communicate our feelings is something that takes time and needs regular practice.

In the story of creation, man became separated from God because of sin, and it took God so many years to work out a plan to reconcile man with him. Today, all it takes is a simple confession—an expression of our feeling of loneliness, to enjoy fellowship with God again.

How then can we enjoy the same fellowship with the people in our lives? We can try reaching out to them and make an effort to explain our feelings. We'd be surprised how much of it could be a slight misunderstanding, our own fault, or how the other party has been clueless about our feelings. Just as God honours communication, so do people.

Further Study: Luke 10:38-42

Prayer: *I know that you value communication, Lord, teach me to reach out and extend a hand of fellowship to others, just as you opened the door of reconciliation to me. Amen.*

Tip of the day: Reach out to someone and share your feelings.

December 5th

Mirror, Mirror

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life..." John 14:6

Text: John 14:1-12

An integral part of creative writing workshops teaches writers to find and hone their voice. This is because every story carries a piece of the writer.

Let's take a look at Jesus. The prophets of old heralded His coming. He was to become the saviour. John the Baptist, His forerunner, described Him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). And then Jesus described Himself as the light of the world (John 8:12) and the way, truth, and life (John 14:6). Jesus came into the world fully aware of who He was, what He was about, and how to reach the people of the world.

While we might not have all the answers, we at least know who we are in Christ. So, how much of this identity are we living out today, rather than trying to become someone else to fit in with the crowd?

Further Study: John 8:12-30

Prayer: *Lord, it's easy to fall into the trap of peer influence and falsehood. Grant me the grace to understand who I am, and live as you have made me, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*).

December 6th

Get Engaged

If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.
Isaiah 58:10 ESV

Text: Isaiah 58:6-14

Psychologists say the best way to find personal fulfillment and ease the feeling of unimportance is to channel our energy towards helping other people.

The Bible also attests to this. The one who spends their time to feed the hungry, visit the afflicted and serve others will find light in the darkness and joy. This is easy because God has given a special gift to everybody created—gifts of speech and service, in order that God may be glorified (1 Peter 4:10).

Today God calls us to share the grace we've received with others in need. This is our true worship. By bringing joy to others we also extend joy to ourselves and build the kind of loving relationship that God desires for us.

Further Study: Hebrews 6:10; Matthew 25:31-40

Prayer: *Father, you have made us for community and service. Teach me to look outwards to those who may be in need, to the glory of your name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Get committed to helping others by joining a society today. Volunteer jobs are a good way to meet people who need our attention and skill.

December 7th

In the Spirit of Community

Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others.
Philippians 2:4 (ESV)

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

There is something special about living in a community and relating with people who share similar views and traditions and principles. It shows us that every man is useful and a part of something big.

The Bible teaches the same: there are many parts, yet one body. There are many gifts, yet one church. There are many people yet bound together by one faith. This faith is what we profess as children of God, and when we fellowship, we share with one another the gift of ourselves.

Community reminds us that we all fit somewhere because man was not created to inhabit the earth alone. For this reason, alienation is unnatural, and one way to get past it is by becoming part of a community of believers who will share, care and lift us up when we fall.

Further Study: Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Philippians 2:1-11

Prayer: *Thank you, Father, for making me a part of this household of faith. Help me to look beyond myself and to the needs of my family, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Think on this: Community is about 'us' not 'me'

December 8th

Celebrate Life

'Hear this o Job, stop and consider the wondrous works of God'
Job 37:14 ESV

Text: Job 37

When I was thirteen I took up photography and bought my first camera. Till date photography remains a huge part of my life, reminding me to pause and take in the world around—from the most magnificent of items to the

tiniest detail. Through my lens, I've seen what can only be described as 'wow moments' emphasizing the mighty works of God.

Art can be a means through which we express our perception of the world. Be it through a camera lens, poem or music, our acknowledgement of His handwork can be the difference between joy and sorrow.

Just like Elihu said, we need to stop and consider the wondrous work of God.

Further Study: Psalm 150; Psalm 98:1-9

Prayer: *Lord, I don't know what the future may bring, but I know that worry can never overwhelm a heart filled with praise. Open my eyes to see your hand in the world around me, in Jesus name, Amen*

Tip of the day: When we glory in creation, we celebrate God and the works of His hand.

December 9th

A Friend like No Other

"Let your steadfast love comfort me..." Psalm 119:76a (ESV)

Text: Matthew 11:28-30

One of my favourite hymns growing up talks about the wonderful friend we have in Jesus who bears our sins and grief, and the wonderful privilege to carry *everything* to God in prayer.

It is of great comfort to know that the ruler of the world desires our friendship—a friendship greater than anything we can have in the world. But this comes at a small cost: obedience (John 15:14). Yet, the best things about God's friendship are that it avails us comfort in trials, open access to

His ears, and provides good judgment for the kind of earthly relationships we should enjoy.

So, do you feel forsaken? Take it to God in prayer. In His arms, He will take and shield you and you will find solace there.

Further Study: John 17; 1 Peter 5:7; Hebrews 4:16

Prayer: *There are times I forget my life begins with you, Lord. Thank you for desiring communication with me and for your attentive ears. Teach me to confidently come before you with my needs and enjoy a rich relationship with you, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Let friendship with God be the blueprint for your earthly relationships.

Week 50 Delaying Gratification

December 10th

Should I eat it? (Daniel)

But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.

Daniel 1:8

Text: Daniel 1:1–16

As a child, I was groomed to be on my best behavior whenever we were visiting a neighbor's home; particularly to curb all forms of appetite no matter how appetizing a meal appeared. I dreaded the signature "stink – eye" from my mother. When I reached puberty, I understood that mother was teaching us to discipline ourselves.

Daniel knew that he had to fulfill purpose, therefore, he chose to abstain, not just for that time in his life but for the life to come. If we must have an excellent spirit as Daniel did, we must propose in our hearts today to deny ourselves of that company or communication that won't help our walk with GOD. God is looking for a people who aren't looking for human approval. Be that vessel.

Further Study: Psalms 1

Prayer: *Lord, teach me restraint. I confess that I have not walked in a manner that pleases you and I ask for your forgiveness, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Whose company do you keep?

December 11th

Self-Love? Really? (Rahab)

By faith – because she believed in God and his power – Rahab the harlot did not die with all the others in her city when they refused to obey God, for she gave a friendly welcome to the spies.
Hebrews 11:31 (NLT)

Text: Hebrews 11:1, 31–40

Have you ever given away something of value even though you had more need for it than whoever you gave it to? From our reading, Rahab protected the spies in the face of danger and acknowledged God while she did so. Her action was purely an act of selflessness. She didn't hide them because of what they could do for her. By this singular act, she became part of the genealogy of our Lord Jesus (Matthew 1:5).

Can we exhibit this level of passion for the salvation of others around us? Can we make such supplications on behalf of strangers who cannot repay us? We live in a generation driven by greed and how we can gain from others.

Further Study: Joshua 2; 1 Samuel 20

Prayer: *Lord, in this world that preaches so much about self-love, teach me to love others first just as you did.*

Tip of the day: Do less for yourself and more for others today.

December 12th

Is the Sex Really Worth It? (Joseph)

*But he knows where I am going and when he tests me,
I will come out as pure as gold. Job 23:10(NLT)*

Text: Job 23:9-12

Just as Joseph said, "How can I violate my master's trust and sin against God?" we can also flee from all forms of lust. We must understand that the world we live in today is constantly thinking of ways one can find instant sexual gratification outside the confines of marriage.

The bible says that we must flee (1 Corinthians 6:18). We must learn that sex isn't a tool we can use to trade in favours. It will do us no good.

Have you already fallen into this sin? Jesus can transform your life.

Further Study: 2 Samuel 11&12; Genesis 39:2-6, 41:33-43.

Prayer: *Father, today I confess all sexual impurity that has consumed me and has taken your place in my life, either by thought or by action. Give me the grace to flee in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: If you cannot deny yourself of the seemingly good things today, you may not know the taste of the best things to come.

December 13th

For the Cause of Freedom (Martin Luther King Jr)

*Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:10*

Text: Matthew 5:6-11

A lot of people know Martin Luther King Jr as a civil rights activist who championed the cause against the segregation of black people in the United States. Not a lot of people know that the strength to carry on did not come from being popular or widely accepted by people of the same race but from the place of prayer.

According to his wife Coretta, when Martin had felt like giving up, he reminded God that he was standing for what was right. Instantly, he heard a voice saying, "stand up for righteousness and stand up for the truth...." So, he forged on.

Are you tired of interceding for people, your nation and family? Keep going. Your actions will cause a ripple effect. Stand firm, creation awaits your manifestation. You were made for this.

Further Study: Esther 4; James 1

Prayer: *Lord, I am running on empty. My generation needs me to manifest. I let go of anything holding me back. Ignite me. I refuse to lose faith.*

Tip of the day: You are never too small to be a catalyst.

December 14th

For the Cause of the Gospel (Paul)

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry, which I

have received of the lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.
Acts 20: 24 (KJV)

Text: Acts 20:22-25

From the life of Paul, we see a man who was completely sold out to God. He did not care about what he stood to gain from any man (Acts 20:33). He did not regard his life or his accomplishments (Philippians 3:7-8). Because of his sacrifice, we enjoy the good news of salvation. He denied himself of anything that could possibly entangle him (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Today we have been called into the various ministries and works of life. We must strive to carry out the great commission (Matthew 28:19). The world is designed to hate and persecute you. Don't get it twisted.

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 9

Prayer: *Father, let your Spirit enable me to be all that you have called me to be.*

Tip of the day: Tell someone the good news today.

December 15th

For the Cause of Mankind (Jesus)

*He said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself
and take up his cross daily and follow me. Luke 9:23 (KJV)*

Text: Luke 9:23-26

What Christ exhibited on the cross is nothing short of self-denial. It is the denying of self, not for the sake of a greater good to self but a greater good to others. The ultimate self-sacrifice was seen on the cross. Christ is calling us to a higher purpose. The old song says, "he thought of me, above all". It takes an unimaginable kind of strength to place another's interest above yours.

Christ is asking us to pick up our cross daily and follow him. It needs persistence, consistency and determination to walk with God. His Spirit is here to ease the journey for us.

Further Study: Isaiah 53; Colossians 1.

Prayer: *Lord, teach me to pick up my cross and chase after you until the very end when you call me home.*

Tip of the day: God never promised that it would be easy; all he is asking you to do is to put one foot before the other. TRUST!

December 16th

Saying Yes to His Will (Abraham)

By an act of faith, Abraham said yes to God's call to travel to an unknown place that would become his home. When he left, he had no idea where he was going. By an act of faith, he lived in the country promised him, lived as a stranger in tents ... Abraham did it by keeping his eyes on an unseen city with real, eternal foundations – the city designed and built by God. Hebrews 11: 8-10 (MSG)

Text: Hebrews 11:8-12

Abraham exhibited the innocence of a child expecting goodies from his parents. How many are willing to trust an unknown future in the hands of another? How much more in the hands of a God who knows our end from the beginning? If Abraham hadn't exercised that bone cracking faith, we won't have him as our Father of faith.

Our life experiences are but a memory to God. Don't be bothered about missing out. God is your beginning and your end.

Further Study: Genesis 12; Hebrews 11

Prayer: *Lord, let my faith grow so I can trust you more.*

Tip of the day: Let go and allow God to take over the reins.

Week 51 Breaking Bad Habits

December 17th

Little Foxes

I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Romans 7:24a(MSG)

Text: Romans 7:15-25

Most of your life, you do the same things you did yesterday, the day before that and even the month prior to that. These things form your habits. Habits are actions that are engrained, that have become automatic because of continued repetition. Whether good or bad, a habit is a learned behaviour. Bad habits can range from harmless acts such as nail biting to life-threatening ones such as smoking.

Can you identify with the scripture reading above? The great Apostle Paul who wrote two-thirds of the New Testament was struggling with bad habits. Listen to this: "What I don't understand about myself is I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise" (Romans 7:14-16 MSG). Does it sound like you? Like Paul, everyone alive has something they struggle with. The difference is that some people decide to take action while others allow these little foxes to cost them something valuable, sometimes their life.

Further Study: Songs of Solomon 2:15; Romans 12:1

Prayer: *Lord give me the strength to do what I must, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Think about the bad habits you want to overcome and write them down. You may need to ask close friends.

December 18th

The Answer

Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!
Romans 7:25a

Text: Hebrews 12:1-3

It is said that it takes 66days to break a bad habit. Most people think that the ability to break a bad habit depends solely on one's willpower. Apostle Paul said, "...I can will it, but I cannot do it...I decide not to do bad but then I do it anyway... (Romans 7:17-20(MSG). Paul found that willing it wasn't enough and from what we know of the apostle, we know he had a strong will. Yet this could not bring about the desired change. Paul knew he had come to the end of the rope and needed help.

This is very important when working on breaking a bad habit: acknowledge you need help. Verse 25a says "Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Jesus is the answer and He is near those who call on Him.

Further Study: John 8:36; Hebrews 4:15-16; Romans 13:14

Prayer: *Thank you, Jesus, for making a way out. I bring my bad habits to you and ask that You help me overcome them. Amen*

Tip of the day: Decide to tackle these bad habits one day at a time with God's help.

December 19th

Flesh vs Spirit

"So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."

Galatians 5:16

Text: Galatians 5:16-25

I used to watch wrestling. I enjoyed fights involving Hulk Hogan, Ultimate warrior etc. These men were strong and muscular. Imagine any of these men fighting a frail, weak, hungry looking opponent. You can tell how the match will turn out.

Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, portrays a picture of a war going on between your flesh and the spirit. Verse 17 of our scripture reading says, "...They are in conflict with each other so that you are not to do whatever you want". He goes on to list acts of the flesh, which can also be bad habits. Who wins in this war?

Like the wrestling match described above, the stronger one wins. How do these wrestlers become strong and muscular? Well, they eat right, and they exercise. So if you feed the flesh/bad habits by constantly indulging in them, then the flesh wins and the cycle continues. However, if you feed your spirit by studying the word of God, praying and regular fellowship with other Christians, your spirit becomes stronger and you will overcome bad habits.

Further Study: 1 Peter 2:2; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Hebrews 12:1

Prayer: *Dear Lord, help me to starve my bad habits and feed my spirit man, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Identify a bad habit in your life and starve it.

December 20th

Right Thinking

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Romans 12:2

Text: Romans 12:1-3

Someone said, "sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character...". Bad habits start from the mind. Bad thoughts are like bad seeds which eventually yield bad behaviours. Hence in dealing with bad habits, the root must be dealt with: our thoughts.

Our scripture reading tells us that for there to be a transformation i.e. a change in our 'culture' of bad habits then there should be a change in our minds. How does this happen? 2 Corinthians 3:14-18 shows how the veil over our minds is removed IN Christ. Giving ourselves to Jesus is the first step to mind renewal. Verse 18 explains that when we contemplate the Lord's glory with unveiled faces, we become like Him. When we continually meditate on God's word, we will start behaving like Him. You can also 'contemplate His glory' in the place of prayer. A bad habit is formed due to repetition. Breaking it involves repetition as well. Do not give up.

Further Study: Philippians 4:8; Proverbs 23:7(KJV); 2 Corinthians 10:5-6

Prayer: *Jesus, I know it is only in You that I can renew my mind. Change my thought pattern, help me think all the right thoughts according to Philippians 4:8. In your dear name, I pray, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Say this to yourself: I can break the habit of _____ (fill the gap) through Christ who strengthens me.

December 21st

Relationships and Breaking Bad Habits

"Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm."

Proverbs 13:20

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:33-43

Today, we will give attention to how good friends help us break bad habits.

- ✿ They help you identify bad habits you never thought you had. Solomon says that wounds from a friend can be trusted (Proverbs 27:6a) A friend who tells you the truth even when it hurts is a treasure. Value them.
- ✿ You have someone to confide in. Most bad habits thrive in secrecy. James 5:16a admonishes us to confess our sins to each other and pray for each other so that we may be healed. It is not enough to have friends who can identify bad behaviour in your life. Even more valuable are those you can open up to without fear, those who can pray for you and encourage you. Hold onto them.
- ✿ Just as bad behaviour corrupts good, good behaviour rubs off on people. It is easy to think you are your own person and cannot be influenced by friends but that is not true. Don't continue with chickens. Look for an eagle like you.

Further Study: Psalms 1:1-3; Proverbs 28:13

Prayer: *Lord, I ask that you lead me to the friends I need, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Identify friends who encourage bad habits...and lose them.

December 22nd

Put Off and Put On

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”
Galatians 5:22

Text: Ephesians 4:22-32

The Apostle Paul did not stop at telling the Ephesians to "put off their former self" he went on to tell them to "put on the new self". It was not enough for the Ephesians to stop stealing, but to get busy. It was not enough to get rid of unwholesome talk, but he called for edifying speech on their part. In Verse 31, he pointed out attitudes they needed to get rid of and in verse 32, behaviours they need to embrace.

Replacing bad habits with good ones is an important step. Make a mental note of the triggers for these habits and decide in advance what action to take instead. Today, develop the habit of studying the Bible, praying, telling someone about Jesus and speaking positively. These are habits that will strengthen your spirit hence being able to defeat the flesh.

Further Study: Ecclesiastes 3:3

Prayer: *Jesus, even as You help me destroy bad habits in my life, I ask that you open my eyes to identify good habits I can imbibe in place of the bad ones, in your name, Amen*

Tip of the day: Study and meditate on a verse of the Bible daily. Be consistent.

December 23rd

Live Free

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.
Galatians 5:1

Text: Galatians 5:1

Now that you are free or learning to be free of past encumbrances, don't take on new ones. Jesus has died for us to be free but don't push your freedom. Be on your guard. Don't let other or new bad habits come into your life. The habit of not studying your Bible or of not praying or of not evangelizing or telling lies.

Do not suddenly think now I am strong in Christ, I do not need to do all those stuff I used to follow religiously anymore. 1 Corinthians 10:12 says 'let he who thinks he is standing be careful lest he falls.' You have been called to freedom don't let any yoke of wrong behavior creep into your life. Live free.

Further Study: Romans 6:11-14; John 10:10; Romans 12:11

Prayer: *Father help me be alert and on fire for you always, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Stir up your fire for the things of God.

Week 52 Growing Mentally

December 24th

Jesus Grew

'And Jesus grew in wisdom...' Luke 2:52a

Text: Luke 2:46-47, 51-52.

Jesus was twelve years when the event narrated in the text above happened. Twelve. His understanding and answers to questions were amazing. He was already wise and smart, however, he still *grew in wisdom*.

God in human form grew in wisdom! So should we. We should make it our aim to grow in wisdom. We can follow the example of the psalmist who was smarter than his teachers because he meditated (thought about and pondered) on God's word. Thankfully, we have been given the mind of Christ.

Further Study: Psalm 119:99; 1 Corinthians 2:15-16.

Prayer: *Thank you Lord for your example; by the help of your Holy Spirit, let me be more like you, Amen.*

Tip for the day: Pick a phrase or short verse from the scripture. Write it out on a piece of paper and carry it around in your pocket. Read, reread and think about it frequently throughout today.

December 25th

Sitting Among the Teachers

'After three days, they found him in the temple courts,

sitting among the teachers...’Luke 2:46

Text: Luke 2:46-47, 51-52.

Yes, I know. The texts mentioned above were also referenced yesterday but first read them again carefully.

Jesus was sitting among the teachers.

For a quick 5-minute conversation, people would not usually sit. Sitting down (for reasons other than tiredness) suggests that some good amount of time will be spent in the place of sitting. Jesus spent some time with the teachers who were older and more experienced than him (his human form). As we take today to celebrate Jesus’ birth, note that Jesus quite aware of what he came to do, submitted himself to training so that his coming will achieve its aim; which is to destroy the works of the devil.

Further Study: Proverbs 13:20; Proverbs 14:7

Prayer: *Father, I ask that you send smart and wise people into my life – be they in form of friends, relatives or mentors, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: If you see someone (younger or older) smarter or wiser than you, neither be envious nor intimidated. Rather, try and spend some time with them. You will learn, and you will be mentally stimulated.

December 26th

Listening to Them

’After three days, they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them...’ Luke 2:46

Text: Luke 2:46

My husband's grandfather thought that listening was a good way to learn and grow mentally. So, he would take my father-in-law, who was only a boy at the time, with him to the meetings of elders. My father-in-law would perch on his little stool to listen and observe. He learnt a great deal.

Jesus sat with the teachers and He listened. Listening is more than hearing. It is not about thinking of a response while being spoken to. It involves paying attention and taking note of what is being said and not many people are good at it. It is a skill one should acquire.

Further Study: Proverbs 18:13; Proverbs 4:1-2

Prayer: *Give me a listening ear, O Lord, and an understanding heart, in Jesus name I pray, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Give attention, maintain eye contact and be in the moment when being spoken to today.

December 27th

Ask Questions

'After three days, they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.' Luke 2: 46
Text: Luke 2:46-47, 51-52.

Questions are a great way to learn. Sometimes, people don't ask because they are afraid of looking stupid. Other times, people discourage others from asking questions perhaps due to their impatience or insecurity.

Think about the legend on Sir Isaac Newton who saw an apple fall from a tree and asked, 'why did the apple fall from the tree?' Someone might have said 'that's a stupid question' but that question led to the law of gravity.

Ask questions, not just for the sake of it but, because you honestly want more answers.

Further Study: Ecclesiastes 1:13; Proverbs 25:2

Prayer: *Lord, give me the right questions per time, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Questions don't have to be directed at someone else. Sometimes, it is a good start to self-direct the questions before voicing them out.

December 28th

Cross-Examination

'With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning...' Luke 1:3

Text: Proverbs 18:17

In my early education, I wasn't taught to question books so if something was written in a textbook, it must be right. It wasn't until I was doing some

further education that I was encouraged to question ideas and not to simply accept them because they were written in a book. I found that sometimes, ideas seemed right until I re-examined and re-evaluated them.

Part of developing mentally involves critical thinking i.e. analysing and evaluating issues before making a judgement. Have you ever heard the phrase 'jumping to a conclusion'? This can be avoided by carefully considering and examining a matter from different sides.

Even Luke the physician carefully investigated everything before writing them down. Note the word '**carefully**'.

Further Study: Luke 1:1–4; Proverbs 14:15

Prayer: *Thank you, Jesus, for your example both in asking and answering questions. Help me to be more like you, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Before you begin to question and evaluate, ensure that you have first listened and considered the viewpoints. In all you do, be respectful.

December 29th

Renew Your Mind And Guard Your Heart

'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...' Romans 12:2.

Text: Proverbs 4:23; Romans 12:2

God made everything – both the things we can see and the things we cannot see. He is intelligent and smart among other things. All knowledge comes from Him. He understands the law of physics. Rocket science is nothing compared to His knowledge and understanding. Above all, He is holy.

So, when He asks us to think like Him and not according to the world, He has a good reason. A polluted vessel will give out polluted water. Therefore, let us guard our hearts and allow His word to renew our minds.

If we want to grow mentally, first let's remove the weed from the soil.

Further Study: Psalm 104:34; Matthew 22:37; Romans 8:7

Prayer: *Lord, no one is smarter than you. I humble myself under your will and word.*

Tip of the day: The Bible was inspired by the most intelligent Spirit ever. Take His word as it is.

December 30th

Imagine

*'Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or
imagine...'
Ephesians 3:20a*

Text: Ephesians 3:20

God can do the impossible. We know this and so we ask Him – in prayer. However, I think that we often forget that He can also do much more than we **imagine**.

Imagination is a God-given ability to mentally create original ideas, pictures or things which we cannot yet access with our five senses. The man-made

things that we see (and read), hear, smell, touch, and taste were first created in the minds of people.

Now, we can fly, travel out of the earth, speak to someone miles away, print objects, see babies inside a womb etc. It wasn't always so. Someone imagined the 'impossible'. We too can create good things in our minds. The amazing thing is that God is able to do immeasurably more than we imagine! So, let's go for it.

Further Study: 1 Chronicles 17:2; 1 Corinthians 2:16

Prayer: *Holy Spirit, I yield my mind to you. Help me use the imagination you have given me for the good of all, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Use your imagination. All things are possible.

December 31st

Taking Stock

*You crown the year with your bounty, and your carts
overflow with abundance. Psalms 65:11*

Text: Ecclesiastes 7:8

There is something exciting about coming to the end of a matter, be it a project, a task or a year. It is even more exciting if the end is a successful one. It is a common practice amongst businesses to take stock at the end of a project or year. This practice can be applied to our lives too. Think of the beginning of this year and the tasks you penned down to accomplish. It is time to take stock. Carefully assess if those tasks were accomplished. Assess what could have contributed to or mitigated against it. This will guide you in knowing how far you have come. If you think you were not

successful this year, you need to check the following so that the next year will hold a better record.

- ✿ Were your goals SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound)?
- ✿ Did you discipline yourself by eliminating all distractions?
- ✿ Did you intermittently assess your alignment to those goals?
- ✿ Did you make yourself accountable to anyone?
- ✿ Was the Holy Spirit allowed to lead the way?

You have another opportunity with the New Year to win the race of life. However, do not forget to thank God for this year.

Further Study: Jeremiah 9:23–24; 2 Timothy 4:7–8; Psalms 37:5–6

Prayer: *Lord, I am aware that you gave me enough grace to produce profitable ventures in my life. Help me to be disciplined enough to do so, in Jesus name, Amen.*

Tip of the day: Treat your life as a business and put in measures to ensure success.

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About FECA (Federation of Colleges Ex-students Christian Association)

FECA is a nationwide youth fellowship which was started over 25 years ago by a group of young ladies in their teens. Their desire was to remain standing for the Lord after graduation from secondary school. With this desire in mind, they decided to start out a fellowship for college graduates like themselves in their home cities. That vision has grown to about 150 chapters in more than 25 states of Nigeria, with testimonies that span the length and breadth of Nigeria and all over the world. The vision of FECA is embodied in the statement '*Redeeming the desolation of our land and generation*' Isaiah 61:4, 58:12.

Inside of the back cover.