

Pursuing
GOD'S PLAN
For Your Life

STUDY NOTES

JOSEPH B. KACK

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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV).

These study notes were taken from the 8-week course "*Pursuing God's Plan for Your Life*" conducted by Joseph B. Kack. Although our best efforts have been made to prepare these notes that can be studied by themselves, it is highly recommended that, to fully understand the teaching and to capture the full and most accurate context of this course, these notes should be studied together with the accompanying audio CD.

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Introduction

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

— Jeremiah 29:11, NIV

God has a plan for your life. The Bible says they are good plans. They are plans with an expected end. Our lives are not for nothing. There really is a plan! It’s not an empty wish. It’s not man’s idea. It is not a figment of some preacher’s imagination. The plan has been in the heart of God and prepared from the foundation of the world.

Some of you may be in a complex situation right now. Things in your life may seem all tangled up. As you go through these lessons, the entrance of His Word is going to come in and bring light to unravel those situations so you will see your way out.

Some of you may have lost a few battles along the way. The Lord wants you to know you may have lost a few battles, but you haven’t lost the war. As the saying goes, “it’s not over till it’s over.” You may have skinned or busted your knee along the way, but you know what? The end of The Book says we win! And we can get more proficient at winning. Through these lessons, you will see areas where you may have missed it or perhaps you could have done better. Maybe you could have followed God’s plan more carefully and avoided some of the battle scars along the way. Whatever your case may be, the Word of God will guide you in the right path.

Lastly, there may be some of you who are already pursuing the plan of God and things are going well for you. This course will help you fine-tune the direction that God has for your life. Perhaps the vision that you once had may have dimmed through the years. The Lord is going to renew it here, and you're going to see the prize again. Your hope will be restored and things will get clearer. For some of you, you're going to see right up to the end. You're going to see the big picture. You won't know the details of how to get it all done, but you'll see where you're going. You will see your calling. You will know your place. You will know your race.

I want you to know that wherever you are in your spiritual walk right now, the Word of God will be your transportation to your destiny.

This study is for those who want to know the plan of God for their lives. It is for those who want to experience God's best. It's not for those who just want to get through life. It's not for those who just want to survive. It's for you. It's for the more than conquerors. It's for the triumphant children of God!

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The First Step

The FIRST STEP in successfully pursuing God's plan for your life is to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. Jesus is the Son of God, who died on the cross and shed His blood to pay the price for the sins of the whole world.

The Bible tells us, *"whoever calls on the name of the Lord (Jesus) shall be saved."* – Rom. 10:13

The Scripture also tells us, *"that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."* – Rom. 10:9

When you call on the name of Jesus and receive Him as your Lord, you receive eternal life and you become God's child. This is not joining a church or religion. Accepting the gift of Jesus into your heart gives you relationship with the living God! Only then are you in a position to begin to follow God's great plan for your life.

If you have never taken this FIRST STEP, pray this simple prayer in sincerity from your heart:

"Dear God,

I believe that Jesus is Your Son and that He died on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins. I believe that Jesus has been raised from the dead and that He is alive! Right now, I call on the name of Jesus. Jesus, come into my heart. I receive You as my personal Lord and Savior. Forgive me of my sins and cleanse me by the power of Your blood. Thank You for saving me and giving me eternal life! Help me now to follow Your plan for my life. Amen!"

Congratulations! You are now a child of God!

God Has a Plan For Your Life

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.” – Hebrews 12:1

God has a plan for your life. You have a race to run. You have a destiny to fulfill. God has designed it before the world began. His plans for you are good. They are plans to prosper you. They are plans of wholeness, of strength, of long life, of restoration, and of financial increase. They are plans with an expected end so that you can run your race and fulfill your part of His greater plan and purpose.

You see, you and I are part of a bigger purpose. It's bigger than us, our family, or our ministry. Our being here on earth is not just about us. It's not just about our church or our group. It's about God's plan.

The Old Testament saints had their time. They fulfilled their part in God's great plan. Now it's our time – to seek, to find, to pursue, and to fulfill our part of God's great plan on the earth.

I GOD HAS A PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE (Jer. 29:11, NIV)

A. God's great plan was to bring the Messiah into the earth so that the New Covenant could come in. (Heb. 11:39-40)

1. The Old Testament heroes of faith had their part in that great plan. (Heb. 11)
2. We are in the same COMPANY of FAITH. (Heb. 12:1)
3. *"Therefore we also..."* We are connected with the same great plan and purpose that Abraham and the great Old Testament heroes of faith were a part of.

B. We're in a family now – the whole family in heaven and on earth. (Eph. 3:15)

II GOD WANTS YOU TO KNOW HIS PLAN AND CALLING FOR YOUR LIFE (Eph. 1:16-23)

A. Paul prayed that we may KNOW *"the hope of His calling."*

1. *"The hope of His calling"* is the BIG PICTURE.
2. The BIG PICTURE includes events such as the return of the Lord; the rapture of the church; the great harvest of souls coming in; the church age coming to a close.

We don't need to get hung up, tied up, and tangled up in churches, groups, denominations, and all of those things that would trip us up. God uses churches. He uses denominations. He uses groups. But all these things are to SERVE HIS GREAT PLAN and PURPOSE which is the HOPE OF HIS CALLING — The BIG PICTURE!

B. You and I are part of a bigger purpose.

"God had a better plan for us: that their faith and our faith would come together to make one completed whole, their lives of faith not complete apart from ours." — Heb. 11:39-40, MSG

C. His plans are good and have an expected end. (Jer. 29:11, KJV)

God has plans to prosper you in every area of your life so that you can run your race and finish your course, until

you are COMPLETELY SATISFIED, having done everything He has called you to do.

III GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE IS UNIQUE AND PARTICULAR (Heb. 12:1)

A. **Not only is there a race, but there is the particular race, the individual race, the unique race for each one of us.**

1. It is not enough to just be running. We want to run the PARTICULAR RACE that God has for us.
"...let us run...the particular race..." (TLB)
2. The race is MARKED OUT for each one of us.
"...the race marked out for us." (NIV)

B. **Whether you are called to the ministry or not, you have a race to run.** (Acts 20:24)

1. Paul separates his race and the ministry.
2. God wants you to find your race. He wants you to start it, and then He wants you to finish it.

C. **God has a race for everybody.**

1. Nobody's life is in vain. Nobody's life is a waste.
2. Everybody has something that God is depending upon for him to do.
3. If you're called to the ministry, then ministry is part of your race.

IV GOD HAS LAID HOLD OF US FOR HIS PLAN AND PURPOSE

A. **We've been laid hold of.**

"...that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me." – Phil. 3:12

1. Lay hold means to seize, to comprehend, to understand.
2. Paul is saying, "I press on that I may seize, comprehend, and understand the reason why God in Christ seized, comprehended, and understood me."
3. Our life is not our own. We've been bought with a price. (1 Cor. 6:19-20)

God has laid hold of you for something.
He has laid hold of you for EXPLOITS.
He has laid hold of you for GOOD WORKS.
He has laid hold of you for His GLORY!

B. We have been fearfully and wonderfully put together.
(Ps. 139:14)

1. "No one understands me." He understands you!
"You comprehend my path..." — Ps. 139:3
2. He understands...
 - a. the gifts that are in you.
 - b. the anointings that are in you.
 - c. the skills He placed in you.
 - d. exactly where you fit.

V GOD'S PLANS HAVE BEEN PREPARED FROM BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."
— Eph. 2:10

A. He called us with a holy calling before time began.
(2 Tim. 1:9)

1. Your days were recorded before you were born.
(Ps. 139:16)
2. God knew you before you were born. (Jer. 1:5)
3. He is calling you UPWARD. (Phil. 3:14)

B. We are His workmanship, His poem. (Eph. 2:10)

VI GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE IS NOT A PLAN OF TRIALS, TESTS, OR DESTRUCTION (Jer. 29:11, NIV)

A. God and the devil are not teammates. (John 10:10)

B. God is not using the devil as His perfecting agent in your life. God perfects us through:

1. HIS WORD (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
2. HIS HOLY SPIRIT (John 14:26)
3. The FIVE-FOLD MINISTRY GIFTS (Eph. 4:11-16)

God sends ministers into your life so that you can stay out of trouble, so that you can stay out of danger, so that you can escape the devil's snare; and thereby, prove the GOOD, the ACCEPTABLE, and the PERFECT WILL of God for your life.

C. Satan is the enemy of your faith. (John 10:10)

1. The devil has been sowing the LIE: "God is allowing trials and troubles to make you stronger."
2. The devil brings trouble to take you down. (Mark 4:17)
3. God is not in any way the cause of your problems. (Jas. 1:13, 17)
4. OUR FAITH is the VICTORY that overcomes the world. (1 John 5:4)
5. We are to submit to God, resist the devil, and he will flee. (Jas. 4:7)
6. The devil has a legal right to be here, but Jesus has overcome him. (Col. 2:15; 1 John 3:8)

When you know that God is not anywhere in sickness and disease, that He is not anywhere in poverty and lack, that He is not anywhere in depression, that He is not anywhere in oppression, then you can STAND your ground. You can resist the devil, and he WILL and MUST FLEE.

VII GOD'S PLANS FOR YOUR LIFE IS THAT YOU BE FRUITFUL IN EVERY GOOD WORK (Col. 1:10)

- We have been predestined for good works. (Eph. 2:10)

You Have a Particular Race to Run

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.” – Hebrews 12:1

God has a particular race and a path marked out for you. On that path are good works. On that path is provision. On that path is anointing. On that path is favor. On that path is blessing without sorrow. On that path is unusual grace – the supernatural ability to do what God has ordained for you to do.

You and I want to find that path. We want to walk out the particular race that God has marked out, chosen, prepared, and made ready for us from the foundation of the world.

I YOU HAVE A UNIQUE RACE (1 Cor. 12:12-27)

A. You are unique, especially and specifically designed for your place and for your race.

1. Nobody can do what God has called you to do the way you can do it.
2. Nobody can run your race the way you can run it.

B. Do not despise your personality. You were created with a plan and a purpose in mind.

II YOUR RACE IS NOT A RACE AGAINST OTHERS (1 Cor. 12:12-27)

A. We are the body of Christ and members individually. (v. 27)

1. We need one another. We're part of the same team.
2. My race is to help you run your race. Your race is to help me run my race. Together, we will fulfill God's great plan.

B. Get rid of the fear because our race is not a competition.

1. God has not given us a spirit of fear. (2 Tim. 1:7)
2. Fear causes people to jockey for position in the ministry.

We need every ministry and every God-ordained church functioning in its purpose and grace, with the glory of God all over it.

C. Be free to be yourself.

1. The fullness of the anointing on your life will come forth as you are free to be yourself.
2. Begin to say, "Lord, I want to know what I have been created to do. I want to know my place. I want to know where I fit."
3. You are His workmanship. (Eph. 2:10)
 - You have been handcrafted by the MASTER ARCHITECT to fulfill your purpose in life.

Allow other people's success to inspire you,
but as you look over your shoulder, do not copy
what they are doing.

D. God is doing a new thing in you. (Isa. 43:19)

1. There are new ways of church planting, new methods of discipleship, new ways of doing things for God.
– Lay aside preconceived ideas of what a ministry should be.
2. This is a day of GREAT EXPRESSION in the Body of Christ.

Walk with God, and let the expression of what
He has made you to be come out.

**E. As you obey the Lord, you have eternal job security.
No one can take your place.**

1. Be secure in your race and in your place.
– We need everyone in his or her place.
2. Pastors should release people into the plan and purpose of God for their lives, instead of holding them for their own purpose.

**III YOUR RACE IS NOT YOUR CHOOSING. IT'S ALREADY
BEEN CHOSEN FOR YOU (1 Cor. 12:18)**

A. God sets the members in the body just as He pleased. (v 18)

1. Your race is not your decision. It's your discovery."
2. You will function best, flourish, and thrive as you pursue the plan that God has for you.

**B. Trust Him to put you where you fit best, and do not lean
on your own understanding. (Prov. 3:5)**

If we just yield and step into the place that God is leading us into, we'll discover things that we didn't know are in us. God is trying to bring us into MORE. He's trying to bring us into places where there will be a demand on the treasure that's inside of us.

IV YOUR RACE WILL TAKE YOU PLACES YOU HADN'T PLANNED TO GO – PLACES WHERE YOU WILL THRIVE AND GROW

A. God directs your steps. (Prov. 16:9)

1. God's plans might mess up your OWN plans, but it won't mess up your life.
2. Goal setting is good, but don't get stuck in your plans. Give God room to move. (Prov. 3:5; Prov. 16:3)

B. There is treasure on the inside of you. (2 Cor. 4:7)

C. Make a decision of liberty.

1. Be determined to know God for yourself.
2. Don't let the opinion of others lead you.
 - Take responsibility to hear from Him, to follow Him, and to make your own decisions for your life.

Walk with God. Live by faith. Do what God puts in your heart to do. Live full of the Word. Live full of the Holy Spirit. Do the projects, the exploits, and the things that God has called you to do; then you will find expression coming out of you. You will find anointing coming out of you. You will find the gifts of the Spirit coming out of you. You will find fruit that remains coming out of you.

The Pursuit of the Plan of God

(The Will of God is not Automatically Done)

“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.” – Philippians 3:12

The will of God is not automatically done in our lives, but we must actively and aggressively pursue it. God loves us, and we can trust Him with our lives. God will move heaven and earth to get us the revelation and information we need to walk out His plan for our lives.

But we have an enemy, the devil, who wants us to fail. His plan for us is that we do not fulfill our destiny. For this reason, we need to seek and to pursue; to contend and to fight for God’s plan to be accomplished in our lives.

I THE PLAN OF GOD MUST BE PURSUED (Phil. 3:12)

A. The will of God is not automatically done.

1. We **follow after** the plan of God. *“Not as though I had already attained...but I follow after...” (KJV)*
2. We **press on** to lay hold of the plan of God. *“...I press on to lay hold of (grasp) and make my own...” (AMP)*

B. Paul is pressing to know why God has apprehended him.
(Phil. 3:12)

1. God has apprehended us for a plan. *“...I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” (KJV)*
2. He apprehended us before we were born. (Jer. 1:5)

C. We must take ownership of the plan.

“I press on...and make my own...” – Phil. 3:12, AMP

1. We take ownership of the plan for the reason that He has taken ownership of us.
“...for which Christ Jesus... made me His own.” – v. 12, AMP
2. We belong to God now. (1 Cor. 6:19–20; 7:23)
3. We were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. (1 Pet. 1:18–19)

God is calling us all — everyone of us —
to step out of our own plans and to dare step into
His great plan for our lives.

II WE MUST BE PERSUADED OF GOD’S CHARACTER AND NATURE

A. We can trust God with our lives.

1. God is good. (Ps. 106:1)
2. The Father loves us. (Eph. 2:4)
3. The Father cares for us affectionately, and He cares about us watchfully. (1 Pet. 5:7, AMP)
4. God is not a user. He is a Rewarder. (Heb. 11:6)

If the Lord asks to use your boat, He's ready to give you a net-breaking, boat-sinking catch. (Luke 5:1-11)

B. When God declared a beginning for your life, He also declared an end with it. (Isa. 46:10)

III FAITH IS REQUIRED IN THE PURSUIT OF GOD'S PLAN

A. God doesn't do anything on the earth without man's faith and involvement.

1. God gave man dominion and authority. (Gen. 1:26; Ps. 115:16)
2. He gave us a free choice. (Deut. 30:19)

B. God requires faith.

1. Faith pleases God. (Heb. 11:6)
2. The plan of God works as we walk it out by faith. (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11)

C. We have an adversary who comes to steal, kill, and destroy. (John 10:10)

1. The devil is working through the world system to cause us to fail. (1 John 5:19)
2. There is a God to submit to and a devil to resist. (Jas. 4:7)

IV THE PLAN OF GOD COMES BY REVELATION (1 Cor. 2:9-14)

*"But as it is written:
'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.'
But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit..."*

– 1 Cor. 2:9-10

A. The things that God has prepared for us are to be manifested here on earth. (Ps. 31:19)

B. The plan of God is spiritually discerned. (1 Cor. 2:10,14)

1. God reveals His plan to us through His Spirit. (v. 10)
 - a. The natural man does not receive the things of God. (v. 14)
 - b. The carnal mind is opposed to the will of God. (Rom. 8:6-7)
2. Set your mind on things above. (Col. 3:1-2)
 - a. Don't get entangled with the affairs of this life. (2 Tim. 2:4)
 - b. You'll miss out on God's best if your life is filled ONLY with natural existence.
 - c. Give yourself to spiritual things – Bible reading, prayer, and the fellowship of the saints.

V THE PLAN OF GOD IS NOT AUTOMATICALLY DONE, BUT WE MUST...

A. Seek it.

1. Jesus sought the will of the Father. (John 5:30)
2. Paul knew what to do because he asked, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (Acts 9:6)
3. When you ask, you receive. (Matt. 7:7-8)
4. When you seek, you will find. (Matt. 7:7-8; Jer. 29:13)
5. When you call, He will answer. (Jer. 33:3)
6. He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6)

B. Pursue it.

1. The plan of God must be actively and aggressively pursued. (Phil. 3:12)
2. You can do it. The Greater One is in you. (1 John 4:4)
3. God is at work in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Phil. 2:13)

You are built to pursue! You are born again.
You have the LIFE, the NATURE, and the ABILITY OF
GOD on the inside of you. If you look to Him, the Holy
Spirit in you will rise up and He won't let you quit!

C. Contend for it.

1. Contend earnestly for the things of God. (Jude 3)
2. Contending is an aggressive pursuit.

D. Fight for it.

1. Fight the good fight of faith. (2 Tim. 4:7)
2. We're not fighting with people. (Eph. 6:12)

There is a fight. It's a fight of faith. It's a fight against lies. It's a fight against deception. It is a fight not to quit. There is something worth fighting for, but know this — it's a battle that's already won!

Confession and Prayer

God has a plan for my life. It is a good plan. I believe it. I receive it. Lord God, I open my heart to Your plan — to seek it, to pursue it, and to contend for it. I'm willing, Lord, by Your grace, to fight for Your plan and to see Your will done in my life in Jesus' name.
Amen.

A Willing Heart

“Come to me and I will give you rest... Wear my yoke – for it fits perfectly – and let me teach you; for I am gentle and humble, and you shall find rest for your souls.”

– Matthew 11:28-29, TLB

Part of our pursuit of the will and the plan of God for our lives involves a **willing heart**. This is important to know because God will not **force** His will upon us. If you and I are going to move forward with the plan of God, we must be convinced and fully persuaded of His character.

God is a good God. He is not a user or a manipulator. God gives you and me a **choice**. He wants us to **freely come** to Him. Having a willing heart – a heart that’s open to God’s will – will help you begin to understand, recognize, and receive information concerning His plan for your life. If you are willing, He will teach you. If you are willing, He will show you what He has prepared for you.

I THE IMPORTANCE OF A WILLING HEART

A. A willing heart is an OPEN heart.

1. It is open to the will of God.
2. It is open to what God has to say.
3. It is open to what God will have us do.

B. A willing heart is important when you understand how God operates.

1. God is a GENTLEMAN. He will not force or coerce.
(Matt. 11:28-30)
"Come to Me...for I am gentle and lowly in heart..." - vv. 28-29
2. God is MEEK. (Matt. 11:29)
 - a. Someone once defined meekness as velvet-covered steel.
 - b. Despite His ability and power, God gives man a choice.
(Deut. 30:19)

C. Because God is meek and gentle, He will not force His will on us.

II "LET ME TEACH YOU."

A. Come to Him. "Come to Me." (Matt. 11:28)

1. Because He won't force His will upon us, He tells us to WILLINGLY COME to Him.
2. He is the Creator. We are the created.
3. If you want to operate in revelation, you must LEARN TO COME to Him. (Matt. 11:25)

B. God does not change. (Mal. 3:6)

1. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Heb. 13:8)
2. God does not change because He doesn't need to!
 - a. He is always right.
 - b. His ways are right. (Ps. 145:17)
 - c. His plan is set. (Ps. 33:11)

C. Let Him teach you. (Matt. 11:29, TLB)

1. He says, “Come to Me...let Me teach you...” – vv. 28–29
2. Can you hear the heart of God? With all His power, He could make you learn, but He won’t.
“Wear my yoke – for it fits perfectly – and let me teach you...”
– Matt. 11:29, TLB

III GOD’S WAY IS THE BEST (Jer. 29:11)

A. God has the best pathway for your life.

“...I will guide you along the best pathway for your life...”
– Ps. 32:8, NLT

1. He will INSTRUCT you and TEACH you in the way you should go. (v. 8)
2. He will GUIDE you with His eye. (v. 8)
3. He will ADVISE you.
“...I will advise you and watch over you.” – v. 8, NLT

B. Cooperate with God. He knows what to do.

1. God is light. In Him is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5)
– God sees your problem through the eyes of light.
2. He can lead you out of any complex situation.
“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” – Ps. 34:19

C. Continue on the path of light. (Prov. 4:18)

1. The entrance of His Word gives light. (Ps. 119:130)
2. God will lead you step by step. (Ps. 37:23)

No situation is too complex. It is simply an absence of light. If you are in a complicated situation, RECEIVE GOD as your ADVISER and turn on the light of His Word.
When the light comes, you will SEE and you will KNOW what to do.

D. God will ultimately give you what you want even if it's not His will for you.

1. Jesus wanted to gather the Jews, but they were unwilling. "*...How often I wanted to gather your children...but you were not willing!*" – Luke 13:34
2. The Lord gave Israel a king against His will. (1 Sam. 8:4-22)

IV WILLING TO DO HIS WILL

A. Jesus makes a great statement of truth:

"If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know..." – John 7:17

- A willing heart comes first before the revelation of God's full plan.

B. Willingness to do His will puts you in a position to hear from Him.

C. We must be willing to do anything, whatever the Lord might ask us to do.

V THE PRAYER OF CONSECRATION (Matt. 26:39)

A. Consecration is needed to do the will of God.

B. Jesus consecrated Himself to the will of the Father.

"...Not as I will...Your will be done." – Matt. 26:39, 42

1. Jesus was faced with something He would rather not do, but He yielded His will to the will of the Father.
2. On the other side of His willingness were you and me. (Heb. 12:2)
3. We're here today because Jesus willed to do the will of the Father.

C. What the prayer of consecration IS NOT.

1. It is not a prayer you pray ONE TIME in your life.
2. You don't pray, "Thy will be done" when faced with sickness, disease, or financial lack.

3. God's will is revealed in His Word. His will is that:
 - a. We are HEALED. (1 Pet. 2:24)
 - b. We are STRONG. (Prov. 10:29)
 - c. We LIVE LONG. (Ps. 91:16)
 - d. ALL our needs are met. (Phil. 4:19)

D. The prayer of consecration is a prayer you pray on a regular basis throughout your lifetime.

1. We pray it concerning the SPECIFICS of God's plan for our lives:
 - "Lord, should I marry this person or not?"
 - "Should I take this job?" "Should I go abroad, or should I stay here?" "Should I get into this business?"
2. We pray it as we face crossroads in our pursuit of the plan of God for our lives.

A man of God said this, "You may not know exactly what the Lord wants you to do in specific detail, but you should always be willing to do whatever He wants you to do and go wherever He wants you to go. UNWILLINGNESS to obey God can HINDER or DELAY His plan from being fulfilled in your life."

Prayer of Consecration

Heavenly Father, I open my heart to You. I am willing. Teach me how to be open. Wherever you lead, I will go. I will follow. I will pursue. Help me, Lord, to come to a place of total willingness. For I know your plans for me are good. Souls are waiting. Fruits are waiting to be born through my life and my obedience. Thank You, Lord, for Your great love and Your great plan for my life in Jesus' name. Amen.

Knowing the Character of God

“How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings. They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.”

— Psalm 36:7-8

“Everything Happens For A Reason.” Oftentimes, people make such statements following a calamity, or a catastrophe, or some other unfortunate events. Perhaps, something tragic happened in their lives. Because of spiritual ignorance, they don’t know what to do, and so they make such statements. What they are implying is “God is in control, and He has allowed these things to happen in my life.”

Yes, everything happens for a reason, but God is not always the reason. He is not always the cause. We need to know and have understanding of this spiritual truth, so that the devil will not take advantage of us.

Is God in control? We learned that God doesn’t do anything on the earth apart from man’s involvement. He is in control only to the degree that we believe His Word, agree with Him, and do what He says. In this way, we give Him access, and then we give Him control.

God is a good God. He only has good plans for us. Knowing this and being convinced of it will help us to willingly consecrate our lives to Him and allow His plan to be accomplished in our lives.

I GOD DIDN'T DO IT!

A. Some of the reasons why bad things happen in your life:

1. Neglect.
2. Ignorance. *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..."*
— Hos. 4:6
3. Sin. *"The wages of sin is death..."* — Rom. 6:23
4. The Law of sowing and reaping, of seedtime and harvest.
"...for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." — Gal. 6:7
 - Good seeds bring forth good harvest.
 - Bad seeds bring forth bad harvest.
5. The reality of the devil. (John 10:10)
 - There is a thief loose; and he comes to steal, kill, and destroy.
6. We didn't resist the devil. (Jas. 4:7)
7. We fell asleep on our watch. (1 Pet. 5:8)
 - We are to be sober, alert, vigilant, and watchful because there is an adversary.

We are the light of the world. We are the salt of the earth.
As you and I stand, believe the Word, and
do the will of God, we are keeping back evil and
allowing God's will to be done on the earth.

8. Not listening to the leading of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. Sons of God are led by the Spirit of God. (Rom. 8:14)
 - b. The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth. (John 16:13)
9. For the Word's sake.
"...tribulation or persecution arises for the Word's sake..."
— Mark 4:17
 - God is not bringing the persecution or the tribulation.
The devil is stirring it up to get you to release your hold
on the Word of God.

It's time for us as believers to TAKE SPIRITUAL RESPONSIBILITY
for what's going on in our lives
instead of just throwing up our hands and saying,
"It's the Lord who is allowing it all."

B. God gave the church authority. (Matt. 16:18-19)

1. We are the body of Christ on the earth.
2. Our faith gives God the legal right to get involved.
3. God is in control in a nation to the degree that we, the Church, submit to Him and pray for leaders and those in authority. (1 Tim. 2:1-2)

II KNOWING GOD'S CHARACTER HELPS YOU TO CONSECRATE FULLY

A. Consecration gives us access to the grace of God to walk victoriously. (Matt. 26:36-42)

1. Consecrate yourself BEFORE trouble or temptation comes. (Matt. 26:41)
2. Jesus consecrated Himself BEFORE going to the cross.

It's important to make a QUALITY DECISION once and for all to GO ALL OUT for God and follow His plan for your life. That decision will be an ANCHOR TO YOUR SOUL to keep you in God's perfect will when the devil tries to bring his best temptations into your life to DISTRACT and DETER you from the plan of God.

B. The area in your life that's not fully surrendered is the very area the enemy will use against you.

1. Doing the will of God and fulfilling His plan require everything.
2. You can die and go to heaven, and yet not fulfill the plan of God.
3. Lay everything on the altar.

C. It's difficult to consecrate yourself if you are not convinced about the character of God.

1. It's difficult to submit to somebody you don't trust.

2. You'll be first in the submission line when you find out how much God loves you and that He really has good plans for you.

III FEAR NOT! GOD IS GOOD!

A. **God's goodness is great!** (Ps. 31:19)

1. What has He prepared? He's prepared great goodness!
2. Whom are they for? For those who trust Him.
3. Where? Right here on the earth!

B. **His lovingkindness is great.** (Ps. 36:7)

- I can trust Him 100% because He loves me so much!

C. **Those who trust in Him are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of His house.** (Ps. 36:8)

- One of the devil's lies is that, if you follow God's plan, you won't be satisfied; your desires won't be fulfilled.

D. **All life comes from Him.** (Ps. 36:9)

E. **He's the Giver of good gifts.** (Jas. 1:17)

- He's the Great Benevolent One.

F. **It is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.** (Luke 12:32)

1. FEAR NOT!
2. God is not an absentee father.

G. **He is our total and full supply.** (Ps. 36:8)

- He is more than enough for our lives.

H. **He makes the willing and the obedient eat the good of the land, right here on earth.** (Isa. 1:19)

I. **God does not lie or change His mind.** (Num. 23:19)

- He said it. He'll do it.

J. **God does not withhold any good thing from us, not one thing!** (Ps. 84:11)

1. The devil will pull you away from God's best with the LIE that when you follow God's plan, you won't have certain things in life.
2. Get the fear out! Get the doubt out!

K. Those who fear Him lack no good thing. (Ps. 34:10)

- Where is the good thing? It's in the plan of God!

IV KNOWING GOD'S CHARACTER EXPOSES THE TACTICS OF SATAN

A. The devil is a slanderer. He slanders the character of God.

- His tactic is to make you believe that God is holding back something from you. (Gen. 3:1-5)

B. He uses fear to make you think that you're missing out on something and that God won't come through for you.

C. He says that if you follow God, you will be the laughingstock of everyone.

- The Bible says, "*Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.*" – Rom. 10:11

Listening to Your Heart

“The spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inner depths of his heart.”

– Proverbs 20:27

The plan of God – His highest and His best for your life – is spiritually discerned. You cannot know it with your five physical senses. God reveals it to you by His Spirit whom He has given to us.

The spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord. If God wants to reveal something to you, He will do so through your spirit (your heart). If you are to fulfill His plan for your life, you need to know how to listen to your heart. God wants to spare you heartache and wasted time! As you develop sensitivity to your spirit, you are able to hear from the Lord more clearly, follow more directly His will for you, and avoid missteps along the way.

I GOD REVEALS HIS PLANS TO US BY HIS SPIRIT

“But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” – 1 Cor. 2:9–14

A. God’s plans are “spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. 2:14)

B. When the Bible talks about the “heart,” it is often referring to the spirit of man.

C. Man is spirit. He has a soul. He lives in a body.

“...the God of peace...sanctify you completely...your whole spirit, soul, and body...” – 1 Thess. 5:23

1. Man is a three-part being – spirit, soul, and body.
2. God is Spirit. (John 4:24)
3. Man was created in the image and likeness of God. (Gen. 1:26)
4. Our body is our “earth suit” and gives us the legal right to abide on the earth.
5. God breathed the breath of life – His life – into man’s body, and man became a living being. (Gen. 2:7)

II GOD’S SPIRIT WILL LEAD US INTO THE FULFILLMENT OF HIS PLAN

A. Sons of God are led by the Spirit of God. (Rom. 8:14)

– God will lead you into all the truth. (John 16:13)

B. We must learn to be led by God’s Spirit. (Rom. 8:14)

C. The Spirit bears witness with OUR SPIRIT. (Rom. 8:16)

1. God will deal and communicate with us through our spirit, not through our mind, our intellect, or our body.
2. We must become aware of our spirits.

III GOD WILL ENLIGHTEN AND DIRECT US BY HIS SPIRIT

A. The spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord. (Prov. 20:27)

- If the Lord wants to show you something, He'll do so through your spirit.

B. God does not want us in darkness.

1. We are sons of light. (1 Thess. 5:5)
2. We walk as children of light. (Eph. 5:8)

C. Our spirit is God's communication center. (Prov. 20:27)

1. If you are born again, your spirit is alive to God. (Rom. 6:11)
2. God, by His Spirit, is living on the inside of you. (2 Cor. 6:16)

You have a great ADVANTAGE in life!
In any situation that you come up against, you are no longer limited to head knowledge or to what your physical senses tell you. As a child of God, you have been ELEVATED to receive revelation knowledge from the Holy Spirit.

D. Your spirit will know things your head doesn't know.

1. Trust the Lord with all your heart (your spirit); do not lean on your own understanding. (Prov. 3:5)
 - Do we get rid of our understanding?
No, we just don't lean on it.
2. Our mind is limited, but our spirit is UNLIMITED because it has contact with the Holy Spirit.
3. The Holy Spirit, in you, will search out and reveal all the deep things of God. (1 Cor. 2:10)

E. Don't walk in the futility of your mind.

"This I say...that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind." – Eph. 4:17

- This is how the Gentiles, who don't know God, walk.

We have a greater source of information –
the Holy Spirit bearing witness with our spirit.

IV WE WILL NEVER KNOW GOD'S PLAN THROUGH OUR SENSES

A. The natural man does not receive spiritual things; they are foolishness to him.

"But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." – 1 Cor. 2:14

1. Natural means "sensual"; that which belongs to the physical.
2. The natural man is preoccupied with what his five physical senses tell him.

When you are at a crossroad, trying to decide which way to go, don't look to your reasoning or at what's happening in the natural. LOOK ON THE INSIDE! Circumstances might say, "Don't go. It will never work out."
But on the inside, the Spirit is saying,
"Go, do it! It will work out!" LISTEN TO YOUR HEART.

B. Consider the following men of faith:

1. Abraham OBEYED and went out, NOT KNOWING where he was going. (Heb. 11:8)
2. Noah was divinely warned of things NOT YET SEEN, and he prepared. (Heb. 11:7)
3. Moses REFUSED to be called a grandchild of Pharaoh, the most powerful man at that time. (Heb. 11:24)

If you don't understand that God leads you through your spirit, Satan will hold you captive and take advantage of you through your intellect and what your five senses tell you.

V YOUR SPIRIT WILL WORK FOR YOU

A. Answers will come from your heart.

"...Meditate within your heart...and be still." – Ps. 4:4

B. You receive instructions even as you sleep.

"...My heart also instructs me in the night seasons." – Ps. 16:7

C. Your spirit searches for answers.

"...I meditate within my heart, and my spirit makes diligent search."
– Ps. 77:6

D. God will enlighten your spirit.

"For You will light my lamp; the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness." – Ps. 18:28

VI FAITH IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE IN LISTENING TO YOUR SPIRIT

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." – Heb. 11:6

A. Don't speak negatively. (Mal. 3:13)

1. Don't say things like, "I can't hear from God." "I'm so confused."
2. When you speak negatively, your spirit has nothing to work with.

B. Believe and speak the Word of God:

1. When I seek, I find. (Matt. 7:8)
2. When I call, God answers. (Jer. 33:3)
3. I am God's son. I am led by His Spirit. (Rom. 8:14)

4. I am His sheep. I know His voice. (John 10:4)
5. The Lord is instructing me and teaching me in the way I should go. (Ps. 32:8)

C. As you make positive affirmations of God’s Word, your spirit will go to work to “search out” the direction you need.

“...my spirit makes diligent search.” – Ps. 77:6

D. The Good Shepherd will speak to your heart in such a way that you will KNOW what He is saying.

*“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”
– John 10:27*

E. Even when you feel confused, declare God’s Word.

VII KEYS TO DEVELOPING SENSITIVITY OF SPIRIT

A. Be aware that you are spirit.

– Acknowledge with your mouth daily, *“I am a spirit.
God talks to me Spirit to spirit.”*

B. Keep a tender heart.

1. Practice INSTANTLY obeying the voice of your spirit.
2. When God speaks to you, don’t put it off. Don’t procrastinate.
3. When you wake up in the morning, check in with the Lord; purpose in your heart to follow the Lord all day, and pay attention to your spirit.
4. Pay attention to your conscience.
5. Be quick to ask for forgiveness.

C. Read your Bible.

1. Don’t just rush through a devotional routine.
2. Our Bible reading goal is QUALITY and not quantity.
3. Bible reading and Bible study are not the same.
4. Find the time to read your Bible when you’re not overwhelmed with natural distractions.
5. As you read your Bible, you have fellowship with the Holy Spirit.
6. As you read your Bible, you become familiar with the Lord’s voice.

The Holy Spirit, who inspired and penned the Bible,
is the same Holy Spirit who bears witness
with your spirit.

D. Pray in other tongues.

1. It is God's will for everyone to pray in tongues.
2. When you pray in tongues, your SPIRIT is praying.
(1 Cor. 14:14)
3. The same place the tongues come from is the same place
God's direction will come from – your spirit!

The enemy's thoughts will bombard you
from the OUTSIDE, but God's direction and wisdom
come bubbling up from the inside.

Knowing How to Be Led by the Holy Spirit

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

— Romans 8:14

The Bible says we are sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. As sons, God is faithful to lead us by His Spirit who lives on the inside of us. Our spirit is now God’s communication center. That means if He wants to give us guidance, direction, wisdom, and illumination, He will do so by the Holy Spirit through our spirits.

You may ask, “If I have something in my heart, how do I know whether it is the Holy Spirit or not?” How do we tests the spirits? How do we examine His leadings? Is there a way to know? Good news! We can know! Knowing how He leads us will help us to accurately and effectively follow His plan for our lives.

I GOD IS FAITHFUL TO COMMUNICATE HIS PLAN

A. **God is not unjust.** (2 Cor. 5:10)

- God will not hold you accountable for something He didn't make known or available to you.

B. **He is the Good Shepherd.** (John 10:11)

1. We are His sheep.
2. He calls you by name. That talks about the uniqueness of your call. (John 10:3)
3. We know His voice. (John 10:4)

C. **He will instruct and teach us in the way we should go.** (Ps. 32:8)

1. We are sons of God through faith in Jesus. (Gal. 3:26)
2. As His sons, He is faithful to lead us by His Spirit. (Rom. 8:14)

II EVERY LEADING SHOULD BE TESTED

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God..." — 1 John 4:1

A. **The leading of the Holy Spirit will always AGREE with the Word of God.**

1. The Word and the Spirit are one. (1 John 5:7)
2. This is a foundational truth — the Word and the Spirit ALWAYS AGREE.
3. The more we know what the Word says, the more skillful we can become in being led by the Spirit.

B. **Don't believe every spirit.** (1 John 4:1)

1. There are many voices in the world, and they are all significant. (1 Cor. 14:10, KJV)
2. Different voices are meant to take you to different places.
3. All voices have a source. Determine the source of what you are hearing or sensing.

C. Test the spirits. (1 John 4:1)

1. Spiritual experiences should agree with the Word.
2. When you pray in fear, it connects you with the wrong spirit.

D. Prophecies should be tested.

“Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.” – 1 Thess. 5:20-22

1. *“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.”*
– 1 Cor. 14:29
2. The gift of prophecy is a great blessing, but we are not led by prophecies. We are to be led by the Spirit.

Prophecy is not to lead or guide the believer. Personal prophecy should confirm what is already in your spirit. Remember, if we are to follow God's plan for our lives, we have to take responsibility to receive direction from God for ourselves.

E. To “try the spirits” (KJV) means to examine, or to discern, the spirit.

1. We are spiritual people, and we can judge all things. (1 Cor. 2:15)
2. We don't go around judging people. We judge the spirit of a thing.
3. Not all groups or organizations are the right ones for you. What's right for one may not be right for another.
“There is a way that seems right...” (Prov. 14:12; 16:25)
4. Even Satan can transform himself into an angel of light. (2 Cor. 11:14)
5. Just because something looks good doesn't mean it is God's leading.
6. We judge things by the Word of God and by what we have in our heart.

III HOW DO WE TEST THE SPIRITS?

A. The Holy Spirit will always lead you in line with the Word of God. (1 John 5:7)

B. The Holy Spirit will always lead you in truth. (John 16:13)

1. He will never lead you to lie.
2. He will never lead you to mislead.
3. He will never lead you to deceive or cover up.
4. A person who is led by the Spirit has nothing to hide.
"But he who does the truth comes to the light..." — John 3:21
5. He will lead you in line with integrity. (Prov. 11:3; 12:22)
6. If it disturbs your conscience, don't do it!
7. The leading of the Holy Spirit will produce boldness and a quiet confidence.

Don't compromise your integrity. Don't sell out.
It's not worth it! When you compromise, you lose
your confidence before God and before the devil,
and the devil will rip you off!

C. The Holy Spirit will always lead you in love.

"Follow after love..." (1 Cor. 14:1, DARBY)

1. The motive for operating in the gifts of the Spirit should be the edification of others.
"Pursue love and desire spiritual gifts..." — 1 Cor. 14:1
2. Love does not seek its own, but is always considerate of others. (1 Cor. 13:5; Jas. 3:17)
3. Always pursue what is good for all. (1 Thess. 5:15; Phil. 2:4)
4. Owe no one anything except to love. (Rom. 13:8)
5. Make sure your plans are not vengeful. (Rom. 12:17-21)

D. The Holy Spirit will always lead you into the fruit of the Spirit.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace..." — Gal. 5:22

1. The Holy Spirit will lead you into joy. He won't lead you to stay home and have a pity party.
2. The result of having the Holy Spirit and yielding to Him is love, joy, peace, etc.
3. He won't lead you into strife.

Walking in love does not mean your life will be without confrontation. Jesus never took a step out of love, and yet, He confronted the Pharisees. The Bible says "speak the truth in love." At times LOVE MUST TAKE A STAND. Walking in love doesn't mean you compromise for the sake of peace. Lasting peace comes only as we stand in the truth.

E. The test of time.

1. Don't rush! If you believe, you don't need to get in a hurry.
"...Whoever believes will not act hastily." – Isa. 28:16

In the kingdom, there's urgency, but God is not in a hurry. You don't have to move anxiously. Time is a good way to test the spirit. In most cases, if it's God today, it will be God tomorrow!

2. If you're too fast, you can move ahead of God and be out there on your own!
3. If you receive a leading, why not sleep on it? Give it some time.
4. Use time as your friend.
5. Time becomes your enemy when you are under pressure to move quickly.
6. Acknowledge Him, and He'll direct your path. (Prov. 3:6)
7. *"...he sins who hastens with his feet."* – Prov. 19:2

We're looking for the sure leadings.
We're looking for the sure path.

8. Stay before the Lord until you get knowledge from Him. (Prov. 19:2)
9. *"...he who is impulsive exalts folly."* – Prov. 14:29

10. If you've acted hastily and entered into an agreement that you know is not from God, deliver yourself quickly out of it. (Prov. 6:1-5)

F. Submit your plans to those who are spiritually mature.

1. Don't just look for people who will tell you what you want to hear.
2. Strive for unity and agreement with those around you who are spiritually mature.
3. Spiritual authority is your friend!
4. In the multitude of counselors, there is safety. (Prov. 11:14)
5. Having a desire and willingness to submit your plans to spiritual authority is an indicator of true humility.
6. What should you do when those you respect spiritually don't agree with you?
 - a. Be very careful!
 - b. Slow down!
 - c. Check what you have received with the Lord again and again.
 - d. If you are still sure of the Lord's leading, move forward.

It's not the job of the authority to lead you and tell you what to do, but spiritual authority is a SAFEGUARD and a SOUNDING BOARD for our lives, especially with life-changing decisions.

7. Ultimately, you have to follow the Lord's leading, not man's.
8. Submit to one another. (Eph. 5:21; 1 Pet. 5:5)
 - The great Apostle Paul submitted his revelations to other leaders. (Gal. 2:1-2)

IV THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

"He will honor and glorify Me, because He will take of (receive, draw upon) what is Mine and will reveal (declare, disclose, transmit) it to you." – John 16:14, AMP

A. He will declare, disclose, and transmit.

B. Don't try to hear "words" and "voices."

C. God is always leading, but He is not always "speaking."

Offentimes, people are looking for words or trying to hear voices, but the Lord is not always speaking to us in words or in an audible voice. One thing is sure though — He is always leading, guiding, and communicating.

V HOW DOES GOD LEAD AND GUIDE?

A. God leads us by peace.

"For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace..."
— Isa. 55:12

1. Let the peace of God act as an umpire in your heart.
(Col. 3:15, AMP)
2. Pay attention to peace in your inner man.

One way to walk out God's plan is to take baby steps. Each step you take, check your spirit. If you have peace, take another step. Acknowledge Him in every step. If at any point you don't have peace, STOP! WAIT.

B. God leads us through a "knowing."

"But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things." — 1 John 2:20

1. You have the anointing to know.
2. The anointing abides in you and teaches you all things.
(1 John 2:27)

C. God's leading can come as a perception.

"...I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster..."
— Acts 27:10

- A perception is an inward witness; a "hunch," or intuition.

D. His leading can come to us through our conscience.

1. Conscience is the voice of your spirit.
2. *"I tell you the truth...my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit."* — Rom. 9:1

People are often looking for the spectacular — the booming voice, the signs, the wonders, the writing in the sky. By doing so, they miss the supernatural — the Holy Spirit inside of them bearing witness with their spirits.

Maybe there are some leadings...some stirrings in your heart, and you've been wondering whether it's the Lord or not. Why not acknowledge Him with it? If there are issues in your life you have not opened to the Lord, begin today by giving it to Him. Fear not. His plans for you are good!

Identifying His Leadings

*“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that
we are children of God.”*

– Romans 8:16

God has a good plan for your life, but there is an enemy, the devil, who wants to get you on a different path. The enemy will present you with what looks like God’s will for you. As you follow God’s plan for your life, you need to be able to discern what is God’s and what is not. We are no longer spiritually ignorant, walking around clueless. As a son of God, you can and should expect that He will lead you by His Spirit. Equally important to knowing how He leads is to know how He **does not lead**.

The Bible says there is a way that seems right to a man, but the end of that way is death. In this lesson, you will learn further how to **clearly identify the Lord’s leadings** by knowing how He does not lead, thereby keeping you from going the wrong way.

I WE ARE NOT LED BY FEELINGS

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God... The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”

— Rom. 8:14,16

A. Sons of God are led by the Spirit, not by their feelings.

B. The Spirit bears witness with our spirit, not with our feelings.

C. What to do when you don’t “feel” like doing what is right:

1. Realize that feelings change.
2. Stir up the gift of God in you. *“Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you...”* (2 Tim. 1:6)
 - a. Pray.
 - b. Praise.
 - c. Rejoice!

D. What you feed upon will affect your feelings.

1. Feeding fleshly appetites and carnal inclinations will create wrong desires.

If you feed yourself always with carnal things
— movies, television, malls, or newspapers —
these will become stronger in you and will affect
your desires.

2. Delight yourself in the Lord, and His desires will become strong in you. *“Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.”* (Ps. 37:4)
 - a. Delight in prayer.
 - b. Delight in Bible reading.
 - c. Delight to do God’s will.
3. A terrible time to make important decisions for your life is when you’ve been feeding on the wrong things.

II WE ARE NOT LED BY OUTWARD CIRCUMSTANCES

"We don't ascertain the will of God by outward circumstances. We ascertain the will of God by what the Lord is saying to our spirit." – Kenneth E. Hagin

A. (For Pastors) Poor indicators of the will of God:

1. Church attendance
2. Crowd size
3. Size of the offering

As you persevere with the Word that's in your spirit, circumstances will change! Provision will come!

B. We are not led by what looks most comfortable.

Things will line up with the Word that you have in your spirit because the Word that's in you is the Word of DOMINION. As you follow it, it causes everything else to line up!

C. "Bonds and afflictions" didn't move the Apostle Paul. He was on a mission! He was on assignment! (Acts 20:22-24)

D. We change circumstances as we walk in the power and authority of the Word and the direction of the Holy Spirit.

God may lead you in a place that's not exactly the garden spot of the earth, but He'll lead you there so you can change it into a garden spot! Greater is He who is in you — greater is the Word of God in you than all the hell, the demons, the fear, and the poverty around you!

III WE ARE NOT LED BY OPPORTUNITIES OR OPEN DOORS

- A. Not all opportunities are God-given opportunities.**
- B. Just because the door is open doesn't mean you're supposed to go through it.**
- C. Acknowledge the Lord by praying about open doors and opportunities.**
- D. We are to be led inwardly, not outwardly.**
- E. Satan is the god of this world. (2 Cor. 4:4)**
 - 1. He can open doors.
 - 2. He can orchestrate circumstances.
- F. Something may look like the "endless golden road," but the end is death. (Prov. 14:12; 16:25)**

IV WE ARE NOT LED BY MONEY

- A. You cannot serve God and money. (Matt. 6:24)**
- B. The deceitfulness of riches choke the Word of God. (Mark 4:18-19)**
- C. The deception is: "If only I had some money, everything would be alright."**
- D. Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and the things you need will be added to you. (Matt. 6:33)**
- E. Don't seek to add to yourself.**

One of the most responsible things you can do for your family is to walk in God's plan and purpose for your life.

- F. A good financial offer doesn't mean it is God's plan for you. Pray about it first!**

- G. **Following God’s plan for your life will bring true prosperity, lasting riches, and the blessing without sorrow. (Prov. 10:22)**
- H. **Don’t make decisions based on money.**
- I. **We are not led by the highest salary.**
- J. **Don’t always look for the cheapest way to do something.**

Our goal is not to find the “cheapest” way to do a project for God, but to fulfill what God has put in our heart.

V WE ARE NOT LED BY NEEDS

“When they found Him, they said to Him, ‘Everyone is looking for you.’ But He said...‘Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.’” – Mark 1:37-38

- A. **Jesus was not led or pressured by everyone’s immediate need or demand. He was led by the Spirit. He walked in His purpose.**
- B. **Just because a need presents itself doesn’t mean you’re to get involved.**
- C. **We are to be led by the Spirit, not by needs.**
- D. **There are needs we are called to meet, but we’re not called to meet every need.**

Not all good things are necessarily God's best for us.
We don't just want to do good things.
We want to do God's things.

- E. **God doesn’t need any of us to play the role of God, trying to meet every human need in the earth.**
- F. **The Lord needs each of us to “bear our own load” by taking our place in God’s plan. (Gal. 6:5)**

G. This is not an excuse to be hard-hearted, cold, and callous.

1. The Bible tells us to maintain good works and to meet urgent needs. (Tit. 3:14)
2. When a brother is destitute of daily food, you help. (Jas. 2:15-16)

H. The devil can take you for a ride if you're trying to meet every need around you.

I. Ask yourself, "Am I doing this because the Lord has led me or just because there is a need?"

J. We should love with discernment. (Phil. 1:9)

There are many things you can do, needs you can meet;
but God's leading will always PLANT you and
POSITION you for MAXIMUM IMPACT.

VI WE ARE NOT LED BY THE EXCITEMENT, HYPE, OR ENTHUSIASM OF THOSE AROUND US

A. We are not led by the majority.

B. Joshua and Caleb were a minority. (Num. 14)

C. Everybody might be cheering or jeering you, but THAT'S NOT A LEADING.

D. We're not moved by the opinion of others.

E. Many enter the wide gate. (Matt. 7:13-14)

F. The majority, "the church of the day," did not get to enter the Promised Land. "...but with most of them..." (1 Cor. 10:1-5)

As you are led by the Spirit of God, you will meet needs.
Supernatural doors will open for you.
Circumstances will line up and change.
Money will come. We don't follow these things.
These things obey and follow us.

God's Plan is Progressive

“But the path of the just is like the shining sun that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.” — Proverbs 4:18

God's plan for our lives is not a one-time event. It's a walk of faith, and any walk begins with a step. The walk of faith consists of steps because God's plan is progressive. The Word of God says the path of the just is like the light of dawn that shines brighter and brighter unto the full day.

Your path, as you take steps in following God's plan, is not supposed to get darker. It is designed by God to get brighter and brighter. Your race is made up of a series of assignments. Where you begin is not where you will end. You need to be faithful with what you have now, no matter how small it may seem. You may begin small, but the Word promises your latter end will be great! That's because God has not destined you to stay small. He has destined you to become great!

I THE PLAN OF GOD IS A PROGRESSION

A. The plan of God is a walk of faith.

"...but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised." – Rom. 4:12

1. Abraham took steps of faith.
2. The path we take is a progression. (Prov. 4:18)
3. The will of God is a path that we follow.

B. God's Word – His direction – is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. (Ps. 119:105)

1. Just like a lamp or a flashlight, the light goes out further with each step that you take.
2. "Light" is simply an instruction from the Lord; truth; revelation; the Word that we have today.

When the Lord gives us a Word, we are responsible to walk in the light of that Word. As we walk in the light that we have, more light will come that will lead into an even greater light.

C. The walk of faith begins with a step.

1. Abraham obeyed God, and he went out not knowing where he was going. (Heb. 11:8)
 - a. He was moving in the light that he had – the instruction from God to leave his family and "go to a land I will show you."
 - b. He took a STEP.
2. The Lord didn't give Saul (Paul) the blueprint for his entire life, but gave him the next step.

"...go...and you will be told what you must do." (Acts 9:6)
3. The path towards greater light is the truth, revelation, or instruction that you have from God now. (Ps. 36:9)

II EVERYTHING BIG STARTS SMALL

A. Everything God wants to build, to establish, to put in you, and to do for you starts small.

1. A small seed, when sown, can grow and become great. (Mark 4:30-32)
2. He who is faithful in the LITTLE THINGS is also faithful in much. (Luke 16:10)
3. To get to the great, we must begin with the small.
"Though your beginning was small, yet your latter end shall increase abundantly." – Job 8:7

B. Be faithful with the little things.

1. Nothing is small if it's an instruction from the Lord.
2. What you have now is all you've got. It's your future!
3. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. (1 Cor. 5:6)
4. It's the little foxes that spoil the vine. (Song 2:15)

Some people never get to the "big things" in life because they don't understand the Law of Progression. We don't want to be so "someday-minded" that we forget to be faithful with what God has put in our hands today.

C. What you do TODAY is going to produce your tomorrow.

1. "A person's success lies in his DAILY routine."
2. We should aim for daily obedience, daily sowing good seeds, daily thinking right thoughts, and daily speaking the Word.

III YOUR LIFE AND RACE ARE MADE UP OF A SERIES OF ASSIGNMENTS

A. Your faithfulness to your current assignment will largely determine the timing of your next assignment.

1. Where you start is not where you will end up.
2. What is in your hand today?
3. What has the Lord given you today?

The way you handle what is in your hand today will be the same way you will handle what the Lord will put in your hands tomorrow.

B. Part of being faithful to your current assignment is completing or finishing it. (John 4:34, John 17:4, 2 Tim. 4:7)

1. You can't go to your next assignment until you first finish the current one.
2. Practice being a strong finisher.
3. There is no social promotion in the kingdom of God.
4. God does not promote you merely because you are trying hard or because you have been around a long time.
5. Faithfulness to your current assignment is the only way God can and will promote you.

IV THE CALL AND SEPARATION INTO THE CALL

A. Everyone has a call.

1. In the life of Paul:
 - a. *"Paul...called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel..."*
– Rom. 1:1
 - b. Saul (Paul) was a chosen vessel for Christ. (Acts 9:10-19)
 - c. *"Now separate unto me...Saul for the work which I have called them."* – Acts 13:2
2. You were called from your mother's womb. (Jer. 1:5)
3. The call includes assignments, plans, good works, and things you are supposed to do and carry out in your lifetime.
4. Just because you have a call doesn't mean you are ready and qualified to stand in that place.

B. The separation.

1. This is the time when you are separated into and standing in the calling you received.
2. There is a PROCESS of TIME before you stand in the place that God has called you.
 - For the Apostle Paul, more than 13 years passed from the time of his calling was revealed (Acts 9:15) until the time of his separation into that calling (Acts 13:2).
3. The duration between the call and the separation into that call is largely up to us.

- You can hasten the time of your next separation by being faithful and obedient with today's instructions and assignments from the Lord.

Something awesome happens when you get separated
— grace comes; then comes anointing;
then comes supernatural ability; then comes
supernatural endowments of the Holy Spirit.

C. There are tests of obedience and faithfulness between the time of the call and the separation into the call.

1. If you pass these tests, then God has the LEGAL RIGHT to promote you.
2. He will promote you with the GLORY, the ANOINTING, the FAVOR, the ABILITY, and the ENDOWMENTS of the Spirit of God.
3. God's will is to promote you.
4. When we get promoted, KINGDOM INFLUENCE EXPANDS.
5. In most cases, the Lord will lead you to help somebody else before He gives you your own ministry. (Luke 16:12)

We're not in a hurry to be promoted. We will get there God's way. We will get there in God's time. And when we get there, we will have the "goods" to get the job done!

D. Faithfulness is required.

"Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful."

— 1 Cor. 4:2

1. To be "found" is to be found by examination.
2. 1 Timothy 3:10 talks about deacons being first TESTED for their office.

V YOUR CURRENT ASSIGNMENT IS PREPARATION FOR FUTURE ASSIGNMENTS.

A. There is training and development in your current assignment.

- You are being sharpened and equipped for future assignments.

"He teaches my hands to make war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze." — Ps. 18:34

If you abort your current assignment and "jump ship," you will not be trained, developed, and prepared when the Lord wants to promote you.

B. God's will for you is promotion.

1. Promotion comes from the Lord. (Ps. 75:6-7)
2. Humble yourself before the Lord, and He will promote you. (Jas. 4:10)
3. We humble ourselves by agreeing with God.
4. God promotes us in His time, His way.
5. He promotes us with His authority and His anointing.

If we are not faithful, we won't be prepared.
If we are not prepared, we won't get promoted.

C. Days of preparation are never lost time.

1. There are important lessons or truths that you still need to learn in order to successfully fulfill God's plan for you.
2. It takes time to prepare and establish oneself in God's Word.
3. Although it may seem difficult and uncomfortable, preparation is PART of the RACE God has set before you.

D. When you have been proven faithful, God can move you into a place of GREATER responsibility, anointing, and ministry.

A man of God wisely said this: "God has a WAY, but He also has a TIMING, and to move out of God's timing is to move out of His will."

Exhortation and Prophecy

If you'll follow God's plan for your life, you'll begin to rise. And you'll not only rise, but you'll stand. And you'll not only stand, but you'll stay. And you'll remain, and your progress will be evident to all. So, don't despise the day of small beginnings. Don't despise the assignment that's in your hand today. Learn to esteem it. Learn to rejoice over it. Learn to give thanks for it. Be diligent to stir yourself up, to give thanks for what God has put in your hands today.

Be diligent to make your calling sure. Be diligent to make your election sure, and then don't stop but continue. Continue, and be faithful. Continue, and be faithful. And you will be glad. And blessings will come upon your life. Blessings and provisions will come upon your life that come no other way but by being faithful to God's plan and God's purpose for your life.

There are real things to contend for. There are real things of God to walk in and to contend for. Real graces. Real places. Real anointings, but it's only for the faithful.

There are no shortcuts in the kingdom, but there is a sure path. He says in His Word, "This is the way. Walk in it." Even now, I believe God has spoken to you about something, and it's an assignment. Take it to Him in prayer. Be faithful to carry it out.

Many good plans are not God's plans. Good plans don't get promoted. God's plans receive promotion. God will give you assignments. He'll give you plans. He'll give you things and make you stewards over them to be a blessing on the earth...to be a blessing to all families of the earth! He'll put things in your hands. Big, big plans! Be blessed! Be faithful. And follow God's plan for your life!

Judging with Righteous Judgment

*“Do not judge according to appearance,
but judge with righteous judgment.”*

— John 7:24

God has a high calling for you. He has high places for you to walk in. The devil wants to pull you down from your high places and cause you to walk in low, beggarly, miserable places.

A key to walking in God’s high places for you is to judge all things with righteous judgment. God has given you His Holy Spirit, and as a spiritual being, you no longer make decisions merely by what you see, hear, or feel; but now you are equipped to judge with righteous judgment.

I AS SPIRITUAL PEOPLE, WE JUDGE WITH RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT

“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” – John 7:24

*“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”
– Prov. 16:25*

A. What does it mean to judge with righteous judgment?

1. It means to judge things with discernment.
2. It means we judge all things – opportunities, what we see, hear, and feel – according to the Word of God.
3. We judge things according to the witness in our own spirit.
4. It doesn't mean we judge one another.

B. Take your seat as “judge,” or Satan will take advantage of you.

C. We can judge things because we are spiritual people.

“But he who is spiritual judges all things...” – 1 Cor. 2:15

**II JUDGING WITH RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT –
A KEY TO WALKING IN GOD'S HIGH PLACE FOR US**

*“He makes my feet like the feet of deer, and sets me on my high places.”
– Ps. 18:33*

A. The devil wants us to operate in LOW PLACES.

1. “Low places” is where you are limited to the futility of your own mind.
2. It is a place where you are governed by, and limited to, your own reasoning – what you can see, feel, or what you can figure out.
3. It is a place where you're living by what you can achieve or what you can do in your own strength.
4. This is the devil's arena, and he wants to pull you down.

B. God has a HIGH ROAD for us.

“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” – Phil. 3:14, KJV

1. In order to walk that high road, you have to learn to judge with righteous judgment and not according to outward appearance.
2. We are no longer impressed with everything that looks good outwardly.
3. Listen on the INSIDE.
4. Everything may look good on the outside, but on the inside there's a flashing red light that says, "Don't go!"
5. Not everything is as it appears.
6. The devil would love to keep you busy, occupied, and preoccupied in something that looks good but is not God's best for you.

The devil will bid high for you! He'll send things that look good to get you off the high path.

III WE ARE EQUIPPED TO JUDGE WITH RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT

A. The Lord will light your candle.

"For thou wilt light my candle: the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness." — Ps. 18:28, KJV

1. God will give direction to your spirit.
2. You are spiritually blind without the Spirit of God leading and guiding you.

B. We have received the Spirit of God. (1 Cor. 2:12-16)

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God." — 1 Cor. 2:12

1. We can judge because we now have access to the mind of Christ. (v. 16)
2. Every believer has access to the mind of Christ, but not many believers access it.
3. The mind of Christ is revealed through the Word of God.
4. You can pray in tongues with the help of the Holy Spirit to access the mind of Christ.
5. As you pray in tongues, the wisdom of God will begin to rise on the inside of you.

C. No longer limited to the “sight of our eyes”

“The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him...And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes...” – Isa. 11:2-3

- Now that we have the Holy Spirit, we have inside information beyond what our senses may tell us.

D. Judge the right time.

1. Don't be in a hurry.
 - a. Don't allow men to put you in a position you're not ready for.
 - b. If God didn't put you there, you don't want it.

There are many good things we could be involved in, but we must wait for the Lord's leading.

- c. Take time to bathe things in prayer.
 - d. Be wary of quick opportunities.
2. God's timing is important.
 - a. We must discern not only God's plan, but also His timing.
 - b. When we move ahead of God, we produce a “spiritual Ishmael.”
 - c. We can recover from a “spiritual Ishmael,” but we waste time, years, and money.

E. The realm of the senses is Satan's playground.

1. Being led only by your senses is like gambling.
2. As children of God, we are to be led inwardly, not outwardly.
3. We are no longer led by:
 - Feelings
 - Opportunities
 - Outward circumstances
 - Open doors
 - Need
 - Excitement
 - The majority

Some people think they need money. In reality, they need the Word of God. They need the plan of God. They need to find their place.

4. Our goal is not to meet everybody's needs; but rather, to walk in the plan and the purpose of God for our lives.
5. We're not to be led by the applause or criticism of others.

Your Compass — and your Guide —
is on the inside of you.

Prayer and Declaration

Heavenly Father, thank You for equipping me spiritually. Lord, I open the eyes of my spirit. Light my candle. Help me to judge opportunities, invitations, needs, and outward circumstances. Help me to judge all things that pertain to my life with righteous judgment. Thank You, Lord, for Your Spirit. I am a son of God, and I'm led by Your Spirit. Your Spirit is bearing witness with my spirit concerning Your plans. I am alive to God. I have the life of God in me. I pursue the high call that You have for me. I resist fear. I resist the devil. I yield and submit to the Spirit of love who is guiding me now. Lord, alert me to anything false — low places, low ways, and deceitful people. I commit to follow Your plan with Your wisdom and Your understanding in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Need for Endurance

*“Therefore we also...let us run with endurance
the race that is set before us.”*

— Hebrews 12:1

Our race — God’s plan for our lives — is not a 100-meter dash. It is more likened to a marathon or a long-distance run. We might fall, or trip, or scrape our knees along the way. But we can and should get back up. Why? It is because our race is a lifetime race. It’s **an endurance race**.

God doesn’t want us to just be starters. He wants us to be finishers. God wants us to win. Our victory is important. Our victory is not just for ourselves; it is also for others. We are here to fulfill a plan and a purpose. We are to be a blessing to all the families of the earth! For this reason, we have need for endurance, so that after we have done the will of God, we may obtain His promises!

I YOU HAVE A NEED FOR ENDURANCE

"For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise." – Heb. 10:36

A. You have need of endurance to do the will of God.

1. You can start out doing the will of God and not receive the promise if you quit along the way.
2. When you receive the promise, it will bless others.

B. What is endurance?

1. Endurance doesn't mean putting up with problems.
2. Endurance (translated as "patience" in the KJV) is:
 - a. Constancy
 - b. Perseverance
 - c. Continuance
3. Constancy refers to **ALWAYS BEING THE SAME**; your attitude and your confession are based on God's Word and **NEVER CHANGE**.
4. Endurance is "hopeful fortitude that actively resists weariness and defeat."
- Endurance is active, not passive.
5. Endurance is "holding out" for God's best.
 - a. Don't settle for the inferior substitute the devil offers.
 - b. Hold out for what the Lord has put in your heart.
 - c. Hold out for what God's Word has promised.

Don't compromise. Don't sell out. Don't try to make things happen. We are children of promise, and we receive by promise.

C. Endurance is part of the fruit-bearing process.

"...having heard the Word...bear fruit with patience."

– Luke 8:15

- No patience (endurance) = no fruit.

It is not enough just to begin; now you must continue!

II KEYS TO ENDURANCE:

A. Endurance Key # 1: Know that payday will come!

1. *"For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love..."*
— Heb. 6:10
2. Your labor is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Cor. 15:58)
3. *"...in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."*
— Gal. 6:9

The enemy is heavily involved in psychological warfare.
His plan is to wear you out with a barrage
of thoughts and reasoning.

4. *"...consider Him who endured...lest you become weary and discouraged..."* — Heb. 12:3
5. Be patient like the farmer who knows that there will be a harvest. (Jas. 5:7)
6. When you're tempted to be weary, gird up the loins of your mind. (1 Pet. 1:13)
7. Moses endured because he saw Him who is invisible, and he looked to the reward. (Heb. 11:23-27)

B. Endurance Key # 2: Establish your heart.

1. An established heart is a "fixed heart."
"You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand." — Jas. 5:8
2. How to establish your heart:
 - a. Take time to hear from God before you move.
 - b. Settle the will of God on the "front end," before you do something.

In order to receive from God, you must endure.
You won't endure if you are not 100% sure something is
God's will for you.

3. An established heart (hearing from God) brings confidence.
"Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward."
— Heb. 10:35

4. Paul could say with confidence, “...none of these things move me” because he already knew God’s plan for him. (Acts 20:22–24)
 - a. If you endure long enough, the devil will shut up.
 - b. Paul could not be persuaded because his mind was made up. (Acts 21:12–14)

Knowing God's will in your spirit is your anchor
to keep you on course no matter
what comes against you.

5. Jesus “steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.” (Luke 9:51)
If He hadn’t, He might have detoured.
6. A double-minded man is unstable and receives nothing from the Lord. (Jas. 1:7–8)

If you don't plan to go “all the way,” you won't get
there. Make up your mind. Make a quality decision to go
all the way with the Word and the will of God.

C. Endurance Key # 3: Joy

1. The joy of the Lord is your strength. (Neh. 8:10)
2. “...count it all joy...knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.” — Jas. 1:2–3
 - a. The faith comes from God. The test comes from the devil.
 - b. If you endure, you will be “perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” (Jas. 1:4)
 - c. There’s an end to your faith and patience. It’s called receiving the promise. (Heb. 6:12)
3. Jesus endured the cross because of the joy that was set before Him. (Heb. 12:2)
 - a. The cross looked like defeat, but Jesus knew it was victory. He judged with righteous judgment.
 - b. You have access to the same wisdom that put Jesus on the cross. The devil can’t figure you out.

The devil's arena is reason. His arena is the senses. He'll woo you to come down from your high place of God's Word, so he can whip you in his arena. Our home court is faith. It is the home court of trusting the Lord with all our hearts and not leaning on our own understanding.

D. Endurance Key # 4: Spiritual Strength

1. *"If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small."*
— Prov. 24:10
2. Take care of your spirit. Strengthen your spirit:
 - a. Get away, and get refreshed.
 - b. Take extra time to feed your spirit with God's Word.
 - c. Edify yourself by praying in tongues.
 - d. Watch what you say and whom you say it to.

E. Endurance Key # 5: Consider Jesus

1. This is the major key that holds them all together.
2. *"For consider Him who endured such hostility..."* — Heb. 12:3
3. Jesus *"has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*
— Heb. 12:2
4. What is the importance of Jesus being raised and seated?
 - a. A person does not sit down unless the job is done.
 - b. He sat down because your victory is sure and complete.
5. Consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. (Heb. 3:1)
6. Jesus is the guarantee of the Word of God.
"...Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant." — Heb. 7:22

When you speak the Word of God and agree with the Word of God, Jesus is there, seated at the right hand of the Father, to make sure you get what belongs to you.

7. When you are tempted to be weary and when you feel discouraged, consider Jesus.
8. He already defeated what you're facing. He already got the victory for you!
9. Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant. (Heb. 12:24)
10. Just as sure as Jesus is alive, every promise is yes and amen! (2 Cor. 1:20)

Laying Aside the Unnecessary

*“Therefore we also...let us lay aside every weight...
and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”*

– Hebrews 12:1

Consider yourself a forerunner of the plans and purposes of God, and be willing in your heart to contend for the pure. Be a lover of God’s plan. Pray for God’s plan. Seek God’s plan. As you seek it, you will find it. Don’t settle for less than what you know is God’s best for you.

You have been empowered with the Word of God. It is your transportation to your promised land...to your destiny...to the plan and purpose of God for your life.

So lay aside the unnecessary. Lay aside – strip off, throw off – as the Bible says, anything that will slow you down, hold you back, or hinder you from receiving God’s best for you!

I LOOK TO JESUS, THE FIRST FAITHFUL FINISHER

"looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith..."
– Heb. 12:2

A. He who has begun a good work in you will complete it.
(Phil. 1:6)

B. You too are faithful because He lives in you.

II LAY ASIDE THE UNNECESSARY

"...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us..."
– Heb. 12:1

A. The writer makes a distinction between weights and sins.

- *"...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles..."* (NIV)
- *"...lay aside every encumbrance and the sin..."* (NASB)
- *"...let us strip off anything that slows us down or holds us back, and...those sins..."* (TLB)

B. What are weights?

1. They are anything that slows us down; anything that hinders; an encumbrance; things that hold us back.
2. They are "extra spiritual fat." (v. 1, MSG)
3. Things that are not necessarily wrong, but they slow us down in our race.
4. Things that are not wicked or evil, but will keep us from God's best.

C. To run and finish your race, you have to be in control.

1. All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful for us. (1 Cor. 6:12)
2. Everything is permissible, but they're not all beneficial. (NIV)
3. Our goal: "Not to be mastered by anything." (NIV)

III BE STRONG IN GOD'S GRACE

*"You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."
– 2 Tim. 2:1*

A. Your race is a supernatural race. The grace of God is required.

1. You can't run it in your own might or ability.
2. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.
(Eph. 6:10)
3. Let the weak say, "I am strong." (Joel 3:10)
4. The grace of God is sufficient. (2 Cor. 12:9)
5. Be strong and labor in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
(2 Tim. 2:1; 1 Cor. 15:10)

B. You've been enlisted in the army of God.

"You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier." – 2 Tim. 2:3-4

1. Your life is not your own. (1 Cor. 6:19-20)
2. You can't wage a good warfare and fight a good fight if you're entangled with the affairs of this life.

Wake up! Whether you know it or not,
you're in a spiritual conflict!

IV CARES OF LIFE ARE A DANGEROUS WEIGHT

A. The cares of life will weigh down your heart.

"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with ...cares of this life..." – Luke 21:34

B. The cares of this world "choke" the Word of God.

"Now he who received seed among the thorns...and the cares of this world...choke the word..." – Matt. 13:22

C. Why is it dangerous when cares choke out the Word?

1. The Word of God is what you fight with.
2. The Word is the very thing you resist the devil with.
3. Your progress, your success, and your future are linked to your ability to endure with the Word of God.
4. You are not going anywhere without the Word.

The Word of God is sent to you to transport you into your promised land and destiny, but the cares of this life will cause God's Word to be choked, leaving you with nothing to fight with.

D. What do we do with our cares and anxieties?

1. Cast your burdens on the Lord. He will sustain you. (Ps. 55:22)
2. Cast all your care on the Lord, for He cares for you. (1 Pet. 5:7)
3. Be anxious for nothing, but pray. (Phil. 4:6)
4. You must deal with your concerns so that they don't get into your heart and choke out the Word.

Be spiritually responsible. Go to the Lord.
Put the care in His hand. Make your request known to Him, and keep moving forward in the plan of God.

E. Cares will cause you to lay down your sword.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might...And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." – Eph. 6:10,17

1. The Word of God is your sword.
2. "The Word of God" in Ephesians 6:17 is the "rhema" of God – the specific word that God quickens or speaks to your heart from the Bible.
3. Jesus resisted the devil with the sword of the Spirit:
"It is written..." (Matt. 4:4-7)

4. Satan will bring cares to choke God's Word, causing you to lay down your sword and leaving you with nothing but the futility of your own mind and the power of your own flesh.

The fulfillment of the plan and purpose of God
for your life is connected
to the promise of the Word of God.

F. Cares choke God's promises.

1. We are children of promise. *"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise."* – Gal. 4:28
2. Galatians describes two ways man attempts to accomplish things (Gal. 4:23):
 - a. Through the flesh (our own effort)
 - b. Through promise
3. Our part is to HOLD FAST to the promise and do what that Word of promise reveals to us.
4. We came into God's family through promise, and now we must fulfill His plan the same way.
5. Having begun in the Spirit, we cannot be perfected in the flesh. (Gal. 3:3)

V THE SIMPLE LIFE OF A SOLDIER

"No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier."

– 2 Tim. 2:4

A. You're in God's army now. Live like a soldier.

1. A soldier's life is simple.
2. A soldier doesn't have his own plans.
3. He only goes where he's assigned.
4. The ways of the army override his own opinion.
5. His concern is to please the one who enlisted him.

If you become a true disciple of Jesus,
you will have a simple life.

B. God's Word and plan bring simplicity.

1. Life becomes complicated when people attempt to add to themselves.
 - a. God will add to you.
 - b. Seek first the kingdom of God, and all things will be added. (Matt. 6:33)
 - c. As you obey the Lord, blessings will overtake you. (Deut. 28:2)
2. The blessing of the Lord makes rich and He adds no sorrow with it. (Prov. 10:22)
 - a. What the Lord adds will not slow you down or complicate your life.
 - b. God's timing is right. He will add to you when you are ready for it.
3. Resist the temptation to add to yourself.
4. God added to Abraham, and it didn't slow him down.

C. A soldier is available and on call.

1. God is looking for people who are truly available.
2. In Luke 14:16-24, men gave excuses which were legitimate and not evil; but in reality, they were not available.
 - a. The issue is priority.
 - b. Their plans prove to be a "weight."
3. *"Here am I! Send me."* (Isa. 6:8)
4. We find God's plan when we lay down our own life and pick up His plan. (Matt. 16:24)
 - Timothy did not seek his own plans, but sincerely cared for what was in God's heart. (Phil. 2:21, TLB)

Don't just be concerned about your plans.
Be concerned about His plans. This is a place of great reward. This is a place of great fulfillment and satisfaction. It is a place where the Lord begins to reveal to you His secrets and His heart, and you become a carrier of His plan. You become a true son of God, doing the Father's business on the earth.

No More Weights

“Therefore we also...let us lay aside every weight... and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

– Hebrews 12:1

We are learning that, if we are to run our race and finish our course, we must lay aside weights and encumbrances that will hinder, hold us back, or slow us down. We need to have the spiritual strength, the awareness, and the discipline to identify those things.

The Bible says “let us lay aside”; so don’t cry out to God and ask Him to remove these things from you. No, you lay them aside. The Lord will give you grace. His grace is sufficient, but you have to be the one to make the choice. You have to be the one to take the stand.

I SOME WEIGHTS THAT WE COMMONLY DEAL WITH:

A. The fear of man. "What will others say or think?"

1. The fear of man brings a snare. (Prov. 29:25)
 - A snare is a noose or a trap.
2. The enemy has people assigned to criticize you.
3. Our goal is to please God, not man. (Gal. 1:10)
4. Part of not yielding to the fear of man is learning to say "No" to people.
5. Don't just take invitations. Pray about them.
6. God is looking to entrust people with assignments; to entrust them with His heart, His plans, and purposes. (1 Thess. 2:4)
7. Do not become slaves of men. (1 Cor. 7:23)

B. Sin consciousness

1. This is a guilt complex; it is condemnation over past sins and past mistakes.
2. The blood of Jesus will cleanse our conscience from dead works. (Heb. 9:14)
 - "Dead works" are works of the flesh; works of our own doing and not of the Spirit.
3. We have a remedy for past sins: It's the blood of Jesus!
4. "...*forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward...*" – Phil. 3:13
5. We have received the gift of righteousness. (Rom. 5:17)
6. Righteousness qualifies us to do good works in God.

It doesn't matter what your past is. God has a good future for you. So, lay aside this weight:
 "God can never use me." "I have wasted so much time."
 No, get up and go on! The blood of Jesus is greater!
 God's plan for your life stands!
 There is still much of the plan and the purpose of God you can fulfill in your lifetime.

C. Comparison

1. Comparing ourselves with others is unwise. (2 Cor. 10:12)
2. Comparison results in either of two things:
 - a. You will be lifted up in pride – “Our church is better than their church.”
 - b. You will feel inferior or suppressed – “They’re doing better than we are.”

JESUS IS OUR STANDARD.
He puts men as patterns and examples.
We follow their faith and their example,
but we must look to Jesus, the AUTHOR and
the FINISHER of our faith.

3. Let each man examine his own work. (Gal. 6:4)
4. Bear your own load, and mind your own business. (Gal. 6:5)

Comparison is dangerous. When we start comparing ourselves with others, we start adding things; and then life becomes complicated and burdensome.
What YOU ADD to yourself will slow you down.
Nothing that God gives you will slow you down.

D. Undisciplined flesh

1. “...I discipline my body...lest...I become disqualified.”
– 1 Cor. 9:24-27
2. “... the fruit of the Spirit is...self-control.” – Gal. 5:22-23
3. Watch out for areas of over-indulgence:
overeating, oversleeping, “over malling.”
4. The goal is to be in control, not mastered by anything.

The Lord wants you to enjoy life, but He doesn't want you to do it at the expense of your spiritual well-being.

5. We should not compartmentalize our life. We don't "flesh out" when we want to.

The spirit of the world will drain you. You are soldiers. You can't just go everywhere you're invited to go with everyone who asks you.

6. Blindly following others without asking questions may lead you into places and situations of compromise and over-indulgence.
7. *"And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh..."*
— Gal. 5:24

E. Wrong associations

1. Evil company corrupts good habits. (1 Cor. 15:33)
2. Evil is not just those who smoke, drink, do drugs, or chase women. The Bible calls "unbelief" evil. (Heb. 3:12)
3. Who are you walking with? Who are you spending most of your time with? (Prov. 13:20)
4. The basis of true fellowship is mutual light. (1 John 1:7)
5. Your pursuit of God's plan is a discernment of true and lasting friendship.

As you move forward with God's plan, the dynamics of your relationships will change. As you walk in more light and fellowship with others who are also walking in increasingly more light, you will begin to enjoy TRUE FELLOWSHIP on a much higher level.

II WRONG RELATIONSHIPS CAN BE WEIGHTS

A. Specific people we are to avoid:

1. Stay away from GOSSIPS. (Prov. 20:19; 26:22)
2. Don't associate with an ANGRY MAN. (Prov. 22:24)
 - a. Angry people are always striving with somebody.
 - b. This includes negative people who are always telling you, "You can't make it."

3. Do not associate with those GIVEN TO CHANGE. (Prov. 24:21)
 - a. Look for stability in people.
 - b. Look for and associate with the faithful, not with the busybodies.
4. Avoid the DIVISIVE and OFFENDED. (Rom. 16:17)
 - a. These are the whisperers.
 - b. People who get offended share their offenses.
 - c. Offense spreads like cancer.
 - d. Don't let people dump their garbage on you. People will gain respect for you when they know you have a reputation for not taking in garbage.

Just as God has assigned people to your life,
the devil also has people assigned to you.
These people are weights and must be avoided.

B. "Pursue peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." – 2 Tim. 2:22

1. There will be some people along the way who don't know what you know, but they have a pure heart.
 - Follow through with those types of people.
2. Look at the heart. Listen to what's coming out of a person's mouth.

Following God's plan for your life takes courage.
It will break up your clique. At times, it will require you
to walk out from among the others.
"Come out from among them and be separate.
I will be a Father to you, and you shall be
My sons and daughters."

Supernatural Relationships

“...but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

– 2 Timothy 2:22

God-given, Holy Ghost relationships are priceless. God has ordained them for us along the path. You see, we are not in a popularity contest. Our goal is not merely to be a part of a group or a church. God will link us and join us with people who are essential for us to run our race and finish our course.

As you pursue the plan of God, your heart should be open to recognize and highly esteem the supernatural relationships God brings into your life. These supernatural relationships are a manifestation of His love and of the love of Jesus in your life!

I WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT SUPERNATURAL RELATIONSHIPS?

A. We are to pursue the things of God with those who call on Him with a pure heart. (2 Tim. 2:22)

1. *"He who walks with wise men will be wise..."* – Prov. 13:20
2. We can't do what God has called us to do unless we recognize and identify our God-given relationships.

B. God will knit us and join us together with others.

- "...from whom the whole body, joined and knit together..."*
– Eph. 4:16
- This is a work of the Spirit and not of the flesh.

C. We no longer regard one another after the flesh.

- "...from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh."*
– 2 Cor. 5:16
- We now judge relationships after the Spirit.

D. The Head, Jesus Christ, puts the body together. (Col. 2:19)

1. He **NOURISHES** the body as the parts are knit together.
2. Recognize where you have been knit and where you fit in the body of Christ.
3. As you get connected with supernatural relationships, God will cause you to be nourished.

It doesn't matter what Bible school you went to, how much you study the Word, or how much you speak in tongues. If you want to be properly nourished and finish your course, you must get connected where God has connected you.

E. God sets the members in the body just as He pleased. (1 Cor. 12:18)

1. In a physical body, the elbow didn't choose to be connected to the forearm or the upper arm. God put it there by design.

2. Likewise, God needs you in your place in the body of Christ, connected with those He has joined you with.

F. Supernatural relationships must be guarded.

GUARD your relationships!
 You have to fight and contend for anything God-given in your life. If it's good, if it's from the Word, if it's from God, it's ETERNAL – and the devil wants to steal it.

1. Don't get offended! (Prov. 18:19)
 - a. Offense comes to all of us to try to separate us from those God has joined us with.
 - b. We're not ignorant of the devil's devices. (2 Cor. 2:11)
2. Don't allow the devil to sow discord among the brethren. (Prov. 6:16-19)
3. Recognize those people Satan is using to separate and divide. (Prov. 16:28)

ACKNOWLEDGE supernatural relationships before the Lord, and then be ready to FIGHT for them.

G. We are urged to recognize and esteem those we are divinely connected with.

"And we urge you... to recognize those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you... esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake..." – 1 Thess. 5:12-13

1. "To recognize" means to KNOW or to PERCEIVE.
2. As you acknowledge before the Lord those God has connected you with, a spiritual supply will automatically flow from those relationships into your life and vice versa.
3. God-given relationships must never be treated as COMMON.
4. Avoid familiarity at all cost. (Mark 6:3)
5. Strive to show honor even to those you have known and worked with for a long time. (Rom. 12:10)

6. Esteem relationships by being GRATEFUL for everything people do for you.
 - a. Take time to appreciate them.
 - b. Don't be too familiar with your spouse, your pastor, and those you live and work closest with.

II SOME NUGGETS ON SUPERNATURAL RELATIONSHIPS

A. Every Joshua needs a Caleb.

"As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend." – Prov. 27:17

- Everyone needs a running mate who can speak words that cause you to glow, light up, and be the best that you can be.

B. Every paralytic needs four crazy friends.

"Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men." – Mark 2:3

1. A paralytic represents one who needs a miracle.
2. We need friends who, despite the obstacles – even if there seems to be no way – will make a way for you.
3. They will stand with you and do whatever it takes until you get your miracle.

C. Every sheep needs a shepherd to lead, to guide, and to feed them.

"And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding." – Jer. 3:15

D. Every Moses needs a Jethro. (Ex. 18)

- Jethro is someone older, with more experience, who can see things you cannot.

E. Every Paul needs a Timothy, a son in the faith.

"To Timothy, a true son in the faith..." – 1 Tim. 1:2

F. Every Titus needs a Paul, a father in the faith.

"For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers..." – 1 Cor. 4:15

G. Every David needs a Samuel, somebody to see something in you nobody else sees.

"...And the Lord said, 'Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!'"
– 1 Sam. 16:12

1. When everybody else despises you, God can bring a Samuel who will say, "This is the Lord's anointed."
2. We are all anointed for something.

When you find people who inspire you and bring out the best in you, begin to guard those relationships. Begin to give yourself and your heart to those relationships.

H. Every Peter needs a Paul, somebody who can rebuke you if necessary. (Gal. 2:11-14)

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." – Prov. 27:6

I. Every Paul needs a Barnabas, someone used by God to link us with others who are part of our future and our destiny.

"And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles..."

– Acts 9:26-27

That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. There are relationships that are born of the flesh and relationships that are born of the Spirit. Those born of the Spirit are sweet. They are GIFTS of God!

Prayer

*Father, thank You for supernatural relationships
in my life. Help me to recognize those
relationships which are born of Your Spirit.
I pray these relationships would grow and develop.
Help me to do my part to cultivate them,
and fill my life with them in Jesus' name. Amen.*

You and Your Descendants

“...I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.”

– Deuteronomy 30:19

The choices we make in life affect our descendants. Your life, your obedience, and your pursuit of His plan and purpose not only affect you. They affect your descendants after you. We do what’s necessary to provide good things and good opportunities for our children, but they can live their whole lives in vain if we do not provide for them an example and a pattern of the pursuit of the plan of God. One of the greatest gifts we can give our descendants is a legacy of our love for God’s plan and our pursuit of His purposes. Invest into your future. Pass on that legacy!

I OUR CHOICES AFFECT OUR DESCENDANTS

A. God has set before us life, that both we and our descendants may live. (Deut. 30:19)

1. We always have a choice.
2. If we choose life, all of heaven will back us up, but we need to make a choice.

B. God is interested in the next generation.

1. We not only impart good doctrine. We need to also impart to people a heart to do the will of God.
2. If we have a heart to do the will of God, God will fix our doctrine. (John 7:17)

My life and decisions now are not just about me. I have to ask myself, "How are my choices and my decisions going to affect my descendants?"

C. The descendants of the man who fears the Lord will be mighty on the earth. (Ps. 112:1-2)

1. His generation will be blessed.
2. God doesn't need us running around everywhere. He needs us in our place, affecting the big picture.

D. We serve our own generation by doing the will of God.

"For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God..." – Acts 13:36

We can change our generation by carrying out
OUR PART of God's plan.

E. Generations are changed by faith.

"By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God..." – Heb. 11:3

1. This verse has a two-fold reference:
 - a. It refers to God speaking, “Light be” and forming the world with His words.
 - b. It also refers to the worlds or ages of time being framed by the Word of God.
2. Hebrews 11 describes people who received a Word from God and, by faith, carried out their part of God’s plan.
3. They changed their generation and changed the course of history by doing their part.
4. Life became different on planet earth because people received a Word from God and did it!

There is still history to be written.
There are generations to change.

F. Our descendants will inherit the nations. (Isa. 54:2-3)

1. The descendants of the man who fears the Lord shall inherit the earth. (Ps. 25:12-13)
2. God is descendant-minded. Are we? (Amos 3:3)

G. Part of our call and mandate is to pass things on to the next generation.

“One generation shall praise Your works to another...” — Ps. 145:4

“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever...”
— Deut. 29:29

Take possession of revelation. Take possession of
the plan of God. Fight for the plan and the purpose of
God. It belongs to us, but not just to us.
It belongs to our children forever.

H. Make decisions with a long-term perspective. Invest in the future generations.

Following God's plan for your life might not give you the quickest payout, but we're not just interested in relief from temporary affliction and pressure. We're interested in fruit that remains. We are interested in future generations.

II BIBLE EXAMPLES OF SPIRITUAL HERITAGE:

- A. Paul had a spiritual heritage. His forefathers served God with a pure conscience.** (2 Tim. 1:3)
- B. Timothy had a spiritual legacy from his grandmother and his mother.** (2 Tim. 1:5)
1. Be a grandmother Lois. Pass on a heritage of faith.
 2. Timothy's father was Greek, but his mother was a Jewish woman who believed. (Acts 16:1)

Mothers: If dad won't get with the program, it's okay. You get with the program. Do your part. Be a seeker of God. Be a lover of God. Sow those seeds into your children and pray for your husband, then set an example of submission.

- C. God chose Abraham to carry out His plan because He knew Abraham would pass on the heritage to his children.**
"For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him..." — Gen. 18:19
- D. The Bible has more to say about spiritual heritage:**
1. Solomon as a child was taught by his father. (Prov. 4:3-4)
 2. King Lemuel was taught by his mother. (Prov. 31:1)
 3. Fathers are to bring up children in the training and admonition of the Lord. (Eph. 6:4)
 4. *"The father shall make known Your truth to the children."*
— Isa. 38:19
 5. We are to diligently teach our children the Word of God. (Deut. 6:6-7)

The pursuit of the plan of God must begin with us,
but the revelation cannot stop with us.

E. Pastors need to give their people a heritage of the pursuit of the plan of God, and not just the pursuit of ministry or success in ministry.

F. Paul suffered and endured all things for those yet to come.

"Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

— 2 Tim. 2:10

1. There are others who need to hear.
2. We are part of the completion of the big race. (Heb. 11:39—12:1-2)
3. To endure is to persevere, or to hold one's ground in conflict.

Hold your ground in conflict
for the sake of the next generations.

4. Paul desired to go home and be with the Lord, but for the sake of the elect, he chose to stay. (Phil. 1:21-26)
5. Doing the will of God will bring fruit from your labor.
6. What does the Lord ask? That we lay down our lives for others. (John 15:13)

Be a doer of the Word. Be a pursuer of the plan of God.
It's an upward call. It's a good fight of faith.
It's not for the weak. It's not for the timid. It's not for the faint-hearted. It's for the real men and women of God.
IT IS FOR YOU, BELOVED!

Run to Win

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.”

– 1 Corinthians 9:24

We have a race to run. In a natural race, there are certain things we must or must not do in order to get the prize. The Scripture tells us to run in such a way that we may obtain the prize. Don't just be running to run. Don't just be active to be active. Don't just be involved to be involved. Run to get something! There are rewards at stake – **eternal rewards!**

The Word of God says not to run with uncertainty, not to run haphazardly. No, run to get the prize! **Run to win!**

I RUN TO GET THE PRIZE

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.

But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”

— 1 Cor. 9:24–27

A. There are prizes at stake.

1. We compete to obtain an imperishable crown.
2. Paul is pressing toward the goal for the prize.
“I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” — Phil. 3:14
3. Like the athlete, we need to be temperate (self-controlled) in all things because there is a prize.

B. Jesus wants to motivate us with eternal rewards.

“...I am coming...and My reward is with Me...” — Rev. 22:12

1. Reward means pay; wages; salary; recompense for service.
2. Jesus is not coming empty-handed. He’s coming with wages.

Keep before your eyes the reality of rewards, both temporal and eternal. Otherwise, you will give up and say, “What’s the point anyway?”
There is a point — PAYDAY IS COMING!

C. Judgment day is coming.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ..."
— 2 Cor. 5:10

1. Judgment is not always bad. There can be good judgment.
2. You can be judged faithful:
"...Well done, good and faithful servant." (Matt. 25:21)
3. Your labor is not in vain. (1 Cor. 15:58)
4. *"Therefore, do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward."* — Heb. 10:35

D. You are serving the Lord Christ – the Rewarder, the Great Paymaster.

"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ." — Col. 3:23-24

1. Godliness is PROFITABLE. It has promise in the life that now is and in the life to come. (1 Tim. 4:8)
2. The willing and obedient will eat the best of the land. (Isa. 1:19)
3. Go for the FULL REWARD. (2 John 8)

Only the ages to come will tell what a full reward is.
It can only be measured throughout eternity.

4. *"Let no one cheat you of your reward..."* — Col. 2:18

You need to open your mouth and say, "No way, devil!
Don't mess with me! You won't cheat me of
my reward! You won't pull me off into man's plans!"

5. He who reaps receives wages. (John 4:36)

E. Not all walk in the same level of eternal glory.

"There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon...for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead..."
— 1 Cor. 15:41-42

1. Although everyone born again goes to heaven, not all receive the same reward. (Luke 19:11-27)
2. *“Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament ... like the stars forever and ever.”* – Dan. 12:3
3. Each one will receive a reward according to his own labor. (1 Cor. 3:5-8)

The goal is not just to be involved in ministry.
It's about doing what God has called you to do.
Were you called to plant? Then plant!
Were you called to water? Then water!
That's what you will be rewarded for.
It may include ministry. It may not.

II IT'S GOOD, HEALTHY, AND NORMAL TO THINK ABOUT THE PRIZE

A. We should think about the prize. What's at stake here? How will our decisions impact eternity?

B. Paul thought about the prize.

“I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness...”

– 2 Tim. 4:7-8

– He was thinking about the crown of righteousness.

“But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor...”

– Phil. 1:22

– Paul knew if he stayed, it will be fruit for his labor; eternal rewards were at stake.

C. Moses did. He looked to the reward. (Heb. 11:26)

D. Abraham did.

1. He was looking for a city whose builder and maker is God. (Heb. 11:8-10)

2. He had his eye on the prize.
3. God told Abraham, *“Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”* – Gen. 15:1

E. Jesus did.

“...Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him...” – Heb. 12:2

1. He looked to the prize – the joy that was set before Him.
2. He endured the cross and SAT DOWN! Reward day came!

It is important to be mindful of eternal rewards
because of the decisions and crossroads in your future.
At times you'll be tempted to say,
“Is it really worth it?”

A Final Exhortation

Along the way in pursuing God's plan, you're going to be brought to a place of making some difficult choices and decisions. If you've never come to that point, you're not really walking in the plan of God. The plan of God will cause you to confront things, and things will confront you. It's going to require everything! That's the reality of walking in God's plan. You will find yourself at crossroads where you must leave people and things behind in order to move forward. But you're moving on to greener spiritual pastures, knowing that the willing and the obedient will eat the good of the land. God loves you, and you can trust Him.

The choice is left to you. Which way will you go?

Prophecy

"Great rewards are at stake. Will you pursue the eternal, or will you pursue the temporary? Will you pursue My plan, or will you pursue men's plan?" says the Lord. "But know that I'm beckoning you today. My plan for you stands. Come with Me. Run with Me. Be a doer of the Word. Be a lover of My plan. Pass on the heritage that I'm endeavoring to entrust to you. It's not a teaching. It's your life! Press toward the upward call. I'll keep you. You will not fall. Look unto Me, and let Me guide you. Don't settle for plans of your own making. Walk in the plans that I've assigned for you. Life is short. It will be over soon. Go with Me. You will be glad you did. You will be glad you did. Don't let another day pass. Don't let another week pass. Today, if you will hear My voice, do not harden your heart. Respond to Me."

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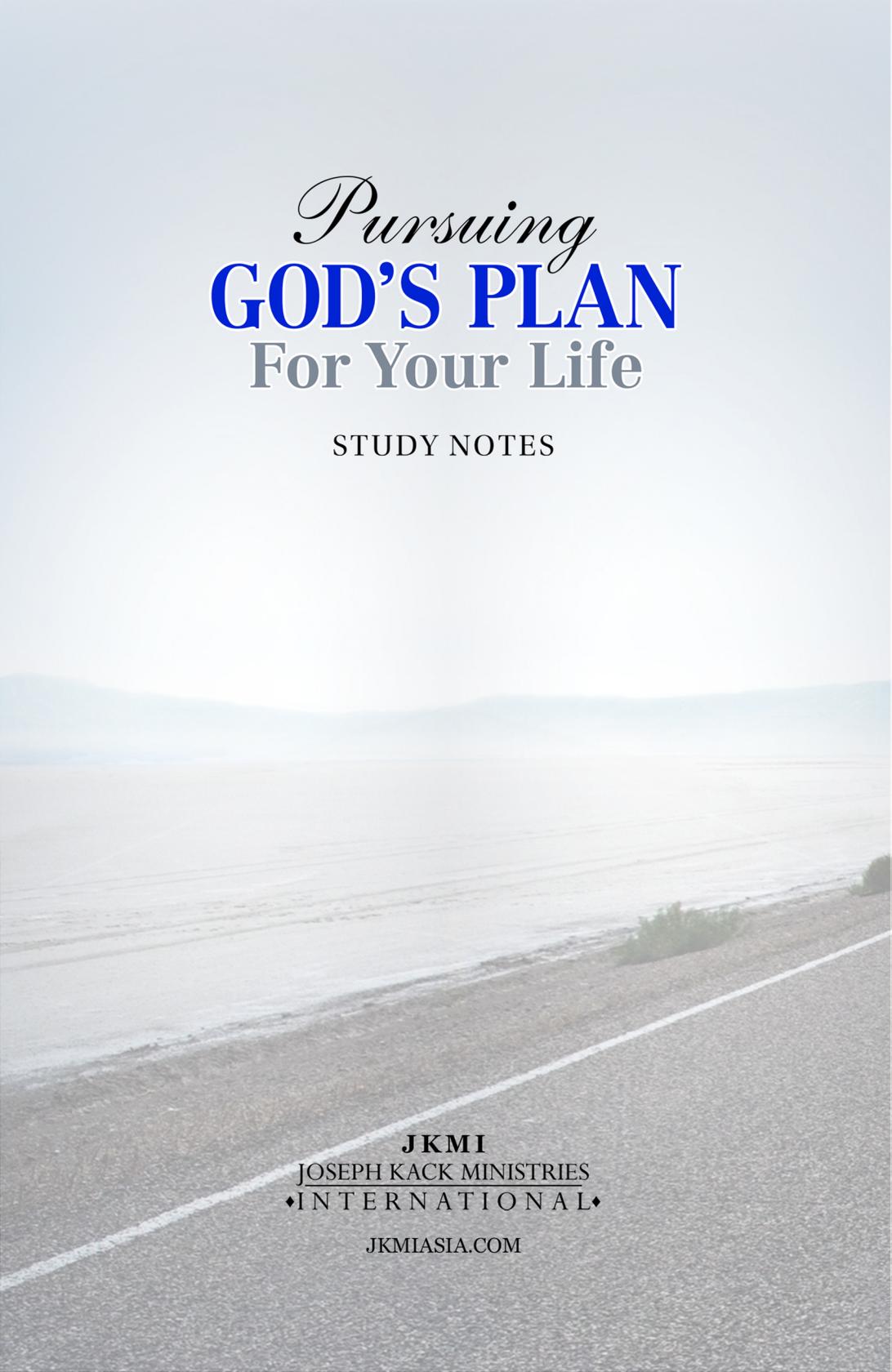
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STUDY NOTES

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