



THE TRANSFORMATIONAL LIFE

How To Be Transformed By
God To Transform The World

ADRIEL LOH

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CONTENTS

1. The Five Movements
2. Appropriating Faith
3. Total Surrender
4. Intentional Intimacy
5. Self-Mastery
6. Ministering Leadership

CHAPTER ONE

THE FIVE MOVEMENTS

THE COMMON STRUGGLE

Struggle is the common and pervasive experience of humanity. We are told that as Christians, we must evangelize and change the world. Yet many of us are just struggling to survive. We struggle with weaknesses that overpower us and negative emotions that debilitate us. We struggle with fear and uncertainty about losing our security, our love ones and our health. We struggle with hurts and disappointments in our past relationships that leave us lonely and alienated. We struggle with meaninglessness in the long working hours and endless stress of our jobs. We struggle with despair at the senseless evil all around us and the deep-rooted injustice in the institutions of our society. Often the trite responses of organized religion fail to offer any real answer. We are like a boat without a rudder, lost at sea, tossed by every wave of circumstances and battered by the winds of life.

Like a ray of light that pierces the suffocating darkness, the words of Christ ring, "If you know the truth, the truth will set you free." (John 8:32). "I am the way, the truth and the life." (John 14:6). The promise of hope, the hope of salvation, the promise of liberation from this present darkness, the promise of the higher victorious life, the promise of transformation, from who we are to who we were truly meant to be.

Impact comes from depth. If we are to truly rise up to the destiny that God has called us to, to change and impact our families, our churches, the institution of our societies and the unsaved of the world for Jesus Christ, then we must first be transformed ourselves. Unless we are transformed, we cannot be used by God to transform the world. But when we allow the Spirit to transform us from the inside out, from the overflow of that inner transformation will be a life used by God to change and transform the world.

THE FIVE MOVEMENTS OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION

How does inner transformation take place? The answer - spiritual formation. Spiritual formation is the transformation of a person by the Spirit of God into the

character, power and glory of Jesus Christ. How do we achieve spiritual formation? Perhaps we have been Christians for many years, or perhaps we are new to the faith, this is a common question we all have. Just as we use GPS and maps to reach our physical destination, we all need a roadmap for this journey of spiritual formation, a instruction manual that will lead us from where we are to where we want to be.

Christ gives us the blueprint when He said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matt 22:37-39). From these verses, we see that the process of spiritual formation involves the building of three key relationships - our relationship with God, our relationship with ourselves, and our relationship with others. In spiritual formation, we grow to love God, ourselves and others rightly, or to put it another way, we grow to be in right relationship with God, ourselves and others. The process of growth in these three relationships is represented by the **Upward**, **Inward** and **Outward** movements. These three relationships form the sum total of life. If we get these three relationships right, we get life right.

THE UPWARD MOVEMENTS

The first movement is the **Upward** movement. The Upward movement consist of three separate but inter-related movements: Appropriating Faith, Total Surrender and Intentional Intimacy. Appropriating Faith anchors us in the incredible reality of our Union with Christ. Total Surrender deals with our submission of all the areas of our lives to the Lordship of Christ. And Intentional Intimacy is the key to a growing relationship with the Person of Christ.

These movements are upward because they deal with our relationship with God. This is the vertical relationship that forms the core of our Christianity, the reason for which we were created, the reason why Christ died on the Cross. All spiritual formation must start with our relationship with God because salvation and the growth of the spiritual life has its origins in the initiative of God. In the beginning God (Gen 1:1). For God so loved the world (Jn 3:16). Man is unable to save himself, hence requiring the first move of God to reach down towards us in love and grace. God is the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2).

THE INWARD MOVEMENT

The next movement is the **Inward** movement of Self-Mastery. Self-Mastery is the ability to manage and lead ourselves. It concerns the discipline, mindsets and habits by which we live our lives. As John Maxwell says, “You must lead yourself before you can lead others.” This is an inward movement because it deals with our relationship with ourselves. We are in right relationship with ourselves when we are able to manage and lead ourselves.

Self-Mastery can only take place subsequent to the Upward movements of Appropriating Faith, Total Surrender and Intentional Intimacy. Our ability to change and master ourselves stems from the work that Christ has done in our hearts during the Upward movements. Without the starting point of the Upward movements, Self-Mastery becomes humanism, the advancement of the self purely through human effort and will. Self-Mastery that follows from the Upward movements has its source in God. To put it another way, it is only when we are right with God that we can be right with ourselves.

THE OUTWARD MOVEMENT

The culmination of the Upward and Inward movements is the **Outward** movement towards others in Ministering Leadership. It is outward because it deals with our relationship with others. When we are in right relationship with God, this leads us into right relationship with ourselves, and when we are in right relationship with ourselves, it is only then that we can be in right relationship with others.

We are called to reach out in love to equip the saints and minister to a world in need. This is Ministering Leadership, leadership that blesses and ministers to those we lead.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

The following diagram illustrates the spiritual formation framework based on these five movements. Each of the five movements contains 12 principles. The key to spiritual formation is to appropriate, apply and work through the principles in each of the five movements on a daily and disciplined basis.

Like an athlete who trains hard to be the best at a sport, or a student who studies hard to prepare for an exam, spiritual formation requires consistency and

discipline. While spiritual formation is ultimately the work and prerogative of the Holy Spirit, our consistent and disciplined practice of the principles in the five movements puts us in a position where the transformational grace of God can operate in us, causing us to grow in right relationship with God, with ourselves and with our neighbour.

The five movements may operate sequentially as we begin our journey, but thereafter take place simultaneously and with increasing intensity and depth, each movement building on and reinforcing the other movements.



CHAPTER TWO

APPROPRIATING FAITH

The journey of spiritual formation starts with the Upward movements. The Upward movements are the process of growth in our relationship with God. The first of the Upward movements is **Appropriating Faith** in the finished work of Christ on the Cross. It is at the Cross where it all begins and it is from the foundation of the Cross that everything regarding our spiritual life and transformation proceeds. Christ's finished work of the Cross has brought about a fundamental change in our identity, changing who we are forever. The Cross is not just an event in history, but through our union with Christ, the Cross effects a total transformation of our body, soul and spirit.

It is important therefore that we know what has happened on the Cross and who we are because of it before we start living our lives. As someone once said, being (who we are) precedes doing (how we live). At the baptism of Jesus, God the Father first affirmed to Jesus who He was – the Beloved Son of God - before Jesus was ready to begin His ministry (Luke 3:22). Likewise, we are not ready to live until we know who we are. If we do not know who we are, we will spend our entire lives working to find our identity and prove our worth. But if we know who we are, we can live our lives as an outflow of that security, identity and worth.

Who then are we? When we accept Christ, by faith we are united with Him. This is a union we have been chosen for before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4). But the most amazing effect of this union comes from our union with Christ in His death on the Cross and His resurrection (Rom 6:5) - His perfect substitutionary death and glorious transformational resurrection. Because of this, a divine exchange has taken place. God has taken all our sin, weakness and shame, and replaced them with the righteousness and power of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:21). All the blessings, power and love that Christ possesses has now been given to us. We are born of the Spirit. We live in Him and He in us. He is our Life (Col 3:4). We are complete in Him. In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead and we now have that fullness in Him (Col 2:9,10). Just as He is now, in His power and glory and perfect righteousness and victory and favour of the Father, so are we in this world (1 Jn 4:17). We therefore no longer look at ourselves but we fix our eyes on Christ, seeing Him in us and us in Him.

Our union with Christ also assures us that one day when He returns, we will be glorified together with Him (Rom 8:17). In Christ, we are chosen, loved, accepted, justified, sanctified and glorified. This is our true identity and the basis of our spiritual formation.

Spiritual formation essentially takes place through the consistent working out in our experience that which we have already become in Christ. It is a move from position to experience.

The problem however is that the truth of who we are is something the devil will do everything in his power to hide from us, or to cause us to deny or disbelieve. It is when we know the truth however, that the truth sets us free (John 8:32). We must therefore realize and reckon (Rom 6:11) who we are in Christ, daily appropriating its operative reality by faith. The Apostle Paul prays that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened (Eph 1:18). We see and visualize with our mind's eye the reality of who we are. We have the "faith of God" (Mark 11:22) – the certainty that God has from His perspective of reality, for then to us it will become a reality.

We discern the lies of the devil and overcome them with the truth of God's Word, for the Word has divine power to demolish the strongholds of lies in our minds. We cast down every argument and demonic deception that sets itself up against the true knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor 10:4-5). As we discipline ourselves to daily claim by faith the truth of who we are in Christ, we experience the supernatural transformation into His likeness from glory to glory.

Surveying the breadth of the scriptures, we find that there are **12** foundational truths that form the totality of who we are in Christ.

ACCEPTANCE

God has forgiven us all our sins past, present and future, and accepts us completely. He sees us perfect in Christ's righteousness, and we have confidence before Him and are at peace with Him.

There is no longer any condemnation or fear of judgment for those who are in Jesus Christ (Rom 8:1). By the redeeming sacrifice of His propitiating death, Christ has perfected us forever (Heb 10:14). There is no sin so great that God has not forgiven, for where sin abounds, His super-abounding exceedingly abundant

grace abounds even more (Rom 5:20). When God looks at us now, He does not see us in our sin, but Christ in us, and His perfect righteousness covering all our sin. All our past guilt and sin has been wiped away once and for all. As Bill Johnson says, "My history declares the effectiveness of the blood of Jesus. Anytime we visit the events of the past apart from the blood of Jesus, we visit a lie because it no longer exists." Because of this, we have boldness before Him on the Day of Judgment, because just as He is, perfectly righteous and perfectly accepted, so are we in this world (1 Jn 4:17).

We therefore rest from our work of self-justification, of needing to prove our worth or earn His acceptance. We don't need to always be perfect in everything so that He will accept us, because He already does. We don't need to do great things for Him or even be successful in our jobs or our ministry so that He will be proud of us, because He already is. We don't have to be useful to others just so that we can have worth in His eyes. He loves and accepts us just as we are, for in Christ, we are perfect to Him and perfectly worthy. We rest secure in His perfect forgiveness, His perfect acceptance.

There is no longer a need for any further sacrifice or work because we cannot add anything to Christ's perfect work on the Cross. This is the new covenant of grace where our response is only to humbly receive and accept His grace by faith. In the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), the younger son squandered his inheritance and returned broken before his father. He knew he did not deserve his father's love, but that was precisely why he received it. The elder son was angry, because he felt the father was not honouring him for his years of hard work. He thought he had earned and deserved the father's love, but that was precisely what disqualified him from it. The way of the elder son was the way of the law. The way of the younger son was the way of wondrous grace - unmerited and underserved favour. As Martin-Lloyd Jones put it, "The Christian life starts with grace, it must continue with grace, it ends in grace. Grace wondrous grace."

LOVE

In the words of St Augustine, "God loves us as if there were only one of us." He loves us perfectly though we are imperfect. He loves us completely though we are incomplete. He loves us unfailingly though we may fail Him.

The Apostle John described himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" six times in the Gospel of John. Likewise, we too are to see ourselves as the disciple

whom Jesus loves, receiving and personalizing His love for us, that we are truly His beloved. We boast not in our love for Him but His love for us, for we have known and believe the love that He has for us (1 Jn 4:15). Our ability to love Him and to love our neighbour can only come about as a response to His love for us. We love Him because He first loved us (1 Jn 4:19), and when His love is perfected in us, we will love one another (1 Jn 4:12).

Everything He does is motivated by His extravagant love for us. For He has loved us with an everlasting love and with loving-kindness He has drawn us (Jer 31:3). Neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation can ever separate us from His love (Rom 8:39), because we belong to Him and no one can snatch us out of His hands (John 10:28).

Nothing can disqualify us from His love because His love is unconditional, initiated in the heart of the Father and earned for us on the cross of Jesus Christ. Nothing can disillusion Him about us because in His foreknowledge He sees the worst of us and what we will do, and yet still loves us intensely. He will never leave us nor will He ever forsake us (Jos 1:5), for even when we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim 2:13). His is a love that is patient and is kind, that bears all things, endures all things, that never ceases to believe in us, to hope in us, a love that never fails (1 Cor 13:4,7-8).

SONSHIP

We are sons and daughters of the Almighty God, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. To us who have received Christ and believe in His name, He has given the right to become children of God, born not of blood or the will of man, but of God (John 1:12,13). He has predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son, that Christ might be the firstborn Son and us after Him as children of God (Rom 8:29).

Many of us have never experienced the strong unconditional love of a father. Emotional absence or emotional abuse has left our hearts scared and we crave the father we never had. We long for a father, our Father. We long to be a son or daughter again. In Christ, we are finally home. We have received the Spirit of Sonship and we are now unshakably secure in our identity as sons and daughters of God. The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and brings us into tender relationship with our Abba Father (Rom 8:15,16). We share in the Sonship of Christ and His personal and intimate

relationship with the Father because of our union with Him. We are set free from bondage to an orphan spirit, from rejection, emasculation and insecurity, from always needing acceptance of others for our worth and identity. We hear the Father say to us, “You are my beloved son, in whom I love and am well pleased.” (Matt 3:17)

COMMUNION

God has brought us into intimacy, communion and relationship with Himself. Our relationship as children of God confers on us the rights of intimacy, access and standing with God. We can now come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Heb 4:16). We have access to the heart of the Father, for He confides in those who fear Him and makes known His covenants to them (Ps 25:14).

God desires to be found by us, speaking to us through infinite yet personal ways, through our experiences, our rational mind, our deepest feelings, and in the voice of the Spirit to our spirit. We find His loving communion in all things, as He pursues us and draws us to Himself, revealing His thoughts, His heart and His will to us. No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has conceived the things which God has prepared for those who love Him, but God has revealed them to us through His Spirit (1 Cor 2:9,10). When we call on Him and pray to Him, He will listen to us. And when we seek Him with all our hearts, He will be found by us (Jer 29:12-14).

FREEDOM

We are united with Christ in His death and resurrection. Our sinful nature has been put to death and the power, bondage and strongholds of sin and negative emotions in our lives have been broken.

The curse of sin has been broken and every effect of the curse cancelled out by the Blood of the Lamb. For our old self has been crucified with Christ so that the bondage of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, for he who has died has been freed from sin (Rom 6:6,7). Sin no longer has dominion over us (Rom 6:14). The Cross has broken every addiction and habitual sin that used to control us, and freed us from the grip of all negative emotions including fear, anxiety, depression and self-condemnation.

We repent, renounce and cancel out all areas of our lives given over to the

devil because of unbelief, idolatry and willful rebellion against the known will and truth of God. We offer ourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and offer every part of ourselves to Him as instruments of righteousness (Rom 6:13). Just as Christ was raised from the dead, we are born of the Spirit and walk in newness of life in the likeness of His resurrection. It is no longer we who live but Christ lives in us (Gal 2:20).

The Spirit is not given due to any merit on our part, but as a daily necessity to empower us for daily living. As we walk in the Spirit's leading, the Spirit mediates the operative reality of the presence and power of Christ in us, who Himself is our holiness and our sanctification (1 Cor 1:30), and causes us to put to death the misdeeds of the body (Rom 8:13). For where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (2 Cor 3:17). There is now no more condemnation to us who are in Christ because the law of the Spirit of life has set us free from the law of sin and death (Rom 8:1) and the Holy Spirit transforms us into the likeness of Christ from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18). We now have the power to be holy and the freedom to live the higher victorious life.

HEALING

On the cross, Christ took our sickness and disease. The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed (Isa 53:5).

He has come to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and to set the oppressed free (Luke 4:18). He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall, but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint (Isa 40:30,31). God will sanctify us through and through, keeping our spirit, soul and body blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus (1 Thess 5:23).

FAVOUR

God's special and extravagant favour is on everything we do. He will do exceedingly abundantly above all we can ever ask or think (Eph 3:20). Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law and broken every curse over our lives and our families so that the blessings of Abraham may come upon us (Gal 3:13,14).

Paul says we are "accepted" in the Beloved (Eph 1:6). The word "accepted"

in Greek means “to grace, to endue with special honour, to be highly favoured.” We are truly highly favoured and greatly blessed. All the promises of God in Jesus Christ are Yes and Amen to the glory of God through us (2 Cor 1:20).

With His favour comes abundance, fruitfulness and security:

Abundance. We walk in the rain and overflow of God’s super-abounding blessing and grace in every area of our lives. God is able to make all grace abound towards us that we, always having all sufficiency in all things, will have an abundance for every good work (2 Cor 9:8).

Though Christ was rich, for our sakes, He became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich (2 Cor 8:9). God will give us abundant prosperity – in the fruit of our womb, the young of our livestock and the crops of our ground. He will open the heavens, the storehouse of His bounty and send rain on our land in season (Deut 28:11-12a). For it is God who gives us the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms His covenant with us (Deut 8:18).

We only need to ask and we will receive, for when we ask and we believe that we have received it, it will be ours (Mark 11:24), for God does not withhold any good thing from us (Ps 84:11). We should therefore have a mentality of abundance. We should never be afraid to give, but freely as we have received, freely we give (Matt 10:8).

Fruitfulness. In Christ, we are freed from the curse of futility of labour that came about as a result of the Fall. God will bless all the works of our hand (Deut 28:12b) and multiply the fruitfulness and effectiveness of our work. Because of the grace of God that is with us, our labour will result in more abundant fruit than everyone else (1 Cor 15:10).

God will make all that we do prosper in our hands. He will give us favour in the sight of men, promote us to positions of influence and extend our territory. He will bless our homes and workplaces because of us and for our sake (Gen 39:3-5). Others will see that God is with us and that His hand is on our lives and they will glorify Him. Whatever we do will prosper and we will have good success (Jos 1:8).

Protection. God will raise a hedge of protection around us and our loved ones, and deliver us from all evil, harm and misfortune. He is our refuge and our fortress (Ps 91:2). A thousand may fall at our side and ten thousand at our right hand, but it shall not come near us (Ps 91:7). We are safe and secure under the shelter of His wings (Ps 91:4), for He will deliver us from every evil work and preserve us for His heavenly kingdom (2 Tim 4:18).

SIGNIFICANCE

We have been chosen and set apart by God for a significant life. We are God's special gift to the world, a sign and expression of His grace. We are called to bless, influence and transform the world for Him. As Ravi Zacharias puts it, "God is the dreamer and we are His dream to change the world." This is a calling that God has chosen us for even before we were born. As God said to Jeremiah, so He says to us, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you. Before you were born I set you apart. I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." (Jer 1:5) We are His masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus to do good works for which God has prepared beforehand for us (Eph 2:10). We are the anointed of God, appointed and set apart for His holy purpose.

What then is the purpose of our lives? For many of us, our life purpose is too small – simply to graduate, get a job, have a comfortable life and then retire. We are made for more than this. We are not created just to exist, just to be mediocre. We are born to reign. Our destiny is to reign in life through one Jesus Christ (Rom 5:17). Our destiny is an incredible three-fold destiny - to reign in life as king and priest and prophet unto our God.

Let us explore this further. As king, we employ His power and authority to build the Kingdom of God and enforce the victory of the Cross into our workplaces, homes, churches and situations. As priest, we stand before God and intercede for others, ministering to them His saving grace. As prophet, we speak the truth of God and what He is doing into the lives of those whom God has called us to save. This three-fold kingly, priestly and prophetic calling can be expressed through whatever vocation we are employed in and whatever role we play in our respective workplaces, families and ministries. As we walk in this calling, no work remains ordinary or mundane. All work becomes a sacred and joyful vocation and attains transcendent meaning and eternal significance.

As the Apostle Paul exhorts us, we are to take heed to this calling that we have received in the Lord that we may fulfill it (Col 6:17). The sustenance and fulfillment of our lives therefore comes from being faithful to our calling and finishing His work (John 4:34).

AUTHORITY

One of Jesus' last recorded words on earth was the Great Commission. "All

authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations..." (Matt 28:18,19) We have long seen it as a call to missions and evangelism, not realizing that with that call also comes the conference of ultimate spiritual authority. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Christ. God has highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:9,10). And that very same authority, He has now given to us. God has raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in His position of ultimate authority in the heavenly realms (Eph 2:6).

Knowing this authority is crucial because of the reality of the spiritual battle. It is the authority that enables the mission. Paul affirms that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of the age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph 6:12).

Authority is the right to give orders and enforce obedience. Spiritual authority is therefore the authority to command and bind demonic forces and subject them to our word. In Christ, we have divine power mighty in God to demolish strongholds (2 Cor 10:4). Christ has given us the keys of authority to the Kingdom of Heaven, that whatever we bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever we let loose on earth shall be let loose in heaven (Matt 16:19). In the Name of Jesus, we have authority to cast out demons, to subject spirits to us, and overcome all the power of the enemy (Luke 10:19). They will by no means hurt us (Luke 10:19), for He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world (1 Jn 4:4). In the Name of Jesus, we have authority to change circumstances and bring forth the Kingdom of God into the present situation, to materialize His will on earth as it is in heaven. To the spiritually dead, we prophesy the breathe of revival into them, saying with the Prophet Ezekiel, "Come O breath from the four winds and breathe on these slain that they may live." As we prophesy in the Name of Jesus, we will see the outpouring of the Spirit and the valley of dry bones arise to become a mighty army (Ezk 37:9-10).

POWER

God has opened the heavens unto us and baptized us with the supernatural gifts and power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish His ministry (Acts 1:8). In these

last days, God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh and show wonders in the heavens and the earth (Joel 2:28,30). Like the disciples in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has now been given to us and we have received the fullness of His power.

The same Holy Spirit who empowered the Son of God to heal the sick, calm the storm, cast out demons, raise the dead and walk on water when He was on earth now fills and empowers us. In fact Jesus says that we will do even greater works than Him, for whatever we ask in Jesus' name, He will do it, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son (Jn 14:12,13). That very same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead now dwells in us and gives life to our mortal bodies (Rom 8:11).

We will know the power of His resurrection (Phil 3:10), the exceeding greatness of His power towards us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places (Eph 1:19,20). We will see that same power manifest in our lives in the here and now.

As we host the gentle presence of the Holy Spirit and walk in intimate fellowship with Him, He manifests His gifts and power in and through us. The Spirit endows us with the five-fold ministry of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher (Eph 4:11), and manifests in us the supernatural gifts of the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues (1 Cor 12:8-10).

God is not a power that we use, but rather we are the vessel that He directs and through which His power flows. In the words of Reinhard Bonnke, we are "agents of divine omnipotence", channels of His divine grace and salvation to a world in need.

INHERITANCE

God has reserved for us a glorious and incorruptible inheritance in the new heaven and new earth, we who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation (1 Pet 1:4,5). All creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed (Rom 8:19). We have been sealed with the Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance when Christ comes to redeem us who are His purchased possessions (Eph 1:13,14).

He has made us kings and priests unto our God, and when He comes in final

glory, we will share in His glory and reign with Him for all eternity (Rev 5:10). We are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, sharing in His suffering that we may also share in His glory (Rom 8:17). We only need to ask and He will give us the nations as our inheritance and the ends of the earth as our possession (Ps 2:8). Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever (Dan 12:3).

VICTORY

On the cross, Christ has won the ultimate victory. In Him, God will give us victory in every area of our lives. God will show Himself strong and faithful, and glorify Himself in every situation.

In our darkest moments, the Lord will cause a new beginning and we will rise to a higher place than we have been before. For in all things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Rom 8:37). He will go forth before us and fight for us, for the battle belongs to the Lord (2 Chron 20:15).

Nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37). We only need to rest in Him and we will see the salvation of the Lord (Ex 14:13). Every place the sole of our feet treads upon, God will give to us, and we will prosper, thrive and have good success (Jos 1:3).

In the end, when the trumpet sounds at His coming, we will be raised incorruptible, immortal, and death will be swallowed up in victory (1 Cor 15:52-54). The conquering Christ will deliver the kingdom to the Father and put an end to all opposing rule and authority and power, including death itself. And then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all (1 Cor 15:24-28).

CHAPTER THREE

TOTAL SURRENDER

The second of the Upward movements is **Total Surrender** to the Lordship of Christ.

At the start of the Second Week of his Spiritual Exercises, St Ignatius of Loyola asks us to consider a human king calling his people to follow him to conquer the land. “If we consider such a call of the temporal King to his subjects, how much more worthy of consideration is it to see Christ our Lord, King eternal, and before Him all the entire world, which and each one in particular He calls, and says: “It is My will to conquer all the world and all enemies and so to enter into the glory of My Father; therefore, whoever would like to come with Me is to labour with Me, that following Me in the pain, he may also follow Me in the glory.””

This is the crux of discipleship – to surrender to the Lordship of Christ and follow Him to the end. To follow Christ however involves a cost. There is a price to be paid, and that price is our very lives. Christ calls us to die daily to ourselves and to the world, to take up our cross and follow Him (Matt 16:24). He compares us to a grain of wheat. Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains but a single seed, but if it dies, it produces many seeds (John 12:24). Likewise until we are ready to die, our lives will have no real impact, no true meaning, and no higher purpose. But if we die to ourselves, then something incredible takes place. As we decrease, Christ Himself increases in us. It is no longer we who live but Christ lives in us (Gal 2:20). He lives out His divine life in and through us, and we are progressively transformed into His likeness from glory to glory. At the end of the day, as a wise man once said, “You are not ready to live, until you are ready to die.”

We therefore take time daily to surrender ourselves to Him. We don’t wait for the moment of temptation before we struggle to surrender, but we surrender in advance, at the start of each day. The key is to keep ourselves in a constant posture of surrender. Sometimes we may have to surrender several times a day to ensure our perfect alignment with the Spirit and to facilitate the Christ-life manifesting uninhibited in us.

From the journey of my own life and struggles, the Lord has revealed to me **12** areas of our lives we are called to surrender to His Lordship.

OUR JUDGMENTS FOR HIS WISDOM

We surrender our judgments for His wisdom. We do not judge things according to our own human wisdom or paradigms, but we inquire as to the source of our judgments before we act on them. We humbly recognize our finiteness and our propensity for self-deception, prejudice and foolishness. In short, we recognize that we may be wrong no matter how right we think we are.

We then seek instead His heavenly wisdom, for His wisdom is always perfect, always good. We choose to see things from His perspective, His eternal viewpoint and not our finite perspective. The ways of God are often foolishness to man (1 Cor 1:21). His ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts higher than our thoughts (Isa 55:9). It is His ways, His perspective, His wisdom that we seek to apply into our lives everyday, in every decision that we make. As Andy Stanley puts it, we ask ourselves at the point of each decision “What is the wise thing to do in light of our past experiences, our present circumstances and our future hopes and dreams?” For what is wise does not depend on what everyone else is doing or what we have the right to do. What is wise depends on what God thinks is wise, or as common saying goes, what Jesus would do in the circumstances. What is wise may also differ from person to person or situation to situation because what is wise must be determined in the context all that has happened to us in the past, where we are at this point of our lives, and what our hopes and dreams are for the future. There is a right place and a right time for everything, and having the mind of Christ will enable us to clearly see what that is.

We need not fret if we lack wisdom, because the Apostle James exhorts that if any of us lacks wisdom, we should ask of God who gives to all freely without finding fault (James 1:5). We ask that the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and fear of the Lord rest upon us (Isa 11:2). As we seek His heavenly wisdom, we are transformed by the renewing of our minds and are able to test and approve what His will is, His good, pleasing and perfect will (Rom 12:2).

OUR RIGHTS FOR HIS PERFECTING

We surrender our insistence on defending and enforcing our rights. Our

rights are what we think we deserve or are entitled to, and we cling on to them because we think that will bring us happiness.

It is not happiness that we seek, but the righteousness and perfection of Christ, and it is through trials and adversity that God molds and refines us, and the righteousness and perfect character of Christ is formed in us. For even Christ had to learn obedience by the things which He suffered and having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation (Heb 5:8,9).

Therefore, unless there is principle at stake, we gladly surrender our rights. We surrender our need to be treated with fairness and respect, and accept suffering and discomfort for His sake. We surrender our bitterness and self-protectiveness, releasing and forgiving those who have wronged or hurt us. We live without selfish expectation or entitlement, but humbly receive with gratitude all things from God, and learning to be content both in plenty and in need.

There are times when God brings us through the wilderness to humble us and test us, so that we can see what is in our hearts, to allow us to hunger and then to feed us with manna which we know not about, so that He might make us know that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Deut 8:2,3).

We take up our cross and follow Him, voluntarily embracing the adverse circumstances of life as means by which our selfishness and self-centeredness are put to death. Rather than avoid or step around situations when they are challenging or uncomfortable, we accept the reality of that which He has placed before us. As William James says, "Be willing to have it so. The acceptance of what has happened is the first step in overcoming the consequences of any misfortune." As Andy Stanley puts it, we choose to see our adversity as a "gift with a purpose and a promise." We consider it an opportunity for great joy when we face trials because the testing of our faith produces perseverance, and perseverance must finish its work so that we will be mature and complete, lacking nothing (James 1:2-4).

OUR DESIRES FOR HIS HEART

The desire for money, sex and power, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, these are things that can control us, pierce us with much grief and ultimately destroy us.

To prevent their power over us, we discipline our appetites and desires so that they do not control or consume us. As Ravi Zacharias puts it, “We train our appetites for a greater cause.” We guard our hearts against sensuality and hold at distance even the good pleasures of life, allowing pleasure to refresh us, but not to diminish our desire for spiritual things, or distract us from His calling on our lives. In the words of Susanna Wesley, “Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off your relish of spiritual things, in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself.”

It is not God’s will to remove our desires but to sanctify them. He wants to replace wrong desires with right desires, His desires. As we surrender our desires to God, the Holy Spirit tempers and sanctifies them. He replaces our self-centered and destructive passions and desires with His holy passions and desires. Our desires become consonant with His desires, His heart becomes our heart, His pleasure our pleasure, and His joy our joy. We love what He loves and hate what He hates. We treat as sacred what He calls sacred, honouring the sacredness of our lives, our bodies and our sexuality, and dreading all filthiness and uncleanness of mind and body. We flee from anything that might draw us into them for we know how much they grieve His heart. We weep for what He weeps, and our hearts break for what breaks His. We weep for the poor, the sick, the oppressed and the lost just as He weeps for them, and we love them as He loves them and gave His life for them.

It is when our hearts are bound to His and aligned with Him that we are able to live fully alive, nourishing and expressing the holy passions and desires that He has planted in the depths of our soul. That is why the Psalmist says, as we delight in Him, He gives us the deepest desires of our heart (Ps 37:4).

OUR ATTACHMENTS FOR HIS REWARD

We surrender our attachment to the things of this world. Jesus did not mince His words when He said, “Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.” (Luke 14:33) He puts the Cross between us and the world, and bids us to come and die. In the words of the song, “the world behind me, the Cross before me.” We die to the world and the world to us (Gal 6:14) and embrace a life of simplicity, contentment, stewardship and separation towards the things of this world. We hold all things with open hands, for as Jim

Elliot puts it, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”

For us, to live is Christ and to die is gain (Phil 1:21). We count all things as loss, worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus, for whose sake we have discarded everything else, that we might gain Christ and become one with him (Phil 3:8,9). We set our minds on things above (Col 3:2) for we are not of this world (John 17:16) but pilgrims that come from God and are going to Him (Jn 13:3) and we know that the world and its desires will pass away (1 Jn 2:17).

We therefore gratefully receive and enjoy all things as His blessings, knowing that they have been given to us by God, are cared for by Him, and are to be used for His purposes to bless others. As we embrace an inner simplicity, our possessions and achievements no longer define or control us. In the words of Richard Foster, “If what we have we receive as a gift, and if what we have is to be cared for by God, and if what we have is available to others, then we will possess freedom from anxiety. This is the inward reality of simplicity.”

As we surrender our attachments to Him, we gain the fullness of His joy, and the reward and enjoyment of Christ Himself, both in this life and for eternity. For Jesus assures us that everyone who has left the things of this world for His sake shall receive a hundredfold and inherit eternal life (Matt 19:29).

OUR REPUTATION FOR HIS GLORY

We surrender our preoccupation with promoting our reputation and worrying about what others think of us. We renounce our fear of man, our fear of their rejection and our intimidation by them. We do not allow the opinions and approval of others to determine our happiness, for as Ralph Waldo Emerson says, “Why should the way I feel depend on the thoughts in someone else’s head.” We do not need man’s approval because God approves of us. We are not afraid of their faces, of what they think of us, for God is with us to deliver us (Jer 1:8).

Surrendering our reputation means we don’t take ourselves too seriously. As G.K Chesterton puts it, “A characteristic of the great saints is their power of levity. Angels can fly because they can take themselves lightly.”

Surrendering our reputation means we no longer need to defend it, for it is

God alone who promotes us and gives us His favour. We are able to exhibit the meekness of silence, speaking only out of love, and trusting that it is God who will vindicate us in the end.

Surrendering our reputation frees us from the trap of performance. We don't have to perform, to please and to impress in order to prove our worth or compensate for our insecurity. We don't have to achieve to prove our significance, for in Christ we are significant. We don't have to always pretend to be perfect and live in morbid fear that our weaknesses will be exposed through the cracks in our meticulously constructed image. Our endeavors and achievements now flow from a heart that is fully assured of its identity and significance. We are secure in His approval and free to seek His glory above our own, that He alone will be glorified by our lives.

OUR COMPETITION FOR HIS SUFFICIENCY

We surrender our need to compete and compare ourselves with others. We stop looking at others and envying their success, thinking that if they have more, we will have less. For we are complete in Christ. We are content and secure in the abundance and riches of His grace. God is not an either-or God. He loves all, He gives to all, He blesses all.

We stop taking everything that happens to us, every achievement, every failure, every experience, as a verdict on us. We stop thinking about ourselves and judging ourselves all the time. We don't overinflate our egos by thinking of ourselves as superior to others, or beat ourselves up by thinking ourselves inferior to others. As C.S. Lewis puts it, we simply "think about ourselves less." We take our eyes off ourselves and enter into what Timothy Keller calls the "blessed freedom of self-forgetfulness."

As we take our eyes off ourselves, we are no longer insecure or threatened when others have more. We do not need to always have to be better than others. We do not need to put others down to elevate ourselves. We can be liberal with our compliments and genuinely happy for others when they succeed. When others do well, we can bless them and not envy them. We can rejoice when they rejoice, for when they are blessed, then everyone gains and God is glorified.

We do not seek grandiose or adulation but pursue a life hidden in Him and are faithful in the unseen acts of the ordinary, where in the words of Henri Nouwen, we are "hidden from the world, but visible to God." We are free to give

power and recognition away, raising others up instead of ourselves.

OUR CONTROL FOR HIS SUPREMACY

It is foolishness and self-deception to think that we can control our lives. To do so only brings anxiety and fear. Instead we surrender to His supremacy and yield vulnerably to the process of His transformational work and the unfolding of His perfect will for our lives. As we trust in Him with all our heart and lean not on our own understanding, but in all our ways we acknowledge His supremacy and His perfect will, He directs and straightens our path (Prov 3:5,6) and orders our every step (Ps 37:23).

No longer do we need to contend, to strain, to be defensive, to scheme, and to manipulate. No longer do we strive for flawless all-or-nothing perfection, for rigid control, or fail-safe certainty. We give ourselves in total abandonment to Him, knowing that we are totally and completely in His hands, for He is sovereign and supreme over all.

The supremacy of God means that all things work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28). All things were created through Him and for Him (Col 1:16). He upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb 1:3) and in Him all things consist (Col 1:17). What the enemy intends for evil, He turns it for our good, to bring us to where we are in our lives and to fulfill His purpose through us (Gen 50:20). As Esther was reminded in the Book of Esther, God has orchestrated all that happens to us to bring us to such a time as this (Est 4:14).

The supremacy of God means that nothing can thwart His purpose. As Job acknowledged, God can do everything and no purpose of His can be thwarted (Job 42:2). He has written our names on the palm of His hands (Isa 49:16) and ordained all our days before each one came to be (Ps 139:16). For the Lord of Hosts has purposed, who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, who can turn it back (Isa 14:27)? We therefore rest in His supremacy, knowing that those He predestined He also called, those He called He also justified, and those He justified He also glorified (Rom 8:30).

OUR FEARS FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS

There are many things we fear - fear of failure and rejection, fear of being hurt and betrayed, fear of loss, fear of insufficiency, fear of uncertainty, fear of losing control, fear of losing hope, and fear of death.

We surrender all our fears to Him, committing all things to him, placing our hope and trust in His faithfulness and love, for He is a faithful and loving God and will always protect us. In His love there is no fear, for His perfect love casts out all fear (1 John 4:18). God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Tim 1:7). He keeps in perfect peace those whose minds are stayed on Him (Isa 26:3). When we pass through the waters, He will be with us, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow us (Isa 43:2). Even in the midst of the storm, even when we face things that we would naturally fear, we need not fear, for the Lord says to us, "Fear not, for I am with you." (Isa 41:10) Though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil, for He is with us, His rod and His staff, they comfort us (Ps 23:4).

We are set free from our bondage to fear. We are no longer slaves to fear. Through His death, Christ has destroyed the devil and released those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb 2:14,15). We have no more fear of death because death itself has been defeated, and when death is defeated, there is nothing left to fear. When we live according to the flesh, we come under a spirit of bondage to fear and this leads to death. But when we live according to the Spirit, this leads to life and peace, for the Spirit testifies of our sonship and assures us of future glory (Rom 8:6,12-17). Our future glory is certain because resurrection of Christ assures us that when He returns, we too shall be changed, incorruptible, immortal (1 Cor 15:51-53).

God is a faithful God and has made a covenant promise to love and bless and save us. The Apostle Paul assures us that Christ is able to save completely those who come to God through Him (Heb 7:25). God is unfailingly faithful and absolutely loyal to His covenant promise and His covenant people. Due to the immutability of His covenant promise, we who have fled to lay hold of the hope set before us may be greatly comforted (Heb 6:18).

We therefore no longer need to let fear grip and dictate our lives, to have to constantly protect ourselves from the things we fear, or mask our fears under exhausting facades of success and invulnerability. We do not fear those in power over us, for the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord (Prov 21:1) and He directs the affairs of men, institutions and nations to His ultimate purpose. We do not worry about our lives, for our Heavenly Father knows our needs, and will feed us like the birds of the air and clothe us like the flowers of the field (Matt

6:26,28). As Andy Stanley says, “We worry about what we are most devoted to.” When we shift our devotion from the things of this world, to seek first His kingdom, His will, His righteousness (Matt 6:33), our worries dissipate in the light of His faithfulness.

OUR PRIDE FOR HIS GREATNESS

Humility, as Gordon T. Smith puts it, is “a disposition of heart that affirms that one is not the center of the universe. It is the antithesis of self-centeredness.”

As we surrender our pride, we move from self-centeredness to God-centeredness. We humble ourselves before Him, for He alone is great and worthy of all honour and praise. Before Him every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil 2:10,11). All of life revolves around Him and not us, for He alone is the center of everything.

We see ourselves as we truly are, sinners saved by grace and bestowed with a love so incredible, so undeserved. We are all imperfect and in need of His grace. Humility enables us to receive that grace, for God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6) and He will lift us up in due time (1 Peter 5:6).

Humility also enables us to love rather than to judge others. As we live in deep dependence on His grace, we grow in our capacity to love and serve others. We humble ourselves before one another and submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5:21). We recognize and affirm the dignity, beauty and worth of our fellow men, for it was for them too that Christ had come to die. We place others above ourselves and serve them in selfless love.

OUR AMBITION FOR HIS CALLING

God has a calling on each of our lives. It is a calling because it is an invitation to respond to His divine initiative of a glorious work He wants to do in and through us. Our calling is unshakeable, for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable (Rom 11:29).

The choices we make at each stage of life can take us closer to and more in sync with our calling, or further away and out of sync with our calling. We can

strive for fame, wealth, status, success or power, or even to actualize ourselves, our talents and our potential, but as Christ reveals, even if we find our life in this world, we will lose it, but if we lose our life for His sake, we will find it (Matt 10:39). We can live for ourselves, or say like Christ, “Not as I will, but as You will.” (Matt 26:39).

We therefore surrender our vain ambitions, our self-serving plans, our hidden political agendas and our striving for actualization at the foot of the Cross, giving up our lives for the sake of His calling. We seek first the kingdom of God (Matt 6:33), letting His dreams become our dreams, and living with the singularity of His call. In the words of the Wesley Covenant Prayer we say, “I am no longer my own, but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you, exalted for you, or brought low for you. Let me be full; let me be empty; let me have all things; let me have nothing. I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.”

As St Ignatius of Loyola counsels, we inquire at each stage, “What more does God want of me?” We are attentive to Him, not moving ahead of Him but watching and waiting for the ebb and flow of His prompting within our hearts. There are times He uses us for great and mighty things, but there are times He keeps us in obscurity and not for any significant ministry. In those times, we continue faithfully in the ministry of small things. As Zack Eswine puts it, “Almost anything in life that truly matters will require you to do small, mostly overlooked things, over a long period of time with him.” In all the seasons of life, we trust, we follow, we obey, and as Francis Chan says, ultimately “God will ensure my success in accordance with His plan, not mine.”

As we walk in His calling, we enter into His flow and find congruence, fulfillment and fullness in our lives, the actualization of our potentiality, the attainment of our destiny, the Life of God. He who has begun a good work in us will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Phil 1:6).

OUR SELF-ASSERTION FOR HIS AUTHORITY

We surrender our need to always assert ourselves and insist on our own autonomy and freedom. We don’t have to have it our way all the time. We don’t set ourselves up as the final authority on truth, morality or wisdom, for it is presumptuous to do so. We are not God, we don’t know it all, we are not always

right, and we need to humbly recognise that.

We repent of our spirit of rebellion and autonomy, and live in humble obedience and submission to Christ and His Word. We submit graciously to the authority of the spiritual and secular leaders He has placed over our lives. For there is no authority except from God and the authorities that exist are appointed by God (Rom 13:1).

As we surrender our self-assertion, we become restrained in word and action, tempered in expectations, and exhibit the quiet calm and gentle meekness of Christ even in the face of opposition. For His wisdom is meek, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, and full of mercy and good fruit (James 3:17).

As we take the yoke of His authority upon ourselves, we find that His yoke is easy and His burden is light; for under His rule, there is no more strife, and we find healing rest and joyous liberty for our souls (Matt 11:29,30). In the words of George Matheson, “Make me a captive Lord, and then I shall be free, force me to render up my sword and I shall a conqueror be.”

OUR SELF-RELIANCE FOR HIS EMPOWERMENT

We do not rely on our own efforts, place confidence in human ability, draw relief from false comforts, or put our hope in the false gods of this world, for these are what the Prophet Jeremiah calls “broken cisterns that can hold no water”, but instead we turn back to God, the “fountain of living water” (Jer 2:13).

We cease from prideful self-confidence and anxious striving and humbly recognize that unless the Lord builds the house, we labour in vain (Ps 127:1). We therefore build with Christ alone as our source and foundation (1 Cor 3:11). We abide in Him, as a branch abides in the vine, our hearts clinging to and resting in Him. Like a tree planted by the waters, we will not fear when heat comes or be anxious in the year of draught, and we will never cease from yielding fruit (Jer 17:7,8).

As the Apostle Paul puts it, Christ in us is like a treasure in earthen vessels, to demonstrate that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We may be hard pressed on every side but we will not be crushed, perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed, sharing in Christ's suffering and death that His life and power may be manifested in us (2

Cor 4:7-10).

We therefore do not live by our own power or might but by the eternal all-powerful Spirit of God (Zech 4:6). For His grace is sufficient for us and His strength is made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor 12:9). We are totally dependent on Him, trusting in His enabling in all the works of our hands, and continually drawing on His divine life in us. As Andy Stanley says, “Embracing your inability is a prerequisite to experiencing Christ’s ability.” For when we are weak in our strength, then we are strong in His (2 Cor 12:10).

CHAPTER FOUR

INTENTIONAL INTIMACY

The first of the Upward movements is **Appropriating Faith** in the finished work of Christ. The second of the Upward movements is **Total Surrender** to the Lordship of Christ. The third of the Upward movements is **Intentional Intimacy** with the person of Christ.

Intimacy with God is the ultimate destiny of man. In the words of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” This is a state of happiness found in eternal contemplation and perpetual communion with God. As Francis Chan says, “The greatest good in this earth is God. God’s one goal for us is Himself.” John Piper says, “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.”

Intimacy with God must be cultivated intentionally. We are at each moment as close to Him or as far from Him as we choose to be. We must develop an intentional consistent habit of engaging and encountering God not just daily but repeatedly throughout the day. We actively run towards Him and pursue to love Him, giving and sacrificing for Him. We choose to desire Him intensely. We choose to pay the price of faith and surrender to draw close to Him. The beautiful truth is that the more we give of ourselves to Him, the more we grow deeper and deeper in love for Him.

The early church fathers saw spiritual growth in three stages – purgation, illumination and union. In purgation, we struggle with and overcome sin. In illumination, we experience the supernatural revelation of God and His Word to us, illuminating our souls. And in union, we enter into true intimacy with God and become united with Him.

Using the three stages as a foundation, and learning from the spiritual disciplines and practices of the early church fathers, the following **12** spiritual activities set out a pathway where we can progress towards intimacy with God.

SILENCE AND SOLITUDE

We start our spiritual journey into intimacy with God by intentionally slowing down our busy, anxious and distracted lives and creating a sacred space

to be alone with God.

In the words of St Alphonsus Liguori, “To preserve recollection of spirit or the constant union of the soul with God, three things are necessary: solitude, silence and the recollection of the presence of God. In other words: seek solitude, practice silence, and rest in God by keeping the thought of His presence ever before you... For interior souls, solitude is the source of abundant delights, for it is there they look upon and contemplate the majesty and beauty of God... A life of solitude is not a life of sadness; it is rather a foretaste of Heaven; it is the beginning of the life of the blessed whose sole happiness is found in the love and praise of God.”

As Ruth Haley Barton puts it, “The longing for solitude is the longing for God... Solitude is a place. It is a place in time that is set apart for God and God alone...a place inside myself where God’s Spirit and my spirit dwell together in union.”

In this sanctuary of time, we run away to the garden of solitude to be with Him. Our soul draws near to Him in this sacred space. We are still and know that He is God (Ps 46:10). In solitude, we wait quietly for Him, for His Word and for His leading. In silence and stillness, we are freed from our addiction to the noise and the busyness and the many words. He waits patiently for us to be finally silent, for it is then that He speaks.

In solitude, we open our hearts to Him. For He stands at the door of our hearts and knocks, waiting for us to invite Him in and spend time with Him (Rev 3:20). He wants us to want to be with Him, to behold Him for no other reason than because we love Him, to love to be in His presence, undistracted, uninhibited and unrestrained, for it is there that He meets with us.

CONTEMPLATION

In the sacred space, we enter into the spiritual activity of contemplation. Contemplation seeks Him whom our soul loves (Song 1:7). The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines contemplative prayer as “the prayer of the child of God, of the forgiven sinner who agrees to welcome the love by which he is loved and who wants to respond to it by loving even more.”

Likewise, St Teresa of Avila says that contemplation is simply to fix our eyes on Jesus in a “loving gaze”, to look upon the One who always looks lovingly upon us. We move beyond words to an intimacy that requires no words.

We stay in His presence and behold Him within ourselves. As St Alphonsus puts it, “The most perfect method of keeping alive the thought of God's presence consists in beholding God within our very selves.” It is in such beholding that we are changed. Robert M’Cheyne says, “A glance of faith may save, but it is the gaze of faith which sanctifies.”

By love we attain directly to Him, by love we reach Him and hold Him close. We centre our heart, mind and soul wholly on Him, our inner compass reoriented towards Him our True North, our hearts revolving around Him our Divine Center. As we do so, He infuses our soul with the light of His loving presence and we become continually aware of His nearness. And our heart finds that which it has always longed for - the face and embrace of God.

STRUGGLE

As we move closer to God, we find that struggle is an unavoidable part of the spiritual life. Our walk with God does not take place only on mountaintops, but also in the valleys, not only in the joys but also in the pain, not only in the calm but also in the storm. There are high and low seasons in our lives and God in His sovereignty will take us through each of them just as He has always taken us through in the past.

St John of the Cross speaks of the “dark night of the soul”, a necessary part of the purgative stage where the soul experiences the necessary refining on the path to divine union. “This night produces in spiritual persons two kinds of darkness or purgation, corresponding to the two parts of man’s nature - namely, the sensual and the spiritual.”

First there is the “dark night of the senses” where God works in the soul of the believer to purge his heart from desire for sensual pleasures and helps the soul enjoy and draw spiritual pleasure from God and God alone. Here, “the soul is no longer attracted by sweetness and consolation, but by God only.”

Then, there follows the “dark night of the spirit”, where God “denudes the faculties, the affections and feelings, spiritual and sensual, leaving... the soul in the deepest affliction, bitterness and distress, withholding from it the former sweetness it had in spiritual things.” The soul is purged of all spiritual pride and avarice in preparation for its union with God. St John explains, “For this night is drawing the spirit away from its ordinary and common sense of things, that it may draw it towards the divine sense.”

As we go through the dark nights, we yield to the refining work of the Spirit. When we hit the wall of hurt, disappointment or uncertainty, and we come to the end of our natural limits, the only way is to go through that wall by surrendering ourselves completely to Him. We choose to trust Him even when we cannot see beyond tomorrow. St John puts it this way, “It behooves those who find themselves in this condition to take courage and persevere in patience. Let them not afflict themselves but put their confidence in God, who never forsakes those who seek Him with a pure and upright heart.”

We wrestle with God like Jacob did, refusing to let Him go until He blesses us (Gen 32:26). We patiently wait for His deliverance and trust His heart that His delays are not His denials. As St John says, “All they have to do is to keep their soul free... contenting themselves simply with directing their attention lovingly and calmly towards God.” In the darkness of the night, where there is no light, and our strength and senses fail, we can do nothing but to “smite upon that thick cloud of unknowing with a sharp dart of longing love”, to hold on to Him who holds on to us.

BROKENNESS

As we struggle, we come into a new brokenness. Brokenness is the recognition before God of our helplessness and spiritual poverty. As St John puts it, “The soul possess and retains more truly that excellent and necessary virtue of self-knowledge, counting itself as nothing and having no satisfaction in itself, because it sees that of itself it does and can do nothing.”

This is brokenness, that of ourselves we can do nothing. Instead, we embrace our vulnerability, our weaknesses, our woundedness, our fears, our incompleteness, our imperfection, our fallen and sinful humanity.

The Beatitudes give us a beautiful picture of the pathway of brokenness.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. (Matt 5:3-6)

The pathway of brokenness begins with the recognition of our spiritual poverty. This leads us to godly sorrow where we mourn our sinfulness. Such sorrow creates a meekness of spirit and a deep hunger for righteousness. In such brokenness, we no longer place any confidence in our own righteousness and

strength (Phil 3:8,9). But in repentant helplessness and holy discontent, we hunger and thirst for more of Him, crying out for His grace and revival.

It is to such brokenness that God fills with Himself, for a broken spirit and a contrite heart, He does not despise (Ps 51:17). It is to such brokenness that He hears from Heaven and forgives our sin and heals our land (2 Chron 7:14).

EUCCHARIST

Our brokenness and struggle lead us to the Cross. The Cross is the greatest expression of God's costly and unrestrained love for us.

We therefore participate as often as we can in the sacrament of the Eucharist, for it is the mystical event by which we celebrate God's love and re-experience the reality of the Cross time and again. As Reginald Garrigou-La-Grange puts it, "The Eucharist is thus the greatest of the sacraments, for it contains not only grace, but the Author of grace. It is the sacrament of love, because it is the fruit of love that gives itself and because it has for its principal effect to increase in us the love of God and of souls in God."

In the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit is poured out on the gifts of bread and wine, and they become for us the real and spiritual presence of the body and blood of Christ. The ordinary is infused with the sacred, the divine incarnated into the earthly. As we partake of the bread and wine, they are instruments through which we once again receive the healing and transforming grace that comes from the finished work of the Cross. Garrigou-La-Grange says, "The reception of the Eucharist is called Communion, or the intimate union of the heart of God with the heart of man, This union nourishes the soul and supernaturally vivifies it more and more, and so to speak deifies it, by increasing in it sanctifying grace, which is a participation in the inner life of God."

Our participation in the Eucharist therefore has a profound mystical and spiritual effect. In addition to being an instrument of grace to us personally, it also unites us with Christ and His Body the church, ordains us in our collective mission to the world, and assures us of final victory. We see this in the words of the Methodist Holy Communion liturgy, "May they (the bread and wine) be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by His blood. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet."

RESTEDNESS

From the finished work of the Cross, we enter into His divine restedness and immovable serenity, where our soul is at peace and rest, refreshed and renewed in His presence. We dwell in the secret place of the Most High (Ps 91:1) where He wipes every tear from our eyes, and calms every fear as we lie in His loving embrace. In the words of St Bernard of Clairvaux, “Rest is in Him alone. Man knows no peace in the world; but he has no disturbance when he is with God.”

The Sabbath has been made for man (Mark 2:27), to teach us that we have limits, that we are human, that we are physically, emotionally and spiritually finite. We can allow society and fear to push us to constantly live maxed out at breaking point all the time until we burn out or break down, or we can honour our own limits and intentionally create breathing space for our body, soul and spirit to be replenished and restored.

In rest, we recognize the necessary rhythm between work and recovery, the optimal tension between striving towards our goals and enjoying the now of the journey. In rest, we cease from strife, from worry, from busyness, from restlessness, and from hurriedness, and we yield to the ebb and flow of what Eugene Peterson calls God’s “unforced rhythms of grace” for our lives.

We can be rested in both activity and inactivity. For restedness is not laziness nor is it acquired only in inactivity. Restedness is the posture of the soul anchored in faith, hope and love. We live and work from a position of rest. Even in our activity, we are rested in Him. We rest because He is supreme and completely in control. We rest because He works while we rest. We rest because He is God, not us. We let go and let God.

ILLUMINATION

In restedness, we move to the next stage of progress in the spiritual life - illumination - the revelation of the truths of God and the Person of God Himself to the depths of our soul. We come daily before God to study and meditate on the Scriptures, not seeking just understanding but also communion and illumination. We cry with Moses, “Show me Your glory,” and God will cause His glory to pass by us and reveal Himself to us as He did to Moses, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth.” (Gen 33:18, 34:6) We will with unveiled faces behold the glory of the

Lord face to face, for God has shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:6).

As our spirit is still and sensitive to the Holy Spirit, our spiritual consciousness is awakened and the eyes of our hearts are enlightened (Eph 1:18) to hear His voice, sense His leading, and discern His wisdom. Deep calls to deep (Ps 42:7) as the Spirit speaks to us through His inner prompting, His consolation, His abiding joy and peace, and His convicting faith in our hearts. We discern the movements and stirrings of the Spirit within our hearts, allowing Him to guide us to the path that takes us closer to Christ and the deepening of His life in us. The Inner Teacher teaches us all things, testifying to our spirit our identity in Christ (Rom 8:16), and bringing us into remembrance of His Word (John 14:26). It is then that we will know the truth that sets us free to abundant life (John 8:32).

PRAYER

We pray continually and unceasingly (1 Thess 5:17). In prayer, we enter into a deep intimacy with God. We come to know Him and His heart, and are transformed by that encounter.

As Oswald Chambers puts it, “Prayer does not equip us for greater works. Prayer is the greater work.” Prayer is not the means to an end. It is the end in itself. It is to be our very lives. As Richard Foster says, “Of all spiritual disciplines prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father... To pray is to change. All who have walked with God have viewed prayer as the main business of their lives.... For those explorers in the frontiers of faith, prayer was no little habit tacked on to the periphery of their lives; it was their lives.”

Out of the life of prayer comes the privilege to move the very hand of God. As the angel said to Daniel, “Your words were heard, and I have come because of your words” (Dan 10:12), things in the spiritual realm were set in motion because Daniel prayed. In the mystery of divine condescension, God waits for us to pray and responds to our prayers. As John Wesley says, “God does nothing but in answer to prayer.” John Sanders says, “God has, in sovereign freedom, decided to make some of His actions contingent on our requests and actions. God elicits our free collaboration in His plans. Hence, God can be influenced by what we do and pray for, and God truly responds to what we do.” We are all priests unto our God, and as priests, we stand in the gap between God and man,

heaven and earth, life and death. Through our actions and our prayers, we co-labour with God to determine the outcome of events and bring salvation to the lost. Prayer has a direct and present effect in the world we live.

How then do we pray? We are to pray as the Spirit prays. From the heart of the Spirit come prayers of love, intercession and supplication (Rom 8:26). As we enter into the prayer stream of the Spirit, His prayers resonate within us and move our hearts. When we pray as the Spirit prays, we pray God's heart back to Him and move His hand to bring forth His will on earth as it is in heaven.

The Spirit hovers over us, waiting to give us dreams and visions. To activate miracles and healings in our lives, we must first hear the Word of God, for faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Rom 10:17). By this we attain to the “faith of God” (Mark 11:22), the certainty that God has when He looks at the world, that all things are subordinate to His will and His power. With the faith of God, we then receive the vision of that miracle or healing from the Spirit. We pray that vision until we possess it within our hearts and birth it in our entire being. We then speak forth and command that miracle or healing into existence and it will be so.

Jesus promises us exactly this, that when we say to the mountains of opposition and challenges, “Be removed,” and do not doubt in our hearts but believe that the things we say will be done, we will have whatever we say. For whatever things we ask when we pray, we believe that we have received them, and we will have them (Mark 11:22-24). This is prayer that originates in the spiritual realm and materializes in the physical realm. This is the prayer that can change everything.

WORSHIP

Prayer leads us to worship. When Moses asked God what shall he tell the people His name is, God answered, “YHWH. I am that I am” (Ex 3:14). This is a powerful mysterious revelation, for it reveals a God who exists, the ultimate, eternal, objective, unchanging reality to whom all of creation subjects and conforms. This is a God who is uncreated, who owes His existence solely to Himself, who is totally and completely self-determined. This is a God who is the first mover, the source from whom all life and power and authority in creation flow. As John Piper puts it, “Sometimes we need to pause and realize that the end of all our questions terminate in God, and we worship.”

The Cross opens the way for us to worship. When Christ cried, “It is

finished”, the sacrifice of the perfect Lamb of God was complete. The veil in the temple separating us from the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom, opening the way for us to enter into the *shekinah* glory, the manifest dwelling presence of God. We can now enter into the Holy of Holies, where the heavens are open to us. We fall prostrate before Him, literally embodying the meaning of the Greek word for worship - *proskuneo*. We love Him who first loved us, with all our heart and soul and mind, exalting, adoring and honouring Him who sits on the throne. We are enraptured with fascination and awe at His transcendent majesty and goodness.

In the words of William Temple, “Worship is the submission of all of our nature to God. It is the quickening of the conscience by his holiness, the nourishment of mind with his truth, the purifying of imagination by his beauty, the opening of the heart to his love, the surrender of will to his purpose - all this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable.”

It is God’s desire that every time we worship, it becomes for us a transformational encounter. In true worship, we encounter His glorious presence and come into a deep ecstatic experience of the Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And it is through that encounter that our heart is renewed and we are changed, transformed and healed.

UNION

Union with God or *theosis*, is the ultimate stage of the spiritual life. Positionally, we are already united with Christ. However it is through the process of Appropriating Faith, Total Surrender and Intentional Intimacy that we ascend into an experiential reality of this union. The journey of spiritual formation can therefore be described as a move from position to experience, the progressive realization in experience of who we already are because of our position in Christ.

The soul in the unitive state enters into a mystical union with God, a union so intimate and strong that it is best described as a “spiritual marriage”. We enter into the Divine presence, where the soul is completely infused with the awareness that He is near us, around us and within us. As the Catholic Encyclopedia puts it, “What constitutes mystical union is that the spiritual impression by which [God](#) manifests His presence makes that presence felt in the way of an interior something with which the [soul](#) is penetrated; it is a sensation

of absorption, of fusion, of immersion... Thus it is that in mystical union we feel [God](#) within us and in a very simple way.”

In mystical union, we enter into the Divine Life. We abide in Christ and He in us (John 15:4). We become partakers of the Divine nature (2 Pet 1:4) and share in the life of God, becoming one with Him in spirit (1 Cor 6:17), transcendent in consciousness and being. As David Hester puts it, *theosis* is “the gradual process by which a person is renewed and unified so completely with God that he becomes by grace what God is by nature... All that God is, except for an identity in being, one becomes when one is deified by grace.” C. S. Lewis says, “If we let Him, He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, dazzling, radiant, immortal creatures, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to Him perfectly His own boundless power and delight and goodness.”

From the Divine Life, we enter into the Divine fellowship of the Holy Trinity. We stand in the position of Christ in relation to the Trinity, entering into the *perichoresis* of the Godhead - the fellowship of mutual self-giving love between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the words of Cornelius Plantinga, “The persons within God exalt each other, commune with each other, and defer to one another... Each divine person harbours the others at the center of his being. In constant movement of overture and acceptance, each person envelops and encircles the others... God’s interior life (therefore) overflows with regard for others.” As the Son enjoys the intimate fellowship of the Father and the Spirit, receiving the love of the Father and the power of the Spirit, so we too enjoy these as we stand in Him. We are invited to join that Divine dance, for that is what we were created for. As Timothy Keller says, “He must have created us to invite us into the dance, to say: If you glorify me, if you center your entire life on me, if you find me beautiful for who I am in myself, then you will step into the dance, which is what you are made for.” We step into the intimate fellowship within the eternal Godhead. Oh transcendent wonder. How can we as created beings even fathom the wondrousness and gloriousness of it all?

MATURE LOVE

Our union with God births forth perfect and mature love. Our soul responds to the immeasurable depths of His love for us with a deep and mature love for Him. St Bernard of Clairvaux outlined four stages of love that we progress through as we climb the ladder of divine ascent into the heart of God. Firstly, to

love self for self's sake. Secondly, to love God for self's sake. Thirdly, to love God for God's sake. And fourthly, to love self for God's sake.

In union with God, we mature from loving God for self's sake, for our own interest and benefit, to loving for God for His own sake. We seek no merit or reward from loving Him, for to love Him is its own greatest reward. As St Bernard puts it, "True love is its own satisfaction. It has its reward, but that reward is the object beloved... He has no gift for them better than Himself. He gives Himself as prize and reward. He is the refreshment of the holy soul, the ransom of those in captivity."

In maturity of love, we love Him with all our heart and mind and soul and strength (Luke 10:27). We love Him above all else and all competing loves, having no other gods before Him (Ex 20:3). We are faithful to Him till the end. We do not abandon Him or lose faith in Him in times of trial or trouble or when He seems silent, but we hold steadfast in love to Him even in the dark night of the soul.

Christ becomes the supreme object of our lives. Our love for Him draws and absorbs every other activity unto itself, and we do all things out of love for Him. Every deed is motivated by that love and every event an opportunity to spur us to love Him more, for as St Ignatius puts it, we see all things as "calling forth in us a more loving response to our life forever with Him."

It is then we are ready to move to the highest and most profound stage of love described by St Bernard, to love ourselves for God's sake. In the words of St Bernard, "To reach this state is to become godlike. As a drop of water poured into wine loses itself, and takes the color and savor of wine; or as a bar of iron, heated red-hot, becomes like fire itself, forgetting its own nature, or as the air, radiant with sun-beams, seems not so much to be lit as to be light itself, so for those who are holy all human affections melt away by some incredible mutation into the will of God." In the torrent of His love, there is no longer any room for self-loathing or inferiority, for we see ourselves as God sees us, and love ourselves as God loves us. In such revelation, we are healed, formed and made whole.

WALK IN THE SPIRIT

We emerge from our sanctuary of intimacy with God and bring our union with God into the activities of everyday life. This is the final fruit of the unitive life. We walk in perfect conformity to His will, being transformed into the

likeness of Christ. This is what the bible calls *walking in the Spirit*. Paul exhorts us that just as we live in the Spirit, so let us also walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:25).

To walk in the Spirit is to respond continually to the impulse, prompting and enabling of the Spirit, to be always conscious of His movement and what He is doing in our lives. For those who are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God (Rom 8:14). Just as we have received Christ, so we are to walk in Him (Col 2:6).

As we walk in the Spirit, the Spirit leads us to put to death the misdeeds of the body (Rom 8:13-14) and transforms us into the likeness of Christ. The Apostle Paul unequivocally states that it is only when we walk in the Spirit that we are able to not fulfill the desires of the flesh (Gal 5:16), but instead be empowered to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law (Rom 8:4). We will naturally set our minds on the things of the Spirit, which brings life and peace (Rom 8:5,6). This is the secret to holiness or perfection, which in the words of John Wesley, is “being cleansed from sin, from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, and by consequence, being endued with those virtues which were in Christ Jesus; being so renewed in the image of our mind, as to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.”

As He who calls us is holy, we also are to be holy in all our conduct (1 Pet 1:15). The Old Testament Hebrew word for “holy” is *kadosh*, which means “special” or “elevated above the ordinary”, while the New Testament Greek word is *hagios*, which means to “set apart”. The result of those who walk in the Spirit is that their conduct shall be set apart and above the ordinary in purity and good deeds. This is evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit which is naturally produced in our lives – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and temperance (Gal 5:22-23).

This is how virtue is produced, not by human effort or habitual practice of human will, which are ineffective against the indwelling sin, but by the power of the Holy Spirit to make us holy. As we walk in Him, virtue springs forth from the Divine Life in us. He orders our every thought, desire and action, and we act in perfect harmony and coordination with Him.

CHAPTER FIVE

SELF-MASTERY

The next stage of spiritual formation requires us to look inwards at ourselves – our discipline, our mindsets and our habits. This is the **Inward** movement of **Self-Mastery**.

While spiritual growth is ultimately the initiative and work of the Holy Spirit, our cooperation and diligence in the growth process is essential. This is the role Self-Mastery plays in spiritual formation and the growth of the spiritual life. In the Upward movements of Appropriating Faith, Total Surrender and Intentional Intimacy, we move closer towards God in right relationship with Him. But this cannot be sustained unless we allow the Spirit to change the mindsets and habits by which we live our lives.

We must respond to the saving initiative of God by choosing to take personal responsibility for our growth. We must also build vision, values, strategy, discipline and courage if we are to achieve and sustain that growth. We must learn to master ourselves, to discipline ourselves and to manage our emotions, our motivations and our responses. For these are the dispositions and postures of the heart, mind and soul required for transformation and growth.

A lifetime of study and research has led me to distill **12** principles of **Self-Mastery** that are foundational to the growth of the transformational life.

CHOICE

In the words of Viktor Frankl, “When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves... Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

No matter what happens to us, good or bad, we can choose our response. As Tal Ben-Shahar puts it, we “choose to choose.” We don’t have to respond in the way the circumstances are forcing us to. We can choose to respond in a way that is positive and constructive. We can choose to respond with faith and not fear. In

all things, we have the power of choice, the power to choose our destiny. As Aristotle says, “Choice, not chance, determines your destiny.”

As John Maxwell puts it, “Most people don’t lead their lives, they accept their lives.” The weak simply let life happen to them and therefore feel powerless. The strong take ownership and responsibility for their lives. They choose the direction and destiny of their lives.

Taking responsibility means we surrender our sense of entitlement, we stop blaming others for our problems, we stop seeing ourselves as victims and we stop making excuses for our lives. We become intentional about our growth and progress. We decide to take real action to achieve personal and spiritual transformation. We do not focus on what we cannot change or control but what we can change and control. If we focus on things beyond our control like the past, others or circumstances, what Charles Duhigg calls an “external locus of control”, we feel helpless and hopeless; but when we focus on things within our “internal locus of control”, which is to change ourselves and the way we respond, this brings hope and empowerment to change the future.

VISION

Having made the choice to grow, the next step is to find a compelling vision of what our end-state should be. A vision is a desired state that inspires passion and gives purpose to life. It is that something that draws us and gives us hope that tomorrow can be better than today. It is that passion that excites and energises us to get up in the morning each day.

Martin Luther King Jr stood before a quarter of a million people on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and uttered those famous words “I have a dream”. He then gave his life for the fulfillment of that dream and generation was changed.

We all need to find our dream, our vision for our lives, the destiny for which we were created, and then we live and give our lives for that dream. For it is when our lives are infused with a greater purpose that we find joy. As George Bernard Shaw says, “This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one... I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. (Life) is a splendid torch which I have a hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it over to future generations.”

The sad thing however is that many people live their lives pursuing other

people's dreams, dreams that are not their own. They live for what others or society say they should want, but never finding out what they really want themselves.

To find our vision, we need to strip away the layers of deceptive desires that stem from the false self we have created in response to the world, and then search deep within ourselves to discover the true self that God has created us to be. Only then will we find who we really are, what in our heart of hearts we are really passionate about, what makes us come alive, the story that will be our life. As Howard Thurman says, "Ask yourself what makes you come alive and then go do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."

The amazing thing is that when we find our own true vision, we will find the heartbeat of God within our own hearts. For He has placed His desires, His heart, His calling deep within our hearts. We will discover that our highest dreams, our greatest passion and our deepest desires actually coincide with His. We will also find that our gifts, our abilities, our personality and our experiences have all been orchestrated by God for the fulfillment of this vision. Our deepest desires therefore lead us to Him and the fulfillment of His desires for the world.

Because of this, we dare to dream great dreams for Him and live passionately for what He has placed in our hearts. Then, with that vision of what we want to achieve and present to God at the end of our lives, we work backwards to form our values and our strategy. We always keep our eyes on the big picture and live each day with that end in mind, asking ourselves at each point of decision, what should be done in light of our vision and dream.

VALUES

From our vision, we then determine and order our values and priorities - what is truly important to us. There are many values we can have but we need to consciously choose and order values that will enable us to achieve our vision, and de-prioritize or eliminate values that work against it.

As a starting point, our values must be God-centered. We seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt 6:33), laying up our treasures in heaven where moth and rust cannot destroy and thieves cannot break in and steal. For where our treasure is, there our heart will also be (Matt 6:20,21). We also learn to "number our days" (Ps 90:12), to live with the constant recognition that we have limited time here on earth. Above all, we seek to love God and love our neighbour as ourselves (Matt 22:37-39), which means to grow in right

relationship with God, with others, and with ourselves.

Having clear values enables us to prioritize and invest our time, energy and resources in the things that are of ultimate importance. Our values give us the strength to say no to things that are good but simply not God's best for us. We simplify our lives and strip away things that are not important to our vision. We cease from activities that are not necessarily bad, but not necessary and only distract us from our vision. As Stephen Covey says, "You have to decide what your highest priorities are and have the courage to say no to other things. The way to do that is by having a bigger yes inside. The enemy of the best is often the good."

As we live according to our values, we multiply and maximize the time we have, creating what Tim Kasser calls "time affluence", which is "the feeling that one has sufficient time to pursue activities that are personally meaningful, to reflect, to engage in leisure." We are able to transcend the rat-race, the pressure and the competition, to free ourselves from the tyranny of the urgent and the enslavement of busyness. We live a centered, paced life, grounded in the divine center that is Christ alone.

STRATEGY

Based on our vision and values, we then construct and calibrate our strategy. Vision determines the 'why', values determine the 'how', and strategy determines the 'what' - what we are actually going to have to do point by point, day by day, to get to our desired state.

Reality must be the starting point of our strategy. We start by facing the hard truth and brutal facts of the situation. As James Stockdale puts it, "You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end – which you can never afford to lose – with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they may be." We accept and confront reality as it is, not as we want it to be. It is from this point that we grow and improve to where we want to be.

Our strategy is therefore the life-plan or method that will take us from where we are to where we want to be. To achieve growth in our relationship with God, with others and with ourselves requires a theological and spiritual formation framework, a personal growth strategy. The early church fathers like St Benedict of Nursia developed what they called the "Rules of Life". These are rituals of spiritual disciplines, practices and conduct that create an intentional pattern to

provide structure and guidance to our daily life. Strategies are not static but will develop and evolve as God teaches us more through the journey of life. We constantly adapt and refine our strategy as we learn and grow.

As we move towards our vision and goal, we do not worry about things that are beyond our control or how large and impossible the whole challenge is, for this will only make us anxious and stressed. Instead, we build empowering habits and rituals into our lives. We focus on the process, the disciplined execution of our strategy, and on making continual progress by growing a little more every day. As Stephen Guise says, “The only way to get results is to go through whatever process leads to them. Instead of expecting perfect results, the “imperfectionist” expects perfect progress and consistency.”

The five movements outlined in this book precisely aim to set up such a strategy. In the context of spiritual formation, the daily disciplined practice of the principles of Appropriating Faith, Total Surrender, Intentional Intimacy, Self-Mastery and Ministering Leadership outlined in this book places us in a position where the transformational grace of God can operate in us.

We need to develop a ritual where we intentionally go through the five movements each day, as this will empower and sustain us at a peak spiritual and emotional state throughout the day and optimize the transformational power of the Spirit in our lives.

SELF-AWARENESS

Starting with the hard truth means starting with the hard truth about ourselves. As Daniel Goldman puts it, “Self-awareness is ability to monitor our inner world – our thoughts and feelings.” It is the keystone of emotional intelligence. Daniel Siegel calls it “mindsight”, “a kind of focused attention that allows us to see the inner workings of our own mind.”

To cultivate self-awareness, we start by searching our hearts each day under the loving examination of the Holy Spirit to ascertain where we are in relation to God, to ourselves and to others. We review the day, looking for times where God has been present and times where we have left Him, ignored Him or even rejected Him.

We allow God to strip away our false self, our self-deception, our illusions and our pretensions, and we connect with our true self, to see ourselves as we truly are, as God sees us. For His Word discerns the thoughts and intents of our

heart, and all things are opened to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account (Heb 4:12,13).

We observe ourselves in moments of adversity and crisis, for it is in such situations that our true self emerges. It is easy to be positive and kind when things are going well, but how we act when things are not going well is a true test of who we really are.

We are also humble and teachable to accept feedback from those whom God has placed to speak into our lives. We invite and are open to all feedback even though they may not be given positively or with good intention. We suspend automatic judgment and discern what we can learn from them without becoming defensive or getting personal. To close ourselves from negative feedback only hinders us from becoming the best possible person we can be.

It is through the above avenues that we are able to see our true self. We see the adaptive patterns of behaviour we have developed to protect ourselves from things we have associated with pain from our past. Our hidden sins and weaknesses are brought to light and we come to an awareness of our true feelings, our underlying motives and beliefs, and our false dependencies and idols. As Siegel says, it “enables us to get ourselves off the autopilot of ingrained behaviors and habitual responses, and moves us beyond the reactive emotional loops we all have a tendency to get trapped in.” It is only through self-awareness that we are then able to take steps towards transformation and freedom.

RESILIENCE

Having a good strategy is not enough. We must also have the resilience, discipline, focus and commitment to relentlessly execute our strategy if we are to achieve our vision. And we build resilience by training ourselves to first be physically disciplined, in our physical training regime, our diet and our sleep, for this will then flow into and build discipline in our lives generally. As someone once said, “How we do anything is how we do everything.”

Resilience enables consistent consecutive performance. We build empowering rituals and positive habits, and take small consistent steps on a daily basis in the direction of our end-goal. As Anthony Robbins says, “It is not what we do once in a while that shapes our lives, but what we do consistently.” Will Durant likewise says, “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an

act but a habit.”

When we face obstacles and adversity, we recognize that we cannot go back to the past, we can only go through the present challenge. As Christians, our endurance is inspired by hope, the hope of glory, for our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal weight of glory that far outweighs them all (2 Cor 4:17). We show diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that we might through faith and patience inherit the promises (Heb 6:11,12).

We train ourselves to always be thoroughly prepared, to perform consistently at our best all the time, to overcome our weaknesses and attain competence and mastery, and to peak perform in every situation, despite pressure, fear or discouragement.

We master the art of having “good bad days”, to do well even when we are having a bad day. We don’t fall apart but fall back on the basics of our faith, our values and our strategy, and have the tenacity to recover and push on.

We direct our focus and concentrate all our resources on achieving our goals. Our actions are driven by the joy and pleasure of achieving our vision, destiny and dreams, and the desire to avoid the pain and regret of not achieving them. We surrender our immediate desires for our ultimate ones, what we want now for what we really want.

We keep on doing what is right even when we don’t feel like it. As Albert E.N. Gray says, “The common denominator of success – the secret of success of every person who has ever become successful – lies in the fact that he or she formed the habit of doing things that failures don’t like to do.”

COURAGE

It is in adversity that heroes are born, for they are those who dare greatly. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy.”

As Theodore Roosevelt says, “The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly... who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly.”

Heroes dare greatly because they are able respond differently to fear. They

do not see fear as something to be avoided or removed, but accept fear as part of life and train themselves to perform and thrive despite of it. As Nelson Mandela puts it, “Courage is not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it.” Many that have come before us have risen up to heroic living despite great adversity and become people of whom the world was not worthy (Heb 11:38).

In the midst of adversity and fear, we rise up with heroic courage and conquer the very fears that hold us back. We throw off everything that hinders us from finishing the race that God has set before us. We do not look at man or this world for we will be discouraged. Instead, we fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy set before Him, endured the Cross, scorning its shame and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb 12:1,2). For there will then arise within us the courage and faith to live and dare greatly.

Most of us work hard to hang on to what we have rather than take the risks necessary to get what we really want. To succeed, we must dare to risk, dare to step out of our comfort zone. As Abraham Marslow puts it, “You will either step forward into growth or you will step backward into safety.”

Every great endeavour will bring the risk of loss. As Andy Crouch says, “The vulnerability that leads to flourishing requires risk, which is the possibility of loss – the chance that when we act, we will lose something we value.” But the presence of God is in the places of risk, when we are willing to step out and dare great things for Him. It may be frightening but it is surely the only way to live.

When we really stand for something, when we really believe in something, we will rise back up again and again each time we are hit by setbacks and failures. For life is a game where we are dealt many hands, and we must have the resilience to stay in the game, the courage to press on, and the grit to keep showing up to play every hand we are dealt.

As Mandela says, “May our choices reflect our hopes, not our fears.” We live a life that reaches towards our hopes and dreams rather than spend our life running away from the things we fear. Instead of asking ourselves, “What if I fail?” we ask ourselves, “How can I be transformed by God to transform the world?”

We shoot for the stars and refuse to compromise or settle for second-best. We have the courage to live true to ourselves, to be who we are called to be, even if it means encountering challenges and living on the edge. And then one day, we will stand before God at the end of our lives and say with William

Borden, “No reserves. No retreats. No regrets.”

ANCHORING

Emotions are like a river - when they are kept within right boundaries, they are powerful and positive, but when they overflow, they become destructive and incapacitating. We can cultivate and maintain a positive emotional state by anchoring our emotions in God. Our hope in God is an anchor to the soul, firm and secure (Heb 6:19).

To maintain a peak state of faith, optimism and confidence in God, we condition our thoughts and emotions through the use of three key anchors - verbal confession and visualization of God’s Word, praise and worship, and deliberate physical posture, all of which are anchored on the Word of God and its revelation of who we are in Christ.

When we are hit by a wave of negative emotions, we pause, take a deep breath, and discern if these emotions stem from wrong assumptions or false associations with things that have caused us pain in the past. We then renounce these false associations and wrong assumptions, and by God’s power break their control over our emotions. We verbally confess out loud and visualize the truth of God as revealed in His Word, the truth of who we are in Christ. As our hearts hear the spoken Word and see the reality of God, faith will arise from within (Rom 10:17) and dispel our negative emotions.

We also immerse ourselves in praise and worship, for God-anointed worship has the power to minister the truths of God into our souls when nothing else seems to work. Music and words sung in faith have incredible power to sooth our gloom, lift our hearts out of despair, re-kindle our faith to believe once again, and re-inspire our hope for greater things.

Lastly, we deliberately adopt a physical posture of optimism and confidence that is reflective of our victorious position in Christ. We stand upright with heads held high and arms opened wide in celebration of anticipated victory. This immediately lifts our emotional state because the posture we adopt physically impacts our posture emotionally and spiritually.

Together, our verbal confession and visualization of God’s Word, our praise and worship, and our physical posture all combine to anchor our emotional state in Him.

POSITIVITY

Everything that happens to us is subject to our perception and interpretation of it, the meaning we ascribe to it. As Shakespeare says, “There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.” Viktor Frankl puts it this way, “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing - to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.” No matter what happens to us, we can choose how we see things. The way we perceive and interpret what is happening then impacts our emotions and even our physical health.

The powerful truth is that we can change the way we perceive and interpret something simply by changing what we focus on. We can focus and dwell on what is good and true and praiseworthy (Phil 4:8), or we can focus on the bad and all that is wrong with the world.

When we don’t get what we want or something happens that isn’t the way we would have liked it, the pessimist, as Martin Seligman puts it, sees it as permanent, pervasive and personal; but the optimist sees it as temporary and isolated, and does not take it personally. Faced with the same set of circumstances, the pessimist becomes discouraged and depressed, while the optimist remains happy and joyful.

Because of who we are in Christ, and the fact that we have a great God who loves us and has a calling and purpose for our lives, we have every reason to be optimists. We do not see things negatively out of fear, unbelief and mistrust, or always assume the worse case scenario, but we see things positively through the eyes of faith and hope, seeing good and finding pleasure in the things that have been given to us. We don’t become negative about stress but reinterpret meaning into our anxious situations and reframe our anxiety into excitement, thereby energizing ourselves for challenge and growth.

We also surround ourselves with positive people and create a positive environment for ourselves. We don’t allow the naysayers, worriers, complainers and criticizers to drag us down. We speak positive affirming words to others and ourselves. We do not require things to be perfect, but in setbacks, challenges, failures and imperfections, we ask ourselves positive and empowering questions of what new possibilities are there for improvement and growth, and what opportunities are there for us to shine and succeed. Above all, we trust that in all things, God works for our ultimate good and His ultimate glory (Rom 8:28).

Positivity should permeate our entire lives. When we are positive in our thinking, our imagination and our words, this brings optimism and positive emotions, and positively impacts our dispositional state, our abilities and our physical health.

MINDFULNESS

We live joyfully alive at each moment of the day. In the words of St Irenaeus, “The glory of God is the human being fully alive.” We are attentive to and celebrate the present, embracing the fullness of all the emotions and experiences that life brings. We redeem the present, seizing the day and making the most out of every opportunity (Eph 5:16). We remember the positive graces of the past day, appreciating them with gladness and gratitude in our hearts to God.

We pause to savor our positive experiences and little moments of joy, and as Rick Hanson puts it, we “take in the good”. We rejoice always, giving thanks in all things and every circumstance (1 Thess 5:16,18). We see the blessing and action of God in all things, and as St Ignatius says, we “find God in all things”.

We develop what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls “flow experiences”, where we are fully immersed and absorbed in what we are doing, with energized focus, full involvement and enjoyment in the process of the activity.

We cherish our memories, but do not live in regret of the past. We move towards our vision, but also delight in the now of the journey. We do not postpone our happiness to the future or worry about what may happen, but we are completely happy where we are right now. As Tal Ben-Shahar puts it, “Happiness is the experience of climbing towards the peak.”

We do not make ourselves unhappy by narrowly defining what it takes to make us happy, chasing after unrealistic perfectionism, or predicating our happiness on things we cannot control. We choose to enjoy the things we do and do the things we enjoy. We turn work into play, love whatever we do, and find joy and fun in them. We are also fully present and attentive to others when we are with them, appreciating them and giving ourselves fully to them.

We look forward in optimistic hope to the joy and pleasure of the blessings that God has in store for us. For He has prepared a table before us in the presence of our enemies. He anoints our head with oil and our cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives and we will

dwell in the House of the Lord forever (Ps 23:5-6).

ADAPTABILITY

We have the adaptability, flexibility, creativity and resourcefulness of mind to respond to new challenges and situations. We refuse to accept that our abilities and circumstances are unchangeable, but we adopt what Carol Dweck calls a “growth mindset”. This is the belief that talent, intelligence and ability are not inherent and static, but what we are born with is only the starting point, and that it can grow and develop through persistence, effort and hard work. Failure is not perceived as lack of talent, intelligence or ability, but an inevitable part of the process of growth. Through each setback and challenge, we learn and grow a little more. We believe that through hard work and continual improvement, we can be better tomorrow than we are today.

We therefore yield to the leading of the Spirit in the midst of uncertainty and change, allowing Him to bring us to new areas we have not gone before. The Spirit then molds and changes us in a process of continual improvement. When we enter into a new environment, we observe deeply the unwritten rules and power dynamics of the environment, respecting and adapting to them, and using them to our advantage. We discern the broader inter-connecting landscape, anticipating tomorrow’s change by responding proactively today, and having the courage to abandon past practices that hold us back.

We plan for the “what ifs”, the obstacles that will inevitably come our way. We create multiple pathways to our goals and transform what life throws at us. When one pathway does not work or when we hit setbacks, we let go of self-orientation and pride, open our minds to the possibility that we could be wrong, embrace the uncertainty without needing to rush to a conclusion, and curiously ask ourselves new questions of possibilities. As Norman Vincent Peale puts it, “Become a possibilitarian. No matter how dark things seem to be or actually are, raise your sights and see possibilities— always see them, for they’re always there.”

We are always observing, always on the lookout for new pathways, new ideas and new opportunities to improve how we do things. We are open and teachable to try new methods. We embrace diverse feedback and explore, socialize and collaborate, drawing knowledge and expertise from varied sources. We have the fluidity of mind to explore within and beyond our existing bodies of knowledge and paradigms, looking for connections we have not seen before, and

creatively linking and combining previous silos in innovative ways that overcomes our constraints. As Anthony Robbins says, “The defining factor (for success) is never resources, it’s resourcefulness.”

CRAFTSMANSHIP

We live and work with a spirit of craftsmanship, mastery and excellence, becoming staggeringly good and the absolute best at what we do. We identify the unique and valuable skills that we have, and then intensely pursue and develop them to meet a specific need in our organization, our church or our society. In doing so, we add such value to those around us that we become indispensable, or as Cal Newport puts it, “so good they can’t ignore you”.

According to Newport, people who focus on their passion focus on what the world can offer them, whereas people who adopt a craftsman mindset focus on what they can offer to the world.

How do we build craftsmanship? We do so firstly by modeling the best. We start by imitating Christ, for there is none more perfect and effective than the Son of God Himself. We also do not despise tradition but return to the ancient paths (Jer 6:16), learning from those who have come before us. We strategically seek out mentors and role models in the different areas of our lives, those who are already at the very top of their game. We also submit to the leaders and authority figures whom God has placed over our lives. We adopt a posture of humility and place ourselves under their apprenticeship and tutelage to learn from and model them. We connect with them and leverage on them to accelerate our learning and growth. We model their faith, internalize their wisdom and observe their techniques. We value learning above all else, and choose paths that will give us the most opportunities and the widest variety of skills to learn.

Secondly, we build craftsmanship through deliberate practice. To master a craft requires thousands of hours of diligent and deliberate practice. It is talent plus hard work that brings mastery. Great achievements do not come through natural genius or talent, but through conscious effort, practice and discipline. We courageously experiment, refine and improve upon the knowledge and skills we have learnt, and then we practice diligently until we perfect our craft. In the words of Robert Greene, “Anyone who would spend ten years absorbing the techniques and conventions of their field, trying them out, mastering them, exploring and personalizing them, would inevitably find their authentic voice and give birth to something unique and expressive.”

Thirdly, we build craftsmanship by a deep and intense focus in our work. When we engage in a task, we are completely focused and deeply concentrated on whatever we are doing. We block out other distractions and remove any residue of attention from previous tasks, fully focusing on the task at hand. As Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi says, “The mark of a person who is in control of consciousness is the ability to focus attention at will, to be oblivious to distractions, to concentrate as long as it takes to achieve a goal, and not longer.” This is the focus we strive to achieve.

Through modeling, deliberate practice and deep focus, we achieve craftsmanship, excellence and mastery in our work and our lives. It is then that we enter into the enjoyment and flow of life, where our ever-increasing capabilities rise to meet our ever-increasing challenges. As Csikszentmihalyi puts it, “Enjoyment comes at a very specific point: whenever the opportunities for action perceived by the individual are equal to his or her capabilities...By stretching skills, by reaching toward higher challenges, such a person becomes an increasingly extraordinary individual.”

CHAPTER SIX

MINISTERING LEADERSHIP

The culmination of the Upward and Inward movements is the **Outward** movement towards others in **Ministering Leadership**. Appropriating Faith, Total Surrender, Intentional Intimacy and Self-Mastery will ultimately lead to Ministering Leadership. Spiritual formation is at the end of the day always outward focused. The grace of God is given to us for others (Eph 3:2), that we may use what God has given to us to be a channel of blessing unto others. Love for God will lead to love for neighbour. Action stems from contemplation. The result of faith is always the work of loving others.

The greatest love we can show to others is to lead them into the saving grace of God and help them fulfill God's calling and destiny for their lives. We are all leaders in some way because we have impact and influence over others. As leaders, we are called to bless and minister to those we lead, and to develop and equip them to reach their full potential in Jesus Christ. Godly leadership does not glorify itself or use its position for its own benefit, but sees itself as a servant and minister of all. Such leadership is diametrically opposite to the leadership we commonly see in the world today. Such leadership however can only come from a heart that is secure in God and the knowledge of who we are in Him. We see this in Christ, who "knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God," humbled Himself, knelt down and washed the feet of His disciples (Jn 13:3-5). It is only when we know who we are in Christ that we can kneel and serve those we lead.

In ministering leadership we partner with Christ in His ministry of love and healing to our loved ones, His work of sanctification and equipping of our churches, and His mission of redemption to our world. For as Jesus says, whatever we do to the least of His brethren, we do it to Him (Matt 25:40). Our ministry extends beyond the local church to what Peter Wagner calls the "extended church" - our workplace, society and secular institutions. We are called to be what Wagner calls "workplace apostles". As Wagner puts it, "A job becomes a ministry when God leads you into the arena and you take the voice of God, the anointing of God and biblical principles with you as you work, minister and serve others in whichever ways you gifts, your experience and your learned skill sets allow you to function."

From the journey of my own experience in ministry and leadership, I have learnt that there are **12** foundational principles of ministering leadership. These principles apply to our leadership both in the context of the local church and the extended church of our workplaces, society and secular institutions.

GROWTH

The first principle of leadership is growth. In the words of Stephen Covey says, “Private victories precede public victories.” We cannot make an impact externally until we have grown internally. We cannot be used by God to transform the world unless we ourselves have been transformed. As Gandhi says, “You must be the change you want to see in the world.” God can only use us to minister effectively if we ourselves are growing. We can lead others only where we have first gone ourselves. In the words of J. Oswald Sanders, “A true leader influences others spiritually only because the Spirit works in and through him to a greater degree than in those he leads.”

We do not neglect our gifts, but give ourselves completely to our growth, so that our progress may be visible and evident to all (1 Tim 4:14,15). As Abraham Lincoln says, “If I had two hours to chop down a tree, I would spend the first hour sharpening my axe.” We sharpen our axe by taking care of our soul and investing in our spiritual formation. Edmund Chan says, “Take care of the depth of your life and let God take care of the breadth of your ministry.” We work conscientiously to develop the gifts, abilities and talents that God has given us. We identify our greatest strengths and use them daily. We cultivate a habit of life-long learning. We are always growing, always progressing. As Stephen Covey says, “Your most important work is always ahead of you, never behind you.”

As we abide in Him and He in us, we bear much fruit (John 15:5). We grow spiritually and are transformed by His power. We no longer minister out of the flesh, but as Dennis and Jen Clark put it, we minister “out of the overflow of what Christ has ministered to us.”

CHANGE

We are called to be salt and light to transform our society and change our world. We do not belong to this world, for Christ has chosen us out of this world

(John 15:19). We are not here to maintain status quo or conform to the patterns of this world (Rom 12:1). We march to the beat of a different drum, charting our own course, God's course. The mission that Christ has given us is to establish His Kingdom here on earth (Matt 5:13-16). In the words of Cindy Jacob, "Jesus wasn't looking for converts to a new religion. He was inviting people into a new kingdom, with a new government and a new King. He was inviting people to live heaven on earth."

The Kingdom of God is established when people are set free from sin - its condemning penalty, enslaving power and oppressive presence, and the reign and rule of Christ is established in the hearts of man. We are placed here to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8) and to deliver man from the dominion of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son (Col 1:13).

We therefore prophetically speak forth what God is doing in the world today, for He is ever working to redeem mankind unto Himself. We intercede with power and authority against the satanic principalities and powers over our country, our cities and our institutions, breaking their strongholds and dominion over us. We rise up as agents of change in the vocations and situations where God has placed us, to transform the institutions and foundations of our society for Him.

As God places us into positions of leadership and influence, we seek to establish biblical principles and values. Where there is greed and injustice, we establish righteousness, justice and mercy. Where there is conflict and strife, we facilitate and intercede for peace and stability. We aim to be a blessing and to value-add to everyone and everything we encounter, leaving them better than when we found them. In doing so, we establish the Kingdom of God right where we are, causing our earthly reality to match His heavenly reality and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We pray for all men, kings and those in authority so that we may have a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence (1 Tim 2:2). We seek the peace and prosperity of the country, city or institution where God has placed us, and pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, we too will prosper (Jer 29:7). Our lives must therefore be driven by a passionate urgency of our mission and our message, our every action intentional to accomplishing them.

SPIRIT-LED

In desiring change, we must be careful not to run ahead of the Spirit, to busy

ourselves with many things, and to try to do everything and be everywhere for everyone. We must resist the temptation to build our own kingdoms fast and famously, driven by our own ambition and desire for fame and power. Instead, we pause to be quiet and still before Him, for it is in the stillness of silence that the Spirit leads us, and we are able to discern His direction, His burden, and His heart beneath the deafening shouts of our own selfish ambition.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches (Rev 2:7). We do not run our churches, ministries or even our secular organizations on the wisdom and plans of man, but instead we bend our knees in prayer to prophetically discern the voice of the Spirit. Like Joshua did before entering the promise land, we fall on our faces before Him in worship and say, “What does the Lord say to His servant (Josh 5:14)?” It was only by heeding the voice of the Spirit that Joshua was able to see the miraculous destruction of Jericho. Likewise, when we discern and follow His leading, the Spirit will lead us to overcome the Jerichos of obstacles in our lives.

In every situation that we enter, the Spirit has already been working redemptively and strategically. Our response therefore is to rest in Him, discern His initiative, His first work, and join Him where He has been working. In our ministry to others, we pause to discern what He has already been doing in their lives, for He has loved and pursued them all the days of their lives. Our ministry is never our work, but His work. As Christ Himself says, “The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.” (Jn 5:19) We therefore align ourselves with what He is doing and only do that which He shows us to do. It is then we will see effectiveness and fruitfulness in our work and our ministry.

CLARITY

From the leading and burden of the Spirit, we develop what Simon Sinek calls the “clarity of why”, the “why” behind what we do. And it is this “why” that we communicate with clarity to those we lead. We inspire them with a prophetic vision of a new and better state that the Spirit has shown to us, one that resonates with the dreams and aspirations God has placed in their hearts, a “city” whose builder and maker is God (Heb 11:10). As J. Oswald Sanders writes, “Those who have most powerfully and permanently influenced their generation have been “seers” – people who have seen more and further than others – persons of faith, for faith is vision.”

Clarity of vision brings clarity in leadership and management so that there is no ambiguity as to our expectations and where we are headed. We keep things clear, concise and simple, simplifying the complex. We communicate our vision, values and strategy regularly and consistently, linking desired behaviour concretely to the attainment of our shared dreams and aspirations. We also provide clarity and closure on decisions and direction to ensure collective buy-in and commitment.

When our vision is clear and compelling, we are able to ask of those we lead to rise up in heroic courage to the challenge we place before them, for the greatest challenge will bring out their finest response. Then they will follow us because they believe in what we believe in and the future we are moving towards.

TRUST

As we step out into ministering leadership, we must earn the trust of those we lead. Trust is the currency of all leadership and relationships. As Stephen M.R. Covey puts it, “I contend that the ability to establish, grow, extend, and restore trust is not only vital to our personal and interpersonal well-being; it is the key leadership competency of the new global economy.”

Leadership can be based on titles, fear or gain, but the highest form of leadership is based on trust. When others trust us, it is then that they are open to us and we are able to lead and influence them.

Trust is built through our actions and not just our words. Each time we act in love, we make deposits of trust into what Stephen Covey calls their “emotional bank account”. Each time we act selfishly or dishonestly, we make withdrawals, leading to distrust and the erosion of our influence as a leader. Influential leadership and strong relationships are all built on positive emotional account balances of trust.

We build trust primarily through our character and competence. In the words of Stephen M.R. Covey, “Trust is equal parts character and competence.” A competent yet dishonest person is untrustworthy, so is an honest but incompetent person.

Competence, according to Covey, comprises our capabilities and results. Capabilities are “the talents, skills, knowledge, capacities and abilities that we have that enable us to perform with excellence.” Results refer basically to our

effectiveness and track record in delivering results when it matters.

Character, on the other hand, comprises our integrity and intent. Integrity is evidenced when we are authentic, honest and keep our promises. As Henry Paulson says, “It is a leader’s responsibility to demonstrate what it means to keep your word and earn a reputation for trustworthiness.” Intent is evidenced when others see that our intentions are good and that we have their best interest at heart. It is when others believe that we are acting in their best interest that they trust us and are open to us.

The one thing that threatens trust is unmet expectations. When others do not meet our expectation or fail to do what they say, it creates what Andy Stanley calls a “trust gap”. To build and maintain a culture of trust, we must choose to fill that gap with trust and not suspicion. We choose to assume the best in others and their good intentions. If the gap persists, we then address it immediately with them, giving them an opportunity to explain or address the gap. When we ourselves do not meet another’s expectations and create a trust gap, we must take responsibility to own it and address it. If we see a forming gap is inevitable, we come clean and surface it before hand. In doing so, we preserve and enhance trust.

The 5 principles that follow – authenticity, affirmation, identification, safety and sacrifice – further develop on the character and qualities of the leader that contribute to building trust.

AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity is about being real. It is about being real about our humanity and vulnerable about our weaknesses. As the Scottish preacher James Philip says, “The greatest saints of God have been characterized, not by haloes and an atmosphere of distant inapproachability, but by their humanity.”

To be authentic is to let true selves be seen. We are honest and transparent with others. We are open about our weaknesses and struggles. We admit we are not perfect, and stop trying to pretend we are perfect. As Andy Crouch says, “The most transformative acts of our lives are likely to be the moments when we radically empty ourselves, in the very settings where we would normally be expected to exercise authority.” Brene Brown says, “We cultivate love when we allow our most vulnerable and powerful selves to be deeply seen and known.”

To be authentic is to stop the charade, to stop playing the games society

plays. We cease the social posturing and step away from the power play at work and in ministry. We don't play politics or manipulate others. We are upfront and honest about our expectations. We avoid flattery, pretense and half-truths. We take off the masks and the facades. Who we are on the outside is who we are on the inside. What we say is what we mean. Our yes is yes, and our no is no. We are the same to everyone, rich or poor, powerful or weak, whether they are in a position to benefit us or not. We treat others nicely not because we can gain something from them, but because God loves them just as He loves us.

To build authenticity in our own lives, we need to start by being real with ourselves. We need to be comfortable and honest with ourselves, to see ourselves clearly as God sees us, to accept ourselves as God accepts us. No more deceiving ourselves, no more trying to cover up our inferiority, no more faking our superiority. We don't need to be somebody else or to pretend to be anybody else. We are just us, in our full humanity, the child whom God has made, nobody else.

The beautiful thing is that we are real with ourselves, we free others to be real with themselves. As Zack Eswine says, "I believe that Christian life and ministry are an apprenticeship with Jesus toward recovering our humanity and, through His Spirit, helping our neighbors do the same." As we recover our humanity, we help others recover theirs.

AFFIRMATION

Our goal in ministering leadership is to make others better, to develop and equip them to help them succeed and reach their full potential in Jesus Christ. For we succeed at our very best only when we help others succeed.

We therefore take every opportunity to build, affirm and appreciate others by our words, choosing to say something positive instead of negative at the start of every interaction. We are careful not to let any unwholesome talk come out from our mouths, but every word we speak is edifying and helpful for building others, that it may impart grace and benefit those who listen (Eph 4:29). We take genuine interest in them. We honour them and let them know how important they are to us, how much we need them. Above all, we show them we trust them. As Stephen M.R. Covey says, "People want to be trusted. They respond to trust. They thrive on trust."

We also encourage their significance by revealing to them the riches within themselves, giving them a high reputation of themselves to live up to. We coach

rather than criticize them. We internationalize a plan for their growth and development and invest in them, encouraging them to surpass us. As Ralph Waldo Emerson puts it, “Trust men and they will be true to you; treat them greatly and they will show themselves great.” We fuel their internal motivation and confidence by leading them through one victory at a time, complimenting their progress and success, and reinforcing desired behaviour with praise and affirmation. As Michelle Gielan says, “We accelerate towards growth when we have perceived progress.” At the same time, we have the courage to require from them accountability for their behaviour and performance. It is through these steps of continual progress that over time they will rise up to great things and achieve our collective success.

IDENTIFICATION

To be an effective ministering leader, we must identify with those we leads. We enter into their world and step into their shoes, so that we become the incarnational love of Christ to them. We become all things to all men, that we might by all means save some (1 Cor 9:22). We empathize with them and understand them before asking them to understand us. As Stephen Covey says, “Seek first to understand, then to be understood.” We resonate with their person, mirroring their interests, emotions, concerns, beliefs and values. We do not project on them our emotional needs and desires, but we see them as they truly are, not as we want them to be.

In genuine love, we are passionately curious about them. We listen to them and learn from them what motivates them and what their pain and struggles are, and we walk real with them through their struggles. In the words of Andy Crouch, “Open yourself to their vulnerability, their fears and dreams, their ambitions and failures.” Just as Christ became flesh to sympathize with our weakness, being tempted in all points as we are (Heb 4:15) and learnt obedience by the things He suffered (Heb 5:8), so we too enter into their suffering and their pain, for it is only then that we are able to truly minister to them. As Henri Nouwen says, “Who can take away suffering without entering it.”

We minister as what Nouwen calls “wounded healers”, not out of our strength or supremacy, but out of our own weakness, woundedness, brokenness and struggle. We allow God to use the pain of our past experiences to forge in us a deeper compassion and empathy for the pain of others. Just as the writer of

Hebrews outlines the qualification of the High Priest as one who can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray since he himself is also subject to weakness (Heb 5:2), so our identification with others in our own weakness also enables us to have compassion towards them. As Carl Jung says, “It is his own hurt that gives (the doctor) a measure of his power to heal.” We are able to connect our pain with their pain, thereby bringing healing to them. We see their pain through the eyes of the Cross, how it breaks His heart, yet through His pain He has redeemed ours.

SAFETY

We lead by creating safety. Through our genuine love and hospitality, we create a safe space where others feel appreciated, included and valued, a space where they can be free to be themselves. As Henri Nouwen puts it, “We can be free to let others enter into the space created for them and allow them to dance their own dance, sing their own song and speak their own language without fear.” We empower them with the autonomy to take ownership and contribute. We provide them the safety to express their honest opinions and give constructive feedback to us without feeling threatened. We set safe boundaries where they can learn from their mistakes, and grow and develop to their fullest potential.

To create safety, we emphasize mutuality – mutual respect, mutual benefit, mutual interest and mutual purpose. We do not react defensively when attacked but we pause, and then respond in a way that is empathetic, positive and constructive. We choose to first listen to and understand the concerns of others, before asking them to understand us. We respect their point of view before asking them to respect ours. We then define and break down the problem, and seek creatively to find a solution that is mutually beneficial, loving and fair, and that address the real concerns, interests and aspirations of all parties.

In the conflict and crucial conversations, it is even more important that we create safety. As Kerry Patterson says, “People who are skilled at dialogue do their best to make it safe for everyone to add their meaning to the shared pool - even ideas that at first glance appear controversial, wrong, or at odds with their own beliefs... They simply do their best to ensure that all ideas find their way into the open.” If people do not feel safe, they will act defensively and with hostility. If we observe this, Patterson advises that we immediately stop our discussion on the matter at hand, and focus instead on creating safety. When others see that we are acting for their benefit and in their interest as well, and

that both sides have the same common purpose, safety is created and the acrimony immediately diffused. We are then able to easily reach consensus and agreement.

SACRIFICE

As Simon Sinek puts it, “Leaders eat last.” Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends (John 15:13). We sacrifice that others might be happy, suffer want that others might be rich, and give our lives that others might live. For this is the cruciform love of God towards us. Just as Christ did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for us (Matt 20:28), likewise we as leaders are servants and debtors to love and serve those whom God has placed under our care.

In sacrifice, we love even when it risks our hearts being broken. As C.S. Lewis says, “To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken.” Just as Christ wept over the city which He loved (Matt 23:37), and went to the Cross for a people who had rejected Him, so we choose to love sacrificially, unrequitedly, expecting nothing in return.

In sacrifice, we substitute evil with love. We forgive those who hurt us and bless those who persecute us (Matt 5:44). We take on and endure evil, absorbing it unto ourselves, draining it to its last dregs. Like the Apostle Paul, we are poured out like a “drink offering” in our sacrifice and service to build the faith of others (Phil 2:17). With the supernatural grace of God, we repay evil with love, becoming a substitutionary sacrifice to bear the cost of sin. In doing so, we break the retaliative cycle of evil and participate in Christ’s redemptive work of salvation to the world. As Aslan the Lion said when he gave up his life in the Chronicles of Narnia, “When a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor’s stead, the table would crack and death itself would start working backward.”

In sacrifice, we give power away when we are called to. Just as Christ, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be held on to or used for his own advantage, but instead made himself nothing (Phil 2:5-7), so we too do not cling on to power but hold it with open hands, ready to give it away for the greater good. One day, we will have to lay down our power once and for all. Therefore when it is time to move on, to hand over our power and position to those who come after us, we do so graciously and joyfully, for

this is our highest sacrifice unto God for the good of all and the glory of His Name.

NEEDS-RELEVANT

Ministering leadership is ultimately relevant to the needs of those we lead and minister to. It focuses on their needs and not ours. We are called to serve those we lead and to add value to their lives. As J.I. Packer puts it, we are “a channel of divine power into other people’s lives at their point of need.” Frederick Buechner says, “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meets.”

At the end of the day, ministry is about people and not programmes. Christ has committed to us His ministry, which at the very core is a ministry of salvation, a ministry that heals the broken hearted, gives sight to the blind, and sets the captives free (Luke 4:18). We ask ourselves what do the people need in order to be redeemed and made whole.

Adapted from the works of Abraham Maslow, Daniel Pink and Anthony Robbins, the following ten needs that are universal and intrinsic to all of us. Everything we do is motivated by the fulfillment of these needs. Many struggle to fulfill these needs through the structures and false gods of this world, only be left disappointed and unsatisfied. Ministering leadership therefore aims to open a channel for God, working with and through us, to be the fulfillment of these needs.

Certainty. This is the need for certainty and safety, to feel safe and secure in the present, and to have a sense of certainty and predictability about the future.

Connection. This is the need for connection and relationship, to connect with others deeply, authentically and meaningfully.

Significance. This is the need for significance and worth, to know that we are worth something to someone, to have a sense of self-esteem.

Autonomy. This is the need to be able to act with freedom and choice, to feel that we are in control of the decisions that we are making about our lives.

Truth. This is the need for truth and understanding, to make sense of a confusing world, to know what is right and wrong, and to know what to ground

our lives, values and decisions on.

Wonder. This is the need for wonder and beauty, to be pleasantly surprised by variety and new things, to be excited by change, and to be in awe of beauty and greatness.

Growth. This is the need for growth and mastery, to achieve competence and craftsmanship in what we do, and to know that we are making continual progress towards fulfilling our potential and destiny.

Hope. This is the need for hope in the face of senseless evil and injustice, the hope of salvation from the evil that is both outside as well as inside the heart of man.

Purpose. This is the need for a higher purpose and meaning in what we do, the belief that we are contributing to a greater cause that transcends ourselves and perhaps even this world.

Spirituality. This is the need for true and authentic spirituality, a spiritual vacuum in the human heart, a hunger of the soul that can only be satisfied by God alone.

In an organizational context, ministering leadership organizes its structures and resources to minister to the ten needs outlined above. In a personal context, the ministering leader sensitively discerns the specific needs of an individual to effectively minister to him or her the grace and power of God. In both the organizational and personal context, ministering leadership leverages on the powerful drive in all of us to fulfill these needs, to motivate those we lead towards desired behaviour and ultimate goals.

MULTIPLICATION

Winning souls and multiplying churches is not the ultimate mandate of the Great Commission. Its true mandate is to make disciples (Matt 28:19). The end goal of ministering leadership must therefore be to make disciples of those we lead.

This can only be achieved through the direct life-to-life contact of a mentoring relationship. We intentionally seek to build such relationships with those we lead, investing our lives in their lives. We model to them our Appropriating Faith, Total Surrender, Intentional Intimacy, Self-Mastery and Ministering Leadership. We entrust the scriptures to them, training them in the Word so that they will be able to teach and build others (2 Tim 2:2). We guide

them to discern God's calling on their lives, and equip them with the discipline, skills and spiritual gifts necessary to fulfill that calling. We equip them for the work of ministry and the edifying of the body of Christ (Eph 4:12). We set high standards for them and hold them accountable to such standards. We coach them as they participate with us in work and ministry. We delegate our power to them and empower them to become ministering leaders themselves, leaders who will ultimately multiply more leaders.

At the end of the day, one life transformed by God will transform others. One heart ablaze with passion for Christ will kindle such passion in others. One soul making a stand for his King and following Him to the end will inspire still greater courage in others. And soon the fire of revival will sweep through our homes and churches and workplaces, and our world will be transformed for Jesus Christ.