

THE LAW OF RAIN

THE ORIGIN MANIFESTATION AND CURE OF
UNFRUITFULNES

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to the ONE who separated me to the preaching of the gospel in spite of many odds.

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I acknowledge my wife, Ify, for her unabated love and 'stickiness' through thick and thin; my earthly parents, Sir (Chief) and Lady V.A.O.Obi for their prolonged parenting and willingness to shelter in dire times.

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I deeply appreciate all the ministers and members of TOCA. Lastly and very importantly, I am hugely grateful to my spiritual parents, Pastor O.N. Ogbuoji, a wise man, and, his stallion wife, Evangelist Maureen Ogbuoji, for their burnishing influence over my life.

God bless you all and many others that space fails me to mention.

FOREWARD

1Sam2:9b *"For by strength shall no man prevail"*

11Chron16:9 *"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him"*

These two scriptures capture the mind of this irresistible and incontrovertible work so beautifully presented to the recurrent inquisition on why many believers suffer lack, sickness, dissatisfaction, death etc., contrary to God's promises. In this analytical study of the lives of men in the Bible days that excelled

in all round prosperity, the author reveals the missing link within today's approach to prosperity, propounded through logical principles, economic formulae and, at times, imbalanced scriptural teachings. This approach has drawn many into foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction, perdition and straying from the faith.

King Solomon, one of the richest men that ever lived on earth, did not apply many of these fabled modern day methodologies in his ladder to economic fame. Joseph did not either. Instead, these Bible characters shared same divine factors in common. The author has adroitly and painstakingly examined these success factors, under divine unction, which gave rise to this masterpiece of a blessing - 'The Law of Rain'.

The author identified the origin and the nature of woes that man has groaned under through the ages - the calamity of Eden. A willful act of disobedience by one man Adam cost man virtually every privilege he once had with and in God. He lost his divine communion with God, true identity, divine habitat, dominion power, health and longevity and finally his abundance through divine providence.

Man was sentenced to hard labour after being chased out of God's love garden, Eden. In an attempt to recapture his lost glory, man engaged in the fruitless journey of multiple religions, the quest and craze for money, as well as the invention of all kinds of medicines. Praise God that the long awaited remedy - originated, planned and implemented by God Himself - has been wrought and offered to man on a platter of gold.

A total redemptive work for man was accomplished in the death and resurrection of the Lord, Jesus Christ. By His death man was reconciled to God, peace and active communion restored; by His blood our sins and iniquities were blotted away; by His stripes we were healed and through His word we re-posessed our lost inheritance and abundance. God's master design is that through

our communion with Him, divine flow is re-activated to supply every need. That is why Jesus said “*without me you can do nothing*”. So in Christ those that believe have ceased from their labours and entered into their rest. The same God that supernaturally responded to King Solomon’s love and sacrifice to Him, and made him the richest king that ever lived, has offered to us abundant fruitful lives but, only in communion with Him.

The Law of Rain identifies the divine principles programmed in the earth from creation which will always yield according to what one sows: either to a life of blessing, fruitfulness and prosperity or to a life of lack, barrenness, poverty and misery. This book therefore reveals a divine cure to the multi-faceted human dilemma. It is a material that re-orientates the total man to the authentic purpose for his life.

I therefore recommended this Holy Ghost inspired, instructive and result oriented book to this generation as a life transforming tool. It is an incredible legacy for posterity if the Lord tarries.

Arc Ifeanyi Odedo

National President, FGBMFI, Nigeria

PREFACE

God made all living things to be able to reproduce their kind. A characteristic that is so critical to life. The charge to mankind on creation was to multiply, replenish and subdue the earth (Gen1:28). The implication is that man (male or female) is inherently fruitful and very productive given the right conditions and environment.

Continuity of life can only be ensured and sustained through fruitful living. In other words, human beings would cease to exist on earth if the current generation does not reproduce its kinds to replace them and continue with their activities on earth. Similarly, man must be able to build upon whatever ideas and project his/her predecessors started.

Through this, the diverse and rich attributes of God, the creator, will be made more manifest to His glory and honour; talents, gifts and ingenuities will be on the increase where fruitfulness thrives. The foregoing premise lends credence to the writer's discuss in this book titled "The Law of Rain – the origin, manifestation and cure of unfruitfulness". Unproductivity is lack of fruitfulness and certainly is not the will of God for any man. It is a curse where it exists and persists. A cure for it must be sought earnestly.

The writer had therefore diligently and graphically presented in this book the workings of productivity or fruitfulness and how to address unproductivity that so much pervades our society. The perusing of this piece is a must for all reading public and particularly the young people who are challenged by so many opportunities in life so that they can develop their God given

potentials to the fullest. Get a copy or more today for yourself, members of your family and friends.

Venerable Obioma Onwuzurumba

Chaplain: Presidential Villa Chapel

Aso Rock, Abuja

INTRODUCTION

The fall of man made him to lose direct communion with God, this led to spiritual death. He was driven from Eden, the place of abundance and fruitfulness, into a place of lack and fruitless labour. Thirdly, he began to experience death physically which is due to ageing and initiation of sickness. Life-span also began to shorten.

Likewise the redemptive work of Christ is also correspondingly three fold. These are:

- (1) Restoration of direct communion with God, that is to be born again.
- (2) Restoration of abundance and fruitfulness
- (3) Restoration of health

So, redemption is not really complete without the three upshots being accounted for. The Blood of Jesus brought back communion, His body bore our infirmity and His Word brought prosperity

through mind renewal. The people of the world, unfortunately, are preoccupied with trying to solve all the three problems their way.

- ❖ To restore communion, they invented false religions, occult and esoteric practices. For example Yoga, Transcendental meditation etc
- ❖ To solve the problem of poverty and unfruitfulness they do all sorts. Their '*love of money*', or rather their fear of poverty, becomes the '*root of many kinds of evil*' ¹.
- ❖ To deal with the issues of health, they invented medicine. At the outset Israel knew nothing of medicine. The priests were responsible for the physical and spiritual health of the people. This continued until King Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh who introduced the practice of Egyptian medicine, which is the precursor of modern medicine, in Israel. King Asa was rebuked for trusting physicians more than the Lord ².

The saints of old, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, David etc led fruitful productive lives by possessing the knowledge of the God of abundance, unlike Lazarus, the sickly beggar in the story told by Jesus who, though was righteous, lived a pitiful life. When he met father Abraham in paradise, he must have rued his life of ignorance on earth.

The overriding question is why did the righteousness of Lazarus fail to help him; was he abandoned by God? Not so! He failed to peer into the '*Law and the Prophets*' or the word of God, just like his compatriot, the rich man, who found himself in torment in hell. Lazarus walled himself from the content of the word of God by '*desiring only the crumbs*' and suffered its devastating consequences.

The purpose of writing this book is to reveal from the scriptures, the grand plan of God for His people, so that our faith, drives, visions etc will be based on the substantiated claims in the word

of God and not on human gimmickry, philosophy and power psychology. Such that prospering Christians should also bear godly fruit, which is precious in God's sight; and be a guiding light and salt to their generation. The other purpose is to let Christians realize that it is needful to add to the above knowledge, practical wisdom of wealth creation and fruitful living which enables the Christian to not only take his opportunities but also maximize them.

¹(ITim6:10); ²(2 Chr. 16:12)

PART 1: ORIGIN OF UNFRUITFULNESS

CHAPTER ONE

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR MAN

The purpose of God for His star creation was evident from the onset. God planted a garden at the Eden and placed man, whom He created, there ¹. Eden means abundance and plenty. It could also signify delight and pleasure. God's intention for man is for him to live abundantly and flourish on the earth. God also gave man the dominion and rule over all the earth ². God gave man the authority and power to exercise influence over all the other created things.

Furthermore, Adam was given the capacity to multiply and replenish the earth and to subdue it. God made man an intelligent being far above other creatures. Man's mind is the faculty he will

deploys to subdue the earth. For the proof of Adams intelligence, he was able to fitly give apt names to thousands of animals in the garden ³. With all these God intended that man should depute for Him here on earth and **become the 'god of this world'** ⁴.

3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, 4 What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? 5 for You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honour. 6 You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet. Ps 8: 3-6

**God's plan for
man is
abundance
that is why He**

CONSTANT COMMUNION

WITH GOD

God designed that Adam be in constant communion with Him to enable him occupy his exalted office ⁵. Adam must not be independent of God. Secondly, Adam must be unreservedly loyal. God retained the ultimate sovereignty over the running of affairs on earth. God placed a limit to Adam's dominance by commanding him not to eat of the 'Tree of the knowledge of good and evil' ⁶. This is to serve as a constant reminder to Adam that he is neither independent nor ultimately in control. Adam needs God to run the affairs as allowed by God, while God supplies Adam with the ability to dominate. Without this God's constant provision, Adam could do nothing.

God made Adam a free moral agent who will be held responsible for his actions. God left him to decide to obey and seek after God or refrain.

THE FALL OF MAN

Tragically Adam, at the prompting of the devil, through the serpent, transgressed God's command not to eat of the tree of

good and evil. The devil tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God's command with the lie that Adam could be like God if he ate the fruit ⁷.

Unfortunately, Adam forgot that he was already made in the '*image and likeness of God*' ⁸. When he accepted the goading of the devil and walked in the path of ignominy, Adam lost everything and became less like God, much to Satan's delight.

¹(Gen. 2:8); ²(Gen. 1:27); ³(Gen. 2:20); ⁴(Psalm 82:6); ⁵(Gen. 3:8); ⁶(Gen 2:16 & 17); ⁷(Gen 3:4 & 5); ⁸(Gen. 1:26)

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL

The fall of Adam from his illustrious position had catastrophic consequences. Adam's recourse to independence, that is, attempting to run his affairs without regard for God's desire and plans - which is the beginning of sin - became the beginning of sorrow and man's laborious stay on earth. Oswald Chambers avers that, "Sin is not wrong doing but wrong being, the deliberate and emphatic independence of God". The consequences of man's fall are threefold:

THE FIRST CONSEQUENCE OF THE FALL

First, Adam's fall led to spiritual death. God had forewarned Adam that the day he eats of the forbidden fruit, he shall '*surely die*' ¹. This death is spiritual. Adam's spirit man was cut off from accessing God's presence. Man is a tripartite being made of spirit, soul and body. Man's spirit is the part of him that communes with God. When Adam sinned, his spirit could no longer do so. This created a yawning emptiness inside of man. The faith life that domiciled in his spirit with which he uses to relate with God was replaced with fear.

The faith life is that of trust and complete dependence on God from where Adam drew strength and resources to enable him execute God's mandate on earth. From then, man began to be afflicted with fear and be dominated by it. After Adam fell, he replied, '*...And I was afraid*', to God's query ². Fear is a signal that we are not living by faith and we are not relying on God; the presence of God is not with us. The first consequence of the fall is spiritual death which manifests as fear – The root from which all manifestations of sin sprouts. An example of fear is the fear of poverty, or greed, which is the more menacing type of fear.

THE SECOND CONSEQUENCE OF THE FALL

The second effect of the fall is that he was cursed and driven away from Eden, the place of abundance ³.

**A man is first
poor in his mind
before it begins**

This curse is the fundamental root of all man's frustrations on earth. The curse of the sweat and struggles became the portion of the fallen man. He also became vulnerable to all kinds of vices and manipulations of the devil. Because he became the victim of fear, he could no longer dominate his environment.

DIMINISHED SOUL

Man's soul, which is the product of the union between his spirit (God's breath) and his body (the dust of the earth), was also afflicted with this enfeebling fear.

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. Gen 2:7

It is with the soul that man reigns on earth and exercises his dominion. The soul is made up of the Mind, Will and Emotion. The diminished soul was no longer dominated by an abundance

mentality produced by the faith-life of his spirit, but this was replaced by a lack, deprivation and want mentality produced by fear. In his prime, before his fall, he relies on God and easily believes that God is the abundant supplier of all his needs, which also includes a high mental acumen. After his fall he lost this ability, he was unsure of what lies ahead. He began to search for alternatives to make up for the loss which led him to commit many sinful acts.

This fear is actually the loss of the true knowledge of the God of abundance. Till date, men are still afflicted with this unwholesome ignorance which continues to beat every other factor as the greatest hindrance to attaining a life of success. 'My people', regrets Prophet Amos, 'perish for lack of knowledge' ⁴. This is why it is correct to say that poverty is of the mind. A man is first poor in his mind before it begins to manifest in his pocket.

Therefore, the origin of poverty is not only the ground being cursed and made to become less productive; man was also cursed by God and driven away from His presence. This loss of communion rendered his mind bereft of the knowledge, wisdom and insight the mind usually drew from the Spirit of God through his human spirit. This unfortunate disconnection lowered and dulled his mental fecundity which led to his pauperization.

THE THIRD CONSEQUENCE OF SIN

The third consequence of the fall is that man began to die through age and sickness. 'Adam lived a nine hundred and thirty years and **he died**'⁵ (Emphasis mine). In its perfect state, Adam's body was not designed to age and die. When his spirit man died, the body also began to undergo depreciation and ultimately death. In the absence of God's presence, the flesh began to suffer decay. The presence of God is proven to supernaturally keep the body from experiencing biological down grade. Moses was able to

stay forty days and nights while on the Mount Sinai. This is impossible in the natural. Not replenishing the body with water will cause biochemical breakdown and certain death, since all the life-sustaining biochemical processes run in the water medium.

LIFE-SPAN SHORTENS

Diminishing longevity and eventual death is clearly portrayed in Genesis chapter five. There, the biographical history of Adam and his progeny offer us the unfortunate picture of the third consequence of sin. Man's lifespan inexorably began to shorten as man continued to live away from God's presence, until men could only boast of living a few years on earth. A close look at the passage will also throw up the amazing fact that Methuselah's age was an aberration, a deviation from the normal downward fall in life-span. In fact, he lived the longest. The Lord revealed to me that the reason for Methuselah's lengthened long life was that his father, Enoch, lived a glorious saintly life such that he did not see death or decay. He translated straight to Heaven⁶. The grace accumulated by Enoch's godly living was generationally transmitted to his immediate descendant, Methuselah. This grace is generated by an intense godly living. Had Methuselah and his descendants continued the godly lifestyle of his father, man's stay on earth would not have been this sordidly short. Death, initiated by age and sickness, is a direct result of the fall of man.

¹(Gen 2:17); ²(Gen. 3:10); ³(Gen3:22-24); ⁴(Amos 4:4); ⁵(Gen. 5:5);

⁶(Gen 5:24)

CHAPTER THREE

THE REDEMPTION PLAN OF GOD

The redemption that Christ brought is also three fold. This is the inseparable triplet comprising: spiritual birth (restoration of communion with God), restoration of trust and reliance on the God of abundance as our sustainer and provider; and thirdly, the possibility of divine health (i.e. life without sickness) or divine healing if we fall sick. Isaiah foresaw this: *'and the inhabitant shall not say I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity'* ¹.

Through the prism of God's dealings with the people of Israel in Egypt and the wilderness, we see the three-fold redemption plan of God for man played out.

THE FIRST REDEPTIVE WORK: REDEMPTION FROM SPIRITUAL BONDAGE

The redemptive plan of God which Christ accomplished was foreshadowed by what happened to the people of Israel, which is an antitype of the church, while in Egypt and in the wilderness. The people of Israel or the 'first church', as they are also called, were finally delivered from the bondage of slavery in Egypt through the shedding and the sprinkling of blood of a lamb on their door posts and the lintel ². The same way the blood of Christ redeemed the believer from the bondage of sin. In the Old Testament, Egypt is a type of the world and sin.

The lamb is called the Passover lamb and it represents Christ ³. The blood is the instrument of propitiation, the agent of redemption. *'Without the shedding of blood there is no remission*

of sin⁴. Those that placed the blood as instructed were saved from the destructive ravages of the 'Angel of death'. This is the first and most important benefit of redemption: deliverance from the aftermath of sin, which is spiritual death⁵.

Deliverance from sin and its consequences leads to re-union with God since we were separated from God, and our communion broken with Him because of sin. This Passover event made the people of Israel to become spiritually renewed or reborn, and entered into a special relationship with God. The glory cloud hovered over them as a physical sign of this new found relationship with God.

**Redemption
was designed
to also deal
squarely with**

THE SECOND REDEPTIVE WORK: REDEMPTION FROM POVERTY

The second benefit of redemption is that unfruitfulness and laborious work was eliminated. Their slavery status and laborious service was terminated when they were set free. God instructed them to spoil the Egyptians. They were invested with a special favour which enabled them to ask for and receive costly precious metals and apparels from the Egyptians. Over night former down trodden, deprived slaves became financially empowered.

Their empowerment was such that when Moses requested for gold, silver and costly apparels for the building of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, they gave so superfluously that Moses had to restrain them. Redemption was designed to also deal squarely with the problem of poverty. Those redeemed shall be partakers of Abraham's blessings⁶.

THE THIRD REDEPTIVE WORK: REDEMPTION FROM SICKNESS

Divine health is the third result of redemption. After the Israelites ate the Passover lamb, they entered the forbidding wilderness. Throughout their long arduous trip which lasted several years, the scripture commented that none of them was feeble or sick.

He also brought them out with silver and gold, and there was none feeble among His tribes. Ps105:37

Before they ate the Passover lamb they fell sick, they were conversant with the diseases of Egypt ⁷. The glory cloud under which they travelled bequeathed unto them the life-sustaining spirit or anointing that produces divine health. Their legs were not blistered nor were they wearied, not even among the aged and infants in their midst.

THE CENSUS

Those that perished among them in the wilderness did so because of the sin of disobedience. Consider this: After the census, which Moses took immediately they left Egypt, six hundred thousand men above the age of 20 were numbered ⁸. Forty years down the road, with many ordeals, travails and deaths, six hundred thousand men were also registered, in another census, when they arrived at River Jordan! ⁹. Same for the Levites, about twenty thousand Levites entered the wilderness, ¹⁰ forty years afterwards about the same number arrived Canaan! ¹¹. This goes to prove, most amazingly, that the Lord pre-determined the number that He wanted in Canaan, and was able to maintain it in spite of everything. God can still maintain and keep you in divine health and from premature death which are benefits of redemption.

¹(Isa. 33:24); ²(Exo.12:7&13); ³(1Cor 5:7); ⁴(Heb. 9:22); ⁵(Gen 2:17); ⁶(Gal3:13-14); ⁷(Deut. 7:15); ⁸(Exo 12:37, 38:26); ⁹(Num26:2-51); ¹⁰(Num 3:39) ¹¹(Num 26:62)

PART 2: MANIFESTATION OF FRUITFULNESS

CHAPTER FOUR

HARDNESS OF HEART

THE LACK MENTALITY

This book is chiefly concerned with the second aftermath of the fall, which is unfruitfulness. Before we obtained redemption, unfruitfulness manifested as lack or poverty mentality. This mentality has a pervasive and extensive influence over the entire sphere of our lives because, the mind, where this mentality lodges, is a principal controlling agency in man.

As already stated, this lack mentality became the lot of man when he was cursed and driven out of the place of abundance to a place of scarcity, want and invariably disease. The faith that was predominant in his spirit and soul was replaced with fear. Lack mentality, which is produced by absence of the true knowledge of God, is one of the fall outs of this destiny destroying fear.

GOD IS ALMIGHTY

God desires first and foremost that we know him as almighty, all-powerful creator. Thus, God was introduced to us in scripture as Jehovah Elohim - The sovereign judge and ruler. *'In the beginning God created the heavens and earth'*. The ability to create is the pre-eminent attribute of God; this attribute stands out all through the scriptures. God therefore longs to relate with His creatures as the Almighty so that they will place their faith in Him as their

savior, deliverer, protector, and preserver; from whom all blessings flow.

Unfortunately, this primary aspect of God which He eagerly desires we know about, we lack the most. This lack of heart knowledge of God as the Almighty, Omnipotent God is what in the New Testament is called Hardness of heart or Blindness. Hardness of heart is not being stubborn or hardheaded.

THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES

Our Lord Jesus used the term 'Hardness of heart' the most often. In most of the miracles of Jesus, the intention of God is to establish the fact of His Omnipotence in the hearts of men, especially His disciples. Divinity, they say, does no unnecessary miracles. Much of Jesus' grief over His disciples was in their being slow to apprehend this pertinent point. Jesus often interchanged 'lack of understanding' with 'Hardness of heart'.

5 And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. Mk 3:5

He who is hard of heart or lacking in understanding will always fail to see the almightiness of God, thus will constantly walk in unbelief. He cannot see God's desire to bless and provide abundantly. He cannot see that God is innately a good God. He will be incapable of accepting that God can do all things. Such person does not please God because he will often fail to position himself, in his mind, to allow God work out His wonders through him. Even though the person is a child of God yet, he hinders God and makes a poor representation of God as impotent and ordinary.

FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND (Mk 6:30-44)

Jesus seeing an opportunity to teach and implant the understanding of His omnipotence into the hearts of His disciples, asked them to make provision to feed the five thousand men besides woman and children, who had been with them in the wilderness several days. Naturally the disciples were afraid; they wondered how they could provide for so many numbers of people. But, Jesus knew what to do. He made the request deliberately; he knew that the disciples were still blind. Jesus afterwards performed a miracle and provided bread and fish for all the people. They were fully fed and had left-over.

WALKING ON THE SEA (Mk 6:45-52)

To reinforce the poignant lesson of acquiring the appropriate heart knowledge of the Godhead represented by Jesus, He had to send the disciples to go to the other side of the sea of Tiberias, after feeding the crowd, intending to meet with them later. After a long time had passed, Jesus, while walking on the water, met the disciples who were still trapped in the boisterous sea. The disciples were alarmed to see Jesus walking on the turbulent waters. They still have not perceived who Jesus really was and he was deliberately trying to teach them that. The scripture aptly noted that the disciples *'have not understood the miracles of the loaves for their hearts were still hardened'* ¹.

THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES (Mk 8:13-21)

Jesus patiently continued to teach His disciples to grasp the heart understanding of who He is. At another time, after the feeding of the four thousand men, Jesus left with His disciples to another place. While on the way, Jesus told them to beware of the *'Leaven of the Pharisees'*. The disciples, due to their level of understanding mistook the word *'Leaven'* to mean *'Bread'* instead of *'Teaching'*. This is because they reasoned that Jesus was concerned about their not taking bread along with them. Jesus

was angry with them and rebuked them sharply for their continuing dumbness:

17 But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? 18 Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? 19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?" They said to Him, "Twelve." 20 "Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?" And they said, "Seven." 21 So He said to them, "How is it you do not understand. Mk. 8:17-21

Jesus repeatedly asked them 'How is it that you do not understand?' Or put differently, how is it that you do not yet perceive me as God with whom nothing is impossible, who can provide abundantly. In summary 'Hardness of heart' is characterized by unbelief.

14 Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. Mk6:14

The heart does not acknowledge nor pay regard to the greatness of the Almighty. Even when good comes, it is ascribed to self or some other human. The person still afflicted with 'hardness of heart' does not understand the saying by Jesus, 'Without Me you can do nothing' ².

THE REVELATION TO PETER (MK. 8:27-33)

However, after Peter got the revelation of Jesus as 'Thou art the Christ', the gospel narration observed that from that time Jesus began to teach them about His imminent death in Jerusalem ³. Now that they have known Him as God, the Almighty Saviour, the God of miracles, they are promoted to the next class, where they will be taught the main purpose of His coming. The foundational

work of grace is to know that God can bless anybody anywhere and cannot be hindered; afterward, God will get you to know the purpose of the blessing.

¹(Mark 6:52); ²(Jn15:5); ³(Mt16:21)

CHAPTER FIVE

OUR PRESUMPTUOUS NATURE

The opposite of hardness of heart is possessing understanding, wisdom and discernment. To display understanding, which is equivalent to possessing the right perspective, is to see things from God's viewpoint, thereby we have the capacity to know things as they actually stand.

When we possess the right perspective it grants us keen insight to comprehend how things actually interrelate among themselves, and, the good judgment to accurately place and allot things their comparative importance – both of which add up to one being very insightful and discerning.

In this case, it is to accurately perceive the greatness of the Almighty and appropriately utilize this perception in the affairs of life. This knowledge of the greatness of God propels faith, confidence and unruffled certitude in handling your affairs. You smile down on challenges that torment and embarrass others. You become wise at heart.

But when we fail to see things from God's perspective and perceive God in his proper dimensions and vastness we become presumptuous. A presumptuous man perceives and acts as he deems fit without recourse to his Creator.

The many troubles the people of Israel had with God, especially while in the wilderness, were because of their presumptuous heart, induced by spiritual blindness. Since they lacked the proper knowledge of God, they were afflicted with a stifling lack mentality, more so as they were deprived slaves all their lives. They grumbled against God at every instance of need. In contrast, Moses, at the same time, will humble himself and pray fervently for God's intervention and provision.

This meek disposition of Moses, unlike the wild, uninhibited and irrational reactions of the people of Israel was because 'God made known His ways to Moses, but his acts to the children of Israel' ¹. One knew only the acts of God, the other knew why God acts the way He does. Moses knew the nature and the wisdom of God that counseled God to do whatever He does, even the things that seem humanly foolish, like not having water to drink after three days of wandering in the desert!

UNBELIEF



A presumptuous heart prohibits trust in God. It makes belief very difficult, even impossible, because the heart will be in spiritual blindness and cannot see God in His accurate magnitude. A presumptuous heart cannot place its trust in the God of abundance because it lacks the knowledge of God. This lack generates resentful, rebuffing thoughts against God which makes true submission very difficult or even impossible.



7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Rom 8:7-8

This is the case with the children of Israel. It made them to refuse to enter Canaan. Because of unbelief, they preferred to go back to Egypt and continue to live as slaves!

REBELLION

Presumption in scriptural terms could be defined as inflated pride; as swelling up and being defiant. A presumptuous fellow defers to no one. He does not delight in God nor is he awed by the acts of God. Delight in God translates into praise and worship of God; appreciation of what God has done is demonstrated by the offering of thanksgiving.

Furthermore, a presumptuous fellow pays no regard to authority. In its extreme state, it leads to the wanton sin of rebellion. Rebellion is the willful act of deviation from the path of righteousness, which has faith as its foundation. It could also be a premeditated going beyond the line of God's law, a rebellious act of rejecting God's authority. This sin stuck with the children of Israel while in the wilderness. Several times they grumbled against Moses, their leader, and made to appoint another leader to take them back to Egypt.

David fervently prayed God to deliver him from the sin of presumption, because it easily leads to the '*great transgression*' - which is rebellion or the rejecting of God's authority ².

¹(Ps. 103:7); ²(Ps. 19:13)

**Success or
failure is
directly**

CHAPTER SIX

FEAR OF SUCCESS

The extreme stage of lack mentality is the fear of success. Success or failure is directly controlled by our mentality. Through Jesus teachings, we see clearly the operation and the effect of this fear in the life of individuals. No where is as mazy as the human

heart. But, Jesus in short, incisive parables or stories divulges the contents of the heart of man: that uncharted waters and unreachable shores.

THE PARABLE OF TALENTS (Matt. 25:14-30)

This penetrating parable reveals that the manifestation of poverty consciousness, with its extreme as fear of success, is the plank that separates the productive servants from the unproductive servants or by extension the successful from the underachievers.

14 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. 15 And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. 16 Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. 17 And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. 18 But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. 19 After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' 21 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'...24 "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' 26 "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. 27 So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. 28 So take the talent from him, and give it

to him who has ten talents. 29 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.' Matt. 25:14-30

The above parable reveals that within a given environment, different people react differently to same conditions, or situations of life due to their mindset and thinking patterns. Strikingly, the master knew his servants had different capacities to be productive. He gave to each according to his ability. He was not sentimental; otherwise, he would have suffered much loss. If he gave all the servants five talents each and, they could only bring back a total of seven talents out of the fifteen talents given that would be a 47% return. But, his adroitness brought him nearly 90% return or seven talents out of eight given out. A sage said that, "he who employs labourers without regard to peculiarities of their abilities will get poor result for his carelessness".

THE PRODUCTIVE SERVANTS

In the Bible days, talent is the unit of measurement for gold - Israel was levied a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold by Pharaoh Neco ¹. The first two servants traded and turned in 100% profit. They were appropriately praised and promoted to control more resources. No sentiments. They proved their worth and did not betray their master's evaluation of them. The servant that brought back no returns was reproved for his unfruitfulness and was called the 'unprofitable servant'. The master commanded that his one talent be taken from him and given to the man that had ten talents. He astonishingly added that, 'For everyone who has more will be given and He will have ABUNDANCE, but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away'. (Emphasis mine)

This is a curious twist in life that plays out repeatedly. Those that have will continue to increase; they have come to possess the awareness and mentality of how to attract and maintain wealth, while those who do not have, due to their lack of understanding,

will continue to be at the shallow end of the stream. Even the little they have will soon fritter away because they do not know how to attract or maintain wealth.

THE UNPROFITABLE SERVANT

The unprofitable servant manifested the classic hallmarks of those afflicted by poverty consciousness. The distinctive features of poverty consciousness are:

❖ **He thought his master to be hard** (verse 24a).

The poor often indulge in perpetually complaining and denouncing of others.

They always bemoan their fate and tend to parry their responsibility, all the while erroneously thinking that their misfortune is caused by others. They do not know that it is self-afflicted.

**The poor
often indulge
in perpetually
complaining**

❖ **You reap where you have not sown** (verse 24b).

They are always envious of others success. Envy is a major hindrance in life. Envy has neither holidays nor rest. *'Envy is rottenness to the bones'* (Prov. 14:30). The poor always think the rich are exploiting them, that the success of the rich is made out of the sweat of the poor. They do not know a thing about the principles of wealth creation. One of which is that you do not work for money but, you make money work for you. The master in the parable did this with much dexterity.

Making money work for you is to have differed streams of income. The different servants presumably were doing different types of business that brought different streams of income for their master. There is nothing absolutely wrong with that. He makes money work for him. He does not have to be

physically involved. In fact,
he should not do that.

**The law of gratitude says
that, abundance**

Because of this envy, the unprofitable servant exhibited the evil trait of ingratitude. The law of gratitude says that, abundance flourishes in a grateful heart. Ingratitude will make you cease giving thanks for what you have and what you are expecting. His grumbling heart could not see of what use the one talent will be. Wallace Walter says, "You will soon become dissatisfied with things as they are when you stop giving thanks for them".

❖ **I was afraid** (verse 25)

We have firmly proved that fear is the foundation of poverty mentality. This fear complex induces the feeling of unworthiness or low self-esteem - which is one of the barricades that keep many in the prison of poverty consciousness. It forces the victim to accept situations that confirm the mental picture of lack the victim carries in his imagination. It makes you do things that postpone success or promote inaction.

**Each time a
man focuses on
what he does
not have: his**

He was afraid of many things including losing the little he was given to trade with. Each time a man focuses on what he does not have; his goal will start to recede from him. On the contrary, if you have a sense of self-worth, you will agree that you represent the best of creation, and therefore deserve the best life gives; and, you are as good as anybody. You will thereby become adventurous.

❖ **You are wicked** (verse 26)

Poverty minded people are also very wicked or self-centered – a proverb of the ancients says that, “wickedness proceeds from the wicked” (1Sam24:13). Prosperity is essentially a matter of the heart. The heart of a good man churns out good things, which attracts goodwill and wealth (Matt.12:35). He thought, “Why should his master further prosper at his expense?” then, he hid the money. Had he desired the good of his master, he would have done the minimum of placing the money in the bank for it to yield interest.

❖ **Lazy** (verse 26)

Laziness begets poverty. Those who will not work should not eat. The unprofitable servant preferred to hide the money instead of investing it. To invest the talent required a lot of mental and physical hard work which he tried to avoid. He was clever by half. A lazy person is often resentful of persons or situations that place fresh demands for work or exertion of energy ¹(2Kings24:33; 2Sam.12:30)

PART 3 THE CURE OF UNFRUITFULNESS

CHAPTER SEVEN

CURE THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

THE CURSE HAS BEEN REVERSED

Let it be made clear that the curse placed by God on both man and the land, after Adam sinned against God, has been reversed.

After Noah alighted from the ark, that took him and his family to safety from the deluge that destroyed the whole earth, he was neither miffed nor benumbed. He did he question the wisdom behind the wholesale destruction. Imagine an instance where only you were rescued in your home town from some disaster, while your brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins and other distant relations were wiped out!

Instead, Noah deferred to the judgment of God, built an altar and worshipped God by repeatedly offering clean animals on the altar ¹. Such meekness, which is very precious in God's sight, made his offering very forceful and engaging: *'And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma, and said, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake"'* ². Noah's sacrifice of clean animals on the altar he built led to the redemption of the land. God, also, thereafter instituted the law of *'seed time and harvest'* which is an overriding law in the matter of fruitfulness ³.

Christ's one-stop, all encompassing sacrifice, on the cross took mankind out of his chains. Christ's death and resurrection redeemed man from the curse he justly brought on himself after he sinned against his God. Christ, instead, took the curse upon Himself while setting mankind free. *'For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on me"'* ⁴. *'There is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...'* ⁵; *"Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold all things have become new"* ⁶; For *'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.... that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus'* ⁷.

So there is no more excuse for unfruitfulness. Every man should bear his own burden and not blame God.

¹(Gen 8:20); ²(Gen. 8:21); ³(Gen. 8:22); ⁴(Rom 15:3); ⁵(Rm. 8:1); ⁶(2Cor. 5:17); ⁷(Gal 3:13, 14)

THE PARABLE OF THE GOODMAN AND HIS TWO SONS

11 Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. 13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. 14 But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. 15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. 17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, 19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."' 20 "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. 23 And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; 24 for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry. 25 "Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' 28 "But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. 29 So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I

have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat that I might make merry with my friends. 30 but as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' 31 "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.'" Lk. 15:11-31

The cure of the problem of poverty consciousness or lack mentality is mostly knowledge. We attain this knowledge through the Word of God and constant communion with the Godhead.

Jesus revealed, through the parable of the 'Goodman and his two sons', that there are two classes of Christians or people generally: The fruitful and the unfruitful, the successful and the unsuccessful. The difference in their destiny lay in their knowledge of the abundance heart of the Father gained through intimacy. Paul counsels every Christian who wants to succeed to get conformed to God, and be acquainted with His will for His children, by being renewed in their minds⁸.

This parable, widely called the parable of the prodigal son, but which I prefer to call the parable of the Goodman and his two sons, because the chief character in the story is not the younger of the sons, but the man who demonstrated much largeness of heart and compassion. The storyline actually commenced with the statement, "A certain man had two sons..." The parable is a narrative wherein the man represents God; the sons, the two categories of Christians, which profiles those that receive from God and live in abundance and those that could not and languish in lack.

FELLOWSHIP BEGETS KNOWLEDGE

Since the man is a symbol of God the Father, the younger son represents those Christians who have learnt how to ask and receive from God. They received because they asked. They were

able to receive due to their covenant position in the house, not because they were qualified. He is a son, therefore an inheritor of the possessions. They know of their covenantal relationship with their father. He asked, *because he knew the* heart of his father. You arrive at such delicate knowledge by closeness and fellowship. He came to know that he had a portion in his father's house. He also knew that his father does not go back on his words. As in every covenant, his word is his bond. *'My covenant will I not break nor alter the words that have gone out of my lips'*⁹.

Therefore, he asked with confidence, *'Give me the portion of goods that falls to me'*. The man promptly divided his possessions and gave him half. The receiving Christian is aware of his inheritance in Christ and the abundant heart of God who says, *'Ask and ye shall receive...'*

The knowledge of the abundance heart of his father which also overflows with compassion was confirmed when, while in trouble, *'he came to his senses'*. In penury and want, while cut off from home, he remembered his father's heart: That even servants in their home fared sumptuously. His father liberated and lifted up anyone that came his way from the pangs of poverty. The boy said, *'I will arise and go back to my father'*. His father did not disappoint. When he came back, the man had compassion on him, and, before he could finish his confessions for his sins, the father had already called for his restoration to his former status.

THE FORCE OF COVENANT LINKAGE

The man accepting his younger son with open arms is the high point of this parable. It double confirms the largeness of his heart. Many fathers have renounced their wards and banished them from their presence when they committed lighter transgressions. The boy spurned his love, rejected him and squandered his hard earned wealth - in the characteristic heedless self-centeredness of the youth - when he absconded. The boy's rejection of his

father, which did hurt him, and, the repudiation of his status as a son finally dawned on him. This led him to willingly accept to step down as a son and be a slave – a level by far better than his present parlous state.

Their connection is not dependent on the boy but, on the filial attachment between them. Brethren, you are blessed regardless of who you are, this is because of the love God showered over you in Christ when He brought you back to communion with Himself. The boy gained this knowledge through intimacy with his father. They were close. On his way back home, his father saw him *‘when he was still a great way off’* – such longing, yearning and anticipation for re-union is due to the throbbing pain of a broken fellowship. God, the Father, has the same longing desire and forgiving heart for mankind. This story of redemption, where the guilty goes scot free, and in addition, hauling a bag full of blessings demonstrates the claims of Christianity as superior to any other religion. Christianity lays bare the depths of God’s heart, revealing who He is to us.

LACK OF COMPANIONSHIP BREEDS IGNORANCE

The elder son represents those that pine away in want despite their plenteous inheritance in Christ. This unfortunate state is because of a startling heart of ignorance produced by lack of companionship. Unlike the younger son, the elder boy is not close to their father. He did not have a close fellowship with him. This is the reason he neither knew nor understood his father. Being considerably distanced from his father, he developed a poor idea of his father. He judged his father to be austere, hard and implacable. He thought his father was hard to impress and please.

**Christianity lays
bare the depths
of God’s heart,**

This is the way many Christians, also subconsciously, have wrong opinions of God. The Lord bewailed through prophet Isaiah that, *'The Ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, My people do not consider'* ¹⁰. Their lack mentality colours their perception of God. But, perception is a mirror. How you 'see' God or what you easily see in people is actually the way you are.

It beggars belief how the elder son came to such conclusions about his father who is so liberal and compassionate. He is actually the hard and the implacable one. A proof of this fact is easily seen when after he crept back from the field and learnt from a servant that his younger brother was back, and that their father was lavishly celebrating the boy's return, he flew into a rage; he would not go in even after his father's entreaties. To him, his brother's return was bad news. The boy wasted their resources; therefore their relationship should be irretrievably broken.

Perception is a mirror. How you 'see' God or what you easily see in people is

ENSTRANGED

This lack of fellowship between the man and his elder son is more striking when you realize that their father did not bother to wait for him to come back, nor send for him, before the welcome-back party commenced. They were actually estranged from each other. When he finally came back, he could not walk straight to his father and demand to know what is happening, an emissary had to carry his message of resentment to his father!

His wrong affections for his father formed a wall between them. Paul lamented that the Corinthian Christians closed their heart to him, and not the other way.

12 *It is not we who have closed our hearts to you; it is you who have closed your hearts to us.* 13 *I speak now as though you were my children: show us the same feelings that we have for you. Open your hearts wide!* 2 **Cor 6:12-13 GNB**

So many Christians are not endeared to God. They are walled off by their poor, condescending opinion of God, which inhibits fellowship with the God they claim to worship. They cannot develop an expectation of good from God of all goodness and abundance, nor learn to understand how to obtain from Him; *'For he who comes to God must believe that he is (good), and is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him'* ¹¹ (addition mine).

No doubt, the main reason the younger son demanded for his portion of the inheritance, while their father is still alive, was because, he knew his brother to be mean, sour and self-possessed. He may not easily give him his share of their possessions if their father dies suddenly. This opinion of the younger son later proved to be accurate, his elder brother felt very sore at his return.

⁸(Rom12:1-2); ⁹(Ps. 89:34); ¹⁰(Isa. 3:13);
¹¹(Heb. 11:6)

**Our thoughts and
imagination are
often the
strongholds that**

ALL I HAVE IS

YOURS

The devious impression the elder son had of his father surfaced when he reproached him of being severe and discriminatory (vs. 29-30). He accused his father of parsimony, *'you have never given me a kid goat to make merry with my friends'*. The boy is clearly dumb. Even a moron will know that since their father divided his possession *'to them'*, that the other half belonged to him. However, being walled in by his opinions, this obvious fact eluded him. Our thoughts and imaginations are often the

strongholds that control our lives; therefore, any search for a better life must begin from there.

Friends, the Lord of all the earth does not discriminate nor have respect for persons. Many people erroneously think that other peoples' blessings were pinched from them. Nobody took what is yours. You can only get what is yours by applying to God, who gives to all liberally. Your rule for living should be this: God who blessed my neighbor can bless me also. Learn to rejoice with those that rejoice and stop charging the just God with wrong.

VAIN LABOUR

Another tragic ignorance he exhibited was to again accuse his father of not acknowledging all his labours, *'These many years I have been serving you, I never transgressed any of your commandments'*. Unlike his younger brother, he did not realize that the way to obtain his portion is through inheritance, because of his privileged position as a son. It is a covenantal relationship, with accruing benefits that are independent of you or your labours. *'And if you are Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise'* ¹².

This lack of savvy made all his labours unfruitful since it was not acknowledged by his father. He is a son in the house but, labours like a servant. He deigns to earn his own portion, which naturally falls to him because of his bloodline. Work is good and advisable but, those with covenant understanding, work not to earn their pay as servants do, but to express themselves and establish their divine purposes on earth. In the case of the elder son, work should be to expand their empire not to impress their father or try to earn anything, because they are his already by inheritance.

The elder son's servile exertions were of pitiable proportions. While he was laboring in the field, mere servants were cavorting in a sumptuous party at home. To make matters worse, while coming back home all alone - the son of such a prominent man

should not be coming back from the field alone - and hearing a tumult, he could not boldly enter the house, but had to inquire from a servant what is going on. Even a scullion will possess better carriage and confidence. This is what Bishop A. Nwachukwu calls the “Grasshopper mentality.”

The message translation rendered 2 Corinthians 6:12 this way:

We didn't fence you in. The smallness you feel comes from within you. Your lives aren't small but you're living in a small way.'

The elder son was manifestly living small.

The elder son's charge did astonish their father. He replied, 'Son you are always with me, and all I have is yours' (Vs.31). This is the nadir of ignorance, the source of many unwarranted want and lack in the body of Christ. So many Christians do not know that, 'All things are yours...and you are Christ's' ¹³.

"He who did not spare His only Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how He should not also freely give us all things." Rm. 8:32

CAUTION: WHEN FAMINE CAME

We should caution that Jesus was not commending the riotous living of the younger son but, highlighting the abundance and compassionate heart of their father. Secondly, that being blessed by God is not from what we do, instead it is from understanding our covenantal standing with God in Christ.

The father promptly gave the young man his portion without attempting to control him. This is a classic portrait of God, who made us free moral agents - the reason we are superior to angels. God would not control anybody, because He made man in His image. He allows us room to make our choices, which He sets before us, but with their inescapable imports. However, He expects and yearns for us to make the right choices, so we would

bask in His abundant goodness. God gave Adam the task of choosing between the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He chose the later with devastating consequences.

The younger son's problems began when he left home. He disconnected from his father who would have taught him the meaning and purpose of wealth. Many parents will be alarmed that the father promptly gave that much wealth to a youngster. There is no cause for alarm, God does not make mistakes! His intention is that the boy would first see his abundant heart and his steadfastness to His word, which is of pre-eminent importance to Him, and then afterwards, commence the process of mentoring the boy on how to responsibly build a financial empire and a glorious destiny. Had he been mentored, the boy would have been much wiser and mature than his older brother, for growth comes from building on our talents, gifts and strengths not by merely persisting under difficulties. To build an empire is different from laboring to earn a living.

SELF-IMPOSED ADVERSITY

Many Christians fall into the same the pit as the young boy. The first sign of prosperity often lures them to forsake God, thinking that he is no longer needed; especially because, they loathe God's wise commandments, given for their good and beneficial conduct. The boy would have none of his father's discipline - which is an acquired habit of every successful man. Foolishly, he moved away so as to cast those rules off his back.

They long to become independent of God, to their chagrin, because famine will soon come; it is part of the reality of life. Life comes in seasons. Those who make the Lord their pillar will survive the period of the famine. Jeremiah says that, '*they shall neither fear nor notice when famine comes*'¹⁴. But those that '*grew fat and kicked*' like Jeshurun¹⁵, and sought independence, like Adam or the younger son, will surely have the bitter

experience of famine. They will soon realize that wealth could grow wings and fly leaving them in dire straits.

The young boy fell into such an extreme state of adversity that he went to tend pigs and desired pig pods *'and no one gave him anything'*. The depth of his travails is clearly evident when you consider that for the Jews, pigs are the most unclean of all the unclean animals. The pig is not discerning, it has no scruples and is naturally dirty. Daniel's prophecy that a certain king will commit the *'Abomination that causes desolation'* ¹⁶ was fulfilled when the scoundrel and abominable fellow Antiochus Epiphanes, the king of the Northern Hellenist kingdom in Asia Minor, sacrificed a pig on the altar in the Temple at Jerusalem, as he vented his rage on the hapless Jewish nation. This he did while crossing through Israel on his way back home, after his defeat at the hands of a Roman fleet.

**The first sign
of prosperity
often lures
many to
forsake God,**

BROKENNESS

These difficult situations, however, does have a positive end. It could lead to brokenness. A lot of modifications occur within us during the process of brokenness, which in turn causes us to improve and update our knowledge of God and reality, since whatever we 'see' of God is really the way we are. As we change, our opinion and perception of God also change correspondingly.

This process of brokenness, that is being poor in the spirit - whence one's spirit is no more presumptuous and arrogant, appropriating things for itself but, lowly unassuming and dependent - is usually initiated by the Holy Spirit to make us increasingly gain the proper knowledge of God. Because man has walked too far away from his Creator, he starkly lost any cognition of Him. The Holy Spirit employs drastic steps or allows us go through some excruciating experiences, like the younger son

went through, so as to cure us of our wrong perceptions produced by our contrary sinful nature.

The boy's experiences refined him, purging him of self-centeredness, self-surfeit and his wrong perception of reality which lured him into seeking independence. The boy was broken to a point he would not mind being taken back by his father as a hired servant. Now more humble, he would, no doubt, relate even better with his father. The same thing happened to the man named Job in the Bible.

LESSONS LEARNED

God's wealth is given in trust and must be spent in God's way and liking. Wealth should be dispensed by those that know the purpose of wealth. Like the young boy, anytime purpose is not known, abuse is inevitable. If he had accepted mentorship, he would have learnt that wealth is to enable the Christian execute his divine mandate on earth, help the church fulfill the great commission and free people from the pangs of poverty, like the father was doing.

In conclusion, while the elder son was pathetically ignorant, the younger son was heartbreakingly self-centered; both suffered for their respective sinful tendencies. The only one above reproach is their father - an archetype of God - who had the precise panacea for their manifest shortcomings. While the younger son received deep lessons on selfless love, which he evidently has in short supply; the elder son was taught the knowledge of abundance and the abundant heart of God.

¹²(Gal. 3:29); ¹³(1 Cor 3:21-23); ¹⁴(Jer. 17:5-8); ¹⁵(Deu.32:15);

¹⁶(Dan11:31 NET)

CHAPTER EIGHT

CURE THROUGH TRUST

OUR JOURNEY BACK TO EDEN

**Our journey
back to Eden
must embrace
the twin issues**

When man sinned and was driven from Eden, his guaranteed place of abundance, he not only lost the appropriate knowledge of God, he also lost the art of trusting in God. His life ceased to be marked by a simple, pure reliance on the goodness and wisdom of the Most High God. Man's wisdom, like that of the beguiling serpent, became corrupted. Faith in God was replaced by fear, trust by distrust and doubt. God's sincere good intentions were now seen through the perverted prism of unbelief and lack mentality. Man can no more receive God's blessings because God and man function from different platforms, just as the scripture says, *'can two walk together unless they are agreed'*? ¹.

So our journey back to Eden must embrace the twin issues of Knowledge and Trust. To cure unfruitfulness, trust in God's goodness and justness must return to our hearts, for *'without faith, it is impossible to please God'* ². Faith is not only believing that God can do something, we must also esteem Him willing to do whatever He promised because of His integrity.

ENCOUNTER WITH A YOUNG MAN (Mt19:16-30; Mk10:17-31)

Jesus was met by a rich young man who desired God's blessedness. Jesus counseled the young man to give away his wealth, so that he might acquire God's kind of true blessings. The young man walked away sorrowfully because, he had great possessions and could not part with his riches. Jesus afterward startled His audience with the statement, *'It will be very hard for those that trust in riches to enter His kingdom'* ³. Petrified, Peter then asked Jesus, *'We have left all to follow you. Therefore what shall we have?'* ⁴. Jesus sympathetically explained to Peter and his group that God had great plans for them.

Unlike the rich young man who clung to his riches while flunking the clarion call to join the chariot of God's kingdom, those that answered the call with unreserved trust shall not come short both in this life, where they will obtain a hundred fold, and in the life to come. Then came the bomb-shell, *'But many who are first shall be last and the last first'* ⁵. That is, those that think they are wise will soon, to their consternation, find out that they are only clever by half; they will come last. But, those that seemed foolish will soon gain the upper hand, *"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God"* ⁶.

¹(Amos 3:3); ²(Heb 11:6); ³(Mk. 10:24); ⁴(Mt19:27); ⁵(Mt19:30);

⁶(1Cor 3:19)

THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2 Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.....6 And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' 7 They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.' 8 "So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.' 9 And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. 10 but when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. 11 And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, 12 saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.' 13 But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14 Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. 15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' 16 So the last will be first, and the first last..." Matt 20:1-16

Jesus immediately employed the 'parable of the vineyard' to buttress the point He was trying to make after the rich young man walked away sorrowfully. Note that in the original manuscript there is no division between chapters 19 and 20. He began the parable with the phrase, 'the kingdom of heaven is like this', or

put another way, this is how to walk with God and be a part of God's blessed crowd. Jesus revealed to all how to beat our way to the top or how to come first if you were previously adjudged last.

With the parable, Jesus masterfully discloses to us the route to the heart of God and how to yoke up with Him, who knows the way through the wilderness and gives the '*treasures of darkness and the hidden riches of secret places*'⁷. As usual, Jesus skillfully contrasted the divergent fortunes of two categories of people and deftly highlighted the factors that gave rise to the different outcome of their lives, which in this case is trust in God.

In the story there are different categories of workers who were hired by the land owner to work in his vineyard. The landowner represents God, while the different classes of workers personify the different types of Christians in the quest to obtain their living from their Maker. Jesus contrasting the interplay of their different attitudes towards the landowner and the landowner's conclusions and actions, Jesus sought to teach Peter and his friends the trunk road to receiving blessings from God without sweat.

DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF WORKERS

The first category of workers came out very early, about 6:00am, ready to plunge into work. These were the admirable natural go-getters: industrious and diligent but, they also exhibit the human tendency of trusting in themselves; always evincing self-interest and shrewdness in their dealings with others, including unfortunately God. They negotiated and agreed with the landowner to be paid a day's wage for labourers, which is a denarius.

The final class of workers was those the world would regard as laggards, who are always condemned to come 'last' in life's scheme of things. They probably came out late for work, or most likely do not have the worldly guile and craft to be picked early ahead of others. However, they have one thing going for them: what they lacked in human cleverness they fortunately made up for in godly wisdom. When hired, they went straight to work, they never haggled nor negotiated the price with the landowner, they trusted him to give them a fair deal accepting his promise that *'whatever is right you will receive'* (vs7).

THE HEAT OF THE DAY

The first category of workers who were canny, relying on themselves, earned one denarius per day while working under the *'burden and the heat of the day'* (vs. 20). The last category got one denarius per hour, and, they worked during sundown. When the first category of workers complained, God reminded them that they have a prior agreement which He had not broken. He had decided to give the latter workers a denarius also, that is what God does with His own thing: *'Because I am good'* (vs. 15).

Those that depend on themselves; their strength, wisdom, human connection will not inherit God's kind of blessings because the *'... Lord takes no pleasure in the legs of a man'...* but *'...in those that who hope in His mercy'* ⁸. Not even their industrious hardworking lifestyle is a guarantee for the abundant life. Had the rich young ruler trusted in Jesus enough to give away his wealth, which Jesus perceived was his confidence, he would have been ushered into a life devoid of toil and turmoil, fear and fretfulness, as he strives to

**The secret of
blessedness is
to live for
others**

make a living. Instead he will taste true abundance and fulfillment. Any form of grasping, or clinging unto things outside of you is due to the lack of abundance mentality, regardless of how rich you are.

Anybody who desires to walk into God's type of abundant living must be prepared to trust in the largeness of His heart. It is not blind trust; you must esteem God to be full of goodness and candour. Like Peter and his friends, you must be totally abandoned to God even to the point of foolishness. "Unless your pursuit of God fools you, it shall not full you", attests Bishop Oyedepo. Half way abandonment and trust will yield no result. No level of abandonment is beneficial except total abandonment.

4 Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. 5 Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. Ps. 37:4, 5

THE SECRET OF BLESSEDNESS

**The secret of
blessedness is
to live for**

The secret of blessedness is to live for others, especially the Lord. To be kingdom addicted. A fruitful, fulfilling life is reserved for those who wholeheartedly live for the Lord; who are unreservedly sold out. Stop living for things, like the rich young man, start living for God. Your joy and fulfillment is anchored on your commitment to God. The quality of your commitment, which is really a product of your love for God, determines the quality of your destiny. Anything less or contrary is replete with trauma, horrifying prospects, regrets, disillusionment, unfulfilment etc.

The master key that unlocks God's door to a blessed life is meekness. The '*meek shall inherit the earth*' ⁹. Meekness means yieldedness to God's wisdom, timing and instructions. Obey without reticence or reservations, even when you don't fully understand or is inconvenient. Disobedience or delays in carrying out clear instructions are by-products of corrupted allegiance. It is the reason for many delays in breakthrough.

⁷(Isa. 45:13); ⁸(Ps147:10&11); ⁹(Mt 5:5)

CHAPTER NINE **CURE THROUGH WISDOM**

The Lord by wisdom founded the earth... (Pro. 3:19a).

God employed the faculty of wisdom when He designed and created the earth. That is, He built through wisdom. He still employs several precepts and principles to keep the whole earth and all that is in it, including mankind, in a steady state.

4 "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. 5 Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6 To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone,

7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Job 38:4-7

It is the Lord who established the body of natural phenomena for the purpose of stability and, He reveals them to diligent and disciplined seekers and inquirers.

Does not wisdom cry out, And understanding lift up her voice? 2 She takes her stand on the top of the high hill, beside the way, where the paths meet. 3 She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city, at the entrance of the doors. Pro 8:1-3

WISDOM LINKED TO WEALTH

Those who are able to uncover and make use of this plethora of principles are called wise. These wise ones use their understanding to attract earth's resources their way.

The crown of the wise is their riches (Pro. 14:24a).

The rich understood the practical precepts that lead to the acquisition and conservation of wealth, which results in fruitfulness. These practical precepts are part of the principles the Lord established after creating the material universe.

I wisdom dwells with prudence and find out knowledge and discretion.... I love those that love me and those who diligently seek me will find me... that I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth, that I may fill treasuries (Pro. 8:12, 17, 21).

Though the true knowledge of God's nature of abundance and trust in His faithfulness and integrity are pertinent, they are only foundational. They are not enough to guarantee anybody godly financial prosperity on earth. We still need to acquire the practical wisdom for wealth creation and sustenance.

A dictionary defined wisdom as that trait of utilizing knowledge and experience with common sense and insight, or that quality of being prudent and sensible in the management of your earthly affairs. God, who created the earth and everything therein, via wisdom, has left same for man to exploit and become equally creative and productive.

Adam received a mandate to have dominion over all created things. He was instructed to 'tend and keep' his abode, the Garden of Eden. These involved the preservation (the keeping) and further cultivation and expansion (the tending) of the garden. Till date man is still expected to 'Tend' and 'Keep' his garden. To successfully do this requires the accumulation of relevant knowledge and utilizing same with prudence and common sense.

King Solomon was adjudged the richest man to ever live; he was even far richer than Croesus, the last king of Lydia. The ancients used to say, "As rich as Croesus." Solomon was also the wisest.

God promised him wisdom, which he utilized to accumulate great wealth. Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs most of which are precepts for being fruitful.

THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS (Lk16:19-31)

The ignorance of the practical steps required to acquire godly wealth will without fail leave you confounded. Your ignorance will not attract God's sympathy because by and large ignorance is a choice. You have chosen to ignore the clarion call to '*search the scriptures*'. For the scriptures are replete with in-depth and diverse precepts which could make us gain wisdom - '*whose ways are of pleasantness and all her paths peace*' ¹.

Once more we draw from the lips of Jesus, '*the wisdom of God*' ², the insight to drive home the above point. The Parable of the rich man and Lazarus is an evergreen that will continue to yield luscious lessons in the school of fruitfulness.

**Your ignorance
will not attract
God's sympathy
because by and**

19 "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. 20 But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, 21 desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table.

Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' 25 But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.....29 Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them...'" Lk. 16:19-31

There are three characters in the story: Lazarus who served faithfully but, had 'evil things' on earth; The rich man who 'received good things' while on earth but, is poor towards God; and Abraham, who was both rich towards God and in material things.

For a long time all the church could see in the parable, as well as the widely called 'parable of the prodigal son' was the moral aspect of the story. In this parable, it is clear that Lazarus lived in the permissive will of God because, even though he went to Heaven, he lived a despicably wretched life on earth. Abraham, on the other hand was well under the perfect will of God. He reveled in abundant blessings God lavished on him while on earth, and afterwards went to Heaven, where he was still held in high regards.

In Paradise, Lazarus was found in Abraham's bosom, meaning that Abraham is God's shining star. Lazarus' subordinate position to another mortal, who walked this earth as he did, confirms the point that he did not live to his fullest potential or, as the Bible puts it, 'full of days'. The rich man was obviously not in the Will of God at all. It is entirely your choice how you want to live as a Christian. Do you want to live as Lazarus or as Abraham?

LAZARUS - GOD'S PERMISSIVE WILL

The tough question we must answer is why was Lazarus, who was clearly righteous, seemed abandoned by God to wallow in such contemptible want and malady; why did God not intervene? The reason is not far fetched: God has given the dominion of the earth to man.

28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, " Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over... every living thing that moves on the earth." Gen 1:28

"The Heaven even the heavens are the Lord's; but the earth he has given to the children of men..." Ps 115:16

God is always true to His word and principles; He does not change. Any part of God's word you ignore has its consequences which you cannot change. We have the freedom to make our

choice, but we cannot determine or influence the outcome. The only way to change the consequence, if it is unsavory, is to change our choice. Lazarus was wise enough to plow his way to Heaven but, lacked the appropriate practical wisdom to lead a fruitful Christian life.

**The wisdom of
God compelled
Him to work.
It is foolhardy
and an offence
to God to sit**

In the creation story, it took God six days, with all His infinite powers and understanding, to create the earth. The wisdom of God compelled Him to work; muddying His hands in the process. It is foolhardy and an offence to God to sit idly and expect prosperity.

If God worked to create and produce, we ought to do the same. The beginning of God's mercy and kindness is to be taught the wisdom of His ways, and ends with Him encouraging us to do as He did .To pray only and fail to exercise the wisdom of God is manifest ungodliness, with telling consequences, as we saw with Lazarus.

DESIRED ONLY CRUMBS

From the start, Lazarus gave himself little chance to escape such life of shame by his thoughts and imaginations. He only '*desired to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table*'. All he could think to survive is to beg. God mercifully gave him the opportunity to stay close to the rich man - the man could have ordered him driven from his gate and never to come again - so that he could get angry with his state and push for a change, as

he observed the rich man and his estate *'fare sumptuously everyday'*. Unlike Jabez, he could not galvanize himself to change his parlous state.

Life gives back to you what you demand not what you deserve. If God cannot reach and change you to conform to His word and precepts in a particular area, you will live and die with it, with all its ugly consequences. We do not have to live broken and defeated lives, God has emphatically promised that *'My people shall not see shame'* ³.

ABRAHAM - GOD'S PERFECT DELIGHT

Abraham, unlike Lazarus, lived an admirably fruitful life on earth. He was a man of means, influence and authority. *'God blessed Abraham in all things'* ⁴. He made Heaven also after his earthly sojourn. As a matter of fact, God was so gratified with his life on earth that he was made a prominent fatherly figure in Heaven.

A FRIEND OF GOD

Abraham was able to achieve a colourful destiny because he had an intense devotional life. Unlike Adam, he constantly built altars everywhere he went from where he called upon God, and especially to mark momentous supernatural encounters. Abraham was a *'friend of God'* ⁵, a God addict. He first sought God's face and not God's hands - he loved God not because of what God can

give. The outcrop of such a life is a man who is constantly moved by faith to obey God promptly. For instance, he promptly agreed to send Hagar and Ishmael, his first son, away and was very willing to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac, to God.

FATHER OF FAITH

Secondly, he had a sound revelational knowledge of the abundance heart of God. To walk with the God of abundance, God will first work into us a heart of abundance. God took special care to work this revelational knowledge into his heart through aggravated spiritual experiences: God made him to look, with his spiritual eyes, in the four directions of Canaan, promising to give him all his eyes could see ⁶. God also brought him out and made him count the stars ⁷. These were trance-like open visions that instilled the Omnipotence of God into Abraham's soul. It was such supernatural encounters that made Abraham the father of faith.

While Lazarus' commitment to God was not in doubt, Abraham went a step further to develop a functional faith life. His fortitude and gritty determination to put his faith to work made him to gain,

**To walk with
the God of
abundance, God
will first work**

through experience, a sagacious life-style. Abraham was a man of gumption. He was acutely insightful and wise. His sound practical wisdom helped him to do things that led to his fruitful earthly sojourn. A few examples will suffice: he had an army with which he safeguarded his possessions in a lawless era of constant conflict and raiding bands; made wise investments in diverse businesses; he led a prudent life in his dealings with others. In an

instance, he insisted on buying with deed a portion of land from the Hittites for burying his departed loved ones, though they promised to give it to him without cost.

POVERTY AND PIETY

Abraham proved that poverty is not synonymous with piety or a gift to the church. Through Abraham, we see God's perfect desire for his children: Worshipful, dependent on God, abundantly prosperous while on earth and afterwards spend eternity in His presence. Indeed, the other entire notable figures that God gave us as guideposts to emulate (Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, David etc,) were equally men of means and influence who loved God. There is clearly an undeniable link between godly wisdom, acquired through a close walk with God, and prosperity.

14 Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding, I have strength. 15 By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice. 16 by me princes rule, and nobles, all the judges of the earth. 17 I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me. 18 Riches and honor are with me, enduring riches and righteousness. (Prov 8:14-18).

In contrast, Lazarus evidently lived a less than fruitful life, he went to Heaven as 'one escaping from fire' ⁸. Since our reward in Heaven depends on our activity on earth; how we influenced others for the kingdom, how far we extend the kingdom in our own small corner, how we spent and are spent for the cause of the gospel, you do not need the intelligence of a rocket scientist to know that Lazarus was useless to the kingdom. What could

such a beggarly, sickly, reproachful fellow accomplish in the community of men? Wealth is glorious; it commands influence and radiates dignity, *'but a poor man's wisdom is despised; no one ever listens to his advice'* ⁹, how much more that of an offensively sick beggar.

Abraham, the foremost Old Testament figure, shall serve as template for us, as we discuss in greater detail the biblical practical wisdom that lead to an abundant fruitful life, which I choose to call "The law of Rain".

¹(Pro3:17); ²(1Cor18); ³(Joel 2:26-27); ⁴(Gen. 24:1); ⁵(Isa41:8);
⁶(Gen. 13:14-16); ⁷(Gen. 14:5-6); ⁸(1 Cor.3:15); ⁹(Eccl 9:16NET)

CHAPTER TEN

THE PERTINENT NEED FOR BALANCE

In the story of 'the rich man and Lazarus', Lazarus was poor and sickly, yet went to Heaven; the rich man was very rich and *'fared sumptuously'*, but went to hell; Abraham was *'blessed in all things'* and went to Heaven. The thought provoking lesson Jesus passed on to us was that neither riches nor poverty is the reason anybody should go to hell. Not all the rich men will go to hell, or all the poor to Heaven. Poverty is not synonymous with piety, nor is prosperity a proof of God's presence and approval.

**Poverty is not
synonymous with
piety, nor is prosperity**

SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM

In the pursuit to lead successful and fruitful lives, it is of extreme importance that we take *care not to 'fall into temptation and a snare and into many hurts and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition'* ¹. While wealth is wholesome and fruitfulness desirable, spending eternity in God's presence is far more important. We have a pertinent need for balance.

It is not wise to spend a brief period on earth in luxury and opulence, while the whole of eternity is spent in tears and torment, pain and pangs in hell. The major reason Jesus spoke the parable is to make *'man to stop justifying himself before men and, to know that 'what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God'* ². Lazarus, roundly despised by men, maintained his devotion to God, and went to Heaven, while the rich man, who was *'clothed in purple and fine linen and, fared sumptuously'*, went to spend eternity in hell, where he is constantly *'tormented in flame'*.

What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul Mk 8:36

In our quest for success, our overriding guide should be to *'seek first the kingdom of God'* ³. The seeking should be constant and persistent, because it is very easy for the heart to be lured away from our chaste devotion to Christ. The heart of man is given to all forms of idolatry. Anything that replaces God as the sole object of worship is an idol.

SERVING GOD OR MAMMON

The reason many who acquire wealth fall into the snare of not seeking first the kingdom is that money grants us a large measure of independence from God. That is why our Lord warns that we *'cannot serve God and mammon'* ⁴. Money tends to give us the effrontery to despise any need for God. This is a fundamental sin that resonates deeply in any fallen soul.

The fallen soul strongly desires to cast off the restraining bar of God's rules and laws. It resents the notion of submitting to another. The fallen soul deigns to be its own god. Wealth tends to make this wanton desire come to fruition. Awash with wealth, submitting to God's demands for righteousness becomes a pesky yoke. This is why the world turns its back on God while in hot pursuit of mammon.

THE RICH FOOL

16....*"The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." 20 but God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' 21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."* Lk. 12:16-21

Attempting to be independent of God is why Jesus called a man the rich fool. The man ignored the admonition that *'a man's life*

does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses' ⁵. He laid up treasures for himself but is not rich towards God. As his resources increased, he began to plan, but had no place for God. In all his plans God was never in the picture.

If only he realized that all the increase, and the soil, even his soul, came from God. After all, many had worked much harder than him, yet without equivalent results. He ought to wisely place himself merely as God's steward so that God, who gave the increase, will direct the dispensing of the wealth the way He chooses. Since this fact eluded him, his soul was recalled back in the thick of his plans. In endless pains in hell, he came to learn who the real owner is.

INCREASE IN WEALTH INCREASES PASSIONS OF THE FLESH

Pastor Ogbuoji says that, "when wealth increase, so does the propensity of the sinful flesh". When money grows, so does our sinful traits, we become more haughty, rash and arrogant. The rich man in our previous story went to hell as a harsh reminder for all to keep their focus right. The rich man allowed the '*lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life*' ⁶ to consume his soul. God purposely posted Lazarus to him so that both will learn from each other what they respectively lacked. Lazarus' devotion, despite his daunting travails ought to serve as a powerful admonition for him to repent and turn to his Maker. He rather chose to ignore God's deliberate attempt to save his soul, for God has a deep love for man; He does not desire any sinner to perish. He fell in '*love with the world and the things in the world*' ⁷ and spurned God's everlasting love for mankind.

His riches became the vehicle that propelled his lust of the eyes, he was '*clothed in purple and fine linen*'; his lust of the flesh, he '*fared sumptuously everyday*'; and, his pride of life, he was '*buried*' in pomp and pageantry. Lazarus never tasted such luxury, he got no burial. He was merely carried to Heaven by

angels after he died. The rich man's affections were glued to things of this world. He never spared a thought for Heaven and God his Maker. Otherwise, Lazarus' heart wrenching condition should have gained his considerable attention, which is one primary reason God grants increase.

THE RICH YOUNG RULER

Through the story of the rich young ruler, we see another peril that places men in the pit of hell.

17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" 18 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. 19 You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'" 20 And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth." 21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." 22 but he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Mk 10:17-22

The young man failed God's Covetousness Test. He walked away sorrowfully, unable to meet Jesus precondition for entering Eternal life. Greed, every bit manifested by the young man, is what forces us to be covetous. Covetousness springs from the heart that relies on money as a source of comfort, prestige, security etc. But, God commands us to trust Him from whom all blessings flow.

Greed, or the fear of poverty, forces us to keep as much as we can so as to, in our own calculations, keep our head afloat and away from the back-hole of lack and despair. But, we should not forget that God is the provider, sustainer, shield and the 'lifter of our head' ⁸. Because of the bondage of greed, this enterprising

and promising young man missed out on eternal life and ended up in hell. Paul's admonition to Timothy for onward transmission to the church wraps it up:

17 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. (1Tim 6:17-19).

¹(1Tim6:9); ²(Lk16:15); ³(Mt6:33); ⁴(Mt6:24); ⁵(Lk12:15); ⁶(1Jn2:16); ⁷(1Jn2:15); ⁸(Ps3:3)

PART 4 CREATING YOUR OPPORTUNITY

Chapter II

THE LAW OF RAIN

*20 "From where then does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding?23 God understands its way; and He knows its place. ...26 when **He made a law for the rain** and a path for the thunderbolt. Job28:20-26*

WATER IS LIFE

The law of rain is about the series of physical phenomena that eventually result in rainfall. The rain in the Bible and all over the world signifies blessing ¹. Water is life; rainfall brings with it a season of refreshing. Vegetation that turned brown and previously blighted springs back to life with a shimmering green. Trees that

had shed their leaves begin to bloom again announcing the return of abundance.

BE PASSIONATE AND THIRSTY

The fall of rain is synonymous with a sudden massive accumulation of favour, or, to have the door of opportunity swing open to you. To create this opportunity you must be passionate and thirsty about your desire to be prosperous. Any pursuit not ennobled by passion, soon runs out of steam and will bow to obstacles and other inhibiting circumstances.

FREE YOURSELF OF GUILT

You must free yourself of the guilt that sometimes accompany the accumulation of wealth. It is sin not holiness that brought poverty. God's plan for man is abundance that is why He placed him in the Garden of Eden, the garden of abundance and plenty. We must change and renew our minds according to God's original plan. Since sin is the direct cause of poverty and lack, now that we are born-again, '*old things must pass away*' ². As a child of God you are an unlimited inheritor of God's riches and possessions.

7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Gal 4:7

An heir is a shareholder by birth. So we must change our frame of mind to conform to our present status in Christ. We will not inherit much unless we change our thinking accordingly, '*for as a man thinks in his heart so is he*' ³.

MONEY MUST BE WOODED

Someone said, "It is the first duty of everyone not to be poor". Money is likened to a shy maiden that must be wooed. But, poverty quickly descends on any without prior invitation, like an

armed man, once suitable conditions are consciously or unconsciously established.

I went by the field of the lazy man, And by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; 31 And there it was, all overgrown with thorns; Its surface was covered with nettles; Its stone wall was broken down. 32 When I saw it, I considered it well; I looked on it and received instruction: 33 A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest; 34 So shall your poverty come like a prowler, And your need like an armed man. Pro 24:30-34

Poverty mentality easily seizes its victim. It develops on its own even when you are not attempting to have it. This is because of the sin nature that came into man after he sinned and, afterwards was driven from the Garden of Eden.

MONEY IS NEUTRAL

Money is neutral. It is neither good nor bad. It only takes after the nature of its possessor. *'To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their minds and conscience are defiled'* (Tit 1:15)

Money in the hands of a righteous man, a God's steward, will do an incalculable amount of good. A man of God said that, "money is next to Omnipotence". You do not have to look far, every vision or dream is rendered useless and a mere wishful thinking at the instance of lack of money. What makes money so powerful is that money is the result of our collective resolve. We have decided to use money to determine the value of goods and services. It is not the paper or coin that is powerful, but the fact that men, who were assigned the oversight of the earth, have determined to employ money as the platform to facilitate all socio-economic interactions and interplay.

¹(Eze34:26); ²(2Cor5:17); ³(Pro23:7)

THE SPIRITUAL GIVES BIRTH TO THE PHYSICAL

Therefore, to understand the phenomenon of rain, which physically signifies blessing, and walk backwards into the spirit realm, we shall see the laws that also govern blessings and abundance. We know that whatever we see on earth was given birth to by spiritual realities. The spirit gives birth to the physical. God created the physical universe out of nothing we can see i.e. 'ex nihilo'. These physical phenomena that produce rain are part of the extraordinary wisdom of God; the wisdom He deployed to create and run His universe. But, all those phenomena already existed in the spirit realm. That is the reason the spirit realm controls the physical.

Because we are beings that operate in, and, understand physical realities better, the best way to peer, with any measure of accuracy, into the spirit realm is to study the physical tendencies the spirit realm gave birth to. That is walking from the known into the unknown.

He who understands physical laws and phenomena and applies them to the

He who understands physical laws and phenomena and applies them to the spirit realm will achieve astounding results. The witchdoctors understand this extremely very well. That is why they use animals and plants that have characteristics similar to what they want to achieve supernaturally to concoct their Juju. For example, they use dogs to produce the juju that had to do with promiscuity; and eggs, to produce the juju that ruin people's destiny, because egg is an embodiment of future life.

We no longer, as believers, need to grope in the dark, or to rely on man-made mechanistic psychology, which drains the soul of its spiritual sap and vitality, to work out prosperity for ourselves. The wisdom of God for such has been given us in the scriptures. To understand this law that governs rain is to understand the law of prosperity.

UNDERSTANDING THE PHENOMENON OF RAINFALL

15 He has made the earth by His power; He has established the world by His wisdom, and stretched out the heaven by His understanding.16 "He causes the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain; He brings the wind out of His treasures."

Jer 51:15-16

These physical phenomena which create rain are spelt out in the above passage and several others in the Bible: Ps135:7; Amos 5:8; Job37:3; Jer10:13 etc. They are:

- ❖ Water vapour rises from the earth through the process of evaporation.
- ❖ Lightning comes after ward, and
- ❖ Wind is released from its treasures or store houses;
- ❖ It is the rain-bearing wind that carries the cloud full of water.
- ❖ The water when it is too heavy to stay up in the sky begins to fall as rain.

**To understand this law
that governs rain is to**

**Generosity is
both the path
and the**

Chapter 12

FILLING UP YOUR CLOUD

27 For He draws up drops of water, Which distill as rain from the mist, 28 Which the clouds drop down And pour abundantly on man Job 36:27-28

The first step in the making of rain is the filling of the cloud with water vapour. The cloud is what carries the rain. Rain cannot fall until the cloud is too heavy to remain in the sky. God causes water vapour to be drawn up into the sky. The cloud when full pours abundantly on man for *'If the cloud be full it empties itself on the earth'* ¹.

THE LAW OF GIVING & RECEIVING

Before the earth receives rain it must give up water vapour. This fulfils the law of Giving & Receiving. So to be blessed like the earth, you must give up something. An Indian proverb says that, "good people, like the cloud, receive only to give away". Generosity is both the path and the purpose of prosperity.

"While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease." Gen 8:22

SOWING AND REAPING

Sowing and reaping, seed time and harvest is God's way of blessing. It is an all-time covenant that God instituted after Noah sacrificially worshipped God with his offerings.

'He causes vapour to ascend from the ends of the earth' Ps 135:7a

Giving is the way to fill your cloud. What you give is what you receive. If you sow kindness that is what you reap. If you give away your finances that is what comes back to you abundantly. The rule is, *'give and it shall be given unto you'* ². If you expect to receive then you must give. If you are too poor to give then you are also too poor to receive.

6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 So let each one give as he purposes in his

**Until your seed
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promised to**

heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Cor 9:6-7

Sowing and reaping is God's way of prospering the saints. God is not moved by our tears, sorrows or need but by seed we have sown. If you keep your seed that will be the most it will be for you; but, if you sow it that will be the least it will be for you. Until your seed dies it will not grow. What God promised to multiply is your seed that is sown.

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. Gal 6:7

God is not to be mocked, you cannot make fool of Him, whatever a man sows that is what he shall reap. Those who sow sparingly will reap sparingly; those who sow abundantly will also reap abundantly. 'The measure you give is the measure you receive' ³. This is an over riding law in the realm of prosperity. God himself dresses every giver with beauty and grace.

ACCEPT ANY INVITATION TO GIVE

When we give to God we are assured from the word of God, which cannot be broken, that we shall receive much more. When the Lord invites you to give, it is not to impoverish you rather it is to bless you. Anytime there is an invitation to give by the Lord, somebody is about to be lifted up, a star is about to appear.

In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand; for you do not know which will prosper, either this or that, or whether both alike will be good. Ecc 11:6

We must also sow frequently. Do not be weary in good doing. The farmer may be hungry but he must keep sowing. Not to sow is to have a bleak future and abort your destiny. The most beneficial part of your seed is the one sown. We receive by faith, so we must give by

**God himself
dresses every
giver with**

faith. God honours faith. When you give, see God behind it. It is an investment of faith, because of that we will not be discouraged when results delay.

GIVING IS COSTLY

24 There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. Pro 11:24

God watches and weighs what we give by what remains after we have given. Jesus commended the widow, who gave two mites, more than all the others that gave much more because, she put in all her livelihood, while the others gave 'out of their abundance'⁴. The weight of what we gave is what it costs us to give. David says, 'I will not give to God what cost me nothing'⁵. Do not think that what you have is too big for God.

GIVING PURGES GREED

Giving establishes us spiritually because, it liberates us from placing our confidence in things and transfers us to having confidence in God. The flesh detests giving, because giving takes away those pillars and props upon which the flesh leans.

Greed and stinginess often prohibits us from giving. To correct this covetous trait, God often demands that prospering Christians should give sacrificially. Giving sacrificially breaks the hold of greed over our soul. The major way to deal with greed is not by avoiding money making schemes, like engaging in stocks trading, but to give away your possessions.

THE OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS EXAMPLE

Abraham, our template, who helps us appreciate the practical wisdom that governs prosperity and fruitfulness, is a foremost giver. He paid his tithes and gave his best to God whenever God makes any demand. Giving is one of the remarkable traits of these prominent Old Testament saints. Solomon offered the Lord

a thousand burnt offerings; that night, the Lord appeared to Him at Gibeon, and gave him an open cheque. He also offered over a hundred thousand peace offerings during the dedication of the Temple. Somebody called it a bloody affair! The Lord immediately responded with a cloud of glory. David, while bringing back the Ark to Jerusalem, danced, sang and *'when those bearing the ark of the Lord has gone six paces he sacrificed oxen and fatted sheep'* to the Lord! ⁶. David also provided immensely from his personal processions for the building of the Temple.

GIVING WITH THE RIGHT HEART

However, for our giving to be profitable, it must be preceded by a wholehearted love for God; otherwise our giving will be mercantile i.e. like trading. This brings no reward. The state of your heart determines whether the prompting to give is godly. Abraham was called a *'friend of God'* who obeyed God promptly even in dire situations. Solomon *'loved the Lord'* ⁷, while David's *'soul pants after the Lord'* ⁸.

Equally important is to stop giving presumptuously. Do not give dud cheques. Give post-dated cheques only when the Lord clearly instructs you, or you will be guilty of presuming on God. Do not think that giving a post-dated cheque will move God, to thrust to you, money that you are anticipating. Giving dud cheques during offerings is an insult to God; it implies that He is not able to do what He promised, while He never promised anything in the first place!

God values your eternal destiny more than your offerings; therefore do not bring offerings from rejected sources: bribe⁹, oppression and exploitation ¹⁰, prostitution ¹¹, greed ¹², etc.

¹(Ecc 11: 3a); ²(Lk6:38); ³(Lk6:38); ⁴(Lk21:1-4); ⁵(2Sam24:24);

⁶(2sam6:12-14); ⁷(I kg 3:3); ⁸(Ps 42:1); ⁹(Deu27:25;16:18-19;Pro17:23); ¹⁰(Isa3:14-16); ¹¹(Deu23:18); ¹²(Pro1:19;15:27)

HOW TO FILL YOUR CLOUD

The Lord revealed to me the four most important types of giving we must engage in regularly. These are: Tithe, Prophet's offering, Kingdom offering and giving to the poor, in their descending order of importance. We must spread our giving in these four areas, which attracts varying graces to us. It is like different streams flowing into a river ¹.

Other types of giving we should also engage in, but occasionally, are Isaac's offering, First fruit offering and Vows or votive offering.

¹

TITHE

And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord. Lev 27:32-33

Tithe is one tenth of all our increase. Tithe is not a debt we owe God, it is not a yoke. Rather, tithe is an acknowledgement of the fact that all we are, and have, is from God. Tithe is a peculiar form of worship which indicates that we adjudge all our increase as coming from the beneficence of God. He is the God of increase.²

TITHE GROSSLY MISUNDERSTOOD

It is unfortunate that some Christians have misconstrued the issue of tithe and thereby overlook this most important act of worship. Few things give God more pleasure than to acknowledge Him as the source of all good things. The confrontation Elijah had with the Baal prophets at Mount Camel, the tussle that made Elijah a star was to prove the point that God, not Baal, is the progenitor of fertility ³.

These Christians dismiss tithe as an Old Testament relic which Christ has done away with. They are wrong on many accounts. First, both the Old Testament and the New Testament are a continuum, the seamless word of God. God does not change. The Old Testament could be seen as the word of God concealed; and the New Testament, the word of God revealed. The Old Testament is no less important than the New Testament. All the covenant relationships God initiated that resulted in the salvation grace of the New Testament were all in the Old Testament.

THE LAW IS A MULTIPLE BODY OF RULES

Secondly, our brethren seem not to know that what the Bible refers to as the Law in Old Testament is actually the merging of a group of three different bodies of rules for conduct. These are: The **Commandments**, which governs the moral life; the **Judgments** or statutes, which are the social laws given for orderly running of society. These include the rules about animals, health, interpersonal interactions etc. Finally the **Ordinances**, which governs the religious life and the Temple worship. It includes all the sacrifices and ceremonial cleansings.

It is these three collections of rules that are called Law in the Old Testament section of the Bible. Jesus Christ's substitutionary death did away with the ordinances only. The other two, the moral law and the statutes are still binding. For e.g. '*thou shall not steal*,' a moral law, still remains in force today.

The statutes however, kept changing as the society evolves. Some of them though are no longer necessary, but they were expedient at that time, like isolating anybody that has a contagious skin disease.

THE DIFFERENT ERAS

Another point they overlook is to lump the period between Genesis chapter one and Malachi chapter four as one era. The time of the patriarchs, Job inclusive, is regarded as the Era of the conscience.⁴ This era began with Adam in Genesis Chapter one and ended with the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai in Exodus chapter twenty. From Exodus chapter twenty down to Malachi is the period of the '*Law and the Prophets*'. Old Testament actually means Old covenant. Testament means covenant. It is the covenant God instituted with the Israelites through Moses at Mount Sinai. Before then, we have several other covenants God struck with Adam⁵, Noah⁶, and Abraham⁷. All of these covenants are still operational today.

TITHE IS A MANIFEST ACT OF WORSHIP

Tithe predates the Old Testament, Abraham and Jacob paid tithes. So tithe, even though incorporated into the old covenant that God established with the people of Israel through Moses, is actually not a law but a manifest act of worship and subservience, an indication of a loving relationship between creature and Creator.

The law was added to the Abrahamic covenant because of transgression until the Seed to whom the promise was made should come⁸. It did not delete the Abrahamic covenant, which is faith-based; it is an insertion not deletion.

To say that tithe belongs to the Old Testament as such should be dropped, yet quote the Old Testament and claim the promises therein is hypocritical. The fact that Jesus Christ approved and endorsed tithe establishes the fact that we ought to tithe.

23 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices — mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law — justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. (Mt 23:23)

Tithe was not emphasized in the NT because it has become a norm with all the people including the Christian at the time of the early church.

TITHE IS FIXED AND OBLIGATORY

10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it. 11 "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," Says the Lord of hosts. Mal 3:10-12

The entire tithe must be brought into the house of God en bloc. To tithe is not optional, it is obligatory. It is holy unto the Lord ⁹. Tithe is fixed it is not a free-will offering. Other offerings can be given at your behest; it is out of your free will.

Pastors can also collect tithe - though they themselves must also tithe, since to tithe is not a law, but an act of devotion. Let no Pastor exclude himself from this pertinent moral obligation. The Levites paid 'Tithe of tithes' ¹⁰.

TITHE BRINGS BLESSINGS

From the above passage in Malachi, refusal to tithe is to buy a curse, because it is tithe that opens the door for blessing and also rebukes the devourer. Therefore, the other givings do not replace Tithe. Your offering has not really started until you pay your tithe; 'to obey is better than sacrifices' ¹¹. It is tithe that brings us under covenant blessings; it is the master key to covenant prosperity.

Every body actually pays **tithe**: either you pay your tithe to God and receive joyful blessings; or to the devil, through incessant hospital bills, vehicle breakdowns, losses or even inexplicable frittering away of your **income without anything** tangible to show for it. Lastly, not to pay your tithe is regarded as unrighteousness ¹².

¹(Ecc 11:1, 6); ²(1 Cor 3:7); ³(1kg18:1-40); ⁴(Rm 2:14-16);
⁵(Gen1:28-30); ⁶(Gen 8:22); ⁷(Gen 17 and 22); ⁸(Gal3:2); ⁹(Lev 27:30); ¹⁰(Num 18:26); ¹¹(1Sam15:22); ¹²(Lk16:11)

PROPHET'S OFFERING

He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. Mt 10:41

Prophets or pastors are God's anointed messengers sent to represent Him and communicate His blessings. Irrespective of the visions and pronouncements you received from the Lord in the closet, a man must still be sent your way to bless you, in order to practically download the blessing onto your life. This is so, because God has given this earth to man. Abraham had Melchizedek, the King of Salem, Priest of the Most High God, bless him; only afterwards could he realize all of God's declared blessings on his life ¹³.

THE BENEFITS OF PROPHETS OFFERING

Prophet's offering is higher than giving to the poor. Jesus stoutly defended Mary, the sister of Lazarus of Bethany, when she was attacked by some of His disciples, for preferring to expend an alabaster box full of costly oil on Him, instead of giving the money used to buy the oil to the poor ¹⁴.

Prophet's offering introduces you to the benefits of the anointing which the prophet is carrying, and enables you tap into the

anointing that took the servant of God years, amidst tears and toil, to acquire; a kind of circumnavigating into God's peculiar concentrated presence. This offering grants you security and protection. It also breaks financial limitations and transfers to you the favour which anointing attracts. Prophet's offering leads to the preservation of destiny.

Paul prayed that the Philipian church will have all their needs met, because they touched his heart with their repeated prophet offerings. The truth is that prophet's offering provokes supernatural blessings. Wherever you see a poor pastor, you shall see a poor congregation.

WORTHY EXAMPLES

The Widow of Zarephath gave her last meal to Elijah and got a miracle of supernatural sustenance throughout the period of the famine ¹⁵. The Shunemite woman gave willingly and sacrificially; she constructed a new apartment and furnished it for Elisha. This opened a door to a flood of blessings in her life - blessings that money could not buy: she got a precious son after years of barrenness ¹⁶, had the son raised back to life, after he died, and restored to her ¹⁷, she was warned of an impending severe famine ¹⁸; when she came back, after escaping the famine, God prepared the King to welcome her and, she got back all she lost while away ¹⁹.

The same streak of giving ran through Gideon's heart. When Israel was ravaged by foreign raiders and oppressors, impoverishing her, Gideon still offered a young goat and bread to the unusual Man that appeared to him, announcing his commission as the next leader of Israel. It is only after the Man disappeared that he realized that He was an Angel of the Lord. Abraham intuitively knew that his three visitors were of another realm, he lavishly entertained them and got an embarrassingly

long spell of the yoke of barrenness broken ²⁰. Lot did exactly the same to these unearthly visitors and was preserved from an impending disaster over Sodom, where he dwelt. Go and do likewise!

¹³(Gen 14:17-20); ¹⁴(Jn12:1-8); ¹⁵(1Kg 17:9-16); ¹⁶(2Kg 4:16-17);
¹⁷(2Kg 4:18-37); ¹⁸(2Kg 8:1-2); ¹⁹(2Kg 8:3-6); ²⁰(Gen18:9-10)

KINGDOM OFFERING

This is another offering that brings a rapid change in status and destiny. If you care for God's concerns, God will care for yours.

14 "Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: 15 You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty); 16 and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field. Exo 23:14-16

The people of God were commanded to bring offerings to the Lord, 'None shall appear before me empty'. They were encouraged to bring as the Lord has prospered them. We must not come before the Lord empty handed because, everybody has something to give. The Lord has given seed to the sower. To claim to have no offering is to place little significance on the things of the Kingdom since certainly we do eat, drink and perhaps indulge in some habit.

COVENANT PRINCIPLE OF EXCHANGE

When we come empty handed, we reveal that we certainly lack the understanding of the covenant principle that practically guides how God blesses His people as he had promised.

22 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 23 "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: 24 "The Lord bless you and keep you; 25 The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; 26 The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.'" 27 "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them." Num 6:22-27

During any of the holy convocations or feasts, the people appear before the Lord with their offerings; subsequently the priest blesses or invokes the Name of the Lord on them. The Lord promises 'and I will bless them'. There, they exchange the little they have for the much that God has: Their weakness, sickness, poverty, oppression and bondage etc are exchanged with God's superabundant strength, health, wealth, protection and liberty etc respectively. The earth has received a command to run on this law of exchange. To appear with nothing is a volitional decision that you intend to go away with nothing. God is only interested in the seed sown.

YOU WERE BLESSED FOR THIS PURPOSE

Give Kingdom offering, that is one reason He blessed you in the first place. He could not have asked the people of Israel to give for the building of the Tabernacle in the wilderness if He had not previously given them favour to collect so much precious gifts from the Egyptians.

Always respond excitedly when God demands. When God makes a Kingdom demand it is to add colour to your destiny. Anytime God reveals a need in the house of God, or your eyes are opened to a need, somebody is about to be blessed; God is gearing up for somebody's promotion. David gave excitedly for the Temple with

goods worth, millions of dollars, affirming that *'I have set my affection on the House of my God...'* ²¹. Before then, he had observed that while he *'dwells in a house of cedar, the Ark of God dwells in curtains...'* He **therefore purposed** to build the Lord a befitting house. The same night, the Lord appeared to Nathan, the prophet, in a vision detailing that He had propped up David's throne with mercy, and, intend to establish his throne forever ²².

I do not need to add more, if you care for what God cares for, God will abundantly care for you beyond *'what you can think or imagine'*. ²³

²¹(1Chr 29:3); ²²(2Sam 7:1-17); ²³(Eph3:20)

GIVING TO THE POOR

7 He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done. Pro 19:17

Helping the poor is also one of the pillars of giving which is important in the Kingdom economics. Giving to the poor bring real rewards. It delivers from troubles that attract shame; those deliverances that money alone cannot solve.

GOD IS CONCERNED FOR THE POOR

God is concerned about the plight of the poor. In the Old Testament, He instituted **several welfare programs** which were incorporated into the Levitical laws. Some of them are: the cancellation of all the debts of the poor at the sabbatical year (i.e. after every seven years) ²⁴, the release of all Hebrews who had become servants, through poverty, in the year of Jubilee ²⁵. He

also provided that every three years the produce of the land was tithed and distributed to the poor ²⁶, in addition to the Gleaning laws, which urged the Jews to deliberately leave part of their harvest in the field for the poor ²⁷.

The Old Testament encourages us to give to the poor, and, considers helping the poor as act of righteousness. Oppressing the poor is declared as one of the crimes of the wicked ²⁸. God is often praised in the scripture as the protector, refuge and provider for the poor, who also readily hears their cry.

GOD NEVER INTENDED ANY TO BE POOR

4 except when there may be no poor among you; for the Lord will greatly bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance — 5 only if you carefully obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe with care all these commandments which I command you today. Deut 15:4-5

However God had not destined anybody to be poor. He did not intend a continuing poverty in Israel. He clearly stated in the above passage that there may not be any poor in the land, if the people will diligently observe His commandments.

Being Omniscient, He knew that some will disobey, that is why Jesus said, 'the poor you will always have among you' ²⁹. The ubiquitous presence of the poor gives us unlimited opportunity to give and rise ever higher.

NEW TESTAMENT VIEW

In the New Testament, Jesus led by example in giving to the poor ³⁰. He also declared that the first beneficiary of His gospel are the poor, especially the mendicant who have nothing at all ³¹. The apostles counseled that we should remember the poor, and, while doing good to any we must not diminish the person, because God sees everybody as equal. James made it clear that the way you

treat the poor has eternal consequences. One of the reasons the 'richman' went to hell is because of his disregard for the plight of the poor around him.

Always have it in your programme to pay somebody's health bills, school fees, rent, broken down property etc. Abraham lifted Lot from obscurity and established him. *'He who gives to the poor shall not lack'* ³².

²⁴(Deut 15:1-9); ²⁵(Lev 25:39-41,54); ²⁶(Deu 14:28-29); ²⁷(Lev 19:9-10); ²⁸(Deut 24:15); ²⁹(Jn12:8); ³⁰(Jn13:27-29); ³¹(Lk. 4:18-19); ³²(Pro 28:27);

ISAAC OFFERING

This is one of the offering that should be used sparingly. The Isaac offering is a demand God deliberately places on already consecrated vessels who seek higher glories of God. It is for the totally surrendered Christian who is abandoned to God. God employs such requests to shift affection and trim the flesh in the believer's life. Therefore it leads to brokenness which results in sudden increase of status and authority in the spirit realm, accompanied by the ability to command higher mantle - or power.

... God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ... "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." 3 So Abraham rose early in the morning... and took... Isaac his son; to the place of which God had told him... 10 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the Angel of the Lord said, "... "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me..." By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and

have not withheld your son, your only son —17 blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." Gen 22:1-18

Usually it is the person, things or place we love and cherish most that the Lord requests that we relinquish. He knows what to ask for, do not help Him.

Abraham was asked to give up Isaac, because that is the 'son he loved'. Such sacrifices are often painful and until God explains and sheds light, we will never understand the purpose for the sore trials and extreme adversity. Isaac offering, however, calls God down rapidly as in the case of Abraham; God immediately initiated a higher, more extensive and universal covenant promise to him, 'In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed ...'

The value of the sacrifice is determined by how much it costs you. The volume of the sacrifice produces equivalent volume of God's presence in your life.

INTIMACY WITH GOD

Intimacy with God precedes such demands. He seeks to continually align you to His will and purpose through purging you of the intervening offensive spirit of independence and self love. He forges you into His desired mould through the discipline of relinquishing cherished possessions which you are relating with wrongly. If you want the best of God, you must be ready to give up your best. If your Christianity costs you nothing, then your Christianity is nothing. The pursuit of Deity is costly. It simply demands your all. It will lead to the perishing of

**The value of the
sacrifice is
determined by**

your outward man: your wrong affections, confidence, dependence, sense of security and self-worth etc, while your inner man is daily being renewed *'which is working for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory'* ³³.

LOVE IS THE LUBRICANT

Obedience prompted by love, closeness and consecration to God is the lubricant for such sacrifice. Jesus said, *'the cup that my Father has given Me shall I not drink it?'* ³⁴. The Father demanded for His life which He willingly gave as a *'ransom for many!'* When God called out for Abraham, he answered, *'here I am'* – very ready, unreserved and submissive.

The Jonahs of this world cannot enter into this realm of giving. For, if you run away from lions and bears you cannot have the experience of victory over a Goliath. So you must be like Jesus not Jonah. Bishop Oyedepo was asked by the Lord, several years ago, to give away his Mercedes 280 model, he promptly obeyed. Afterwards, the Lord told him that it is too late, if he prefers poverty, because he must be made rich. Abraham gave Isaac and became the father of all the faithful.

³³(2Cor 4:16-17); ³⁴(Jn18:11)

VOW

4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed — 5 Better not to vow than to vow and not pay. 6 Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands? (Ecc 5:4-6)

When all things fail to get you desired relief, employ the secret of vows. Generally, a vow is a solemn pledge to do something for God in exchange for relief from a particular distress. It is usually of your own prerogative. Vow engages God who loves His integrity and *'cannot lie nor repent'*. Do not enter into it casually. Use it sparingly. Keep the exact terms of the vow, not more or less. For example, if you vowed to give a cow do not give a goat or an elephant. God places Himself under obligation to keep his own part of the bargain.

God values integrity and steadfastness greatly. He promised never to break *'My covenant nor alter the word, that has gone out of My lips'* ³⁵. Do not break yours, for whatever reason, because it leaves you at the mercy of devourers, who are merciless exacters. God cannot be made fool of. ³⁵

Hannah turned to vows to terminate the scourge and shame of childlessness. The Lord heard her, and gave her a son. Faithfully, she kept her terms of the bargain. This unbroken transaction between God and Hannah led to the emergence of the greatest Judge in Israel.

FIRST FRUIT OFFERING

9 Honor the Lord with your possessions, And with the first fruits of all your increase; 10 So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine. (Pro 3:9-10)

The First fruit offering is another important offering which, however, is not given regularly as the first four previously treated. The first fruit is the first part of your increase. It also represents

the first place, time, order or rank and dignity. As the firstling, it is the best and the choicest.

MARK OF HONOUR

Giving God the first fruit is a mark of high honour and regard. God says, *'those that honour me I will honour'* ³⁶, that is why the offering of the first fruit attracts God's blessings. Because honour is willingly bestowed on the one who deserves and is distinguished to have it, and not a thing to be grabbed, God does not always press the issue of the first fruit, unlike Tithe which is mandatory, and, which He demands. However, those who have gained insight into the high-wire point of honouring God, unfailingly have had their *'barns filled with plenty and their vats overflow with new wine'* ³⁷.

GOD EMPHATICALLY CLAIMS THE FIRST PART

God admonished the Israelites to reserve the first born of all that opens the womb, both man and beast, for Him ³⁸. In fact, He told them not to delay to offer the first of their produce and wine ³⁹. The first born of their flock must not be used for labour because it belongs to the Lord ⁴⁰. *'If the first fruit is holy, then the whole lump is holy'* ⁴¹.

The first born is the excellency of dignity and power ⁴². In Israel, the first born has a double portion of the inheritance. So it is not difficult to see why the Lord claims the first born if it is man or beast, or the first fruit if it is a produce.

The Levites *'shall be mine'*, says the Lord, because they were exchanged for every first born male ⁴³. God regards Israel as His first born, the *'first fruit of His increase'* ⁴⁴, which made them special and dignified, and, consequently gives them a first ranking among other nations.

JESUS IS THE FIRST BORN

Our Lord Jesus is called as the *'first born from the dead'* ⁴⁵. One of the reason He will be leading the hosts of Heaven that will finally

vanquish the devil. All these express the validity of the importance of the first born or the first fruit and why it is deemed very honourable when offered to the Lord. Abel offered God the first born 'of the flock and their fat' ⁴⁶; he gained approval from God. Cain brought an offering out of his general increase and was rejected. Abel's offering conferred on him a cloak of righteousness, such that his blood was speaking right into God's ears after his death.

Even the demonic human sacrifice by the King of Moab, of his first son, elicited so much wild activity in the negative supernatural which the invading Israelites could not resist and had to be driven back. The principalities that were released by the sacrifice simply overpowered the Israelites ⁴⁷. This goes to show what happens when we unreservedly honour the One we worship; mighty angels will be sent on our behalf.

JERICHO

When the Israelites entered Canaan, God commanded that Jericho shall not be rebuilt after its decimation ⁴⁸. In addition, all the gold and silver etc that they got from Jericho must be dedicated to Him and taken into the treasury of the Lord ⁴⁹; but, the ox, sheep and donkey be utterly destroyed ⁵⁰, as a mark of their being also consecrated to God - because it was the first fruit of their conquest! They could keep the spoils gotten from the conquest of other Canaanite cities for themselves ⁵¹.

The reason Achan was harshly punished when he took the Babylonian garment is not because the garment was irredeemably defiled, after all they were allowed to keep spoils from the other Canaanite cities, but that he took what God had dedicated to Himself - a kind of sharing God's glory! No man ever does that and remains guiltless.

The order forbidding the rebuilding of Jericho - because God dedicated it to Himself - was disregarded at a very costly price to

the rebuilder ⁵². For the same reason, Jericho had a dark spiritual overhang over it, since it was rebuilt in disobedience. The land was barren and the water bad ⁵³, also Jesus did not do any miracles there, except in the case of blind Bartemaeus who applied the covenant name of Jesus - The son of David - to gravely attract Jesus attention and broke through the curse over the city. The name, the son of David, is what certified and authenticated Jesus as the Messiah and King of Israel. ⁵⁴

INDIVIDUAL DISCRETION

Our greedy nature, fear of poverty and undue attachment to the things outside of us are what make giving of the first fruit or the first part odious and agonizing.

The Law nowhere specified the amount to be given but, left each individual to use their discretion in giving. The only stipulation was that the choicest were always to be offered ⁵⁵.

Some teachers believe that the first fruit should be all the first month's salary in any year or our first increase in the year, because the commandment is a yearly ritual. Some, however, believe that it is the first part of the increase in any new venture. Whichever one you accept, let your giving be according to your faith and give willingly, not out of compulsion or dissimulation.

³⁵(Ps 89:34);³⁶(1Sam2:30); ³⁷(Pro 3:10); ³⁸(Exo 13:2, 12); ³⁹(Exo 22:29); ⁴⁰(Deu 15:19); ⁴¹(Rom 11:6); ⁴²(Gen 49:3); ⁴³(Num 3:12-13); ⁴⁴(Jer 2:3); ⁴⁵(Col 1:18); ⁴⁶(Gen4:4); ⁴⁷(2Kg 3:21-27); ⁴⁸(Josh 6:26); ⁴⁹(Josh 6:19); ⁵⁰(Josh 6:21); ⁵¹(Josh 8:2, 11:14); ⁵²(1kg16:34); ⁵³(2kg2:19-22) ⁵⁴(2Sam7:16, Ps89:34-37); ⁵⁵(Num 18:12)

THE WAITING PERIOD

He sends lighting with the rain and He brings wind out of His storehouses (Jer 51:16c NIV).

After filling the cloud and it becomes either full or is getting full, the next phase in the making of rain is the thunder and accompanying wind. Both have their spiritual and physical significance.

THE LIGHTNING AND THUNDER=THE TESTINGS AND TRIALS

Naturally, lightning occurs when water particles in the water-loaded cloud shear and rub against each other as the cloud is driven by the wind at great speed. This physical process builds up a huge amount of electricity as electrons are peeled away from the surface of the water molecules. This causes the release of high voltage flashes seen as lightning. Because sound travels slower than light, the noise accompanying the flashes is heard seconds later as thunder.

Spiritually, lightning signifies testings and trials.

2 Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. 3 You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. 4 So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way. Jam 1:2-4 Msg

Everything of worth must go through testing and proving. Precious metals are refined to bring them to point of high value and luster. *'The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold'.* This trying removes the impurities, the things that compromise the quality and value of the metal. *'Take away the dross from the*

silver, and it will go to the silversmith for jewelry’¹. Pruning goes before blessing. This period is not for your undoing but, for your up building. Jesus says, ‘the tree that bears fruit I will prune so that it bears much fruit’²

**All
good
things
are
achieved
by
those**

PERSISTENCE

Before the door of opportunity opens up to you trials appear first. This period demands persistence. Persistence is an essential factor to move desire to concrete achievement. Without persistence nothing gets done. Many abort their dreams at this point, at the first sign of trouble. They lack the mental toughness to wait and see the daystar dawn on their expectations. All good things, they say, are achieved by those who are ready to swim upstream.

“Before the door of life opens upon you, there appears to be a hidden guide that will test men with all kinds of discouraging circumstances before they can enjoy any great achievement with the accompanying reward for the attainment of goals”, declares a sage. Calvin Coolidge also adds, “Nothing in this world will take the place of persistence. Talent will not. Nothing is more common than unsuccessful people with talent. Ingenuity will not, the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are (next to) Omnipotent. The slogan ‘press on’ has solved and always will solve the problem of the human race”.

This testing enlarges and makes you both ready and worthy of the blessing. T.B Mathew observed that, “When preparation meets opportunity success results”. Trials are part of the preparation agenda.

MERE ASSUMPTIONS

Until we fully go through this period most of the things we think we know are mere assumptions. Assumption is the lowest level of knowledge. The testing period is designed by the POTTER to make us grasp reality better. Screens on the mind, which colour our perceptions, are peeled away; imaginations, generated by untamed drives and desires, are blown away at the furnace of trials. We gain self-knowledge and thereby attain self-mastery. To dominate your environment, you must dominate yourself.

Welcome this period with open arms, it is an era to gain the right perspective and build capacity; time to understand more accurately the mind of Heaven and stand a good chance of being blessed, because blessed persons are only those propelled by the Lord. Trials tend to solidify your sense of mission and strengthen your resolve to succeed in life.

Wait. Give Time, time. Your seed needs time to die, decay, grow and mature. Different crops require different periods for maturity, so do our expectations. The waiting schedule for different harvests also varies. Jesus counsels us to ask, seek and knock, signifying that varying levels of persistence may be required at different circumstances. However, do not place value on yourself based on your human ability, always be conscious of the 'I AM THAT I AM'.

ISAAC'S RECORD IN PERSEVERANCE

2 Then the Lord appeared to him and said: "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you. Gen 26:2

Isaac stretched the record for waiting and persistence to new levels and was handsomely rewarded ³. He was stripped of his inheritance by an unrelenting famine. He did not rush down to Egypt, which was the custom of the people dwelling in that region whenever famine strikes Palestine - the grave mistake his father, Abraham, made. Instead he went to Abimelech, his mentor and father's friend, who lived in Gera. There he resolved to seek the face of God. God told him to stay in the land *'I shall yet tell you'*.

We hardly hear God except at the altar of prayer. He was kept waiting, for only God knows how long, while the famine ravaged his possessions. When the next instruction came, he was told to stay in Gerar - a land also experiencing the same severe famine. Isaac obeyed and fully relocated or *'dwelt'* in Gear, while majority of the people of Palestine massed down to Egypt for sustenance provided by the presence of the river Nile.

After a year, in what seemed like eternity full of blight, suspense, perseverance and faith, Isaac entered into a new realm of walk in life. The adversity had enlarged him wherein he saw the Omnipotence and faithfulness of God. These held him in good stead when the Philistines began to envy him as they see him *'grow richer and richer by the day until he was very wealthy'* (vs. 13 Msg). He survived and outlasted all their provocations until he came to his *'Rehoboth'*, where he said: *'God has made rooms for us'* (Vs 22).

¹(Pro 25:4); ²(Jn 15:2); ³(Gen 26:1-22)

THE WIND = PRAYERS & CONFESSIONS

The wind is what drives the loaded cloud to a particular location. In Israel the beneficial wind is the North wind which *'brings the refreshing rain'* ⁴. The East wind blows in from the desert. It is a

violent gust of wind that scorches grains, withers the vine and parches fruits. Figuratively, it is a wind deployed in spiritual warfare ⁵. The North wind can also be used to attract blessings during prayers.

Our prayer and confessions move the hand of Him that moves the universe to figuratively 'bring the wind out of His storehouses'. God will not move until men pray. Every move of God is only at the instance of a man's insistence on his knee. 'Men ought always to pray and not to faint' ⁶.

**Every move of
God is only at
the instance
of a man's**

Prayers, confessions, praises and worship are what we keep doing while we await our due season, until the cloud become full and pour its contents on us. The bloated, black cloud comes to its owner without miss. There is something about miracles that enables it to accurately pick its target among millions; there is no misplacement in the spirit realm. Only yours will come to you.

MEDITATIONS ON PSALM 63: THE WILDERNESS OF WAITING

David shared with all how he survived the gale of troubles while in the wilderness of Judah. Meditating on Ps 63 will also help anyone who is in the 'Wilderness of Waiting'.

- ❖ Vs 1: David acknowledges God as the only true God. There is none beside Him. He looks up to no other. He sincerely and eagerly seeks the face of God. David seeks God not what He gives. This attitude sucks out despair and despondency which builds up when we are self-absorbed.
- ❖ Vs 2: Look forward to seeking His salvation and the revelation of His Omnipotence in your life. With this, you no longer feel abandoned but you are now hopeful. Hope, they say, is the anchor of the soul, humanity's surest friend.

- ❖ Vs 3-5 when we become wrapped in His awesomeness, praise and worship is a natural out flow. We burst into worship as our gratified soul is entranced in His glory, instead of grumbling and complaining, which is what we get into if we stayed in the flesh 'watching the wind'. Worship is a powerful signal that you are ignoring your present mocking circumstances. Worship helps you concentrate on God. You make the point that your help and lifting is from Him alone.
- ❖ Vs 6-17: Meditate on His past goodness and deliverances. Remember that He has been your help in the past; make strident confessions about these. Let everybody who cares know that '*His right hand upholds me*'. Keep confessing; keep saying it, because you know that God '*cannot lie*'. Confession is like watering a seed in the ground or like steadying the infilling cloud. Our confessions create our environment. It is a major instrument in the determination of destiny. Confession leads to possession. Let nothing neither stop nor intimidate you.

However be assured that if your cloud is empty the wind comes dry and severe. That is why harvest does not answer to prayers alone. If nothing is going up from you, like the dry desert, that yields no vapour, you will have a scorched desert-like destiny.

²(Pro 25:23); ⁵(Jer 18:17; Josh 27:20-22; Hos13:15); ⁶(Lk 18:1)

TAKING YOUR OPPORTUNITY

CHAPTER 15

SEEING AND SEIZING OPPORTUNITY

Opportunity is a possibility due to favourable combination of circumstances. Opportunity results when your cloud becomes full and it starts to rain. *'If the clouds are full, they empty themselves upon the earth'*. Opportunity is an open door of favour. The rain or opening can come in the form of little droplets or as a massive down pour. Both are of God, do not desire one above the other; they have their merits and demerits.

The massive down pour type of opportunity is very slippery; it comes suddenly and soon afterwards disappears. One must be very ready, very prepared to see it and seize it. This form of opportunity is described as a "haughty goddess that wastes no time for those unprepared for it". While the little droplet type of opportunity is quite despicable but, more enduring, almost begging to be harnessed. Such kind of opportunity when taken often leads to more openings. They may be deceptively small but if diligently exploited opens up to a deluge of goodness.

However, the level of opportunity that comes your way is determined by what you have given back to life. Zig Ziglar postulates that, "you can get everything you want in life if you help other people get what they want". It also depends on your capacity, for Heaven can not pour on you things beyond your capacity.

DUE SEASON

The question of when the rain will fall or the harvest season has always perplexed Christians of all ages. The harvest comes when

you are due. When the due season arrives your dew will descend. You are due when your cloud is full. Your cloud will be full when you have cast enough up there.

Your due season answers mainly to your giving activities. Prayer is secondary. Most of your effort should be saddled towards filling up your cloud. Your due season is independent of your location. When your cloud is full your harvest shall surely come. You cannot be denied. God is not a man that he would lie¹. He cannot do wickedness or commit iniquity².

DO NOT FAINT

You must not faint before your season is due. Learn to keep casting your bread upon the waters; it shall surely come back to you, greatly enlarged, after many days. Stop observing the wind or regarding the cloud, just keep sowing.

Cast your bread upon the water, for you will find it after many days....4 He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap. Eccl 11:1-4

Those that observe with the eye of the flesh often sow carnally and reap corruption; they get into a worse state. Instead, sow at the prompting of the Spirit, so that you will reap abundantly³. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for being adept at observing the weather with fleshly dexterity but, are inept in discerning the movements in the spirit realm⁴. Consequently they miss out on Zoë, which is God's best for His creatures spiritually and materially.

**When the due
season arrives
your dew will**

Seize every opportunity to give. Every sacrificial kingdom giving brings you closer to your due season, because it helps to fill up your cloud faster.

WHY GOD APPOINTS DUE SEASON

God appoints seasons so as to test our hearts. He wants to know what is in your heart – God or money. He wants to be satisfied that you are worthy of the blessing. It is easy for our heart to be drawn or seduced by the allures of wealth; and the promptings in our heart to be dictated by money rather than God. When this happens, it leaves us spiritually wrecked, which adversely affects our more essential eternal destiny. This was the fate of the ‘rich young ruler’. This is why waiting is inevitable on the path to prosperity. ⁵

You must come to the point where you believe that you are blessed when you received Jesus as Lord and Savior. You are not blessed only when money came your way; you are blessed already when you entered into a covenantal relationship with God. It is very important to have this mindset, otherwise you will change when wealth begins to flow; your eye will now be fixed on riches, this will hinder God from revealing to you the purpose of the wealth.

**Waiting is
inevitable on**

¹(Tit1:2); ²(Jos 34:10); ³(Gal 6:7-9); ⁴(Mt 16:2-4); ⁵(Jos 23:10)

CHAPTER 16

THE HEART

A dictionary definition of the heart states that, the heart is the centre of all physical and spiritual life. As a center of spiritual life it is the fountain of thoughts, passions, desires, purpose and sensibilities which could be stirred in a good or bad way. It is therefore the seat of personal life in which the distinctive character of the human manifests itself. Success or failure – the ability to take opportunity – begins in your heart. The heart of the

matter is a matter of the heart. Sam Adeyemi declares that, “your nature places a limit to your capacity for action”. Your success is rooted in your in nature. What you believe is what you become. When you refuse to believe in what God said in His word concerning His people, it results in failure ¹.

This wrong mindset will certainly hinder you from seeing God’s opportunity. Abraham was constantly inundated in His mind with supernatural experiences and thereby mentally stretched. He was able to believe God’s supremacy over His creation. Lazarus on the contrary *‘desired only crumbs’*.

Poverty is ultimately the result of incessant poverty thinking. Success is sourced from a heart that throws out abundance consciousness. Life rewards you with what you are not what you wish. Life gives you what you deserve.

Your daily thoughts influence your decisions, your decisions influence your actions, then your habits, your character and finally your destiny. What you do repeatedly concretizes into your future.

PREPARATION

Preparation of the heart and hands, i.e. being skilled, is a factor that influences our ability to take opportunity. When opportunity meets preparation success results. Talent alone will not make you a success neither would being in the right place at the right time. You must be ready to take the chance. The big question in life is, are you ready? “Unless a man has trained himself for his chance”, insists J.B. Matthew, “the chance will only make him look ridiculous. A great occasion is worth to a man exactly what his prior preparation enables him to make of it”. “Jade unpolished does not make a gem”, corroborates a Chinese proverb.

Quit drooling, just wishing and hoping for a brighter tomorrow, invest in yourself. Constantly improve yourself. God cannot do for you what He has given you the ability to do for yourselves. You

cannot be who you need to be by remaining who you are: buy books and tapes, attend seminars, learn about new ventures, and improve your skills. It is when who you are changes, that what you are will modify. It is madness to continue with what you used to do and expect a different result.

EXPECTATION

Expectation is another factor that determines our ability to see and seize our openings. Expectation often births manifestations. Heightened expectation creates focus which enables you stay on what is the most important – the thing most desired. It excludes distracting and discouraging influences from those around you and your environment.

THE DREAMER'S EXTRAORDINARY EXAMPLE

Joseph, the dreamer, was a man who knew how to take opportunity. He bubbled with expectation concerning the dreams he had while he was younger. This expectation kept him focused on God, who alone could make the improbable dream come true, while also panning away discouragement that may interlope before the dream becomes reality.

Broken because of separation from his beloved parents, sold into slavery by his brothers, falsely accused and jailed by Portipha, he still remained on top of his deprecating circumstances. He did not grumble nor complain, neither was he despondent, otherwise he would be unable to make use of his gift, nor excel to be a useful leader, both in Portipha's house and in the prison. The operation of his gift, which is discerning of spirits, requires a heart and mind in an excellent peaceable condition. They must be under the control of the Holy Spirit. One must not walk in the flesh: grumble, pout, harbour bitterness, live with depression or in sin etc.

While in prison, he seized the opportunity that came his way when he accurately interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's officials. This set off a chain of events that finally led to his freedom and

frog leap into stardom: Pharaoh had a disturbing dream which none of his lieutenants could interpret. Pharaoh's butler, whose earlier dream Joseph had correctly interpreted, recommended him. Joseph was invited to the palace.

Being full of expectation, he knew his time had come. He shaved, put off his prison clothes and put on new clothes, ready to enter unto his new world ². If he was not expectant, but despondent, he will fail to see the chance for his break-through. He would not have put on a cheery, poised, winsome mien. His depressed mind would prevent him from accurately interpreting Pharaoh's dream. As a matter of fact there is no way he would he saunter into Pharaoh's presence looking decrepit and dejected. Imperial Pharaoh would have sent him away immediately. The opportunity to even get to hear the dreams, let alone interpret it will be lost.

BARTEMEAS

Another star that attests to the reward of expectation is the Blind Bartimeaus. He did not let the opportunity for his healing slip by. He shouted and screamed until he got Jesus attention. When asked to come, even before his miracle occurred, he quickly threw

BLIND

**Courage is
not the
absence of
fear rather,
the
judgment**

'away his garment, he rose and came to Jesus' ³. Why? He knew his time for deliverance had come. He was very expectant. When Jesus asked him what he wanted, he gave a direct response. His overwhelming desire made him decide before hand what will change his situation and, he remained focused on that.

COURAGE AND BOLD ACTION

Several times opportunity arrives among thorns or even hornets, so it requires courage and bold action to take it. The promise of

inheriting Canaan, a land *‘flowing with milk and honey’* arrived decked with giants. Joshua had to demonstrate uncommon courage to take the land. Courage is a quality of spirit that enables you to face danger and pain without permitting dominance from fear. Courage is not the absence of fear rather, the judgment that something else is more important than fear. The devil does not fear the man that is overridden by fear because, he knows that he is harmless; the man cannot take any devastating action against him.

Courage is the distinctive attire you have to wear to enable you take action at the auspicious time, because if the time is past, preparation does no good. John Mason maintains that, “You will always miss 100% of shots that you did not take. Success favours the bold”. You cannot kill a Goliath if you run away from lions and bears. You have reached stagnation if all you exercise is caution. T.W. Husley concludes that, “The greatest end in life is not knowledge but action”.

HEROIC ACTIONS

Abraham demonstrated uncommon courage when he boldly marched with his 300 man strong army to rescue his nephew, Lot, who had been taken captive after the raiding of Sodom by five kings. He used the opportunity of Lot’s capture to reveal the love of God in his heart; that he bore no resentment against Lot, who recently cheated him. Because of the exhibition of this unconditional godly love, God sent Melchizedek, the king of Salem, Priest of the Most High God, who was then His human representative on earth, to meet him on his way as he returned back from the defeat of the five heathen Kings. Melchizedek met him and blessed him with a blessing of inestimable value. Without this blessing, Abraham would have amounted to nothing! ⁴

Mordecai took the pristine opportunity that appeared in the kingdom of Persia when the position of the queen was declared vacant. He boldly urged Esther, her young niece, to enroll for the

contest. Esther was a captive Jew, a despised foreigner that stood no chance. This is a risky act of extraordinary courage. That is why Mordecai wisely instructed Esther to hide her identity ⁵.

Through divine providence, Esther became queen in a foreign land. This led to the protection and preservation, in prosperity, of the Jews from the hands of their enemies. O. Van Bismarck noted that, "The statesmen are those that wait until they hear the steps of God sounding through events, then leap and grasp the hem of His garments".

PROCASTINATION

Opportunity is like the fleeting shadows, it waits for no one. "Dispatch", says Chesterfield, "is the soul of business". You must take action to harness it immediately. The greatest enemy of success and conquest is procrastination - that whorlish habit of needless delay. Where action is required, procrastination is deferring action to a latter time. H.W. Shaw bemoans that, "the greatest thief the world has ever produced is procrastination and it is still at large". Procrastination is still roaming the streets afflicting many.

¹(Deu 7:7-8, 8:18); ²(Gen 41: 14); ³(Mk 10:50); ⁴(Gen14:1-21);
⁵(Esther 2:10)

LEVERAGING

Leveraging is a helpful strategy in the battle for success. Leveraging quickens your preparation and readiness to take opportunities that are every now and then strewn in your path. Not to have a lever is to struggle and sweat for success.

INFORMATION IS KEY

Leveraging for success is to humbly find the things and people to help you on your way to success. We need to learn from other people's insight and knowledge. We borrow so as to amplify our potentials. It requires humility. You borrow from those who have been where you are trying to go through. You need to know where to seek help when you do not know what to do. A key information can turn your life around. A single conversation with the right person can be more valuable than years of study.

Borrow from other people's success, as Queen of Sheba did. Learn also from other people's failure. You do not have to pay the high price for success. Learn from the experience of those that failed on their way to success. J. Mason advises that, "We should learn from others, because we will not live long enough to make all the mistakes ourselves and learn from them".

"You can buy wisdom or borrow wisdom", proposes Mathew Ashimolowo, "The former is to experience failure where-in you pay with time, money and convenience; the latter is to borrow from the experience of those who failed". Success can be resurrected from the ashes of other people's failure.

THE SEEKER'S HEART

In essence, to be successful you have to always seek for fresh knowledge. Knowledge must be pleasant to you. You should rub minds with great minds to become a great mind. In the story of the 'rich young ruler': his attitude towards Jesus discloses why he was a rich ruler at a young age⁶. He packed his few years on earth with quality information, even though he ended poorly because of greed. He invested in time. Not all old men are wise, ask Elihu of the book of Job; it depends on how, and with what you spend your time.

HUMILITY

As a seeker of fresh knowledge and information, he possessed the humility of mind to ask from those he thought had what he wanted. James counsels that *'...we should receive the engrafted Word with meekness...'* ⁷. To learn and improve, you need to be humble. Some people are not, their sense of inferiority is often aggravated in the presence of those superior to them in a particular area of life, and this inferiority complex forces them to unwisely walk away from a source of very priceless information. We should not feel uncomfortable with people who have what we do not have, instead see them as potential sources of information.

ENTHUSIASM

The rich young ruler enthusiastically sought out Jesus. He came *'running and knelt'* before Jesus seeking for new information that will improve him. The haughty Pharisees on the contrary, despised Jesus, refusing to learn from Him. The young man had heard Jesus speak graciously about eternal life and he desired it. He had known much about the Law and has kept it. He also wanted to know about eternal life.

One could feel the earnestness in his voice, *'what shall I do to enter eternal life'*? Enthusiastic fellows are always driven. They see life as a discovery not drudgery. Those that make the most of life see it that way. Their enthusiasm produces passion. Passion is the power house that generates drives and ideas which in turn breed success. This is so because drives and ideas compel conditions to be favourable for the actualization of desired purposes.

**We should not
feel
uncomfortable
with people
who have what
we do not**

Mark, the Evangelist, commented that, *'Jesus looking at him loved him'* ⁸. Jesus was affected when He saw his enthusiasm, zeal, zest and a burning desire to succeed. It is very unfortunate that he could not overcome the greed which calloused his heart.

INVERSE PARANOID

One way to get close to those that will be helpful is by being what is called 'Inverse paranoid'. It is the opposite of paranoid which is the state of a person suffering from paranoia. Paranoia is a psychological disorder characterized by delusions of persecution - the feeling that every body is conspiring against you; or grandeur - the exaggeration of one's importance. In inverse paranoid, you humbly believe that the whole world is conspiring together to do you good. You often look out for opportunity in any situation.

⁶(Mk 10:17-21); ⁷(Jam1:21); ⁸(Mk 10:21)

CHAPTER 17

MISSING OPPORTUNITY

"Wherever you go, go with all your heart," counsels a sage. Half-hearted approach to life will leave you in the middle of the road, which is a dangerous place to be. To take all the chances that God graciously brings your way, your heart must be prepared and ready through prior determined effort. To miss an opportunity is not a mistake. It is a function of your heart; something influenced your conclusions and actions. *'As in water face reflects face so a man's heart reveals the man'* ¹.

ORDER

18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. Mt 15: 18-19

Add also grumbling, complaining, anxiety, backbiting, jealousy, envy, poverty or lack mentality, negative confessions etc. These fleshly tendencies are the barriers that prevent us from seeing and seizing opportunities.

To prosper we have to overcome the flesh. We must bring the whole riotous world of the heart under the Lordship of Jesus Christ². *'In your heart set apart Jesus as Lord!'*³. Order is thereby created. Order is the first law in Heaven. Order enhances productivity.

Lazarus failed woefully to exploit the opportunity offered him by getting close to the 'rich man'. God wanted Lazarus to get angry with his despicable state, and apply pressure on himself, so as to come out of the mire. Anger and embarrassment, when properly channeled can act as a powerful motivator to achieve. Rather, Lazarus remained locked in his old thinking ways. He desired only to beg and solicit for sympathy.

Abraham on the contrary seized the opportunity that brought him relieve from life-long heartache of childlessness, when he perceived his three visitors as not of this realm and lavishly entertained them. To attract the so-called good luck you must be ready to take advantage of opportunities. Unfortunately opportunity is seasonal; if you miss it you will have to wait for another season.

MURPHY'S LAW

There is a law that always plays out; it is called the Murphy's Law. It says that, "whatever will go wrong, it would". This is so when one does not have what it takes to achieve. Do not standstill on the inside and expect to move ahead on the outside.

HOW TO PRODUCE A GOOD HEART

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good things (Mt 12:35).

Putting your heart in the state you need to succeed is hard work through diligence. Life's choices cost something. It is a matter of choice not chance. Some of the things we have to do are:

- ❖ Reprogram your heart for success. Seek knowledge and pursue it ⁴. *'Buy the truth and do not sell it'* ⁵.
- ❖ Your heart, eyes and ear have a connection. What you see and hear continuously will soon enter your heart and then your life. So surround your self with successful people, materials, and above all, the word of God
- ❖ Speak and act boldly. Do not wait for circumstances to be favourable before you speak and act. Do not talk big and act poor.
- ❖ Be expectant. Always be poised. Be a believer in the God that can suddenly cause something marvelous to happen. Anticipate a sudden turn around of events. Reckon that God is presently busy constructing a miracle for you.

¹(Pro 27:19); ²(Pro4:20-11); ³(1Pet3:5); ⁴(Prov 4:20 - 22); ⁵(Pro 23:23)

PART 6

MAXIMIZING YOUR OPPORTUNITIES - PLANNING

CHAPTER 18

THE ESSENCE OF PLANNING

Many Christians merely stop at just taking their opportunities. The harvest soon fizzles out and they begin to speculate on when the next harvest season will come. They need to know that the Lord's plan is to maximize any window of opportunity offered them, so that the proceeds of one harvest season will last till the next, since life comes in seasons.

The storehouse would be perpetually filled. *'You shall eat the old harvest and clear out the old because of the new'* ¹ and *'your threshing shall last till the time of sowing'* ², such that it will be possible not to suffer lack any longer, nor the cruel vicissitudes of constantly swinging from the state of lack to plenty.

**Planning is an
integral part
of work. To**

DO NOT FAIL TO PLAN

Planning before the time of vintage arrives results in maximizing the proceeds of the present harvest season. The Lord counsels that before you build or go to war or carry out any enterprise, you should first sit down and plan. The popular cliché that 'those that fail to plan, plan to fail' is an all time truth.

Planning is an integral part of work. To plan well is to work well. One minute spent in planning will save you two in execution: *'An enterprise is built by wise planning'* (Pro 24:3TLB). In this age of knife-edge competition, we should not only work harder, but also smarter in order to stay ahead of the pack. Someone quipped that, "all the voyages of the aimless are bound in shallows and miseries".

28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand

to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?... Lk. 14:28-32

THE BENEFIT OF HABITUAL PLANNING

The story of the 'rich fool' provides a grand insight into the power of planning; how planning proves pivotal in maximizing potentials and in deciding the outcome of our lives.

16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods...' Lk 12:16-18

Why would the ground of a man, already rich, still produce abundantly? Is God partial? No! God gives bountifully to all. The man, long before he became foolish, was transcendently wise. He met each successive harvest season with incisive planning. That is why he became rich. What you do habitually will determine the outcome of your life.

Lack of prior planning is one of the major reasons for underachievement and under utilization of opportunities. Those that fail to plan will always rue their fate. Every body's ground periodically produces abundantly but, not every body becomes rich afterwards. They may transiently live in abundance but, without maximizing the increase, like everything of this earth realm, it soon finishes.

The man had, had planning as a life philosophy. When the ground produces again, he was neither overwhelmed nor obtuse, not knowing what to do with the increase neither was he wasteful - the reason some do not grow beyond a certain limit - he sat down and began to plan. He said, *"I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build a greater"*. A sage said that, "A great occasion is

worth to a man what his prior preparation enables him to make of it”.

RESOURCE ALLOTMENT

Planning is all about resource - men, time, money etc - allotment. Planning begins with pre-determining in your mind what should be the desired end. That means you plan with the end in sight. Planning starts with envisioning, then the mapping out deliberate steps to attain your goals within a specific time frame. Any good planning requires the amassing of information and the processing of the accumulated information. You must plan knowledgeably, gather all the information you can about the venture before you commence. Do not act out of sentiments or hear-say, neither out of instinct nor influence from those around you. If you do, you will be unhappy with the harsh realities that will be your lot midway into the venture.

PRIORITIES

Quality planning requires prioritizing or scheduling our time and other resources. We should learn to know the things that are the most urgent or important. To prioritize means to arrange in order of importance. Patrick Morley counsels that, “priorities are predecisions we make to decide in advance what we will give ourselves to”. *‘A prudent man foresees trouble ahead and hides himself...’*³. We should not expose ourselves or dabble into everything that comes our way.

Priority is a tool that helps to distinguish opportunity from distractions. Priority enables us remain focused. Somebody described focus as an ‘Art of Exclusion’. That is the skill we developed that promotes the exclusion of distractions and unimportant issues from our schedule. To have priorities in advance is to plan to reduce the pressure we

**Priority is a
tool that
helps to
distinguish**

feel when we have to make delicate decisions as the flow of opportunity starts.

To successfully set your priorities is to be finally free. You have gained freedom from distractions from within and without; also, you have developed the ability to ignore the varied impulses, cravings, desires, pressures, goadings, ideas etc that constantly buffet us. Above all you have developed the capacity to say No. 'No' is an anointed word. No, means that you are focused, it helps you set your priorities right.

PURPOSE

No, also connotes that you have purpose. Purpose defeats intrusions. It sets the agenda. It excludes any thing, whatever it is, that does not yield itself towards the fulfillment of the desired end. Purpose makes us decided persons who are neither confused nor prevaricating. It facilitates the generation of passion and energy which are necessary for commitment. Armed with purpose, we can now determine the end from the beginning, because the future can be predicted when we have awareness of purpose. If we take care of purpose, they say, the end will take care of itself, because purpose does what it must.

**Armed with
purpose, we
can determine**

Since no man can do everything, necessitating the need for choices, priorities will help you determine how you invest your limited time, money and precious energy into the things that count, things that aid you to actualize your purpose.

Many mostly fail because they did not manage their priorities well. So you must establish your purpose and let it determine your priorities, then make decisions on the basis of your priorities not your pressures.

ANXIETY

Lack of prioritizing or pre-deciding the more important or urgent matters will make you anxious at the critical moment of decision. Anxiety is a wasteful and unpleasant emotion caused by the unleashing of wild thoughts without proper mobilization or harnessing of either ideas or information. There is no vision, passion or productive drive but, mere agitations that lead to uncoordinated actions, without profitable results.

This is so because we presumably did nothing until the final moment. We glossed over many things because we failed to do enough ground work. We did not gather the necessary information and facts, and with that, preplan. Thereby, we make many poor decisions and consequently many mistakes during the moment of reckoning, when we come under fire. We become rattled and anxious at such times, indulging in many frantic activities, which lead to waste and losses or even failure.

GOAL SETTING

In planning, it is of extreme importance that we have targets or goals. Without goals we become like rudderless ships. We will drift endlessly. "By the street of by-and-by one arrives at the house of never", declares Cervantes. It will be difficult to reach any destination without a definite goal. Unless you have a clearly set goal, you are not going to realize the maximum potential that lies within or around you. Nothing becomes dynamic until it becomes specific.

GOALS WORK LIKE MAGNET

A well defined goal work like a magnet, they pull you in their direction. The better you define them, the better you are able to describe them, the better they work. Increased productivity is always the result of well defined objectives.

The real value of goal setting is not accomplishments, which is secondary; planning compels you to become the person it takes to achieve goals. Reaching your goals is not nearly as important as what you become by reaching them. Jim Rohn claims that, "once you set goals that really matter you are no longer the same person".

Writing down your goals shows that you are committed to growth, that you are serious. Passive hope alone will not get you by. Dreams come cheap; it is their actualization that counts. Hope unaided by clear planning can actually harm you. The Bible says that, '*hope deferred makes the heart sick*' ⁴.

SET YOUR GOALS HIGH

While planning, set your goals high. Set them high enough, out of reach, to cause you to grow and stretch, though not far beyond you that you get discouraged before you start. In order for goals to be effective they must be big. Booker T. Washington maintains that, "the size of an accomplishment is measured by the quality of obstacles you overcome to reach your goals." Try and bite more than you can chew, for only then will you need the Omnipotence. It will force you to keep your eyes on God, unlike Peter, who took his eyes off Jesus and immediately began to sink.

CONFIDENCE

The foundation of planning should be faith in God. Do not place value on yourselves. Always be conscious of then I AM THAT I AM - the reason the 'rich fool' became foolish. In addition, have confidence in your God-given abilities. Have faith in God, because there are things in life which only His grace will see you through; have confidence in yourselves, because that will give you the boldness and necessary aggression to mobilize your inner strength and strategize. Both of these stir up passion, the agent that drives you through foggy paths. Confidence is the maiden of success; it is what makes you to keep going.

THE MECHANISM OF PLANNING

Napoleon Hill, the atheist, made some succinct points on the 'how' of goal setting. While I completely disagree with some of his views, I find these guides helpful. I accept them because it has been widely proclaimed that, "all truth is God's truth". The points are summarized below:

- ❖ Decide on a definite goal
- ❖ Decide on a definite time frame within which to achieve the goal
- ❖ Write down your goals
- ❖ Develop a plan to achieve your goal
- ❖ Decide on the price you are going to pay
- ❖ Think about your goal everyday; and I add, to plan effectively, you have to be taken captive by the purpose in mind.

¹(Lev. 26:10); ² (Lev 26:5); ³(Pro 22:3); ⁴(Pro13:12)

CHAPTER 19

PLANNING FOR THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF RAIN

We have previously stated that the natural rain may come as a heavy downpour or little persistent droplets. Different strategies

should be developed to exploit and maximize the different types of rain or opportunities.

PLANNING FOR A HEAVY DOWNPOUR

Rainfall in the Middle East is very unpredictable. However, God in His wisdom prepared a special phenomenon through which the land is watered. The people themselves have developed the skill that enables them harness the capricious water supply.

In Israel and surrounding nations, there are several large valleys or gullies that run through the length of the land. They are called Wadis. These gullies or streambeds remain dry until the rainy season. God was referring to this when He asked Job, *'Who had divided the channel for the overflowing water?'*¹.

Suddenly, without notice, a large gully that was previously dry becomes filled to the brim with water and transmutes into a large stream. God says, *'I will make the wilderness a pool of water'*²; *'I give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen'*³.

What usually happen is that a heavy downpour falls far away, say Lebanon, in the north of Israel. The rain water collects in these Wadis and flow down in a violent current through Israel and empty into the Red sea or the Mediterranean Sea. The psalmist prayed, *'bring back our captivity as the streams of the south'*⁴. This prayer pleads that the situation of the people should suddenly experience a turn around, from a dry forlorn hopelessness, to a state of being inundated and overwhelmed by the *'great things the Lord has done!'* - Just as the dry Wadis suddenly become large streams.

PROPHET ELISHA'S INSIGHT

This type of water supply is so freakish that in a moment you are deluged with water but, within a brief period, the whole body of

water is gone. So, if you are not diligent or have not acquired the necessary skill to enable you maximize this type of very slippery blessing, you will be left empty-handed. That was the skill prophet Elisha apprised the men of King Jehoshaphat to implement. He told them to *'make this valley full of ditches'*... They shall *'...not see wind or rain* (because it will fall in a far off land) *yet, the valley shall be filled with water...'* ⁵ (Additions mine). He knew about the rain fall through his prophetic prowess. To retain some of the water, that will appear suddenly, but will soon flow away, they have to dig ditches which would keep part of the water for use at their bidding.

MONEY IS A CURRENT

In the financial realm, a sudden deluge of cash flow or opportunity may come your way; if this is improperly managed it soon fizzles away. We must learn to make the most of an opportunity during the lifetime of the opportunity. Money is a current, it flows. Inability to administer it successfully means that it parts ways with you. Clason admonishes that, "gold is reserved for those that knows its laws and abides by them". Treat money with contempt, and it will always have the last laugh. Rather, you should treat it delicately and with care as you would a damsel.

**Treat money
with
contempt,
and it will**

The point is that the only way to keep money is by growing it, for money regardless of quantity will unexpectedly fritter away, leaving you stupefied. *'... For riches can disappear as though they had the wings of a bird!'* ⁶. Money begets money. Everything begets its kind, so with money. To grow money is to invest it.

¹ (Job 38:25); ² (Isa 41: 18); ³ (Isa 43:20); ⁴ (Ps 126:4); ⁵ (2Kgs 3:16-17);
⁶ (Pro 23:5 TLB)

PLANNING FOR THE SMALL DROPLETS

This is another type of blessing or opportunity. Rains do patter in form of small droplets. This drizzle arrives as a phase in your life. Heaven cannot pour on you things beyond your capacity. God's way of leading us along the path of success is, *'precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little'* ⁷. Do not take this phase for granted. It is very important you remember that it is from God. *'Do not despise the days of small beginnings'* ⁸. You must be where God has planned for you. He emphatically said, *'without me you can do nothing'* ⁹.

WINESKINS

New wine can only be put in new wineskins. Jesus counseled, *'No one puts new wine in old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskin and be spilled, and the wineskin will be ruined. But new wine is put in new wineskins and both are preserved'* ¹⁰. New irresistible opportunities, with their accompanying pressures, cannot be placed in vessels that had not developed the capacity to take them. The man may crack, spilling the precious opportunity. Just as God told the Canaan bound Israelites that He would only allow them take the land a little at a time lest they be overwhelmed by wild beasts, if they should expel the original inhabitants at once.

There are commensurate wild beasts, found at every level of life. If you are promoted way above your station in life, you may be unable to confront the 'devils' unleashed at that level, which will cause tragic losses or even the aborting of destiny. Follow God, He does not make failures. God works all things according to the counsel or wisdom of this will ¹¹. He designs for us a glorious living.

START SMALL THINK BIG

Many successful stories started at the bottom. Little things sooner or later get bigger. Nothing is born big; do not be afraid to take small steps. However, do not fail to think big. Think big but, start small is a cardinal advice; Plan with the end in sight. Do not forget that opportunity when taken leads to more, so do not stop the process of expansion before it has the chance to begin. Little openings you take today have in it several seeds of other opportunities.

THE SEED PRINCIPLE

Understanding the seed principle will enormously enable you maximize this precious phase of your life. 'God gives seed to the sower'¹². The money you have now is the seed given you by God to enable you propel yourself to financial freedom in the future. The seed is meant to be sown. Do not eat nor allow it to waste, erroneously thinking that it is small and will not amount to much.

God also 'increases, the seed sown'. If you properly sow your seed, God watches over it, to see it gradually multiply. The law of multiplication means that the future is locked in that seed. Myles Munroe stated that, "the death of a seed is the burial of a forest" and Dr. Robert Schuller affirms that, "you can count the number of seeds in an apple but, you cannot count the number of apple in a seed". "To eat your seed without sowing is to die without knowing", finally declares Dr. Paul Eneche. With the Law of multiplication little things soon gets bigger. You can move from where you are to where you want to be. It requires the shrewd use of seed and time. The most important thing is the quality of the seed not the quantity. Quantity can perish in a flash.

**Do not forget
that
opportunity**

TIME IS A FRIEND

If you understand the seed principle, time becomes an ally. Do not waste time. Sow your seed now. Time is wealth. Time is both the most precious and the most perishable commodity. It is a gift from God.

Make use of time; the time you lose, is lost forever, with all its embedded riches. Time is not a fruit but, a seed. Start now to sow so that you do not get angry and frustrated when you see your contemporaries, who accepted this nugget of wisdom, and sowed their seeds start reaping.

THE HUNGRY EATS UP HIS SEED

*'The hungry eats up all his harvest....'*¹³. This is the reason people become poor and hungry. They eat up all their harvest. The harvest may be few, but that should serve as a seed. The poor lack the wisdom of the seed principle. He eats up everything. To eat your seed is to swallow your destiny and devour your future. Those that eat up their seed will experience a bleak future full of deprivation and want.

The seed principle is the most extensive in operation. Great men achieve much by acting when it is easy and cheap. God did the same with Adam and Eve: He planted seeds in them and commanded them to fill and replenish the whole earth. He thus conserved effort, resources and time.

THE REASONS WE DO NOT START SMALL ARE DUE TO

- ❖ The spirit of competition. We find it difficult and intimidating in the midst of superiors. We are not humble, we do not want to be seen as a non-starter.
- ❖ Fear that we might not make it, because our start up capital is very small
- ❖ Ignorance of the seed principle

⁷ (Isa 28 13); ⁸ (Lk.5:37-38); ⁸ (Zeph4:10); ⁹ (Jn15:5); ¹⁰ (Lk5:37-38) ¹¹ (Ep1:11); ¹² (2Cor9:10); ¹³ (Job 5:5)

INVESTMENT PLANNING

Your investment plan is the financial intelligence you employed, while investing the money that came your way, either as a deluge or in trickles. The first thing to note about investment is that you have to overcome any abhorrent gnawing guilt in your mind about money. You should not have any form of aversion against the accumulation of wealth.

LOVE OF MONEY

Money is neither dirty nor stinking. Money is not the root of many kinds of evil. It is the love of money that brings untold heartaches. In fact the love of anything puts you in trouble with God. After all, it is not money that caused the down fall of King Saul, nor the many pains of David. Money is inert; it only takes after the nature of its possessor. "If we command our wealth, we shall be rich and free, if our wealth commands us, we are poor in deed", Edmund Burke validates the point.

I found out that most of the parables of Jesus, which He employed to explain the workings of the kingdom of God, were derived from economic activities: fishing, farming, trading, investing, merchandising etc.

ALL GOOD GIFTS ARE FROM GOD

Money is very necessary in the fulfilling of our divine mandate on earth. "Dreams are a dime a dozen, it is execution that counts," chides Theodore Roosevelt. Money empowers the possessor with varied options and for that reason is a distinguished facilitator in bringing about a colorful destiny. What you do with the money God placed in your hands is your responsibility; God will later hold you accountable for it. *All good and perfect gifts come from*

God'¹³. He does nothing without purpose; you must also be purpose driven like your Father. Financial foolishness is not equivalent to holiness, ask Abraham. You must be wise. The scripture refers us to the ants, and from those puny creatures learn practical astute wisdom ¹⁴.

However, I must hasten to add that if all you live for is to accumulate wealth, you will die in misery. "If money is all that man makes, he will be poor indeed - poor in happiness, poor in all that makes life worth living", affirms Herbert Casson.

FINANCIAL PHILOSOPHY

It is the difference in the financial philosophy of people that eventually differentiates us into the rich and the poor. Money is fluid, the only way to maximize it, and make it stay with you, is by investing it through a well laid out plan.

The poor spend their money and save what is left. The rich save their money first and spend what is left. It is the same amount, just a difference in thinking pattern. "Both poverty and riches are the offspring of thought", observed Napoleon Hill.

The rich exercise great discipline over their finances. They subdue unhelpful impulses and demands of wants. They know that human wants are insatiable, so they first put aside a predetermined amount as savings, before spending the rest. The rich consciously fight the Parkinson's Law that says that, "expenses will always rise to meet income". Solomon had earlier observed that, '*when riches increase so are they that eat them*'¹⁵.

On the contrary, the poor and the middle class think of status and therefore gather liabilities - things that depreciate in value with use: cars, television, and other household luxury items. But the rich spend their money on assets - things that appreciate in value

with time for e.g. landed property. The poor are self-indulgent; they are not aware that delayed gratification is a sign of maturity.

The rich always see opportunity, possibilities and reward; the poor see obstacles, problems and losses, and are thus resentful. The rich believe God can and will prosper them, therefore they take risks and invest. The poor thinks that money is difficult to come by, therefore they play safe and, put their money in savings account. Savings account is for the rainy day; investment is for increase.

The rich believe that if things go wrong, they can bounce back. They know how they made their money and are convinced that they will make it again.

SAVINGS PLAN

Jim Rohn, the American philosopher, developed what he called the 70/ 30 rule in personal financial management. After paying your tithe, which is obligatory, you should then learn to live on the 70% of the remainder. This 70% is spent on necessities and luxuries. The other 30% should be saved. If you cannot save while your income is small, you will not be able to save even if your income grows. The Greeks say, "To whom little is not enough, nothing is enough". This 30% should be allocated in the following way:

❖ CHARITY

It is advised that 10% be given as charity in the form of the offerings discussed earlier, except the Isaac offering which is a bolus sacrificial offering.

❖ SAVINGS

The other 10% should be placed in the bank as ordinary savings. It is reserved for the rainy day. It will offer you peace of mind when adverse circumstances come suddenly.

❖ CAPITAL INVESTMENT

The last 10% should be kept for capital investment.

¹³(Jam1:17); ¹⁴(Pro6:6); ¹⁵(Ecc11:11);

CHAPTER 20

CAPITAL INVESTMENT

The last 10% should be devoted to wealth creation. This is the key to financial freedom. To be financially free you must invest. Salary alone will not grant you financial freedom. Financial freedom means that the dividend from your investments can meet your expenses. You may decide not to work again, yet able to meet all your needs. You should develop your financial state to the point where the net flow of finance would be towards you. That is, what flows out is less than what comes to you.

DO NOT ASSUME

Before investing this 10%, that has accumulated, you should be thoroughly acquainted with facts. Secondly, you must change your financial philosophy to resemble that of the rich enumerated above. Do not assume. Sam Adeyemi asserts that, "If you are still struggling with financial independence, many of the things you know about money are mere assumptions". Assumption is the lowest level of knowledge. Your investment plan must start with accumulating as much information as you can get, then take it to God for tinkering. With a wealth plan in place, you will be highly motivated.

COMPOUND INTEREST

To invest wisely, you may start with placing your money in a fixed deposit. The 'Parable of the Talents,' previously discussed, reveals that placing your money in the bank is the lowest level of investment. In the parable, the 'householder' rebuked the 'unprofitable servant; that he ought to, in the least, place the money or talent he was given in the bank to 'yield interests'.

Placing your money in the fixed deposit rather than in the ordinary savings meant attracting higher interests. Also, the money grows faster through the principle of compound interest. With this, you would overcome the depreciating effect of inflation, which placing your money in the ordinary savings account or current account will experience. If your money is not attracting enough interest - like those placed in the ordinary savings or current account - the value of the money will diminish over a period of time, because of inflation. Inflation causes the same amount of money to purchase fewer amounts of goods and services.

Compound interest works this way: if you fixed N100, 000.00 and the interest accruable is 20% per annum, after one year your money will increase to N120, 000.00. This new amount would still attract 20% the next year, and so it multiplies. At the end of 5 yrs, your initial deposit of N100, 000.00 would have bloated to almost N250, 000.00! However, you have to give the deposit time to grow and give you value.

PERSONAL INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT

To invest rather than merely fix your money in the bank, you have to wisely look at those skills you have developed at work or through your hobbies and convert them into profitable ventures. As an example, writing. You may also engage in trading, property development, and stocks or join a thrift society that places their money with investment managers. Nevertheless, the best plan for

financial freedom is to start your own business, it brings the highest dividend.

One principle that should guide you in investing is the axiom which says that the greater the risk, the higher the reward. But, you must first be thoroughly acquainted with the business before you commence.

DAVID AND GOLIATH (1Sam17:20-54)

Whichever venture you decide to participate in, do what David did. He took off Saul's armour, because he had not 'tested' or proved them. He was not acquainted with them. Instead, on his way to confront Goliath, he took his sling and stones, which he had previously tested, and it brought him victory.

Over the years, David had learnt to overcome loneliness while in the wilderness by constantly practicing with his sling. He will pick and hit imaginary targets. Through practice, he developed the skill of slinging stones, at terrific speed, with precision. Practice makes perfect. That way also, he had kept at bay wild animals which longed after the sheep he was tending.

So David was adept at using the sling and the stone as a very effective weapon. Like the warriors before him, David could '*sling a stone at a hair's breath and not miss*'¹. He perfected the skill to kill with a sling and stone. Killing with a sling and stone was like sport to him. This skill, God dexterously relied on, at a desperate time, when Goliath sullied the armies of Israel.

You can also make a kill in business if you take extra time and effort to acquire the necessary skill, through learning and practice, in your planned venture.

GREAT RISK BRINGS GREAT REWARDS

David also took great risks. He poured scorn on fear as he ran towards the fully kitted Goliath, exercising great faith in God that '*trains his hands to war and his fingers to fight.... who delivers*

David, His servant, from the deadly sword' ². David fixed his eyes on the God who '*looks on the earth, and it trembles*' and '*touches the hills, and they smoke*' ³.

"Intelligence," observes John Mason, "is content to point out the road, but never drives along it. It is faith not reason which impels men to action". Faith in God moved David to take great risks and got for himself great rewards. King Saul and the rest of the Israeli army knew what to do, have the right weaponry, but were intimidated by Goliath, and, played safe. They became the cheer leaders that sang David into national reckoning and stardom.

HERD MENTALITY (MT8:28-32)

Another point to note while planning to invest, is not to behave like the two thousand herd of swine that ran down the steep slope and drowned in the water due to what I chose to call the 'Herd mentality'. This is the tendency of animals or people to move or crowd together without a clue as to where they are going; or why they are there; or even what they are doing. An example is the disorderly mob that rose up, in Ephesus, against Paul ⁴.

Not all the two thousand pigs were affected or possessed by the legion of demons that were cast out of the man with the unclean spirit. But, when the ones that had demons enter them reacted violently, and ran down the steep slope, the rest followed and perished with the afflicted.

Do not join the rat race. Be peculiar. Be distinct and unique. Get appropriate skills in your preferred business venture and, you will not perish with the crowd. Seek to acquire and improve your skills and consequently your capacity. Learn to figure out how to add value to whatever you offer, and, especially to do what others before you are not doing.

It is well documented that about 90% of all one man businesses die within the first 5yrs. Yours shall be a different story in Jesus Name!

If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed but skill will bring success. (Ecc 10:10 NIV)

INVEST IN TIME

One more point to consider is that you have to invest in time. Do not work for money, instead, let money work for you. The man mentioned by Jesus in the 'Parable of the Talents' mobilized his servants to keep doing business for him, while he travelled on a journey that could still bring him profit. He did not close down his business; he maximized his investment in time.

Often the difference between the poor and the rich is their use of time. The rich are adept at investing in time, while the poor fritters away time. The man practiced to the greatest possible degree the concept of making money to work. Even though not physically involved, his money still yielded dividends. Invest smartly, you do not have to do everything yourself. This may involve placing your resources in other people's ventures.

¹(Judges 20:16); ²(Ps 144:1,10); ³(Ps 104:31); ⁴(Acts 19:32)

DIFFERENT STREAMS OF INCOME

To be really rich and advance into financial security, you have to plan for, and, grow different streams of income. If you depend on only one source of income, what will you do if that source dries up! You should create multiple sources of river flows of income. Not only will that shield you from the hazards of financial failure, the multiplex will act as synergy for each other. Excess money from a branch of your business could be pulled over into another branch that is in dire need of funds. You do not need to borrow, yet your business receives precious funds at the critical time it is needed. Lack of funds, at the decisive time it is required, is the major reason for business strangulation.

The man referred to above also employed this concept of multiple streams of income. He gave out talents, the unit of measurement

of gold in Bible days, to several of his servants. These servants could be trading in related but, different types of businesses.

SOLOMON THE DOYEN OF PROSPERITY AND ABUNDANCE

The ancients understood and dexterously practiced this principle. Abraham was very rich. He was blessed with flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female servants⁵. Job was also very wealthy. He possessed thousands of sheep, camels, yokes of oxen, female donkeys and a very large household⁶.

The different types of beasts were actually different types of businesses, which brought different streams of income. Sheep is for textile, after shearing; the donkey is for haulage, ferrying goods over great distances; the camel is for transport, commuting humans in the desert; the yoke of oxen is for mechanized large scale agriculture. Abraham also engaged in the ultimate trading: he bartered in gold and silver, which he also wisely used to conserve his wealth in a stable solid asset. So Abraham and Job were involved in haulage, textile, transport, and agriculture plus currency businesses.

Solomon, the doyen of prosperity and abundance, deployed the wisdom God gave him to multiply wealth.

14 The weight of gold that came to Solomon yearly was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold, 15 besides that from the traveling merchants, from the income of traders, from all the kings of Arabia, and from the governors of the country... 22 For the king had merchant ships at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the merchant ships came bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and monkeys. 23 So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom... 28 Also Solomon had horses imported from Egypt and Keveh; the king's merchants bought them in Keveh at the current price. 29 Now a chariot that was imported from Egypt cost six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse one hundred and fifty; and thus, through their agents, they

exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria.(1Kg 10:14-15, 22-23, 28-29)

Solomon was a huge entrepreneur, who traded in several goods. Added to these are gifts and tributes from his vassal kings and tributaries. This is the secret of his phenomenal riches. Manna did not fall from heaven for him. He had many inflows of revenue that came in torrents. He shrewdly engaged in practical wealth multiplying techniques that made him the ultimate man in prosperity. Notice that six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold came to him yearly - the number, six, stands for both man and money. Tally that with the fact that David paid Araunah (or Ornan) six hundred shekels of gold for the site where the Temple was to be built⁷ - that is, the Temple site was purchased at full price!

**Leadership is
exerting
positive
influence on
the**

LEADERSHIP

Finally, plan also to build an organized administrative structure that is orderly and methodical, independent but, interrelated group of people, with clearly defined roles. It is very pertinent, so that even in your absence the establishment continues to thrive. Abraham and Job had several servants. Eliezar of Damascus was Abraham's faithful and dependable chief servant.

God found out that it is not good for Adam to be alone. The command '*be fruitful and multiply*' cannot be put in effect alone. God had to make a '*help meet*' for Adam. The spiritual principle is, while '*one chases a thousand, two will chase ten thousand*'⁸. There is always a many fold increase in productivity when we work in partnership. '*Two is better than one*'⁹

Through this structure you should strive to provide quality leadership. Leadership is all about exerting positive influence on

the followership towards achieving set objectives. It involves, as Bill Newman sees it, “knowing the way, going the way and showing the way”.

If a leader does everything, he defeats leadership development among the people. If he delegates, he is not shirking responsibility, instead, he is organizing responsibility more effectively. Because, “Leadership”, claims Ted Engrestom, “is to guide and develop others, and seek to provide training and direction”.

However, it is important to know that whereas leaders should delegate responsibility and the authority to carry out a task, they cannot delegate accountability. The leader must be courageous enough to accept oversight accountability and not shift blame, even under pressure, until the task is accomplished. Failure to delegate is not logical but emotional. It is an overestimation of who we are and underestimation of what others can contribute.

⁵(Gen 24:35); ⁶(Job1:3); ⁷(1Chr21:25; 2Chr3:1); ⁸(Deu 32:30); ⁹(Ecc4:9)

PART 7

MAXIMIZING YOUR OPPORTUNITIES - WORK

CHAPTER 21

GOD’S ORIGINAL DESIGN

Work is the ultimate factor that determines what we make of the opportunities that come our way. Many people think work to be a daunting, uncouth task we have to endure to earn a living; a

necessary burden that places food on the table. But, work is not a means to an end, it is not a means of survival, work is an end. Work enables us participate in the creation process and actualize our creative potentials.

IMAGE AND LIKENESS

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Gen 1:26-28

God blessed man by placing in man certain innate abilities, and gave him the mandate to rule the earth. This dominion mandate can only be actualized through WORK. God is humble, He deliberately placed a limit on himself so that man can have the opportunity to join the creation process and be 'like' Him, though in an imprecise form, after all man was made in the 'image and likeness' of God.

The words 'image' and 'likeness' are not the same. In Hebrew they are two distinct words and they communicate two different characteristics of God. While Gen 1:27 only recorded that man was created in the 'image' of God, in v 28 we see what is meant to be made in the 'likeness' of God: to subdue and have dominion.

The 'image' of God or 'Tselem' in Hebrew, roughly means the shadow of a thing; not an exact duplicate; a thing representing

**Work
enables us
participate
in the
creation**

something in an imprecise manner. This is exactly what man is to God. While Jesus is the exact copy or image of God, Adam was not. This 'image of God' is to bear the nature of God, which is akin to the 'fruit of the Spirit' i.e. kindness, goodness, love, faith etc, in an imperfect manner. When God, at Moses' request, decided to reveal Himself to Moses, He hid Moses in the cleft of a rock, because *'no man shall see God's face and live'*. What Moses 'saw' was the relational nature of God. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, *'The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abounding in goodness and truth...'*¹.

The 'likeness' of God or Demuwth in Hebrew means resemblance or similitude. Demuwth is a feminine word. It is also strongly used in Gen 5:1. Genesis chapter five chronicles the genealogy or progeny of Adam. Hence, it could evoke the idea of producing or bringing forth. Therefore, from Gen1:28, the likeness of God is to resemble God in His power and creative capabilities, however in an imprecise manner. These two qualities - Image and Likeness - when fully expressed, as God intended, makes man truly the *'god of this earth'*.

CO - CREATORS

To confirm the above point, Genesis chapter two repeated and further explained how man was made. Gen 2:7 reveals that God made man in His image by breathing into his nostrils, while verses 8 and 15 promotes the idea that man was made in God's likeness to 'Tend' (i.e. cultivate, grow create fresh portions) and 'keep' (i.e. protect, weed, keep intruders at bay) the Garden of Eden. God placed Adam in the garden to exercise dominion over it. God's image' or nature is to, for example, love, and His 'likeness' is to create.

It was to co-create, with God or to be 'like' God that made God to 'bless' man and gave him the dominion mandate. This co-creating is called WORK. The creation itself, though, potentially

completed is not physically actualized without man's input. Our cities and other artifacts were created by man. So it is through work, the 'tending' and 'keeping' that we exercise our dominion mandate. Through work we actualize our divine destiny and purpose on earth.

¹(Exo33:12 - 34:9)

CHAPTER 22

WORK IS AN END

Work is its own reward; when loved, work makes life sweet, purposeful and useful. Work is the agency for realizing and establishing divine purposes. When we are enmeshed in the process of realizing our divine purposes, only then do we work, otherwise most people labour as they strive to eke out a living, through their careers, with the accompanying grief, restlessness and sorrow. This is why labour is very grinding and burdensome.

22 For what does a man get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun? 23 Because all his days his task is painful and grievous; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity. Eccl 2:22-23 NASB

SOURCING DIVINE PURPOSE

Since to work is equivalent to actualizing God's purpose, it is very important that we know the divine purpose for our lives. This is usually ascertained and apprehended, when we really desire it. We should commence by considering our talents and temperament traits, because for the most part, we are designed for our purpose. But more importantly, we should pray and wait on God, who helps us to discover it. He usually nudges our heart into a particular walk of life or prospects; therein also, we easily

blossom with dreams and ideas. We have little difficulty or need no urging to develop passion, excitement and enthusiasm to get to work and solve problems when we drift into that sphere.

However, God hardly responds to the slothful, those drooling aimlessly, and living in fool's paradise. Rather, He unveils His purpose – through any means He chooses – to those who are already busy doing something, who proved themselves faithful and diligent, even excelling in their careers. This is because bringing purposes to fruition requires industry, determination, doggedness and resolve. It is only in rare instances, such as Jesus, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, did God divulge His purpose for a subject while still in the womb.

A few examples will help: Moses fought off depression that comes with failed dreams, he was content with *'tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law'* ¹, when he was called to lead his people out of bondage in Egypt. Gideon also overcame frustrations due to constant harassment from foreign plunderers. He received the call to deliver his kinsmen from foreign oppression while he adroitly *'threshed wheat in a winepress in order to hide it from the Midianites'*. ² Elisha declined to be lured into complacency prompted by cornucopia. He received his upward call from being a successful farmer to a prophet, while *'he was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth'* ³.

God ran a check on Saul before He made him king. God made Kish, Saul's father, to send Saul to find their lost donkey – Kish could have sent only his servants! Saul was not indolent, a trait typical with the children of the rich, he searched for the missing donkey over large territories of Israel until they came to Zuph, where Samuel was at that time. He passed the test. The search was called off, it was no longer necessary; for God had said to Samuel, *'tomorrow about this time I will send you a man from the*

land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him commander over My people Israel' ⁴.

Finally, David refused to be dejected because of family rejection. He defied his painful childhood, and faithfully tended his father's flock in wilderness, even at the risk of his life, until God decided that it is time to relocate his destiny from the wilderness to the king's court. God has 'found a man after His heart' ⁵. Samuel had to organize an anointing service and hastened Jesse, the father of David, to 'send and bring him. For we will not sit down till he comes here!' ⁶.

WORK VERSUS LABOUR

Man's agonizing stay on earth, is so because, he purports to derive this ken of attainment and joys of contentment from mere possessions – what he calls fruit of his labour. He becomes bewildered as he finds out that his enormous possessions could not compensate the emptiness, needling pains and the 'labouring for the wind' ⁷, that become his lot.

But, as we employ to establish God's agenda for our lives, we work and no longer labour. The reward is the gratifying feeling of fulfillment and sense of accomplishment. These, king Solomon says, is the real reward for working – it is a priceless gift from God; a truly wholesome and glorious end to all earth's pursuits.

12 I am certain that there is nothing better for a man than to be glad, and to do good while life is in him. 13 And for every man to take food and drink, and have joy in all his work, is a reward from God. Ecc3:12, 13 BBE

To the earthling, work is not an end but, a means to an end. With this belief, he heads into an endless cycle of pursuits; and of not

having enough, because human wants are impossible to satisfy. Some religious people put down legitimate acquisitions, as if that is the problem, but the real conundrum is man trying to get God's good gifts – which is joy and fulfillment – through possessions, rather than from accomplishing the purposes God has for their lives.

Wealth, with accompanying acquisitions, does bring transient joy, which lasts while one is still struggling with poverty. Once poverty is defeated, money ceases to induce joy. Real enduring joy and satiety comes to those who have accomplished. Solomon bewailed this astonishing fact when he moaned, 'vanity of vanities, all is vanity'. That is, merely trying to possess, for its own sake, leaves us in emptiness and 'grasping after the wind'.

10 Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure.... 11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun. Ecc2:10-11

THE END OF EARTH'S

PURSUITS

Man seeks, through self-appointed labour, to make the accumulation of belongings an end. The end of all earth's pursuits should be the full actualization of one's God-implanted potentials and the attainment of the consummate state of pleasance – that fundamental feeling that is hard to define, but that, people desire to experience. God was in this state when He reflected deeply over His creation, after six days of work, and 'saw' that 'it was

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Once poverty**

very good' ⁸. Thereafter, *'on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed'!*⁹.

We gain access into the original blessings God placed on man as we work ¹⁰. The worker laps up the contents of dominion mandate that God gave man, and relishes the creative potentials of the mandate. To work is to create; it forbids burdensome labour and toil, and heightens your estimation of your value.

Genuine thanksgiving to God emerges from the heart and lips of the sated worker who, seeing God's divine purposes being realized, has found that God does all things well!

WORK GIVES MORE THAN MONEY

Added to the above is also the fact that work is a privilege, it gives more than living and money; it is a preparation for life. Work makes us learn and improve upon ourselves and stay productive. This story proves the point: A farmer drives his boys hard in their farm. One day, a neighbor noted that it is not necessary to make the boys work so hard to raise a crop. The farmer quietly responded, "I'm not just raising crops, I'm raising boys".

Task accomplished with positive results produces a high feeling of fulfillment, which lures us into taking up more tasks, with a further opportunity for self-development. This way, any feeling of emptiness and low self-esteem, which afflicts the wayward, is driven away. The continual cycle of accomplishment of tasks and self-development ultimately results in developing to one's fullest potential. "The Creator" observed Orion S. Marden, "could have spared men physical work but, he could not have been a developed man".

¹(Exo3:1a); ²(Judg6:11); ³(1kg19:19); ⁴(1Sam9:16); ⁵(1sam13:14); ⁶(1Sam6:11); ⁷(Ecc5:6-17); ⁸(Gen1:31); ⁹(Exo3:17); ¹⁰(Gen1:28)

THE NEED FOR WORK

Work is the foundation of all business, the source of all prosperity. Work is what enables us get established in life. Through work we fulfill our purpose on earth. The successful families have work as the father and integrity as the mother. Zig Ziglar affirms that, "work is the price we enjoy to travel the highways of success. Great civilizations were built by men who expended their sweat glands".

An Italian proverb says that, "Words do not make flour" while an Indian proverb adds that, "you cannot go to heaven by lip-service". The American prolific investor, Thomas Edison asserts that, "success is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration". *'He who has a slack hand becomes poor but, the hand of the diligent makes rich'*¹, substantiates Solomon.

Generally, wealth flows in the direction of exertion of energy, *'... he who gathers by labour will increase'*². Wealth comes by converting expertise and effort into currency. Prosperity results when we share out gift and know-how, through work, with those that need it.

DESIRES & IMAGINATION

Actually work starts with a strong desire to possess. *'When desire has conceived it gives birth'*³. A strong desire creates imaginations or visualizations. If the desire is not strong enough it will not produce imaginations. Imagination is to pre-play the future. Memory plays back the past, while we play the present through thought. Imagination is the ability to see and determine

what you want or expect in the future. Orion S. Marden rationalizes that, “As your visions so will be your life”.

The ability to imagine is the reason we are superior to animals. While animals act out of pre-programmed instincts, that cannot be altered; man acts out of self-imposed will, which can be changed at his behest. Man can alter his plans, programmes etc.

The actual physical work should start after you have laid out your plans. God led the way in this regard. Before he formed man or He began the physical work of making man, He said, ‘*Let Us make man*’,⁴ this means that He had a desire and a blue print, which every workers must have if he were to amount to anything.

WORK IS A BLESSING

With Imagination or vision and a blue print or planning, physical work is no longer strenuous or daunting. You actually look forward to it because, vision generates passion or enthusiasm. It is work that makes the beautiful philosophies about planning, motivation, healthy self-image etc., to work. As results tumble in, there is excitement. Work is certainly a blessing to the soul, producing a feeling of accomplishment, fulfillment and a lift. When we actualize our desires, it is a revelrous state to be in. Ernsset Renon observed that, “work regarded by many as the curse sent upon men for sin is instead God’s highway to the hills of happiness”. To climb the ladder of success, you do not pay a price, you just enjoy your career and the work involved.

HARD WORK IS A

DEPENDABLE ALLY

Hard work, especially when of strategic importance, shortens your way to the top. It enables you outwit your competitors and adversaries. Joshua repeatedly employed the element of surprise to rout and defeat

**Hard work,
especially
when of
strategic**

enemies far more in number, and more equipped than him. That way, he defeated two sets of confederate armies⁵. In one instance, he marched all through the night from Gilgal, his base, to Gibeon. This strategy requires lots of work. This extra effort yields many dividends. It is the extras that produce dramatic results. It has been proved that the salesmen who posted better performances put in just 17% extra effort.

Abraham understood this principle also. With his 300 man strong army, he came suddenly on the rampaging five allied Kings, led by the imperial king Chado-laomer⁶. He routed them, and rescued Lot, his captive nephew. He also marched all through the night. David and Gideon also relentlessly pursued their adversaries until they caught them.

You cannot beat hard work. It is one major distinguishing factor that influences victory in life. Jesus clearly counsels any who intends to accomplish their set-out tasks, especially in the face of daunting opposition, that there are *"only twelve hours in the day"* ⁷, Work hard while it is day, while the opportunity still stands, so as to maximize it, when night comes the opportunity will drift away, leaving you empty handed. Thomas Edison protests that, "Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in over-alls and looks like work".

SLOTHFULNESS

The slothful resent hard work. Slothfulness, which is the antithesis of hard work, is a malady of the will that not only causes the neglect of one's duty; it is also working only when it is convenient, or doing just enough to get by. Slothfulness is an attempt to escape from social and spiritual responsibilities in the expectation that someone else will care for us.

The lazy man is a parasite, he demands that others cater for him and earn his bread for him; he is asking special privileges in wishing to eat bread which he has not earned. Lazarus, the man under our purview, is a classic example of a slothful person. He would not work but, preferred to beg. He placed just enough pressure on himself to enable him get to the rich man's gate, daily. He became so poor that he could not even afford to treat himself.

'The soul of a lazy man desires and has nothing but, the soul of the diligent shall be made rich'. Pro 13:4

Slothfulness manifests as a general distaste for anything that places extra demand for manual or mental labour. It could come in the form of **procrastination**, with its endless postponement of duty, or **indolence**, wherein work is executed half-heartedly or with extreme carelessness. It could also come as **faintheartedness**, whereby tasks are avoided that seem difficult, on the ground that one may not be able to finish it and become a laughing stock. Worse still the slothful may become **spiteful** and resentful of those who are advocating his development, those that God mercifully brought into his life to help him grow and escape a life of defeat and unfruitfulness.

GET RICH QUICK

In our societies today, slothful fellows constantly look out for short-cuts to get rich quick. Such malaise is what gives rise to vices like gambling, lotteries, scams etc. We should avoid the mindset of cheap ways of making money. There is no free lunch - getting something for nothing - anywhere. Benjamin Franklin declares that, "diligence is the mother of good luck". Our security is guaranteed not by depending on others but, by sustaining ourselves and making contribution to others.

If you make an animal dependant on man, you take away his resourcefulness and it will quickly be in trouble, same is true for

man. That man loses the ability to exploit the human potential. He ceases to be realistic and, acquires a distorted sense of judgment. He stops being desirous along sane paths and, lacks the will to produce hard work, which is a major requirement for prosperity. His lack of industry disenables him from being imaginative, innovative and focused.

Like the younger son in the previous 'parable of the lost son', those who get bonanzas or win lotteries never became better after a couple of years, they become even worse, with disrupted families, ruined career, lost friends etc, because of their lack of purpose.

¹ (Pro 10:4); ² (Pro 13:11); ³ (Jam 1:15); ⁴ (Gen1:26); ⁵ (Josh10:1-10; 11; 1-9); ⁶ (Gen14:13-16); ⁷ (Jon11:9)

CHAPTER 24

DISCIPLINE AND CHARACTER

The ability to work and maximize our opportunities is not possible without a disciplined lifestyle. The human potential is only fully actualized in those that have acquired desirable disciplined habits. Discipline is the bridge between thought and accomplishment. Without discipline nothing serious happens.

To be disciplined means we have deliberately subjected ourselves to acquire the habit of self control. A dictionary defines discipline as that unique process of intelligent thought and activity which developes positive action and controls negative thoughts. Discipline encourages success and refuses failure.

SELF - MASTERY

One word to describe lack of discipline is to be unrestrained; to be dominated by so many impulses demanding outlets at same time is a breeding ground for failure. To work effectively and succeed, we must learn to restrain the various untoward drives on the inside of us. Someone remarked that, "self-mastery is the hardest job you will ever do. If you do not conquer yourself, you will be conquered by self". "Unless you discipline your impulses they may ruin you, no matter how generous they are", ratifies Oswald Chambers.

*To learn, you must love discipline; it is stupid to hate correction.
Pro 12:1 NLT*

SELF - EXAMINATION

To gain self-mastery, which is to allow only needful and beneficial drives to have expression at a time, we should engage in self-examination. The beginning of self-development is self-examination. This though is hard to bear, because the self is reluctant to have itself examined, we prefer to allow ourselves be self-deceived through self-adulation. Self-examination, when done under God, in light of the scripture, is very rewarding. It leads to self-knowledge.

Self-knowledge often goes together with God-revelation. The more a person discovers himself the way he really is, the more he feels the need for God, the more God manifests Himself to such a soul. The person becomes clear minded and easy to understand. The less a person knows himself, the more complex he is.

**Self-
examination,
when done
under God,
is very**

A mind into which self-analysis has not penetrated has a thousand unrelated motives, drives and impulses. He cannot bring all his drives to rivet on a single goal. He is unable to

concentrate his focus and harness his mental resources; therefore he cannot convert his innate drives into positive action, and, will fail to work productively. These unrestrained drives will ultimately force him to waste his potentials.

CHARACTER

Character is that innate complex attribute that determines a person's moral or ethical actions and reactions. Character is formed when we learn the habit of self-restraint. What we do habitually eventually forms our character traits. Once you get the habit, good or bad, the habit gets you. Character is most essential to convert our innate potentials into accomplishments. It enables us make wise choices that flow into fruitful actions, which results in increased productivity at work, and eventually success in life.

UNRESTRAINED

Many have failed to make the most of their opportunities and even lost their placing in life due to indiscipline. The people of Israel corporately lost their place as the priests of the Most High when they became '*unrestrained to their shame*' in the wilderness¹. They demanded a gold head, from Aaron, to replace the Godhead, to assuage their unrestrained idolatrous habits.

The precursor of such unrestrained tendency is self-indulgence. After worshipping the golden calf, the people '*ate and drank and rose up to play*'. When the tribe of Levi recovered themselves by standing with Moses, and instantly obeyed the Lord, only they became reinstated to the exalted position of Priesthood ². The rest lost out. Do not be a lover of pleasure, restrain yourselves and place yourself under discipline.

Character	is
most	
essential	to
convert	our

Reuben also lost his place as the first born when he 'went up to his father's couch'. He was unstable as water ³. Instead, the right of the first born went to Joseph ⁴. Because of this Joseph got two portions⁵ – through Ephraim and Manasseh – when the land of Canaan was divided among the various tribes ⁶. This unstable trait also manifested in Reuben as indecisiveness – a lack of firmness of character and purpose: When his younger brothers ganged up to kill Joseph, their half-brother, he would not firmly put his feet down, as a first born should, and demand that Joseph be left alone. This ultimately led to Joseph being sold to slavery.

THE TALE OF TWO DELIVERERS

The list of wasted potentials will be incomplete without Samson. He was anointed beyond measure from the womb, his birth foretold and his job as deliverer cut out for him. He shared same beginnings with Jesus. However, while Jesus accomplished his earthly task with utmost dexterity and adroitness, Samson became a total failure. His undoing was his inability to develop accompanying character to convert his enormous potentials into accomplishment.

Samson was wild and unrestrained. He repeatedly gave in to his self-destructive impulses, which became his Waterloo. He finally fell into the hands of a pandering woman called Delilah. His imprisonment, with eyes gorged out, is a fitting lesson for his lack of understanding and discipline.

Blows that hurt cleanse away evil, as do stripes the inner depths of the heart. Pro20:30

SUBMIT TO AUTHORITY

The habit of self-restraint that builds character is perfected through a deliberate design of submitting to authority, which includes but not limited to the authority of the Word of God, parents, and laws of the land. We also place self-imposed

constraints on ourselves so that we could belong to a community, e.g. a local church assembly.

A fool despises his father's instruction, but he who receives correction is prudent. Pro 15:5

Samson bluntly refused to submit to the wisdom of his parent and the laws of Israel, which forbids intermarriage with foreigners, to his perpetual regret ⁷. On the contrary, Jesus never broke any law; but He was '*subject to His parent.... and increased in wisdom, stature and in favour with God and man*' ⁸.

¹(Exo32:1-35); ²(Exo32:25-29); ³(1Chr5:1, 2); ⁴(Deu21:17);

⁵(Eze47:13); ⁶(Gen49:3-4); ⁷(Judg14:1-3); ⁸(Lk 2:51-52)

CHAPTER 25

EXCELLENCE

To ultimately maximize the opportunities God has given you, it is very important that you bring yourself or your product to a level of excellence. In the market place of life, people do not pay for effort, they pay for results. People will willingly part with their money in exchange for a product that meet their expectations and needs. There are no sentiments there. Money travels only in the direction of profit. Money only begins to flow when there is a pledge of profit.

'AS POOR AS CHURCH RAT'

The church became poor because, they lost the vision that they have to offer the world something in exchange for finances. This led to the unfortunate proverb 'as poor as the church rat'. People

will not part with their hard earned money except there is an anticipation of profit, physical or spiritual.

Pastor, stop making those emotional appeals for money, share your dynamic God given vision and let your congregation see how it can also benefit them, as they partner with you. We are generally motivated to give to a vision of which we will derive some benefit, rather than to needs. So to get money, the question is, what do you have in your hands, what can you offer? Whatever you have in your hands must be developed to the point of usefulness and high degree of refinement, then many will, without being coerced, part with their money to get it. The church has no reason to be poor if she develops her God-given spiritual gifts to the point of excellence to meet spiritual needs. Remember that ministry is mostly about meeting needs.

MANNA

We have some lesson to learn from the Israelites while in the wilderness. When the manna fell for them from heaven, the substance that looks like coriander seed was unpalatable. God did that deliberately to teach them the need for work and excellence. Every of the Lord's provision, every opportunity, requires work to fully actualize and maximize its benefits. God's provision must be coupled with man's efforts to bring it to fruition.

**People will
not part with
their hard
earned money
except there
is an**

A mouth-watering manna did not drop straight into their mouths. To convert the manna to a level it is palatable and acceptable, they went out of their camps and gathered the manna from a DISTANCE, ground or beat it, cooked it, then baked it and *'made cakes of it, and, its taste was like the taste of pastry with oil'*¹. Thus, they transformed the raw manna, a nascent door of opportunity - which was initially received with a deprecating

quip: 'what is this' (manna means what is this?)² - into an eatable, agreeable, pleasurable and satisfying state.

BEATING YOUR BEST

Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before unknown men Pro 22:29

Excellence is to be compelled and driven by a higher vision until you reach your destination of 'standing before kings'. Those driven by excellence always look ahead, they think of tomorrow. They do not get easily satisfied or assuage the prevailing taunting drives, which is mediocrity. They refuse their environment or circumstances to dictate what they think or do. They always think of distinction, of standing out and being the best. Excellence results when you assume the attitude of 'beating your best', as you get immersed in the mental environment of greatness. Thinking yourself a champion brings out championship performances from you.

CONCLUSION

The only way to have your good share in the market is to make yourself and your product more valuable. It is not a game of chance or luck. Make extra effort; assume extra responsibilities, since money and promotion are the reward for the problems we solve, and, our demand in the market. To increase your value, work on yourself rather than on the job. The first brings a fortune; the latter just money. That is how to work smartly.

In the realm of excellence you should not confuse activity with accomplishment. Do not only stay busy, make progress. You do not toil but, work. The first is to labour without evidence, to dissipate energy without result; the second is to be effective. Life gives back what you gave, so be creative, diligent and timely.

STRESS AND BURN - OUT

The value of work cannot be over emphasized. It is very important, though, to lead a healthy life style. Many have unfortunately replaced the salutary need for work with an ominous drive for unhealthy competition, which has led many to their ruin. You have the God given responsibility to take good care of your body. Your body is the suit given you to live on earth, if you ruin it, your stay here is finished and, all your unrealized dreams will go down the grave with you.

UNHEALTHY COMPETITION

Many are ill-advisedly rushing to climb to the top, as we hate to see others achieve more than us. We then put ourselves under pressure, so as to level off, and, even climb higher. This is what results in stress and burn-out with the consequent danger to health.

The greatest peril to health today is probably work-related stress. There are many who spend their youth chasing wealth at the expense of their health, only in their twilight years to spend their accumulated wealth chasing after their failing health.

Stress is any physical, chemical or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension. Chronic over-work is a harmful habit that could lead to obesity, heart diseases, anxiety, fatigue, depression etc. It can also be deadly. Though, a mild degree of stress is helpful to create dynamism, which compels us to do a good job and to work energetically.

**In the realm of
excellence you
should not
confuse**

The merciful man does good for his own soul, but he who is cruel troubles his own flesh. Pro 11:17.

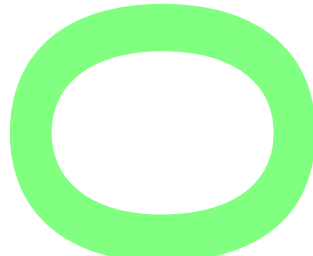
REST

Balance is vital. Do not let your profession become your obsession. Protect your mental, physical and emotional health by taking time to rest and enjoy the fruits of your labour. Rest is very important. Exercise regularly also. Simple exercises like walking briskly down the street will do a lot of good. The Bible admonishes that we eat, drink and see good for all our hard work³. Abraham lived a life of balance; he often feasted with his friends⁴ and visitors⁵.

We should work to live and not live to work. Balancing work with rest and leisure will enable you care for the needs of your family. Do not forsake the joys of family life by placing too much emphasis on work. Do not allow work to get most of your energy and the 'lads get what is left'. Balancing your work, recreation and family obligation will bring you rich rewards. Work hard and play hard is a timely admonition.

MAKE OUT TIME FOR GOD

Living a simple balanced life is truly a blessing. As you prioritize, make room for the all-important spiritual life. Spend quality personal time with God, and do not neglect church attendance. Today's work and spend lifestyle: the life of more work, more money, more acquisitions and no time for God is an over-reach that is killing many. The rich fool's problems remains that he worked very hard, acquired much, but, had no place or time for God. Tragically all he worked for could not benefit him in the long run. Giving priority to spiritual things and trusting in God will lead to living a simple, balanced, tension free life.



FEEDBACK

It is possible to be financially independent before the age of 50. We do not have to live our later years helpless and on limited resource. Many plan it so, but get off course mid-way. That is why a mid-course correction or feedback is very necessary. To become financially independent, we should undergo such mid-course corrections. We need a feedback system to check whether our financial 'plans' are 'working'.

The feedback is of inestimable value to the navigator, both in the air and sea. The navigational equipment's main duty is to set the direction for the destination, and midway, to correct for any deviation from the path. The scientists that send rockets to the moon know that the rocket, being buffeted by elements, will get a little off course. There is always the need for a mid-course correction, the take-off guidance systems is not be enough.

A popular Chinese proverb proclaims that, "the journey of a thousand miles begins with a step". I always add "begins with a correct step"! This is because if you deviate an inch, you will not get to your destination, and, will lose the thousand miles; so concentration is key. Cicero confirms that, "careful attention to a thing often proves superior to genius and art"

Through mid-course corrections, while you work out your plans, you become the master of what you have and who you are, because you can beat off extraneous influences from scuttling your plans. We do not have to belong to the group of people that say 'I don't know where all the money goes! We must know where all the money goes, and where it comes from. The Bible says that, *'he who is faithful in little will soon become ruler over much'*.⁶

Finally, life is unwilling to hand over prosperity and responsibility to those that fumble and waste their fortune. We have all been



given opportunities, which bombard us everyday, however, it is up to us to decide if we are going to use God's laws to create and win the battle over unfruitfulness.

¹ (Num11:4-8); ²(Exo 16:15); ³ (Ecc 3:13); ⁴(Gen 21:8); ⁵(Gen18: 3-8); ⁶(Lk16:10)