SUBMISSION!

Embracing Liberty through Intimacy with God

INTRODUCTION

Submission as a word in the context it is being considered here, can literally be defined as the action of accepting or yielding to a superior force, or to the will or authority of another person. It denotes weakness or vulnerability in its execution, so that it is seen as a negative development in the life of an individual. It is frequently associated with weakness, oppression, and control.

In the setting or circumstance of our relationship with God, submission is an emancipating practice that leads to liberty, greater affection, and transformation of the one who submits.

Take for instance, submission in marriage. The woman is required to submit to her husband, in reciprocation of which the husband is obligated to love his wife like Christ love the Church and gave Himself for her to the point of death.

In my marriage experience, I can confirm his to be true. My husband and I have enjoyed some form of reciprocation from each other, which saw him ensuring that I was protected from whatever he knew was unhealthy to me as his wife. On my part, I submitted myself to his loving authority as my husband. So I understand what submission is, and the benefits thereof.

I know clearly therefore, that it is not about losing one’s self, one’s autonomy, or dignity. Rather, its about realighning youself to the plan and purpose of God for your life, which would ultimately see you becoming a better version of yourself for your good and the lory of God. It is more of acting in faith, having recognized that God your Maker has better plans for you.

The benefits of submission in the life of the one who submits himself or herself to the sovereignty of God are enormous, and most rewarding. The feeling of liberation that comes with submission is awesome.

As a person, the thought of how I enjoyed my husband’s unhindered care, because I was submissive, as re-strengthened my resolve to submit to God’s sovereignty authority from a point of greater understanding.

When we submit to God, we are released from the liability of having to be in charge, and the temptation to want to manipulate circumstances and people, which is what we often do as humans with selfish tendencies. We are free to rest in God’s sovereignty and goodness. In submission our relationship with God is deepened; allowing us to experience more of His presence, guidance, and love. This way, we become more open; surrendering our old nature through a transformational process that is initiated at the point of submission. Gradually our minds are renewed and we are able to freely yield more to God’s influence in our character modification process.

At this point, the peace of God which passes all understanding in fully in charge; ruling our emotions. Whatever happens, our responses are initiated and driven by the Spirit of God Who is in total control of the steps we take.

In my walk with God as a believer, I have found “submission” to be a veritable tool of access to the many possibilities of transitioning from one level of victory to another, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in my pursuit of a meaningful life.

This book is a product of my experience of God’s goodness through the transforming power of my “submission” to Him. It is my earnest desire that it will serve this same purpose in the life of the reader.

Deaconess Grace Amina Kolo

Chapter One

OUTLOOK ON SUBMISSION

Submission is essentially the act of surrendering one’s will, desires and control to a higher authority. It is an act of allowing some form of influence over one for some benefits - mutual or otherwise. It could also take the form of one given themselves for self-discipline, in a bid to attain higher standards or goal in their career and personal development endeavours and/or initiatives.

Whichever initiative one is choosing to pursue, the benefits are numerous and outweigh the pain of the process. If it is for spiritual growth, submission allows individuals to trust in God’s plan and provision, and to seek guidance and direction from Him. Scriptures like Jeremiah 29:11 quickly comes to mind, and one can fully trust God to do what He says He will do. He is faithful and keeps His Word.

For our community’s maintenance of social order, submission to constituted authority of governance; respecting and obeying the laws and rules of the land holds the key. So also is the attainment of harmony in our relationships.

Whereas submission could be misunderstood as weakness, in a world that values autonomy and independence, its significance in promoting spiritual growth, social order, relational harmony, and personal development cannot be overstated. Submission in whatever form, requires strength of character, courage and of course absolute humility. It is therefore correct to say that a person who embraces submission, does so from a point of strength of their appreciation of the goals they aspire to achieve, in order to attain greater liberty, joy and fulfilment in their lives.

Submission: The Christian Perspective

Submission is voluntary in the Christian viewpoint. God does not force Himself on anyone. It is your choice to voluntarily allow Him into your space for His influence, which is for your good. In Revelation 3:20, we are told, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” Clearly, you are at liberty to yield or not to yield yourself to God’s sovereign control. This is a fundamental aspect of the Christian faith.

Demonstrating his power of choice in submitting oneself to the authority of God, Joshua had this to say to the children of Israel:

“And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Joshua 24:15

In the Bible, submission is presented as a progressive and liberating concept. It is not about losing one’s personality or independence, but somewhat about finding liberty and joy in yielding to God’s will, at which point He takes the control of the happenings of your life, in the way that best suites His purpose and your good. In Matthew 16:24-25, Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.”

As complex as this may seem, the working on this scripture in our life is centered at our yieldedness in total submission to God Who knows what’s best for one. He alone is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond our imaginations.  What better thing is there for us to do, than to submit to Him and His will?

The apostle Paul also writes extensively about submission in his letters to the early Christians. In Ephesians 5:21, he says, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” This verse emphasizes the importance of mutual submission in relationships, whether it be in marriage, family, or community.

Whereas submission is for the benefit of the individual executing it, this benefits cannot be achieved if one chooses to go against the requirements of His Maker for a purposeful life, which is only found in compliance to His will.  The Bible is very clear about this as seen in Romans 12:1-2, (I beseech you therefore brethren,   by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a lliving sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptableand pefect will of God. Serve God with Spiritual gifts.)

Worship being the essence of the life of all humans, submission is at the core of it. To live a life that is pleasing to Him and feel fulfilled doing so, we must surrender our will and desires to God.

Jesus Himself exemplified the essence of submission in the way He lived while on earth. Yes submission can be unpalatable, but ultimately it is for our own good. In Philippians 2:5-8, Jesus' willingness to to give up His life on the cross, highlights the ultimate act of submission, and the best act of love and obedience. And as we know, this is the foundation of the believer's faith.

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Not My will, but Yours

As believers, one of the greatest demonstration of our submission, is in our acceptance of the will of God in our lives. In God’s will, He has everything outlined for our good. We do not have the big picture of our lives. God does and requires that we trust Him to put all the puzzles together; believing that He knows the end from the beginning. No matter how bad our experiences, if we would trust Him, everything will ultimately turn out for our good. It’s just a matter of time and trust. In His Word He tells us if we would relinquish control, all things shall work together for our good.

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Romans 8:28-30

One of the most significant examples of Jesus’ submission is seen in His attitude when Soldiers went to arrest him at Gethsemane. In Matthew 26:39, , even in the face of great suffering and sacrifice, Jesus said a prayer that demonstrated His total submission to God’s will. He said, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” His submission to God’s will is a central theme of His ministry, and it is a powerful example for believers today. He was willing to lay down His life in obedience to God’s plan, even in the face of a disgraceful execution sentence - death by the cross. He recognized why the cross and yielded Himself.

13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”),

14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Galatians 3:13-14

Jesus recognized this as God’s will in the processes of redemption. In Isaiah chapter 53, we are told Jesus recognized that it was in His Father’s will that He be subjected to a painful experience to the point of dying on the cross, in order to redeem the human kind from the grip of sin and eternal death. In submission to such will of His Father, He gave Himself to be so killed.

**Embracing God’s will**

The journey to surrender, trust and obedience, can only be embarked upon With a deep understanding of God’s character and nature, and a willingness to submit to His plans and purposes. Experiencing a sense of peace, joy and contentment that transcends our circumstances, ensues when we embrace God’s will.

Surrendering our own desires and plans, is the first step in embracing God’s will. It is letting go the need to control and manipulate our circumstances, and trusting God’s sovereignty with an understanding that He has the nest of intentions for us. So that even when we don’t understand, we believe that His plans are always good for us, having recognized that His ways are higher than our ways. Now as we seek God’s revelation of His plan and purpose for us, we are humble, teachable and willing to be led by the Holy Spirit.

In my walk with God as a believer, the experience has been that of great joy, having surrendered my will for His will, living has been a lot easier in obedience, not just by following His rules and regulations, but essentially by being totally yielded.

Now I can say that following His leading even when it is difficult and sometimes uncertain, I must be willing to step out of my confort zone and take risks by faith in Him who has called me to trust Him. Recognizing that His ways are not my ways, and His thouhts not as mine, I have learned to patiently wait, trusting in His sovereignty to reveal His plan and purpose for me at His own time. The sense of peace, joy and contentment that transcends my circumstances which I am yearning for, especially now living the life of a widow, can only be achieved if I wholeheartedly embracing God’s will for my life.

Again Jesus is my example in this. He submitted Himself to the authority of His parents (Luke 2:51). He also submitted to the authorities during His miistry here on earth. He paid taxes and obeyed laws of the land (Matthew 22:15-22).

**Dying to self**

In Matthew 16:24, Jesus said, *“If anyone would come after me, they must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”*  Living a life that’s pleasing to God, entails dying to seld, which is actually surrendering one’s desires, interests and will. It involves letting go of your ego, and seeking to live being guided and influences by God’s will and purpose. It is living a life that is completely yielded, making the choice to daily put God’s will and purpose above yours, which is characterized by selflessness, humility and obedience.

This is one of my biggest priorities as a believer. Obedience has become pivotal in my walk with God, no matter the difficulty and even when I don’t understand His ways, because I know that He has my best interest at heart.

Now I experience a deeper level of freedom, joy and peace in my relationship with God.

Chapter Two

**ACKNOWLEDGING THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD**

One of the most important steps to becoming, is acknowledgment. Acknowledging who you are, what you have, where you are at, and most importantly, your strengths and your weaknesses. To acknowledge is to accept the truth or existence of something. Once you are able to accept your position, the next step is to embrace it as your reality of the moment, which invariably is going to drive you to do the needful, towards achieving your purpose.

Sovereignty refers to the supreme authority and power of an entity, such as a state, institution, or individual, to govern and control their own affairs, free from direct external influence or control.

Now to speak about the sovereignty of God, it is dominion taken to a limitless level. God is infinite and He actually is the true definition of sovereignty. He is self-made and self-sufficient, and all that has to do with dominion in its absolute sense.

Acknowledging the sovereignty of God is a fundamental aspect of the Christian faith. It is the recognition that God is the Supreme Ruler of the universe, and that He has absolute control over all things. This understanding is essential for believers, as it affects our perspective on life, our relationships, and our faith. The Bible teaches that God is sovereign in all aspects of life. He declares the end from the beginning, and from ancient times, things that are not yet done (**Isaiah 46:10**). This verse emphasizes God’s sovereignty, stating that His plans and purposes will come to pass, regardless of human actions or decisions.

In **Psalm 103:19**, the Psalmist writes, *“The Lord has established His throne in* *heaven,And His kingdom rules over all.”* This verse highlights God’s reign over the universe, emphasizing that His sovereignty is not limited to a specific realm or domain. However, one can only experience the impact of His influence, if they trust and acknowledge Him as being sovereign.

**Trust and Acknowledge**

Trust triggers faith, and acknowledgment builds faith. You naturally would have faith in the person you trust. When you have faith in someone, you would allow their influence on you, on purpose.

Now you cannot have faith in God, if you do not acknowledge Him as God. The word *“acknowledge”* stands out in the context it is used here, because it is the link between one’s faith and God’s provision.

In the Bible, what guaranteed God’s protective provision to His people had always been their loyalty to Him; acknowledging Him as the only One God worthy of trust and reverence. Our pride and glory must not be in our human capabilities, but in God and all that He represents by the might of His sovereignty. By this, we are able to speak about Him, from the point of our various experiences walking daily with Him. In our walk with Him, we are able to identify certain of His traits, by which we attempt to define Him.

The most outstanding character of God is that He is Spirit and sovereign in nature. There is nothing one can ever be, or achieve apart from God. Paul speaks of Him as One in whom all humans live and move and have their being (**Acts 17: 28**). To attempt to define Him is to say the least: most impossible.

How do you define a being who is absolutely self-determined? He does as He pleases. Daily walking with God as a believer, the most prevailing qualities of His that one would easily identify, are that He is Omnipotent (having the power to do anything He chooses to do), Omniscient (having complete knowledge of all things, past, present, and future), Omnipresent (being present everywhere and fully aware of all things), Immutable (unchanging and His plans and purposes are fixed), and Eternal (having no beginning or end and is outside of time). God is the most suitable characterization of what sovereignty is, in its truest sense. Nothing happens without His knowledge, approval and control.

These qualities are revelations of Who He is. They emanate from our peculiar familiarities walking with Him. Through these numerous experiences, He mirrors to us His nature by the many perspectives of His personality that we would gain relating with Him. He gradually becomes to us what the Psalmist says of Him in **Psalms 3:3***: “But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head.”*

Acknowledging God’s sovereignty has several implications for believers.

**Firstly**, it promotes humility and dependence on God. When we recognize that God is in control, we are more likely to seek His guidance and wisdom in our lives. In **Proverbs 3:5-6**, we are admonished to trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on our own understanding. And that in all our ways we should acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your path.

**Secondly**, acknowledging God’s sovereignty brings comfort and peace in times of uncertainty. When we face difficult circumstances or uncertain futures, we can find solace in the knowledge that God is in control. His covenant with us for loving and pursuing His purpose, is that all things shall work together for our good (**Romans 8:28).**

**Thirdly**, recognizing God’s sovereignty encourages us to pray and seek His will in our lives. In **Matthew 6:10**, Jesus teaches us to pray, “*Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*” This prayer acknowledges God’s sovereignty and asks for His will to be done in our lives and in the world.

**Lastly**, acknowledging God’s sovereignty leads to gratitude and worship. When we understand that God is the Supreme Ruler of the universe, we are more likely to express gratitude for His blessings in our lives. In **Psalm 100:5**, the psalmist writes, *“For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.”*

In addition to these implications, acknowledging God’s sovereignty also affects our relationships with others. When we recognize that God is in control, we are more likely to forgive and trust others, knowing that God is working everything out for our good. **Philippians 2:12-13**, puts it this way:*“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”*

Furthermore, acknowledging God’s sovereignty leads to a deeper understanding of His character and nature. When we recognize that God is sovereign, we are more likely to trust in His goodness and love, even in difficult circumstances, because we know God is in charge of everything. We would therefore become more humble and lean more to God; knowing that it is He who ordains and controls all things.

*6 By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,*

*And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.*

*7 He gathers the waters of the sea together [b]as a heap;*

*He lays up the deep in storehouses.*

**Psalm 33:6-7**

Chapter Three

**RESTING IN GOD’S EVERLASTING ARMS**

The notion of God’s everlasting arms, is closely tied to His character as a loving Father. Just as a father longs to protect and care for his children, God desires to do the same for us. He wants us to feel safe and secure in His presence, knowing that He is always looking out for our well-being. His everlasting arms are a symbol of strength, protection and care, which are always available to us. These arms are not limited by time or space; they are eternal just like God Himself. They are always open, always ready to receive us, and always willing to hold us close.

The Bible puts it this way: *The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms…* (**Deuteronomy 33:27**)

This verse paints a beautiful picture of God’s loving care and provision for His children. The image of God’s everlasting arms enveloping us in a warm embrace, is a comforting reminder of His presence and protection in our lives. God’s everlasting arms is a fortress of absolute peace and security, where we can find solace and strength in the midst of life’s inescapable challenges.

**Our Fortress**

A fortress is a potent symbol of strength, security, and resilience. It represents a safe haven, a stronghold that provides protection from harm and danger. Throughout history, fortresses have been built to withstand sieges, battles, and natural disasters; serving as beacons of hope and safety for those who seek shelter within their walls.

The idea of a fortress extends beyond physical structures. It can also represent a mental or emotional stronghold, a place of inner strength and resilience that enables us to weather life’s challenges. In this sense, a fortress can be a state of mind that allows us to face adversity with courage and determination.

As Christians who believe in the Word of God, we find numerous examples of fortresses and strongholds in scripture, each serving as a reminder of God’s power and protection. The fortress of Zion, the city of David, and the temple in Jerusalem all represent places of refuge and strength, where God’s people could seek shelter and protection.

In addition to physical fortresses, the scriptures also speak of spiritual strongholds, such as the “*fortress of faith*” and the “*armor of God.”* These metaphors remind us that our faith and trust in God are our greatest weapons against the forces of evil and adversity.

**The armor of faith**

This a powerful metaphor that represents the spiritual protection and strength which comes from our belief in God. Just as a suit of armor protects a warrior from harm, the armor of faith shields us from the attacks of the enemy and enables us to stand firm in our beliefs.

The Bible describes the armor of faith in **Ephesians 6:10-18**, where Paul writes, *“Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”* This armor includes the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the belt of truth, the shoes of peace, and the shield of faith.

Each piece of armor represents a vital aspect of our faith, and when worn together, they provide complete protection and empowerment. The helmet of salvation protects our minds and thoughts, the breastplate of righteousness guards our hearts, and the belt of truth secures our waists. The shoes of peace enable us to move forward with confidence, and the shield of faith deflects the enemy’s attacks.

The armor of faith is not just a passive protection, but also an active empowerment. It enables us to move forward with boldness and courage, to share the Gospel with others, and to overcome obstacles and challenges. When we put on the armor of faith, we are not just defending ourselves, but also advancing the kingdom of God.

As believers who are fully yielded to God in absolute submission to His sovereignty, it is comforting to know that we have God as our Fortress. In our journey through life, we inevitably face challenges and obstacles that seek to shake our foundations. Yet, in these moments of uncertainty, we can find solace in the knowledge that God is our Fortress, our Rock, and our Salvation. We can trust in His unwavering love and care, knowing that He is always with us, always for us, and always working for our good. **Acts 17:28a** puts it this way *“For in Him we live and move and have our being.”*

Whether physical or spiritual, a fortress provides a place of refuge and protection, a stronghold that enables one to weather life’s challenges with courage and determination.

**Our Refuge**

We all can do well with some good security. A refuge is a place of safety and security, a haven where one can seek shelter from the storms of life. It is a sanctuary that provides comfort, protection, and peace, a place to escape the turmoil and chaos of the world. A refuge can take many forms, from a physical location like a home or a shelter, to a mental or emotional state of mind.

A refuge can be a lifeline in time of crises; offering a sense of hope and renewal. It is a place where one can find solace, guidance, and support, a place to recharge and restrategize. A refuge can also be a source of inspiration, a place where one can find strength, courage, and resilience.

From the biblical story of Noah’s Ark, to the modern-day refugee crises, the concept of refuge is deeply rooted in human experience. It is a universal human need, a fundamental desire for safety, security, and belonging. Whether seeking refuge from natural disasters, political persecution, or personal struggles, the idea of a refuge remains an effective symbol of hope and resilience.

Now for believers, God is our refuge, a steadfast and unwavering source of comfort, strength, and hope in the midst of life’s turbulence. This timeless truth, echoed throughout the scriptures, reminds us that our Almighty God is a reliable sanctuary, a fortress of protection and peace.

In the Bible, we are reminded that *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble”* (**Psalm 46:1**). This promise has been a beacon of hope for countless generations, a reminder that our God is always near, always willing to offer shelter from life’s tempests.

As we journey through life, we inevitably face trials and tribulations that seek to shake our foundations. Yet, in these moments of uncertainty, we can find solace in the knowledge that God is our refuge. He is the rock on which we stand, the anchor that holds us fast, and the safe haven where we can find peace.

The Psalmists puts it this way: *“I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust’”* (**Psalm 91:2**). This declaration of faith, speaks to the fact that our trust and hope are in God alone. He is the one who watches over us, who keeps us under the shadow of His wings, and who promises to never leave us nor forsake us.

As our refuge, God offers us a place of safety and security, a sanctuary from the storms that rage around us. He is our hiding place, our secret stronghold, and our shield. In His presence, we find peace that surpasses all understanding, a peace that guards our hearts and minds.

From my experience walking with God, I have enjoyed numerous benefits under His protective arms, some of which are peace, security, strength and comfort.

**Peace that surpasses all understanding**

In a world filled with chaos and uncertainty, God’s arms offer an asylum of serenity. When we find ourselves lost and alone, His arms envelop us in a sense of security and comfort. Here we find peace in the midst of turmoil.

His arms are a symbol of His unwavering love and care, reassuring us that He is always with us, guiding and protecting us. In times of fear and unease, we can turn to His arms for solace, knowing that He is our rock and our salvation.

The peace that passes all understanding is a divine gift from God, transcending human comprehension. It’s a deep sense of calm and serenity that settles in our hearts, even amidst chaos and uncertainty. This peace is not based on circumstances, but on the unwavering trust in God’s sovereignty and love. It’s a peace that guards our hearts and minds, shielding us from apprehension. We are told in **Philippians 4:6-7**, *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”*

The prophet Isaiah writes, *“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You. Because he trusts in You”* (**Isaiah 26:3**). This promise reminds and reassures us that when we place our trust in God, we can experience a peace that surpasses all understanding. This sense of security and protection is a fundamental human need, which is essential for our well-being.

**A sense of security**

As believers, we have a unique sense of security and protection in our relationship with God. It is rooted in our faith and trust in His sovereignty and love for us. We know that God is our refuge and fortress, our rock and salvation (**Psalm 46:1, 2 Samuel 22:2**).

This sense of security and protection is not based on our circumstances, but on God’s promises and character. We can face challenges and uncertainties with confidence, knowing that God is with us and for us (**Romans 8:31**). We are reminded in **Psalm 91:4**, *“He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.”*

Whereas we are not promised a trouble-free life, in the midst of our troubles, we a guaranteed God’s presence and help. We can rest in His tender loving-kindness, knowing that He is our eternal refuge and security.

**Strength for our journey**

In our walk with God we will experience moments of weakness, stemming from unavoidable challenges and obstacle. However, we can find strength for our journey in God’s Word and His promises. The Psalmist has this to say: *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song I will praise Him”* (**Psalm 28:7**).

God’s strength is available to us through His Holy Spirit, who empowers us to face our trials with courage and confidence. In **2 Corinthians 12:9**, Paul writes, *“And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”*

As we walk with God, we can find strength in His presence, His promises, and His people. We can lean on Him in times of weakness, and trust in His goodness and love. With God’s strength, we can overcome any obstacle and continue on our journey with hope and faith.

**Comfort in times of distress**

As believers, we are not immune to sorrow and pain, but we have a unique source of comfort in times of distress. God is our comforter, and His presence and promises bring solace to our hurting hearts. In **2 Corinthians 1:3-4**, we are told God is the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort who comforts us in all our troubles.

Clearly, we know that in times of sorrow and pain, we can find comfort in God’s love and presence. We can cast our cares upon Him, knowing that He cares for us (**1 Peter 5:7**). We can trust in His sovereignty, knowing that He is working everything out for our good (**Romans 8:28**). We can find comfort in His promises, such as **Psalm 34:18**, (*The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit*).

God’s comfort is not the removal of our pain, but a presence that sustains us through it. He walks with us in our sorrow, and His comfort enables us to endure and even find joy in the midst of trials. As believers, we can rest in God’s comfort, knowing that He is our rock, our refuge, and our eternal hope.

Resting in God’s everlasting arms is a place of peace and security, where we can find succor and strength in the midst of life’s challenges. God’s everlasting arms represent His eternal and unwavering love for us, and they are always available to us. By seeking God’s presence, trusting in His love, letting go of control, and finding comfort in His character, we can rest in His arms, and experience His peace and protection in our lives. May we find comfort in God’s everlasting arms, and may we always remember that we are loved and cared for by our heavenly Father.

Chapter Four

**INTIMACY WITH GOD**

The thought of this, I am sure would get some people wondering how one can have intimacy with their Creator. But let’s look at it from the human perspective and appreciation of what it is.

**Intimacy**

Intimacy is an intense and affectionate connection with another person, marked by vulnerability, trust, and deep passionate understanding. It is the state of being fully present and open with someone, sharing thoughts, feelings, and desires, without fear of judgment or rejection.

Intimacy encompasses much more than physical closeness of the genders, as it involves sharing moments of joy and sorrow, supporting each other’s growth, and fostering a sense of safety and belonging amongst friends and family members, where trust, empathy, and mutual understanding create a deep bond.

Looking at intimacy holistically, it is clear that, it is a reflection of our capacity for love and constructive connection, which allows us to experience the beauty of human relationships and to find comfort, solace, and meaning in the presence of others. By embracing intimacy, we can cultivate richer, more authentic relationships and discover the depths of our own hearts and souls.

**Intimacy with God**

Intimacy with God is a deep and personal relationship with our Creator, marked by vulnerability, trust, and deep emotional understanding, without fear of judgment or rejection. Intimacy with God requires a willingness to give oneself in total surrender just as one is, in their state of need and utter helplessness.

In **Psalm** **139:1-4**, David writes, *“O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O Lord, You know it altogether.”*

This passage highlights the depth of God’s knowledge and understanding of us, inviting us to embrace His intimate presence in our lives. But how can we embrace His intimate presence in our live? We can do so through certain channels of engagements that would see us yielding ourselves completely for His influence.

1. **Vulnerability**

Vulnerability with God involves being honest and transparent, sharing our deepest fears, doubts, and weaknesses without pretenses or masks, so as to build a genuine and intimate connection with Him, free from the burden of shame and fear.

In **Psalm 103:14**, we are reminded that God is acquainted with our frailty, knowing we are dust. He meets us in our vulnerability, offering love, grace, and compassion. We experience emotional healing, spiritual growth, and increased trust in His goodness. We become more open to a transformative experience that allows us to build a deeper, more authentic relationship with our loving Creator, thereby making us more honest with ourselves and others.

1. **Trust**

At the core of the Christian faith is trust. It involves having confidence in God’s sovereignty, love, and goodness. By trust we come to Him, surrendering our fears, worries, and doubts to Him. In turn we embrace His promises and plans for our lives, believing that, even when circumstances seem chaotic and uncertain, God is in control.

God is very clear about trust and reminds us In **Proverbs 3:5-6**, to trust Him with all our hearts and lean not on our own understanding. But in all our ways we should acknowledge Him, and He shall direct our paths.

Trusting God is not always easy, but it is essential for our spiritual growth and well-being. By choosing to trust God, we experience His peace and calmness in the midst of turmoil, comfort and hope in times of sorrow. We will also experience deeper intimacy with Him, which will further heighten our faith and confidence in His goodness.

1. **Communication**

Healthy communication with God is the foundation of a vibrant intimate relationship with Him. It involves sharing our thoughts, feelings, and desires with Him in honesty and vulnerability, while also listening to His guidance and wisdom to navigate life’s challenges with greater confidence and faith.

Healthy communication with God is not a one-way conversation, but a dynamic and interaction where we both speak and listen. By it we experience more intimate and personal connection with God, through which we are enabled to cultivate deeper trust and faith in His sovereignty.

1. **Obedience**

Demonstrating our love and commitment to God, is a fundamental aspect of the Christian faith. It is called “*Obedience,”* without which our declaration of love and loyalty to God is faulty. King Saul faulted in this and he was told “*Obedience is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams*” (**1 Samuel 15:22**), because obedience involves surrendering our will to His, and following His commands and guidance.

In **John 14:15**, Jesus says, *“If you love me, keep my commands.”* Keeping God’s commands is the essence of obedience, without which obedience cannot be said to have been achieved. When we obey God, we demonstrate our trust in His sovereignty and goodness, and we open ourselves up to His guidance, by willingly, humbly surrendering our will for His, even when it’s difficult or unclear.

1. **Worship**

Worship is a lifestyle, a posture of the heart, and a holistic declaration of God’s worthiness, by the expression of our esteem and gratitude to God; acknowledging His majesty and grace. It is a thoughtful response to His love, goodness, and sovereignty, transcending mere words or actions. It is not a one-off activity we momentarily do, but a lifelong devotion to our Maker in response to His majesty.

Worship encompasses various forms, including prayer, singing, Scripture reading, giving, and many other services. It is a personal and corporate experience, uniting us with fellow believers in shared devotion. As we worship, we connect with God’s presence and power, experiencing spiritual renewal and refreshment that enables us to be more of all that He expects of us.

1. **Quietness**

Whereas as believers God is always in and with us, a moment of contemplation, reflection and rest in God’s presence wherever we are, is a precious gift that should be intentionally embraced, to remind us of the fact that we are not living independent of God.

In a world filled with many distractions, quietness allows us to pause, breathe, and stay connected with our loving Creator. It’s an invitation to slow down, let go of our worries, and simply be with God in an intention engagement, not because we have lost touch with Him, because we want to remind ourselves of the fact that it’s in Him we live and move and have our being.

Quietness is not just a physical state, but a spiritual posture. It’s a choice to quiet our minds, listen to our hearts, and seek more of God’s guidance. In quietness we rediscover our true selves, our deepest desires, and our greatest needs. We find clarity, purpose, and direction, as we continue on the path God has set us, when we gave our lives to Christ.

1. **Scripture**

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** tells us *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

Reading and meditating on God’s Word is a transformative experience, allowing His truth to penetrate our thoughts and hearts. As we immerse ourselves in Scripture, we encounter the living God, who speaks directly to our souls. Through His Word, God reveals His character, His love, and His plans for us; guiding us into a deeper understanding of Himself and ourselves.

As we ponder and apply His principles, our thoughts are renewed, and our hearts are changed, through a transformational process of experiencing spiritual growth that would deepen our relationship with Him. His Word becomes a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; illuminating our journey and empowering us to live a life that honours Him.

1. **Community**

*“As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend” (***Proverbs 27:17**). This is why the Bible goes further to say, *“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”* (**Hebrews 10:24-25**).

Community is a vital feature of the Christian faith, where we share our journey with fellow believers; supporting and encouraging one another. It’s a place where we can be authentic, vulnerable, and honest, knowing that we are not alone in our struggles and triumphs. Community provides a sense of belonging, a feeling of being part of something bigger than ourselves, where we can freely collaborate.

Through communal collaboration we learn from each other’s strengths and weaknesses, and we grow together in our faith. We find comfort in times of sorrow, celebration in times of joy, and support in times of need.

Community also provides accountability, challenging us to live out our faith in a way that honors God. We are encouraged to serve, to give, and to love, demonstrating the love of Christ to a watching world.

In the long run, intimacy with God is a precious gift, available to all who seek Him. By embracing vulnerability, trust, and communication, we can cultivate a deep and personal relationship with our loving Creator.

Chapter Five

**TRANSFORMATION**

Transformation, as the word implies tells of a process. It’s a process of growth that is initiated by self-discovery and daily renewal, as we drop our old practices and replacing with newer and more imoactful habits that would see us making better choices for a brighter future. By transformation we are doing a complete overhaul of our habits through reframing our thoughts with a view to birthing a renewed version of ourselves for a better tomorrow.

Transformation is like a caterpillar givin up its cocoon. It is not a loss, but an emergence of its realself in its majestic beauty. Every person is headed to adestination to become the person of his purpose in life. Transformation is the way to becoming that person.

Transformation is not always erasy. Dropping old habits and imbibing new ones in order to become a better person is a long process through a lot of resistance of many fears and doubts, which must be surmounted as we push through to achieve our goal of becoming a better version or a more improved version of ourselves as we evolve daily through a process that was triggered by an awareness of a better future.

**The believer’s (Christian) perspective**

Salvation is the begining of transformation to a believer. The opening of his or her heart to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savour, triggers a process that would see them evolving daily under the influence of the Holy Spirit of God. The presence of the Holy Spirit as Help and Guide, continually incentivize the drive to move in righteousness towards becoming the person of God’s expectation in fulfilment of His purpose of their lives.

Now walk with Christ, we are enabled to stand against the sinful nature which had hitherto held sway on our minds, and challenge those sinful desires that held us bound to to keep obeying the subtles voice of the devil, contravening the prupose of God who made us for Himself. By this simple initiative we become new creations it new Spirits, hearts and minds.

**Spiritual transformation**

At this level of our evolution, the essence of our lives undergoes a life-changing make-over of some sort which is rooted in the core of our being. Here we become aware of the fact that our current position is not where we are meant for, and that there is so much more ahead of us which must be explored in our journey to the place of our calling. It is a desire for something more meaningful an fulfilling, the awareness of which will spark a need for change, to a point we begin to question our beliefs and values in our quest for something better.

Transformation being a process is obviously not a oneoff activity. It is a walk in progress that would see one going to unfamiliar places and sometimes returning or experience familiar situations but with a different approach that is equipped to surmount the challenges of the moment with a brand new mindset that is now yielded completely to God. It is not a process that we can undertake with human abilities, but such as is given to us by the transformative power of the Holy Spirit of God Who is the power behind our movement in a revitalized self by the grace of God. It is therefore a move that require our courage to be vulnerable and trusting, knowing that He Who called us to be transformed is well able to see us through the ups and downs of the process.

This recognision of God’s power and authority in poour lives is what would ignite the process. It starts when we submit to His will by acknowledging Him to be our Creator and sustainer, and trusting in His love for us. This is how we create space for Him to work in us by His grace and mercy, whch displaces all fears.

**A living sacrifice**

Sacrifice connotes dying or loss of life. So one would wonder how life can be ascribed to sacrifice. The question would therefore be: *“how can I be a sacrifice and yet living?”* The phrase *“living sacrifice”* is particularly noteworthy. It implies a continuous, ongoing surrender, not a one-time event.

In the Christian faith, a living sacrifice is a philosophical saying which means or describes a person who has died to His own will and denies his or her right to live the way they want - satisfying and or gratifying their own desires, but those who are sold out to live their lives doing only those things that make for the glory and honor of God who made then for His purpose. A living sacrifice is a sacrifice that that is alive, yet dead to its rights to do as they please, which may not be morally acceptable as right, but have decided to deny themselves of such rights in order to satisfy the purpose of their existence, which is to worship God. Beign a living sacrifice requires that you present your body, mind, and spirit to God as ats of worship, and allow Him to take the lead in your initiatives.

In **Romans 12:1**, the scriptures urges believers to offer their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. This is called true worship, which is a call to surrendering our lives to His sovereignty, to obey His commands and live in accordance to His expectations of us in defiance to our desires for ourselves.

Now the call to be a living sacrifice is not to lose ourselves, but it is to situate ourselves where we righly belong with our true identity in Christ Jesus. This is how we become more like Him, reflecting His love. Our thouhts, beliefs and actions are transformed and we begin to see ourselves and the world through the love of Christ which constraints us to love all without a question.

Beyond our spiritual lives, this action of ours encompasses the whole of our being. Trusting now in God’s guidance, we are enabled to offer ourselves and every resources of ours to Him for His use as He deems fit to serve His purpose. This is how we get transformed in such a way that we are enabled to to serve the purpose of our existence with less struggles.

**Holy and pleasing to God**

The phrase *“Holy and pleasing to God”* should resonate deeply in the heart of every believer, as it describes the ultimate purpose of our lives. In **Romans 12:1**, not only are we urged to present our bodies as a living sacrifices, this sacrifice must be holy and pleasing to God. This phrase is a reminder that our lives must be sacred, devoted solely to honouring God in all that we do.

Now to be holy is to be set apart, consecrated only for the purpose of God, as we live in righteousness and obedience to His will, baving been transformed through the renewing of your mind to live to live for His glory.

This way you live in a way that is acceptable to God, which is maeked by faith and total surrender to His will. Your life is characterized by obedience that is motivated by a deep desire to honour Him in all you do, bringing joy to His heart, ensuring that His Name is glorified by your actions.

When we offer our lives as a living sacrifice, what we are saying is, *“Lord, I surrender my life to You. Use me, mold me, and shape me according to Your will. Make me a vessel that is worthy of Your use, and fill me with Your Spirit, that I may bring glory to Your name.”*

**True and proper worship**

The Christian faith is founded on worship in truth and Spirit. In **Romans 12:1**, Paul writes, *“Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship.”* This verse highlights the essence of true and proper worship. It is about surrendering our lives to God, and not only external actions of attending Chuch services, singing and praying. It involves offering our entire being to God. We surrender our will, desire to Him for His approval, as we acknowledge His worthiness and majesty

It is not a one-time event, but a continuous process, in which we daily surrender our every moment to Him for His approval, recognizing that our lives are iven to us to live as stewards of His mercy and grace.

Chapter 6

**HUMILITY**

*Recognizing our place under God’s authority*

*and surrendering our pride and self-will*

Humility is a profound virtue that encompasses a modest and lowly attitude, a willingness to learn, and a readiness to serve others. It involves recognizing one’s limitations, weaknesses, and mistakes, and being open to growth, correction, and feedback. Humility is not about self-deprecation or false modesty, but rather a genuine understanding of one’s place in the world, and a desire to elevate others.

Humility, at is core, is about surrendering our need for control, recognition, and self-importance, and instead, embracing a mindset of servant-hood, empathy, and compassion. It involves being teachable, adaptable, and willing to listen, learn, and grow.

In essence, humility is a transformative virtue that can revolutionize our relationships, our work, and our very lives. It allows us to build stronger, more meaningful connections with others, to learn from our mistakes, and to find joy and fulfillment in serving and uplifting those around us. Humility is not a natural trait, but rather a cultivated characteristic that requires intentional effort, self-reflection, and a willingness to confront our own pride and ego. This makes it an essential virtue in the Christian faith of absolute submission to the will of God.

**Essential virtue**

In the Christian faith, Humility is a fundamental element, and it is essential to understand what it demands. One of the crucial aspect of humility is recognizing our place under God’s authority, and yielding our pride and self-will.

It begins with a recognition of our limitations and weaknesses. We are not all-knowing, all-powerful, or all-wise. We are finite, frail, and fallen creatures, and we need God’s guidance, strength, and grace to navigate life. When we acknowledge our limitations, we are more likely to surrender our pride and self-will, which are major obstacles to humility.

Pride is a stubborn and insidious sin that can masquerade as confidence, self-esteem, or even spirituality. It is a form of self-idolatry, where we elevate ourselves above others and even above God. Pride leads us to think we are self-sufficient, that we can control our lives, and that we don’t need God’s help. But pride is a lie, and it leads to destruction (**Proverbs 16:18**).

**Pride goes before a fall**

“Pride goes before a fall,” is a timeless wisdom phrase that warns of the dangers of pride or arrogance. It suggests that an excessive sense of self-importance and confidence can lead to a downfall. It is taken from a Biblical teaching in **Proverbs 16:18**, which states, *“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”*

Pride can manifest in various ways, such as an inflated sense of accomplishment, a lack of empathy, and a tendency to belittle others. When we allow pride to consume us, we become blinded to our own flaws and vulnerabilities. We begin to think we are invincible, and that our successes are solely the result of our own efforts. This mindset can lead to reckless decisions, poor judgment, and an inability to listen to others.

The consequences of pride can be severe, ranging from damaged relationships and lost opportunities, to spiritual decay and even physical harm. By recognizing the dangers of pride and actively cultivating humility, we can avoid the pitfalls of arrogance, and instead build a foundation for lasting success and personal growth. As **C.S. Lewis** aptly put it, “Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.”

**Self-will**

Self-will is another major hindrance to humility. It is the stubborn determination to do things our way, even when God’s way is clear. Self-will leads us to resist God’s guidance, to disobey His commands, and to follow our own desires, even when they are contrary to His will.

Surrendering our self-will requires a deliberate effort to humble ourselves. We must choose to put others before ourselves (**Philippians 2:3-4**), to listen to God’s Word (**James 1:19-25**), and to follow His leading (**John 10:27**). We must also be willing to admit our mistakes, to ask for forgiveness, and to learn from our failures.

When we humble ourselves under God’s authority, we experience a freedom and a peace that is hard to find elsewhere. We are no longer burdened by the weight of our own self-importance, and we are able to rest in God’s sovereignty and love.

**Excessive self-worth and self-confidence**

Thinking highly of yourself is a double-edged sword. On one hand, self-confidence and self-worth are essential for achieving success and pursuing our passions. However, when self-regard becomes excessive, it can lead to pride, and a distorted self-image. We begin to prioritize our own interests over others, ignore constructive feedback, and disregard our flaws.

This self-aggrandizement can ultimately lead to isolation, failure, and spiritual decay. A balanced and humble self-awareness is crucial, recognizing our strengths and weaknesses, and acknowledging the value and contributions of others. True greatness lies in serving others, not just ourselves.

**Unhealthy ambition**

Philippians 2:3-4 states, *“Let* nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” This passage exhorts us to renounce self-centeredness and instead prioritize the well-being of others. It encourages a mindset shift from seeking our own glory, to elevating others, recognizing their value and worth. By doing so, we embody the humility and selflessness of Christ, fostering a community built on mutual support, love, and service. This radical approach transforms relationships and honors God.

Unhealthy ambition is a drive for success that prioritizes personal achievement over well-being, relationships, and ethics. It is a relentless pursuit of power, status, and recognition, often at any cost. This excessive desire for advancement can lead to an obsession with self-promotion, competition, and material gain. Unhealthy ambition can cause individuals to compromise their values, exploit others, and sacrifice their physical and mental health.

It can also lead to burnout, anxiety, and depression. Furthermore, it can damage relationships, erode empathy, and create a culture of cutthroat competition.

In contrast, healthy ambition prioritizes growth, learning, and contribution, aligning with one’s values and passions. It recognizes the importance of collaboration, mentorship, and self-care. Unhealthy ambition may bring short-term success, but it ultimately leads to long-term damage and emptiness. Recognizing and addressing unhealthy ambition is crucial for personal and collective well-being.

**Embrace your place under God**

Walking with God as a believer require that we acknowledge His sovereignty over all aspects of our lives and yield ourselves completely to it. Embracing one’s place under God’s authority is a fundamental aspect our faith. This is not a one-time event, but a continuous process, requiring humility, trust, and obedience.

By embracing our place under God’s authority, we acknowledge His wisdom, goodness, and love, and trust in His plan and purposes for our lives. We also acknowledge our own limitations, weaknesses, and sinfulness, and rely on His strength, guidance, and grace. This posture of surrender brings freedom, peace, and joy, as we align ourselves with God’s will and find our identity and purpose in Him. It also enables us to trust in His goodness, even in difficult circumstances, and to live a life that honours and glorifies Him. By embracing our place under God’s authority, we can experience the abundant life Jesus promised, and find rest and peace in His loving sovereignty.

Chapter 7

**OBEDIENCE**

*Following God’s commands and guidance*

*as revealed in Scripture and through the Holy Spirit*

Obedience is the act of complying with a command, rule or authority. In a spiritual context obedience is the willingness to submit to God’s guidance, commands and principles, even when difficult or challenging. It involves humility, trust, surrender, compliance and submission.

In the realm of faith and spirituality, the word obedience carries a profound significance. It connotes a willing submission and surrender to a higher authority, exemplified in the Christian faith through obedience to God’s commands and teachings. Obedience requires humility, trust, and a willingness to set aside one’s own desires and interests. It is a demonstration of love and devotion, rather than mere compliance. Through obedience, we experience spiritual growth, guidance, and protection, as we align ourselves with God’s perfect will. In essence, obedience is a sacred act of surrender, leading to a deeper connection with the divine.

Obedience begins with a recognition of God’s authority and sovereignty. We are His creatures, and He is our Creator and Lord. He has the right to command us, and we have the responsibility to obey. The Bible is clear that obedience is a fundamental aspect of our relationship with God. Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my commands” (**John 14:15**), and “Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me’ (**John 14:21**).

As believers, the Bible is our primary source of guidance for obedience. It contains God’s commands, principles, and wisdom for living a life that is pleasing to Him. We are commanded to “meditate on it day and night” (**Joshua 1:8**), to “read it carefully” (**Deuteronomy 17:19**), and to “obey it carefully” (**Deuteronomy 27:10**). The Bible is our guide for obedience, and we must immerse ourselves in it to know God’s will.

Obedience requires a willingness to submit to God’s will, even when it is difficult or unclear. It requires a trust in God’s sovereignty and goodness, even when we don’t understand His ways. Obedience requires a humility that recognizes our limitations and weaknesses, and a dependence on God’s strength and guidance.

Obedience has many benefits, including a deeper relationship with God, a clearer conscience, and a greater sense of purpose and direction. Obedience also leads to spiritual growth and maturity, as we learn to trust and depend on God more and more. By obeying God’s will, we demonstrate our love and loyalty to Him, and we experience a deeper relationship with Him and a greater sense of purpose and direction in life.

**Obedience is better than sacrifice**

The phrase “*obedience is better than sacrifice*” (**1 Samuel 15:22-23**) highlights the importance of surrendering to God’s will over mere religious rituals. Sacrifice can be an external act, while obedience requires a deep-seated commitment to follow God’s commands. Obedience demonstrates a willingness to listen, learn, and submit to God’s guidance, whereas sacrifice can be a one-time action without lasting change. Obedience transforms our hearts and minds, aligning us with God’s character, while sacrifice may only appease our guilt or ego.

In essence, obedience is a continuous process of surrender, trust, and love, whereas sacrifice can be a momentary gesture. God desires our obedience, not just our sacrifices, as it reflects our true devotion and love for Him. By choosing obedience, we cultivate a deeper relationship with God, and our lives become a living sacrifice, honoring Him in every aspect.

**A guiding principle**

By embracing obedience, we surrender our will to His, allowing His guidance to direct our steps. Our obedience will serve as a guiding principle in our spiritual journey, illuminating the path to a deeper connection with God. It will help us navigate life’s complexities, discerning right from wrong and truth from deception. It leads us to wisdom, as we learn to trust in God’s sovereignty and goodness.

Through obedience, we develop a heightened sense of awareness, recognizing the gentle whispers of the Holy Spirit and the gentle nudges of conviction. As we walk in obedience, we discover a sense of purpose and direction, and our lives aligning with God’s perfect plan. Obedience becomes a beacon of light, guiding us through darkness and uncertainty, and leading us into the fullness of God’s love and grace. By following the guide of obedience, we find our way to a life of purpose, joy, and eternal significance.

**Enhanced and sustainable discipline**

Embracing a culture of obedience is essential for sustainable physical and spiritual discipline and growth, as we continually honour God and fulfil our potentials. Obedience cultivates self-control, allowing us to submit our desires and impulses to God’s guidance. This surrender enables us to prioritize our well-being, making choices that nourish our bodies and souls.

By obeying God’s principles, we develop healthy habits, such as regular exercise, balanced diets, and sufficient rest. Obedience also fosters spiritual growth, as we humbly seek God’s will and wisdom. We learn to trust in His sovereignty, finding peace and strength as we daily walk with Him. Through obedience, we experience transformation, as our minds and hearts are renewed. This transformation empowers us to live a life of purpose, integrity, and service, glorifying God in all aspects of our lives. By embracing a culture of obedience, we can achieve sustainable physical and spiritual discipline and growth, honoring God and fulfilling our potential.

**Deepening relationships**

Through obedience, we can deepen our physical and spiritual relationships, experiencing a more intimate connection with God and others. Obedience requires surrender, allowing us to let go of our own desires and agendas, and instead, align ourselves with God's will. As we obey, we demonstrate our love and trust in Him, and He, in turn, draws near to us, guiding and empowering us. This deepened spiritual relationship overflows into our physical relationships, as we learn to love and serve others with humility and grace.

Obedience teaches us to prioritize others’ needs, forgive freely, and walk in compassion, leading to stronger, more meaningful connections. By obeying God’s commands, we become more like Jesus, who perfectly modeled obedience and love. As we deepen our physical and spiritual relationships through obedience, we experience a more abundant life, filled with purpose, joy, and eternal significance.

**Obedience and loyalty**

Obedience is a critical aspect of loyalty, and improving it would naturally enhance our loyalty to God and others. When we choose to obey, we demonstrate our commitment and dedication to a higher authority, which requires surrender, discipline, and trust, all of which strengthen our loyalty. By obeying God’s commands and principles, even when it’s difficult or challenging, we show our loyalty to Him and His ways. This loyalty deepens our relationship with Him, fostering a sense of trust, security, and peace.

In the same vein, obedience improves our loyalty to others, as we learn to prioritize their needs, respect their boundaries, and serve them selflessly. Our practice of obedience, will make us more reliable, dependable, and faithful, reflecting the loyal heart of Jesus, who perfectly obeyed the Father.

Improved obedience, therefore, leads to enhanced loyalty, fortifying our relationships with God and others, and empowering us to live a life of purpose, integrity, and devotion, which would essentially heighten our act of submission.

**Chapter 8**

**TRUST**

*Believing in God’s sovereignty, wisdom, and goodness,*

*even when we don’t understand His ways.*

Trust is the firm belief in the reliability, integrity, and honesty of someone or something or an entity. It’s the confidence that they will act with goodness, sincerity, and fairness, and keep their promises. It is built through consistent actions, follow-through, and open communication. It’s the foundation of strong relationships, whether personal or professional, allowing us to feel secure, supported, and valued.

Trust is about believing in others, and knowing that they believe in us too. When we trust someone, we feel secure in sharing our thoughts, feelings, and experiences with them, knowing that they will respect and support us.

Without trust, relationships crumble, and communication breaks down. Distrust leads to suspicion, resentment, and conflict. Trust, on the other hand, fosters a sense of belonging, loyalty, and commitment. It allows us to be vulnerable, take risks, and grow together.

In our daily lives, trust is essential in our interactions with family, friends, colleagues, and even institutions. We trust our loved ones to be there for us, our colleagues to work together towards common goals, and our leaders to make decisions for the greater good. Trust is the basis of teamwork, collaboration, and community building.

In essence, trust is the cornerstone of human connection, the glue that holds us together, enabling us to form meaningful relationships, achieve great things together, and build a better world.

**Trust in the Lord**

Trust in the Lord, as seen in **Proverbs 3:5-6**, is a call to surrender our ways and thoughts to Him. It means believing in His goodness, wisdom, and love, and having confidence that He will guide us and make our paths straight. Trusting in the Lord brings peace, rest, and freedom from anxiety and fear. It’s a choice to rely on Him, rather than our own understanding, and to seek His wisdom in all things. By trusting in the Lord, we can live a life that honors Him and experience His blessings and guidance.

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”*

**Proverbs 3:5-6**

Trust is at the core of the Christian faith, and it is essential to understand what it entails. Believing in God’s sovereignty, wisdom, and goodness, even when we don’t understand His ways, is a crucial aspect of trust.

Trust begins with a recognition of God’s character. He is a sovereign God, who is in control of all things (**Psalm 103:19**). He is a wise God, who knows the beginning from the end (**Isaiah 46:10**). And He is a good God, who desires the best for us (**Psalm 84:11).** When we trust God, we are acknowledging that He is in control, that He knows what He is doing, and that He desires our good.

Trust is not the same as understanding. We may not always understand God’s ways or His reasons for allowing certain things to happen. But trust says, *“I may not understand, but I trust You anyway.”* Trust is not based on our feelings or our circumstances, but on the character of God.

The Bible is full of examples of people who trusted God, even when they didn't understand His ways. Abraham trusted God when He asked him to sacrifice his son Isaac (**Genesis 22**). He knew God was up to something better. Moses trusted God when He led him and the Israelites through the wilderness for 40 years (**Deuteronomy 8**). And Job trusted God when He allowed him to suffer the loss of his family, his health, and his possessions (**Job 1-2**).

Trusting God has many benefits. It brings us peace and comfort in the midst of difficult circumstances (**Philippians 4:6-7**). It gives us hope and confidence in the future (**Hebrews 11:1**). And it allows us to experience God's presence and guidance in our lives (**Psalm 23:4**).

But trust is not a one-time event; it is a continuous process. We must daily choose to trust God, even when we don't understand His ways. We must daily surrender our fears, our doubts, and our worries to Him, and trust that He is in control.

In conclusion, trust is a vital aspect of the Christian faith, and it requires believing in God's sovereignty, wisdom, and goodness, even when we don't understand His ways. By trusting God, we demonstrate our faith in Him, and we experience a deeper relationship with Him and a greater sense of peace and hope in our lives.

**Lean not on your own understanding**

Trusting God requires surrendering our human inclination to control and comprehend everything, leaning not on your own understanding. It means acknowledging that God’s ways are higher than ours and that His plans are often mysterious and unpredictable. The Bible says God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above the imagination of our human mind with its limitations.

This kind of trust is not based on our limited human understanding but on the character and nature of God. It is built on the assurance that God is good, loving, and sovereign. When we lean not on our own understanding, we are able to rest in God’s sovereignty, even when life doesn’t make sense.

Trusting God in this way brings peace and freedom. We are no longer burdened by the need to figure everything out or control every outcome. Instead, we can surrender our worries and fears, knowing that God is working everything out for our good.

**In all your ways acknowledge God**

*“In all your ways acknowledge God, and He will direct your paths”* **(Proverbs 3:6).** This verse is a powerful reminder of the importance of acknowledging God in every aspect of our lives. It is a call to surrender our will and our ways to Him, trusting that He has a plan to prosper us, not to harm us (**Jeremiah 29:11**).

To acknowledge God in all our ways, is to recognize His sovereignty and wisdom in every situation. It means seeking His guidance and direction in every decision we make, big or small. It means trusting that He has a purpose and a plan for our lives, and that He is working everything out for our good (**Romans 8:28**).

By this we are essentially saying, *“God, I trust You. I trust Your wisdom, Your guidance, and Your plan for my life.”* We are surrendering our own understanding and our own ways, and instead, we are seeking His will and His direction. This is a powerful act of faith, and it is one that can bring great peace and freedom to our lives.

Acknowledging God in all our ways also means being mindful of His presence in every moment. It means recognizing that He is with us always, even to the end of the age (**Matthew 28:20**). It means being aware of His Spirit guiding us, comforting us, and empowering us to live the life He has called us to live.

**God directs our paths**

The wrong of man’s way that seems right is a treacherous path that leads to destruction. **Proverbs 14:12** warns, “There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end, it leads to death.” This way is built on human wisdom, pride, and self-reliance, rather than on God's wisdom and guidance. It may seem appealing and logical, but it is ultimately deceptive and deadly. Man’s way leads to sin, suffering, and separation from God, while God’s way leads to life, joy, and eternal fellowship with Him. Trusting in God’s wisdom and guidance is the only path to true life and peace.

To receive direction from God would require us recognizing His sovereignty and wisdom, and seeking His guidance in every aspect of life, believing that He knows what’s best for us and we can trust Him fully. This act of faith can bring great peace and freedom to our lives, as we surrender our own understanding and ways, and instead, seek His will and direction.

This is not just a one-time event, but a continuous process. It involves being mindful of His presence in every moment, and seeking His guidance in every decision we make. It means recognizing and embracing the guidance of the Holy Spirit, His comfort, and empowerment to live the life He has called us to live.

Acknowledging God also involves being obedient to His Word and His commands. It means seeking to live a life that is pleasing to Him, and that honors Him in every way. It means being a light in the darkness, a salt in the world, and a witness to His goodness and grace (**Matthew 5:13-16**).

In addition, acknowledging God involves seeking His wisdom and guidance in every area of life. It means seeking His direction in our relationships, our work, our finances, and our decisions. It means recognizing that He is the source of all wisdom and knowledge (**James 1:5**), and that He desires to guide us and direct us in every aspect of our lives.

**Proposed Chapter 9**

**SURRENDER**

*Letting go of our control and desires, and yielding ourselves to God's will.*

Surrender is a profound concept that involves letting go of control, resistance, and attachment to specific outcomes, emotions, or beliefs. It’s an act of courage, humility, and wisdom that allows us to embrace the present moment and trust in the natural flow of life. It’s a powerful tool for personal growth, healing, and transformation.

When we surrender, we open ourselves up to new possibilities and experiences. We let go of our need to know what’s next and trust that life will unfold as it should. It’s a journey that requires patience, self-awareness, and a willingness to embrace uncertainty. It is not a one-time event, but a continuous process of letting go and trusting.

**A feature of the Christian faith**

Relying on God’s strength, guidance, and provision, rather than our own abilities, is a crucial aspect of surrender, which begins with a recognition of our limitations and weaknesses. We are not self-sufficient, and we cannot control everything that happens in our lives. When we try to rely on our own strength, guidance, and provision, we often end up frustrated, exhausted, and disappointed. But when we surrender to God, we are acknowledging that He is our Rock, our Refuge, and our Savior (**Psalm 46:1**).

The Bible is full of examples of people who surrendered to God. Moses surrendered his leadership to God, and God used him to lead the Israelites out of slavery (**Exodus 3-4**). David surrendered his fears to God, and God gave him victory over Goliath (**1 Samuel 17**). And Jesus surrendered His life to God, and God raised Him from the dead (**Matthew 27-28**).

Surrender has many benefits. It brings us peace and comfort in the midst of difficult circumstances (**Philippians 4:6-7**). It gives us hope and confidence in the future (**Hebrews 11:1**). And it allows us to experience God’s presence and guidance in our lives (**Psalm 23:4**).

**A deep sense of peace and calm, even in the midst of chaos.**

Surrendering to God brings an unparalleled sense of inner peace. When we release our grip on control and entrust our lives to Him, we experience a deep calm that transcends understanding. This peace is not dependent on circumstances, but rather on the knowledge that God is sovereign and in control.

As we surrender, our worries and fears are lifted, and we are filled with a sense of trust and confidence in God’s goodness. Our minds and hearts are freed from the burden of trying to figure everything out, and we rest in the assurance that God has a plan to prosper us, not harm us.

This inner peace is not a fleeting feeling, but a constant companion that stays with us through life’s ups and downs. It is a peace that guards our hearts and minds, keeping us steadfast in the face of adversity.

In surrendering to God, we discover that His peace is not just a feeling, but a person - the Prince of Peace Himself. And as we rest in His presence, we are filled with an inner peace that surpasses all understanding, a peace that is available to us at all times, in every situation.

**Freedom from anxiety and stress**

Surrendering to God brings freedom from anxiety by releasing the weight of our worries and fears to Him. As we let go of control and trust in His sovereignty, our minds and hearts are freed from the burden of anxiety. We no longer carry the responsibility of figuring everything out, and we rest in the assurance that God has a plan to prosper us. This freedom from anxiety brings a sense of peace and calm, allowing us to live with joy and confidence, knowing that God is in control. Through surrender, we exchange our anxiety for His peace, finding freedom and rest in His loving care.

**Guidance and wisdom**

Surrendering to God opens the door to guidance and wisdom beyond our own understanding. Trusting in His sovereignty, we gain access to His divine wisdom and guidance. God’s Word becomes a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, illuminating our decisions and direction. The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth, revealing God’s plans and purposes for our lives. Through prayer and meditation, we receive wisdom and insight, enabling us to navigate life’s challenges with confidence and clarity. We experience a sense of peace and assurance, knowing that we are following His perfect plan for our lives. By surrendering our way, we find His way, and His way is always perfect.

**Strength and courage**

Surrendering to God unleashes strength and courage that surpasses our own limitations. As we yield to His power, we tap into His infinite resources, enabling us to face challenges with boldness and confidence. His strength becomes our strength, and His courage becomes our courage. We are empowered to overcome fears, doubts, and weaknesses, and to stand firm in the face of adversity. With God’s strength and courage, we can conquer what seemed impossible, and emerge victorious in every trial. Through surrender, we exchange our weakness for His strength, and our fear for His courage, and become unstoppable forces for His kingdom.

**Forgiveness and healing**

Past hurts can weigh us down and impede on our growth. Surrendering to God brings forgiveness and healing, freeing us from the weight of these hurts. As we release our pain and bitterness to Him, He wraps us in His loving embrace, and His grace and mercy flow into our wounds. We are able to forgive ourselves and others, and let go of the shackles of resentment and anger. God’s healing balm restores our souls, and we are made whole again. With forgiveness and healing, we can move forward, leaving the past behind, and embracing a future filled with hope and promise. Through surrender, we find the freedom to start anew, unencumbered by the burdens of yesterday.

**Spiritual growth**

Surrendering to God deepens our relationship with Him, transforming us into the likeness of Jesus. As we yield to His will, we become more humble, compassionate, and loving. Our thoughts, words, and actions align with His character, and we reflect His grace and mercy to others. Through surrender, we experience spiritual growth, and our faith is strengthened. We learn to trust, obey, and adore Him, and our hearts are filled with His joy and peace. As we surrender, we become more like Jesus, shining His light in a dark world, and bringing glory to our heavenly Father.

**Joy and contentment**

When we release our control and trust in God’s sovereignty, we experience a deep-seated peace that surpasses understanding. Our joy is no longer dependent on our circumstances, but on the knowledge that God is in control. We find contentment in His presence, and our hearts are filled with gratitude and praise. In surrender, we discover that true joy and contentment come not from our external circumstances, but from our internal connection with God. And this joy and contentment remain with us, even in the midst of trials and challenges.

**Trust and faith**

Surrendering to God enhances our trust and faith, allowing us to rely more on His goodness and sovereignty. As we release our control and yield to His will, we develop a deeper understanding of His character and nature. We learn to trust in His promises and provision, and our faith grows stronger. We begin to see His sovereignty in every situation, and our confidence in His goodness increases. With enhanced trust and faith, we are able to rest in His presence, knowing that He is working all things for our good. Our reliance on Him becomes our anchor in the midst of uncertainty.

**Improved humility**

As human beings, we are limited in our ability to function generally. Surrendering to God enables us to recognize our limitations and the need to depend on Him. As we yield to His will, we acknowledge that we are not self-sufficient and that our strength comes from Him. We become more aware of our weaknesses and inadequacies, and we are humbled by the realization that we need God’s guidance and power to overcome them. This humility allows us to approach life with a teachable spirit, seeking God’s wisdom and grace in every situation. By surrendering to God, we embrace our dependence on Him, and our humility becomes a conduit for His strength and wisdom to flow through us.

**Eternal perspective**

Surrendering to God grants us a better perspective, allowing us to prioritize what truly matters and live with purpose. As we yield to His will, we begin to see life from His perspective, and our values and priorities are aligned with His. We recognize that our time on earth is short and that our focus should be on eternal things. We learn to let go of the trivial and temporal, and instead, invest in the things that have lasting significance. With a better perspective, we live intentionally, making choices that honor God and bring joy to ourselves and others. We discover our purpose and live a life that counts for eternity.

**Relying on God’s enablement**

Dauda had always been a self-sufficient person, relying on his own strength to get through life’s challenges. He prided himself on his ability to push through difficult situations, and he rarely asked for help. But one day, Dauda faced a situation that challenged his strength in a way he had never experienced before.

His mother was diagnosed with a terminal illness, and he was devastated. He had always been close to his mother, and the thought of losing her was unbearable. He tried to stay strong, but the weight of his grief and the responsibility of caring for his mother was crushing him.

Despite his best efforts, Dauda found himself struggling to cope. He was exhausted, emotionally and physically, and he didn’t know how to keep going. He felt like he was drowning in his sorrow, and he didn’t know how to keep his head above water, as it were.

It was then that Dauda realized he couldn’t do it alone. He needed help, and he needed it badly. He sought guidance from his neighbor, who encouraged him to pray and ask God for help to get through this difficult time. And as he prayed, he felt a sense of peace wash over him. He knew that God was with him, and that He would give him the strength he needed to overcome.

Dauda continued to pray and seek God’s guidance, and slowly but surely, he began to feel a sense of strength and hope that he had not felt in weeks. He realized that he didn’t have to rely solely on his own strength, but that God’s strength was available to him at all times.

As he faced the challenges of caring for his mother and dealing with his own grief, he learned to rely on God’s strength. He prayed for guidance and wisdom, and he trusted that God would provide him with the strength he needed to overcome. And time and time again, God came through, giving him the strength and endurance he needed to keep going.

Through this experience, he learned a valuable lesson. He learned that he didn’t have to be strong all the time, and that it was okay to ask for help. He learned that God’s strength was always available to him, and that He would never leave him or forsake him.

In the end, Dauda’s mother passed away, but he was at peace. He knew that she was in a better place, and he was grateful for the time they had together. He was also grateful for the lesson he had learned - that God’s strength is always available to us, no matter what challenges we face in life, if we can yield ourselves to Him in total surrender.

Dauda’s story is a testament to the power of surrender and the strength that comes from relying on God. Even in the darkest of times, God is always present, offering His guidance and strength to those who seek it. And as we learn to rely on His strength, we can overcome even the most daunting challenges, and emerge stronger and more faithful on the other side.

**Chapter 10**

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

*Recognizing our responsibility to God, and being*

*answerable to Him for our actions and attitudes.*

Accountability is the willingness to take responsibility for one’s actions, decisions, and consequences. It involves being answerable to oneself, others, and a higher authority, and is a crucial aspect of personal and professional growth.

When we are accountable, we acknowledge our mistakes, learn from them, and make amends when necessary. Accountability promotes transparency, trust, and integrity, and helps us develop a sense of ownership and commitment to our goals and values. It also encourages us to be more mindful and intentional in our actions, and to strive for excellence in all we do.

By embracing accountability, we demonstrate our reliability, maturity, and character, and build stronger relationships with others. Ultimately, accountability is a key component of a life of purpose, responsibility, and positive impact.

**Accountability in the eye of a Christian**

In the Christian faith, accountability is a vital aspect of spiritual growth and discipleship. Believers are called to be accountable to God, themselves, and one another (**Romans 14:12, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15**). Accountability involves taking responsibility for one’s thoughts, words, and actions, and being answerable to God for our stewardship of time, talents, and resources. It also entails being transparent and honest with fellow believers, confessing sin and seeking forgiveness and restoration (**James 5:16, Matthew 18:15-17**).

Through accountability, Christians encourage and support one another in their walk with God, helping each other to stay on the path of righteousness and fulfill their calling (**Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 Thessalonians 5:11**).

Essentially, accountability in the Christian faith is a principle that promotes responsibility, transparency, and answerability for one’s actions and decisions. It encourages individuals to own their mistakes, learn from them, and be willing to be held responsible for the consequences of their choices, fostering a culture of trust, integrity, and personal growth, towards reflecting God’s character in our lives, and ensuring He is glorified.

**Responsibility**

As stewards of God’s resources and gifts, we recognize our duty to use them wisely and honorably. Taking responsibility for our actions, decisions, and thoughts encourages us to be answerable to God and others. This mindset helps us cultivate a heart of humility, repentance, and obedience, leading to spiritual growth and maturity. By embracing responsibility, we demonstrate our commitment to living a life pleasing to God, and our accountability to Him and others becomes a natural expression of our faith and devotion.

**Transparency**

Transparency promotes accountability by openly acknowledging our thoughts, words, and actions, and willingness to be scrutinized. It encourages honesty, humility, and vulnerability, allowing us to confess our sins and weaknesses, and seek guidance and support. Transparency promotes trust and credibility, building strong relationships and a clear conscience. By living transparently, we demonstrate our commitment to integrity, authenticity, and spiritual growth, and our accountability to God and others becomes a natural outcome of our desire to honor Him in all aspects of our lives.

**Answerability**

Answerability promotes accountability by recognizing our obligation to explain and justify our actions, decisions, and beliefs to God and others. It encourages us to be prepared to give an account of our lives, acknowledging our mistakes and sins, and seeking forgiveness and guidance. Answerability fosters a sense of responsibility, humility, and reverence for God's authority, leading to a deeper desire to pleasing Him. By being answerable, we demonstrate our commitment to living a life that honors God, and our accountability to Him and others becomes a natural expression of our faith and devotion.

**Mutual Trust**

The culture of trust in the life of a Christian promotes transparency, reliability, and responsibility. When believers hold themselves and others accountable, they build a foundation of trust, knowing that they are committed to living a life that honors God. This trust creates a safe environment for sharing struggles, receiving guidance, and growing in faith. Accountability also encourages humility, repentance, and forgiveness, further strengthening relationships and trust. As trust grows, so does the sense of community and unity, allowing believers to support and encourage each other in their walk with God.

**Integrity**

Integrity promotes honesty, authenticity, and moral uprightness. When believers hold themselves and others accountable, they demonstrate a commitment to living a life that aligns with God’s principles and values. Accountability encourages transparency, reliability, and responsibility, helping believers to maintain a clear conscience and a strong moral compass. As integrity grows, so does trust, respect, and credibility, allowing believers to be a light in the world and a testimony to God’s grace and truth. Accountability helps Christians to live a life of wholeness and integrity, pleasing to God.

**Personal growth**

Through accountability, believers recognize areas for growth, confront sin and weaknesses, and seek guidance and support. Accountability promotes a culture of personal growth in the life of a Christian by encouraging self-reflection, humility, and a willingness to learn and improve. This leads to a deeper understanding of God’s character and a desire to become more like Him. Accountability promotes a growth mindset, helping Christians to develop spiritual disciplines, build character, and increase their faith. As believers grow and mature, they become more effective witnesses for Christ, and their lives become a testament to God’s transformative power.

**Recognizing God’s sovereignty and ownership over our lives**

Accountability to God is rooted in recognizing His sovereignty and ownership over our lives. We acknowledge that our lives are not our own, but belong to Him who created and redeemed us. This understanding humbles us, recognizing that our time, talents, and resources are entrusted to us as stewards. We are responsible to use these gifts wisely, honoring God's investment in us. Accountability to God involves submitting our will to His, seeking His guidance and wisdom in all aspects of life. We acknowledge that our decisions, actions, and attitudes are subject to His scrutiny and judgment. By recognizing God's sovereignty and ownership, we embrace accountability as a means of living a life that pleases Him, and we find freedom and joy in surrendering to His lordship. May our lives reflect the truth that we are accountable to the One who holds all authority and power.

**Accepting that our lives are entrusted to us by God**

Our lives are a sacred trust, given to us by our Creator, and that we are responsible for how we use them. This understanding acknowledges that our time, talents, and resources are not our own, but are entrusted to us for a specific purpose. We are stewards of God’s gifts, and our accountability to Him requires us to use them wisely and faithfully. This perspective transforms our lives, as we seek to honor God’s trust in us. We prioritize our relationship with Him, and strive to live according to His will and purposes. We recognize that our choices, decisions, and actions have eternal consequences, and we seek to use our lives to bring glory and honor to God. By accepting that our lives are entrusted to us by God, we embrace the responsibility of accountability, and live with purpose and intentionality.

**Understanding that our actions and attitudes have consequences**

Accountability is deeply rooted in the understanding that our actions and attitudes have consequences. We recognize that our choices, big or small, have a ripple effect, impacting ourselves, others, and our relationship with God. This awareness motivates us to consider the potential outcomes of our decisions, weighing the potential benefits against the potential costs. We understand that our actions can either honor or dishonor God, and that our attitudes can either reflect or reject His character. This understanding of consequences drives us to live intentionally, seeking to make choices that align with God’s will and purposes. We acknowledge that our actions and attitudes are subject to God’s scrutiny, and that we will give account for our lives. By recognizing the consequences of our actions and attitudes, we embrace accountability as a means of living a life that honors God and promotes spiritual growth and maturity.

**Living according to God’s will**

Accountability to God is deeply tied to living according to His will. When we submit to His sovereignty and guidance, we acknowledge that our lives are no longer our own, but are surrendered to His purposes. We seek to align our thoughts, words, and actions with His divine plan, knowing that our ultimate accountability is to Him. Living according to God's will requires us to seek His wisdom and guidance in all aspects of life, trusting in His goodness and sovereignty. As we walk in obedience to His will, we demonstrate our love and loyalty to Him, and our lives become a testimony to His grace and faithfulness. By living according to God's will, we embrace accountability as a means of deepening our relationship with Him, and our lives become a reflection of His character and glory. May our lives be a testament to the transformative power of living according to God's will, and may our accountability to Him be a source of joy, peace, and purpose.

**Seeking to use our resources, talents, and time for God’s glory**

Accountability to God is deeply connected to using our resources, talents, and time for His glory. We recognize that everything we have is a gift from Him, and we are stewards of His resources. We seek to use our talents, skills, and abilities to honor Him, knowing that our ultimate accountability is to Him. We prioritize our time, focusing on activities that bring Him glory and advance His kingdom. We manage our finances, recognizing that our resources are entrusted to us to support His work and bless others. By using our resources, talents, and time for God's glory, we demonstrate our love and loyalty to Him. We acknowledge that our accountability to God is not limited to our spiritual lives, but encompasses every aspect of our lives. May our lives be a testament to the truth that everything we have is a gift from God, and may our accountability to Him be a source of joy, purpose, and fulfillment.

**Being accountable to one another**

Accountability is not only vertical, to God, but also horizontal, to one another. As believers, we are called to be accountable to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. This means being transparent, sharing our struggles and victories, and allowing others to speak into our lives. We encourage and support one another in our walks with God, helping each other to stay on the path of righteousness. We hold each other accountable for our actions, attitudes, and words, providing loving correction and guidance when needed. By being accountable to one another, we demonstrate our commitment to community and our desire to grow in our faith. We recognize that we are not alone in our journey, but are part of a larger body, the Church, where we can support, encourage, and hold each other accountable for the sake of Christ and His kingdom.

**A sense of purpose and direction**

Accountability is not only vertical, to God, but also horizontal, to one another. As believers, we are called to be accountable to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. This means being transparent, sharing our struggles and victories, and allowing others to speak into our lives. We encourage and support one another in our walks with God, helping each other to stay on the path of righteousness. We hold each other accountable for our actions, attitudes, and words, providing loving correction and guidance when needed. By being accountable to one another, we demonstrate our commitment to community and our desire to grow in our faith. We recognize that we are not alone in our journey, but are part of a larger body, the Church, where we can support, encourage, and hold each other accountable for the sake of Christ and His kingdom.

**Humility and dependence on God**

When we acknowledge our limitations and sinfulness, we recognize our need for God’s guidance and strength. We humble ourselves, admitting that we can’t live a life pleasing to God on our own. We depend on Him for wisdom, grace, and empowerment, knowing that apart from Him, we can do nothing. This humility and dependence lead us to seek accountability, desiring to be shaped by God’s Word and Spirit. We invite God to search our hearts, revealing areas that need refinement and transformation. We confess our sins, seeking forgiveness and cleansing. By embracing humility and dependence on God, we cultivate a heart that is receptive to accountability, acknowledging that our lives are not our own, but belong to Him who created and redeemed us. May our humility and dependence on God be the foundation of our accountability, leading us to live a life that honors and glorifies Him.

**Chapter 11**

**SELF-DENIAL**

*Setting aside our own interests and desires to follow*

*Jesus’ example of selfless love and service*

Self-denial is the practice of sacrificing one’s own desires, interests, and comforts for the benefit of others or a higher purpose. It involves putting the needs of others before one’s own, and being willing to make personal sacrifices for the greater good. It requires discipline, humility, and a willingness to let go of one’s own ego and wants. Through self-denial, one can develop a stronger sense of empathy, compassion, and selflessness.

**Surrendering our own desires and interests**

The practice of setting aside our own interests and desires to follow Jesus’ example of selfless love and sacrifice, is a fundamental aspect of Christian discipleship. Jesus modeled this selflessness through His life, death, and resurrection, demonstrating that true love and fulfillment come from putting others before ourselves.

By surrendering our own desires and interests, we create space to love and serve others without expectation of reward or recognition. This allows us to experience the joy and freedom that comes from living a life that honors God. As we follow Jesus’ example, we become more like Him, developing a heart of humility, compassion, and service. Through this transformation, we become vessels of God’s love, extending His grace and mercy to a world in need. By setting aside our own interests, we find true purpose and fulfillment in Christ.

Creating space to love and serve others without expectation of reward or recognition is a powerful way to live out our faith. When we let go of our need for validation and applause, we create room to truly prioritize others’ needs above our own. This selfless approach allows us to love and serve with authenticity, without ulterior motives or hidden agendas. We begin to see people as Jesus sees them - worthy of love and dignity, regardless of their circumstances. As we serve without expectation of reward, we experience the joy and fulfillment that comes from aligning our hearts with God’s. Our service becomes an act of worship, a way to honor God and demonstrate His love to a world in need. This way we become tangible representations of God’s love and grace, shining His light in the darkness.

Finding true purpose and fulfillment in Christ requires setting aside our own personal interests and desires. When we surrender our selfish ambitions and goals, we create space for God to reveal His plans and purposes for our lives. This surrender allows us to discover our true identity in Christ, unhindered by our own biases and limitations.

As we seek God’s will, we begin to understand that our purpose is not about personal achievement or success, but about serving Him and others. We find fulfillment in using our gifts and talents to glorify God, and make a positive impact on the world around us.

Setting aside personal interests also frees us from the burden of self-centeredness, allowing us to experience the joy of living for something greater than ourselves. We become part of a larger story, one that transcends our individual lives and connects us to a community of believers pursuing a common goal.

In Christ, we find a purpose that is not based on our own strength or abilities, but on His power and grace working through us. This purpose is not limited by our fears, doubts, or failures, but is rooted in God’s unwavering love and faithfulness.

By setting aside our own personal interests and seeking God’s will, we discover a purpose that brings true fulfillment and joy. We become vessels of God’s love, living a life that honors Him and inspires others to do the same.

**Making personal sacrifices**

Willingness to make personal sacrifices for the greater good is a hallmark of selfless leadership and Christian discipleship. It involves sometimes having to surrender comfort, convenience, or personal ambitions. This mindset recognizes that true fulfillment and purpose come not from personal achievements, but from serving a higher purpose.

Making personal sacrifices for the greater good requires courage, humility, and a willingness to trust in God’s sovereignty. It may involve giving up time, resources, or personal interests to benefit others or advance a noble cause. Such sacrifices can take many forms, from volunteering for a mission trip, to sacrificing career advancement for family responsibilities.

By making personal sacrifices, we demonstrate our commitment to something larger than ourselves. We show that our values and beliefs are more important than personal gain or recognition. This selflessness inspires others and creates a ripple effect of kindness and generosity.

Moreover, personal sacrifices can lead to spiritual growth and a deeper relationship with God. As we surrender our own desires and interests, we create space for God to work in and through us. We become vessels of His love and grace, shining His light in a world that desperately needs it.

In the end, willing to make personal sacrifices for the greater good is a reflection of Jesus’ own sacrifice on the cross. He modeled selfless love and gave His life for our redemption. As we follow His example, we find true purpose and fulfillment in serving others and honoring God.

**Strong sense of empathy, compassion, and selflessness**

Cultivating a robust sense of empathy, compassion, and selflessness is a transformative journey that revolutionizes our relationships, mindset, and overall well-being. Empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, is the foundation of compassion and selflessness. When we actively listen, ask questions, and seek to understand others’ perspectives, we build bridges of connection and foster a sense of community.

Compassion takes empathy a step further by compelling us to act on behalf of others. It’s the willingness to help, support, and alleviate suffering. Compassion recognizes the inherent value and dignity of every individual, regardless of their circumstances. By showing compassion, we acknowledge that everyone has a story, struggles, and hopes.

Selflessness is the culmination of empathy and compassion. It’s the willingness to put others’ needs before our own, even if it means personal sacrifice. Selflessness shifts our focus from individualism to collective well-being, recognizing that our actions impact those around us. By prioritizing others’ needs, we create a ripple effect of kindness, generosity, and love.

By embracing empathy, compassion, and selflessness, we become agents of positive change, inspiring others to do the same. We create a culture of care, support, and service, reflecting the teachings of Jesus to “love our neighbors as ourselves,” and “put others before ourselves.” As we grow in these virtues, we become beacons of hope, shining God’s love and light in a world that desperately needs it.

**The eyes of Jesus**

Seeing people as Jesus sees them is a profound shift in perspective that transforms how we interact with others. It means recognizing that every person, regardless of their circumstances, is worthy of love and dignity. This view is rooted in the belief that all humans are created in God’s image and are therefore inherently valuable.

When we see people through Jesus’ eyes, we look beyond their exterior circumstances - their appearance, socioeconomic status, occupation, or past mistakes. Instead, we see their inherent worth, their unique experiences, and their deep-seated needs. We recognize that each person has a story, struggles, and hopes, just like us.

This perspective changes how we treat others. We no longer judge or condemn based on surface-level characteristics. Instead, we offer love, acceptance, and compassion. We listen to their stories, validate their emotions, and offer support. We see the divine spark in each person and honor their inherent dignity.

Seeing people as Jesus sees them also means recognizing our own biases and prejudices. We acknowledge that we all have blind spots and work to overcome them. We seek to understand different perspectives and experiences, even if they challenge our own beliefs.

This way of seeing is not limited to individuals; it also applies to groups and communities. We recognize the inherent worth and dignity of every culture, race, and ethnicity. We celebrate diversity and promote inclusivity, understanding that each group brings unique strengths and perspectives.

By seeing people as Jesus sees them, we become agents of love, acceptance, and redemption. We create a safe space for others to share their stories, heal from wounds, and discover their own worth. We reflect God’s love and grace, shining a light in the darkness.

In this transformative perspective, we find our own worth and identity. We realize that we too are worthy of love and dignity, regardless of our circumstances. We are all works in progress, deserving of grace and mercy. By seeing people as Jesus sees them, we discover our shared humanity and our deep connection to each other and to God.