

# MORE

40 Ways to Have an Ephesians 3:20 Life

**Dr. Dharius Daniels**

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## 1. MORE WISDOM

*“Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.”*

—Proverbs 4:6-7

**O**n March 30, 1964 a television show debuted on NBC that would attract thousands of contestants and millions of viewers entitled *Jeopardy*. The show, created by Merv Griffin, tested the general knowledge of each participant. Clues would be presented, and the contestants would enclose the answer in the form of a question. As of today, the show is in its 36<sup>th</sup> season with over 8,000 episodes. It is safe to conclude that knowledge is valued, accessible and even entertaining, but less publicized is wisdom. While watching a game of jeopardy or any other trivia show might be an impressive display of knowledge, it is not designed to produce, promote or procure wisdom. Jeopardy is an assessment of knowledge and wisdom is activity based on it.

Have you ever done something that you knew you shouldn't have done prior to doing it? It is possible

to know and not act on what you know. You knew that person was unreliable, self-absorbed, and had a reputation for using people but you decided to pursue the relationship anyway. You knew you didn't need it and couldn't afford it but purchased it anyway. You knew you shouldn't have taken it but took it anyway. Our poor decisions, toxic relationships and destructive behaviors are clues that we need more wisdom but also, they are memories that we can assess to produce it. Wisdom is using the knowledge you have of the past to inform your present. It is the results of the past reaching for the fruits of the future. Could it be that more wisdom can be found in your mountainous mistakes?

Instead of trying to bury your regrets and forget the errors of your past, do not forsake the wisdom it withholds. Let the pain of that past relationship remind you not to enter into another toxic situation. Let the debt of your past remind you not to overspend. Everything that God has allowed to transpire in your life, every experience that you have gone through has traces of wisdom. When we act on the knowledge we have experienced and attained, we embrace wisdom and she protects us and watches over us.

*Lord, Maker and Sustainer of Heaven and Earth,  
we know that you are the fountain of wisdom and  
that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.  
In reverence to you we speak life to the dry bones  
of our past pains and regrets knowing that you have  
made them seeds of wisdom. Let the seeds of our past  
produce wisdom and understanding in our present. In  
the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and King, Amen.*





## 2. MORE STRENGTH

*“But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”*

—Isaiah 40:31

**T**here was a scrawny young boy who dreamed of playing for the NFL one day. He loved the game of football and knew this was his purpose in life. The problem was the boy was weak. He knew that in order to play football he needed to become strong. He just wasn't quite sure how to achieve that goal. He decided he would spend some time studying how to become strong. In his research, he discovered that going to the gym was only part of the formula. Aside from exercise he would need to monitor what he put into his body, because what you put in your body determines the effort you can put out in the gym. He also learned that a healthy amount of sleep was essential to his development. In the gym muscles are ripped and during sleep muscles are repaired. A healthy diet, a consistent exercise regiment, and adequate sleep were essential and preparatory to his purpose in life. Sleep is an indispensable key for more strength.

We are all scrawny at the beginning of our spiritual

journeys. God has purposed us but we need strength for our purpose. We need a healthy diet of the word and to consistently exercise our spiritual disciplines. Unfortunately, many of us miss the most important element of growing stronger, sleep. Without sleep your muscles do not have the appropriate time to be repaired. Without sleep you become exhausted and eventually you will faint or pass out. Hope in the Lord can be understood as a form of sleep. Sleep is a natural way of submitting to the limitations of our humanity. Hope in the context of the Isaiah passage is a way of submitting to the limitations of human strength. An indispensable key to more strength is hope in the Lord.

Have you ever felt like you were trying your best, putting out maximum effort but you hit a spiritual plateau? Maybe it is because your hope is in the things you do to serve, and not the God for whom you serve. Paul, when writing to the Philippian church, said, “Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.” Drawing on a similar illustration of working out or exercising, Paul reminds them that God is the one who is working inside of us. After we have done all we can to feast on the word and exercise ourselves into godliness, let us not forget that our hope in the Lord causes the renewal of our strength.

*Most Holy God, producer, regenerator and sustainer of our strength, we know that alone our power fails, our efforts are vain, and our best is as filthy rags in your presence. Forgive us of the pride that hopes in human power. We submit to you and humble ourselves in your sight. Empower us by your Holy Spirit to do exceedingly and abundantly above all we can ask or think. In the name of Jesus Christ, the resurrected and exalted one, Amen.*



### 3. MORE COURAGE

*“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

—Deuteronomy 31: 6

**I**t is in this text that God reminds us of the kind of God he is. He will get into our struggles with us and prepare the place we are going because God walks with us. Moses is telling the people of Israel that by trusting in the Lord and obeying him, they will be victorious in spite of the great obstacles that they see around them. We are much like the people of Israel. Sometimes we can only see one perspective; we can only see one outcome. But God does not hold our same perspective. He sits high and looks low. God sees what is ahead of us and He knows what it's going to take to get to the place He has for us. This was the case for the people of Israel, and it is the same for us.

God was preparing the way for them, all they had to do was fall in line with what God said. Although Moses was no longer able to lead them anymore because of his old age, God did not leave them without a leader to guide them. Not only did God send them a new leader, but he promised that he would also be with them. This serves as

a reminder that God's presence in our life is enough, and because of that promise...God will not forsake us!

God wants to do the same for us as he did for the people of Israel. In this season we must ask God for more courage. We may have to go through a difficult season in which we are in the struggle and may not be able to lean on the people we are familiar with for help. Still, the Lord wants us to be strong and courageous because he is with us. He instructs us to not be afraid or terrified by our enemies because we are not alone. God has everything we need. How might we gain a new perspective in our own situations, knowing that God is in the midst preparing the way for us? What might our courage and strength look like knowing that God has promised that he will never leave us nor forsake us?

*Lord, strengthen us where we are weak. Replace our fear with courage, not leaning to our own understanding, but trusting in your word, that you would never leave us nor forsake us. Help us to remember that you are with us even in our lowest times and like the people of Israel, we too will be victorious. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## 4. MORE LIFE

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

—John 10:10

**I**t is in this passage that Jesus reminds us that opposition is a fact of life. It is something that scripture does not avoid or dance around. In life we will be faced with an enemy that we must overcome. The thief, that the scriptures refer to, does not have our best intentions. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. Pastor Daniels reminds us that in this verse, the order matters. It is important to pay attention to the order of what the thief comes for: first to steal, then to kill, and last to destroy.

You see, good thieves can pick your pocket and you won't even know it. We usually only notice things are gone when we reach for it and it's not there. This is because, when someone takes something, we are then lacking. Being without something, puts you in a vulnerable state and make you susceptible to an attack. For example, we may need strength in this season, and when we go to reach for it, it is not there. This weakens us, and makes it easier to attack us. If the thief can rob us of what we need, he will then try to kill us. This is not always literal because

people can walk around and function, but be dead inside. Last in the order is destruction. Destruction is last because it is the final level of defeat. When someone is destroyed, they are no more. The thief will try to put someone out of existence. Jesus knows this and wants to equip us with what we need to overcome because he is life!

The first thing we must do is realize that whatever the thief does steal, he will not return. Instead it can only be claimed. In this season of more, we have to go and get everything that was stripped from us, whether that be our joy, peace etc. we have to reclaim what belongs to us. This thief is like any ordinary thief, they will not return what they have taken. This scripture tells us that two people will come, the thief and Jesus, but their intentions are different. The gospel of John talks about Jesus as a true shepherd symbolizing that Jesus is a caretaker of God's people. While the thief is interested in himself, Jesus is interested in his sheep, that is us. He enables us to have life and have it to the full. Life is one of the greatest concepts in the gospel of John. Life is simply God's gift. Jesus reminds us that he has come so that we might have life and have it to the full. Remember that we have not been called just to have life. God wants more for us!



*Heavenly Father, speak to us when we feel that the thief is getting the best of us, because the fact of the matter is, you have already won this battle for us. Remind us that whenever you are involved in it, the situation has to get better; it has to work for our good. Give us Holy Ghost discernment to know when we are being robbed and how we might protect ourselves. Ultimately, help us Father to have life and have it to the full! In Jesus' name. Amen.*



## 5. MORE FRUITFULNESS

*“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”*

—John 15:5

**W**hat is man if he fails to observe the signs and wonders of God? Throughout the course of time, he has enjoyed the grace and mercies of God all while failing to discern the promptings and admonitions that lead to a better life. He even enjoys the blessings from his fellow man by way of God sending the right person at the right time with the right skillset to pour into him. For whatever reason, he believes that he knows what is best with respect to his life. He will find every reason in the book to do it alone when provisions have been made for him to negotiate the obstacles of life with the Holy Spirit. He wasn't created to do this alone. The fact of the matter is, he was created with dependency in mind.

Jesus knew that if man was going to realize all that our God has purposed for him in this world, he would need to draw near to him. During his conversation with the disciples, he made it perfectly clear what each party's

role was with respect to how the relationship should go. He said to the disciples, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener” (John 15:1). In other words, Jesus sustains them and the Father prunes them. Pruning is not a punishment for a Christian; it is a reward. When a branch on a tree becomes damaged beyond repair and presents itself as potentially detrimental to the whole, it is subject to being removed. It lacks the ability to receive the nutrients which the vine provides; therefore, it serves no real purpose as it cannot and will not bear fruit.

As we enter this season of more, we must posture ourselves to be pruned so we can continue to add value to the body of Christ. We must believe and trust that God desires to enlarge our territory; however, we must be mindful that God is not in the business of wasting valuable resources. The question for us on this day, is whether we desire to present ourselves as fruit bearing branches or as dead wood ready for the fire? More is available to those who love the Lord. Are we truly ready to bloom and produce good fruit? God is glorified when we trust him by way of adhering to his Holy word. The evidence of this commitment will most assuredly be the fruit that is produced. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. And more shall be our reward!

*Lord, create in us a desire to glorify you in all that we do. May we always be mindful, Father, that we were not created to do life devoid of your divine intervention. We pray that as branches, you would prune us so that we would always receive the nutrients that you've purposed for us. May you do for us that which you accomplished for Jabez; the descendent of Judah, for we too cry out, "bless me and enlarge my territory" as we navigate this season of more. In Jesus' name. Amen.*



## 6. MORE FOCUS

*“Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”*

—Colossians 3:2

**T**his word of scripture challenges believers in Christ to ponder on what it truly means to set their mind on things above. It begins with a level of determination which reflects a laser-like focus on accomplishing that which they’ve purposed. In other words, nothing can deter them from bringing a reality to that which they’ve envisioned in their minds. The question for those who believe in Christ Jesus, is whether or not they approach God with that same level of intensity and commitment. As they enter a season of more, they find that a focused mind is paramount if they are going to realize those things that are both pleasing to God and beneficial for their fellow man. Time is of the essence and they realize that they do not have the luxury to expend resources and talents on fruitless activities. The enemy is well aware of who they are and what they are capable of doing. They are destined for more and only they can usurp this destiny.

Life is a journey and many of us have discovered that the mind is increasingly prone to fickle acts of

discretion. In other words, one day we are on cloud nine and all is well within the universe and then it happens. We receive a message of some sort, which can cause us to change our entire outlook on life. As believers, we are called to have made up minds coupled with personas that reflect a resolve that no matter how things appear, our hope rests with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. When our minds are cluttered with storylines that lead to confusion, we render ourselves useless in the body of Christ. This is precisely why the Apostle Paul said to the Church at Philippi, “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable –if anything is excellent or praiseworthy–think about such things” (Philippians 4:8).

Our focus is paramount if we desire what God has purposed for his people. We must get to a place wherein we refuse to yield any of our precious time, talents and resources to endeavors which are earmarked for failure. As we enjoy this season of more, we must remain vigilant in our pursuit of excellence and this is only possible when we become intentional with respect to our focus. Make no mistake, our God desires that we would have and therefore accomplish more. For the believer, the scriptures declare that “you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3). Therefore, let us focus on those things which he has purposed and bring him glory. All believers must clear their minds of those things which have no intelligible meaning or value. If you are going to realize more, then you must believe unequivocally that more is possible, and that God has chosen you to receive it!



*Father, we thank you for clarity of thought and the promise that you will do what you declared you would do. We pray that through your Holy Spirit, you would aid us in setting our minds on things above as opposed to those which are of this earth. Grant us, Father, the wherewithal to walk consistently in purpose. Give us laser-like focus. In Jesus' name.  
Amen.*



## 7. MORE KNOWLEDGE

*The discerning heart seeks knowledge, but the mouth of a fool feeds on folly.*

—Proverbs 15:14

There are times in the life of most individuals when wisdom is not only elusive, it is disregarded. I recall hearing someone once say that youthfulness is wasted on the young. Meaning that the season of youthful exuberance is also the season during which there is a lack in wisdom, evidenced by poor judgement and decisions that are made with passionate spontaneity rather than contemplative reasoning. However, contrary to popular opinion, poor judgement is not limited to one's youth. In a perfect world, chronological age and wisdom would be directly proportional. But we live in a fallen world, not a perfect one and in some cases chronology leaves wisdom behind.

The scripture for today is taken from Proverbs, one of the books of the Bible categorized as part of the wisdom literature. Solomon is credited with authoring Proverbs (Proverbs 1:1), however, he is not the only one (Proverbs 30:1, 31:1). A proverb generally speaking is a saying or phrase that expresses a Biblical truth which, if lived by,

will not only result in personal well-being and healthy relationships, it will also develop God character. The book of Proverbs stated purpose is to give good judgement to the simple and knowledge to the young (Proverbs 1:4). However, as we pointed out earlier, young people are not the only ones in need of knowledge and wisdom.

Proverbs 15:14 indicates a fool is content with and only has an appetite for foolishness. Whereas those who can perceive the value and have experienced the benefits of knowledge continually seek after it. The fool only wants a bellyful of the world and what it has to offer. The wise feasts on knowledge. To have it is to want more of it. What is the knowledge that is being sought after? It is the knowledge of God and the things of God; the love of God, the peace of God, the joy of God, the power of God, the presence of God, the Word of God. I pray that we all might become insatiable vessels in constant pursuit of the knowledge of God, always desiring more. As Pastor Daniels stated in a recent sermon, wanting every last bit of what God has for us is not greedy, it's hungry, a divine hunger for more. In this case, more knowledge.

*Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus, I pray that you would give me a discerning heart; a heart that seeks to put You first in all things – a heart of understanding and a genuine desire for a deeper knowledge of You. Father, it isn't the wisdom of the world I desire, but knowledge that can only come from You. Lord, give me a teachable spirit. Thank you, Lord, for giving me everything I need to live a Godly life through the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Amen*



## 8. MORE INTEGRITY

*The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.*

—Proverbs 11:3

All one needs to do is turn on the television at any time, on any day and there will be no lack of stories about people who lack, have lost, or never had integrity. We usually shake our heads and ask, rather judgmentally, how in the world could they do what they did? Rarely, if ever, do we consider ourselves as lacking integrity. Probably what is closer to the truth is that, very often, the only difference between us and them is the fact that their story is on the 6 o'clock news.

For those of us who are Christians, we are to follow the example of Christ, the most upright person who ever walked the earth. But in all honesty, sometimes it's very challenging, even for Christians, to live a life of integrity in a world where those who lack integrity appear to be successful. But what is integrity? It is consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral and ethical principles. Despite the worldly belief that everyone has a price, a person of integrity cannot be bribed and will not compromise their principles for neither gain nor fame.

Integrity is a roadmap to divine success. It is a life of righteousness founded on the word of God, a life that is consistent and is the same in private or public, a life that represents Christ in a manner that brings honor to Him and the kingdom. No matter how well those without integrity appear to be doing, as our scripture indicates, it will lead to their eventual and inevitable downfall. The most unfortunate part is that they will not go down alone, they will take those who are attached to them on that downward journey. What God wants from us is no duplicity and more integrity.

*Father, in the name of Jesus, I thank you that you are a faithful God who never gives up on me, even when I have given up on myself. Father help me to conduct my life, navigate all relationships, and work in my chosen vocation with honesty, integrity, and fairness. Help me Father to be true to your word and help me to handle tests, trials, and temptations in a manner that is pleasing to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.*



## 9. MORE COMMITMENT

*Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He will do it.*

—Psalm 37:5

**H**ave you ever set out on a trip and made sure you had everything you needed, and checked your list only to discover that you were missing something? This is what happens in our lives when we don't commit our plans to God. We set out to do what we believe is the best way for us. If we think about it, maybe the road we are going down is not the path God designed for us to take. It's like choosing a class only to discover that we shouldn't have chosen this course yet.

According to Webster's Dictionary, to *commit* means to pledge or bind to a certain course or policy. How many times have you committed to doing better only to fall short again because you lost focus? The verse says to commit our way to the Lord. When we commit our way to God, we must give it to him, whatever your "it" is. Next, we must trust that God will do what He promised. We must know that if we give it to Him, we should not take it back and try to handle it our way. The third step in this verse is to rest in the assurance that He will do it. If we truly

believe God is who God says he is, then we know that he is not a man that he should lie. And when he says he will do something, he will!

This year let's commit more of our way to the Lord. Commit to more reading of God's word, more prayer time and more of God's presence in our lives. Before we set out to do another business venture, or pursue another goal, let's commit it to God first to see if this is His plan for your life. Trust God to see you through and do what needs to be done.

*Lord God, help me to commit my way to you each day. Help me to commit my plans to you which includes giving you the first of my day, the first of my week and the first of my resources. Lord, help me not to plan before seeking you first for your guidance and direction. Lord, my desire is for more of you. I want to trust you more even when it looks impossible. I believe in my heart that you will do it for me and for this, I say thank you. Amen.*

## 10. MORE FUN

*A glad heart makes a cheerful face, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is crushed.*

—Proverbs 15:13

**T**here was a popular song that we sang in school called ‘If you’re happy and you know it’. The song says, “If you’re happy and you know clap your hands,” and you repeated this verse several times. Then it said, “If you’re happy and you know then your face will surely show it; if you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands.” One of the verses says, “If you’re happy and you know it, then give a smile.” By the end of this song, everyone feels happy and is smiling and even laughing. (*I see you smiling*). Why? Because the song is a reminder that happiness is not automatic. In order to experience it, you must be intentional about it.

What things do you do to make yourself smile? What brings a smile to your face? When our hearts are filled with joy, no doubt a good and hearty laugh will show up on our faces.

The proverb says when our heart is glad, it makes a cheerful face. Think back to a time when you had a good meal or laughed so hard that your sides hurt. Do

you remember eating an ice cream cone or taking a walk with a loved one? These simple gestures make us glad on the inside and it radiates throughout our total being. We can only display on the outside what is on the inside. The second half of the verse says, “but by sorrow of heart the spirit is crushed.” If your heart is heavy even when we smile, those closest to you will know something is wrong because the smile doesn’t radiate the room. It’s difficult to look cheerful when your heart is heavy, and your spirit is crushed due to loss, pain or trauma. No matter what is going on with you on the inside, try to create memories of fun times. Everything in your life doesn’t have to be going well, but when you take the time to remember God’s love toward us, we smile. We can think about the love we have for family, friends and the fun we have when we are together. Do things that make you laugh. Watch a comedy movie, paint a picture or just sing like no one is watching. So, if you’re happy and you know it...then give a smile!!

*Lord God, thank you for your amazing love towards us. Thank you for the many times you have warmed my heart thinking of your love for me. Thank you Lord God for allowing me to see; for when I see the rainbow in the sky, it reminds me of your promises, the smell of flowers, the warmth of the sun, and the moon at night, the laughter of family and friends—all of it helps me to know that you are with me. My heart is glad and I will smile. In Jesus’ name Amen.*





## 11. MORE FELLOWSHIP

*Not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

—Hebrews 10:25

I have heard good Christian people tell me that they do not have to go to church to have God in their hearts. While that is true, we were created to be in fellowship and in unity with each other. We all experience trials and tribulations in this life, but for some reason we think our issues are unique, so we isolate ourselves. When we do that, we lose the opportunity to learn from other Christians. We lose the opportunity to learn how they survived similar issues and remained faithful to God. Experiential encouragement and support are exactly what we need, and this is one of the many benefits of fellowship.

It is easier to live life the King's way when we are fellowshipping and breaking bread together. When you are alone with an issue, you can be tempted to try and resolve it on your own. But if the scripture tells us that one can put 1,000 to flight and two can put 10,000 to flight (Deut. 32:30), or that when 2 or more are gathered in his name, he is with us (Matthew 18:20), then why choose to

live in isolation? The more you love Christ, the more you will want to do his will and fellowship with his family of believers.

If you want to experience a more fulfilling life with the community of believers, then do something different. You can go to church and never learn someone's name but do MORE. Introduce yourself to someone new every week. Don't just go to church on Sunday and leave. Do More! Volunteer to help in the church, or in the community alongside believers doing God's work. Attend a class where you learn and grow by sharing and asking questions. Meet likeminded Christians and start doing life together at the movies, the mall, hiking, reading, and play dates. The sky is the limit, but you must step out of your comfort zone.

*Heavenly Father, I want to become a more involved member of your community of believers. I know we can do more for the Kingdom together, so help me to step out of my comfort zone. Help me to overcome any thought or belief that I use to keep me from fellowshiping with others. I thank you for giving me the confidence to say more than just hello, but to take the time to know and to be known by others. I thank you for helping me participate in fun, life-changing experiences. Amen*



## 12. MORE INTENTIONALITY

*Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.*

—Ephesians 5:15-17

**A**fter becoming a Christian, we must learn how to live life the King’s way. We can no longer go where we used to go, say what we used to say, and do what we used to do. We must die daily to living a life of worry, bad attitudes, selfish decisions, revenge and unkindness. This type of godly life doesn’t happen because *we want it to*; it happens when *we make* the intentional decisions to follow the commands of God given to us in his Word.

You will become a better, bolder, and stronger Christian, when you choose to worship God and put him first in everything. The God-first lifestyle is not a cliché, but an intentional decision to thank God every morning, to give him the first of your increase, and the first day of your week. If you want more of God, give him more of you.

If you want to learn the heart of God and who he is; 1) become more intentional about reading the Bible, 2)

become more intentional about spending time with him in different types of worship, 3) become more intentional about practicing the presence of God by talking and listening to God in prayer, 4) become more intentional about the music you listen to, the books you read, the things you see, the places you go, and the people with whom you spend time. It is in this space of intentionally spending time with the God you love, that he will reveal more of himself to you. His guidance, promises, and miracles will be in and with you, as you spend time in his presence. Remember, God's grace is free, but you must choose to go deeper.

*Heavenly Father, give me the desire to want to make decisions that will increase your glory in me. Help me to listen, see, think, speak and do your will. As I intentionally make decisions to follow your commands, I thank you for revealing more of yourself and your will to me. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

## 13. MORE CHARACTER

*Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.”*

—1 Corinthians 15:33

**H**ave you ever met someone and thought to yourself ‘I’m going to show this person the way of the Lord’, only to realize that after a while you find yourself in a place you didn’t expect? Or have you ever thought, ‘well they say they love the Lord, who am I to judge?’ even though their actions and words seem contrary to what they are saying and doing? So, against your better judgment, you start to hang out with this person and find yourself in a place of disparity. We all have those moments now and again. I, myself, had one in my twenties, a time when we are still finding out who we are as a person and who we are in Christ. I had gotten mixed up with company that was misleading. I was at a point in my life where I wanted to cut loose and have some “fun”. To some in their twenties, that looks like partying, every weekend. You might have heard that song: “Just got paid, it’s Friday night party hunting, feeling right”. Well, we definitely found those parties. And the more I went out, the more I slowly fell away from my routine of studying and praying. I slowly stopped hanging out with friends from church to hang out with those I had just met.

The Bible says in Hebrews 10:24-25a “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another”. God created us to be relational people. He wants us to be in fellowship with one another. In order for our character to grow in the Lord, we should be around like-minded people. Just like when I wanted to have “fun”, I sought out people who were already having “fun”. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “follow me as I follow Christ”. Likewise, to grow in Godly character, we should seek out those who have Godly character. When we begin to isolate ourselves from the fellowship of believers, we become more susceptible to being misled.

Your character is something that you build over time. The more time you spend praying and studying the Word of God, the more you learn what a godly character looks like. The more time you spend with people who are also praying and studying the Word of God, the better able you are to practically apply what you have been praying about and studying. Why? Because iron sharpens iron.

*O Most Holy One, I just thank you for the guidelines that you have given us in your Word. I thank you that you have shown us how we can build more character and become more like you. Lord, I pray that as we continue to grow in our character that we seek out those people with sincere hearts so that we can learn more about how to live our lives in such a way that we are showing off your glory in every area of our lives. In Jesus' Name. Amen*

## 14. MORE CONVERSATIONS

*Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.*

—Ephesians 4:15

**H**ave you ever worked with a person or done ministry with a person that had an issue with you? It shows in the way they talk to you and the way they respond, and all of that. Now I don't know about you, but I was not always saved. During my newly converted seasons, I remember thinking—*whenever I met someone who was problematic*—“Well that is their personal problem.” But the truth is—it's not their problem independent of me. The moment they encounter you, they encounter someone who can help them to see themselves. They encounter a mirror. This is the calling we have said yes to—the willingness to bless those who curse us and pray for those who use us. But how can we bless those that we are unwilling to speak to?

The Bible says in Matthew 5 that if you have a grievance against someone, you need to settle the grievance and settle it quickly. As believers, we should not leave issues as a personal problem that “they” have to work out

on their own. The only way to solve and resolve problems is to have conversations with people. The more we converse, the more we understand other people's point of view. Having conversations with others allows you to see and hear what your heart holds. As we grow, we need to have more conversations with those we trust. Even though conversation may be hard, it is needed so that you and those you live, work or serve with are all on one accord. Matthew 18 says that when we need to have those hard conversations, God will be in the midst. Jesus says in verse 20 "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I with them."

*Dear heavenly Father, we all need to have hard conversations from time to time. I pray that when those conversations come, You season our words with grace like it says in Colossians 4:6 so that we may know how to answer everyone. Lord, even in our light conversations, please be in the midst so that our words will edify everyone in the conversation. Thank you in advance for all that you have done and will do in us and through us. In Jesus' Name. Amen*

## 15. MORE STILLNESS

*“He Says, ‘Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.’”*

—Psalm 46:10

In between the constant social media notifications, everyday errands, work, and our relationships, there are many things that have our attention. In this day and age, it always seems as though we are on the move and plugged in. In the middle of it all, there is a still small voice vying for our attention that we sometimes miss. It’s not always deliberate. For some of us, life demands our attention in ways we can’t avoid. For others, we hear the voice loud and clear. However, we get a bad case of procrastination.

Have you ever tried to get someone’s attention for something important and it seemed like they ignored you until you became a convenient priority? Even when you had their attention, they still refused to focus when you needed them to? It seems as though you are around someone who was there but not *present*. That’s what we do to God in our prayer life. That’s what we do to Jesus in our witness. We do that when it comes to feeding the

Holy Spirit working within us. As we progress and grow, we can't afford to miss God when He's giving instruction. When we focus on the still small voice of God it ensures we:

Stay in alignment and have the right heart posture for favor.

Keep an eye out for avoidable distractions and are prepared for warfare.

Can see the beauty in our circumstances and glorify God in the midst.

Be mindful of the areas where we need God's help.  
Aren't operating in a word ahead or out of season.

We as believers need to learn to discipline ourselves when it comes to fighting procrastination and distractions. We can't get so busy that we assume that because God is omnipresent that we can't miss Him. God is everywhere, but if we're not careful, we'll miss Him. We need to offset that by asking the Holy Spirit to help us in managing our time so we can live in purpose and on purpose. Take some time out of your day to have "dates" with God. Allow Him to minister to you through the Word one-on-one. Let Him love on you and heal the places that are broken. Be still and know that He is God.



*Father God, forgive us for taking You for granted with our time. Help us through Your Holy Spirit to slow down so we don't miss the little things You want to show us. Help us not to miss You when You draw near to us. May we not become so trapped in our pain that we forget to praise You when things don't look like what You said they were going to be. Give us the perseverance, strength, and wisdom required to move in this season, and after, according to Your will that You may be glorified. Help us to soak in Your stillness and experience Your peace and presence in new and wonderful ways. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.*



## 16. MORE CONTENTMENT

*“A devout life does bring wealth, but it’s the rich simplicity of being yourself before God. Since we entered the world penniless and will leave it penniless, if we have bread on the table and shoes on our feet, that’s enough”*

—1 Timothy 6:6-8 MSG

**C**ontentment is synonymous with serenity, gladness, and satisfaction. Complacency, on the other hand, is synonymous with pride, laxity, and laziness. The average person treats these two words as if they are the same; but that couldn’t be further from the truth. Pastor Dharius Daniels puts it this way, “Greed is wanting more than what God has for you. Hunger is wanting all that God has for you.” The dreams and desires that God placed in our hearts are enough for our individual purposes and complementary to those that God assigns us to throughout our lives. However, the enemy uses complacency to amplify or shrink our dreams in the presence of others so that it creates a chain reaction of imposter syndrome.

The *Harvard Business Review* defined imposter syndrome as being, “a collection of feelings of inadequacy that persist despite evident success. ‘Imposters’ suffer from chronic self-doubt and a sense of intellectual fraudulence

that override any feelings of success or external proof of their competence.” Complacency cripples by causing imposter syndrome. It will make us want things that we didn’t think we wanted until we saw someone else with it. It will make us become so familiar with the uniqueness of God’s timing, that instead of working towards our calling, we move in procrastination and call it God. It will make us hold on when we should have let go. Complacency makes us okay with dysfunction.

Living in contentment, however, means that we don’t have to try to live outside of ourselves in order to please God. God gave us unique assignments because He knew we were the best ones for the job. We must stop falling for the lie, especially in a social media driven age, that because we aren’t doing things the way or as fast as others have done it, that we aren’t going to have a fulfilled life. The glass is not half full or half empty. God filled our glasses with enough. If God gave us more than what He has for us, we would be functioning “overwhelmed” instead of out of “overflow.” Think of Israel in Exodus 16. Complacency caused them to mismanage the blessing to the point of it being a burden. Don’t allow complacency to rob you of God’s best.

*Holy Spirit, as You flow through us, help us to fall in love with and appreciate all that our Heavenly Father has placed in us. May we experience more of the things that come with holy contentment, serenity, gladness and satisfaction. Push us to desire all that You have for us. Nothing more, nothing less. Give us more of You as we strive for contentment. You loved us enough to make us in Your image and to give Your only Son, Jesus Christ for us. You are more than enough for us, God. Help us to remember that, in Jesus' name, amen.*



## 17. MORE JOY

*“When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me Joy.”*

—Psalm 94:19

**A**s we prepare for more, we have to acknowledge that there is a silent killer on the loose. This silent killer has one purpose and that is stopping you from achieving your goal for more. The silent killer is anxiety. About 2.4 billion people deal with this commonly known emotional trigger, which means it’s possible to be a part of that number. Anxiety has no boundaries when it comes to attendance, and it shows up without any permission. It shows up when we are trying to plan and prepare. It shows up when we are trying to be patient, and worst of all, it shows up when we are about to execute. Anxiety is a silent killer!

You may be wondering, at this very moment, if you are facing this silent killer. But the question that you should be asking is, *how do I counter-attack anxiety?* The answer is simple—God’s joy. God provided us with the perfect shield for anxiety and that was His perfect joy. The kind of joy that surpasses all understanding. The kind of joy that sees vision and plans at the excitement of a new

beginning. A joy that sets ablaze, not only our environment, but every environment that we walk into. The joy that has cousins called peace, patience, self-control, wisdom, love, gentleness and kindness backing you up. If we want to obtain more this year, then we certainly need more joy!

God wants us to not only obtain His gift of joy, but He wants us to increase it this year! When we find ourselves anxious, we must turn to God and receive more of His joy. Jesus died on the cross so that we could obtain the keys to success and through the Holy Spirit, maintain the joy of God. We may not be exactly where we saw ourselves in the beginning of this year, or following through with what we planned, but today, God wants to provide us with a key to His Kingdom. His joy. Make today your day. Maintain more of God's joy for your life in your devotional time. Tell Him exactly what is giving you anxiety. Focus on God's scripture by reminding yourself of the *who* in the picture, not the *what*. Finally, trade your thoughts and worries for Him through worship. It's time for us to start putting that anxiety in its place with more of God's joy! And it starts today!

*Heavenly Father, thank you for providing us with unlimited amounts of joy. May you take hold of any anxiety that lives within us and replace it with more of your joy! We are seeking the abundance of your joy, so may your spirit that lives within us be the answer to our problems. Finally, Lord, teach us how to obtain your joy, and to maintain it as well. In Jesus' name, Amen.*



## 18. MORE DEVOTION

*“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”*

—Romans 12:1

**T**here was a boy who would play basketball every Friday with his cousin in the driveway. The cousin would continuously beat the boy terribly, causing the boy to storm off with frustration. But one day, the boy desired to be more of an opponent than what he had been. He was determined that he would be the toughest challenger for his cousin. So, he began practicing as soon as he got home from school every day. He would watch more basketball clips and videos so that he could master his shooting skills. This went on for about three weeks. The day had finally come to challenge his cousin with his new skill set. The boy blocked him for the first time, followed by 6 steals, and 20 rebounds. Although the cousin ended up winning the game that day, the boy walked away with his head up because he lost by only two points. He knew that he may not have won that game, but he did become more of a challenge to his cousin—because of his discipline and devotion.

The same can be said for us sometimes. Many of us try to endlessly achieve more in our lives, but continuously walk away frustrated. Romans 12:1 tells us to, “offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.” God has given us the ability to become more than who and what we are. He simply asks for us to give more of ourselves through devotion. It doesn’t matter what we did yesterday or even five years from today, he is still requesting more of us. If the boy did not devote himself to more basketball, he would not have been able to challenge his cousin. Same for us. Whatever we are asking God for, He is asking us for more of our devotion and dedication in return.

God wants to give us more today, but He will need more of us in our devotion. He wants us to have a heart after Him, allowing Him, in return, to fulfill the emptiness throughout every area of our lives. God wants our “yes” in order to equip, approve, and use us more throughout our lives. In short, God needs more devotion from us, so He can provide more for us.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for another day to be able to achieve more through you. Help us to become committed to giving you more devotion with our lives. We may not always do and say things properly to glorify you, but your word says that you see us through your mercy. We want to see and experience more by being more, starting with more devotion. Hear our prayer, Lord, and allow us to accomplish and maintain this goal. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

## 19. MORE SABBATHS

*“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.”*

—Exodus 20:8-10

**T**his almost seems like an oxymoron. God has always patterned humankind “In his image and in His Likeness”. In this scripture, we see instructions that God has given for rest. In the accelerated busyness of what life has to offer, things like social media, 24-hour television and unlimited transportation to places we desire to go, more sabbaths are needed.

This is what I’ve learned about time. It is one of the only gifts that we cannot get back. If we lose our job, we can get another. If we waste a little money, we can earn it back. However, time is not coming back to you, no matter how much you pray to be 21 again! So here is the principle: If you don’t tell your time what to do, it will direct you to engage in things that may be important, but not essential. God needs us to slow down for the next set

of instructions that He needs to give us for a purposeful life; that is a God-centered life. Some of us have some sort of savings, but time can also be viewed as currency. We don't want to use it all up and have none left for God and He's the one that has given it to us. Selah.

When we rest, our bodies have time to heal themselves. When we rest, we think better; especially when it comes to important decisions. When we rest, our relationships are more fruitful. Let's not forget that the scripture also says to keep the Sabbath day holy. This means we must separate ourselves for a moment in order to re-center ourselves in God. God is honored when you rest. God is pleased when you trust him enough to press pause. This reminds us and Him that we are totally dependent on Him. Selah.

*Father, in the swiftness of life, let us remember to rest. This rest allows us the fellowship that we need with you to receive instructions for safety, service and stewardship. In this season of more, remind us to do less. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## 20. MORE OBEDIENCE

*But Samuel replied: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.”*

—1 Samuel 15:22

**H**ere we see a conversation between King Saul and the Prophet Samuel. God instructed Saul to destroy everything in this particular region, but Saul decided he would alter these instructions just a little bit.

In some communities, Saturday mornings were reserved for cleaning and other chores; this included washing clothes. If a family didn't have a washer and dryer in the home, they would have to go to the laundromat. One day, there was a mother who gave instructions to her daughter saying, “Make sure you get ALL of your dirty laundry out of your room.” Now the daughter saw more clothes under her bed, but, because she was so excited about getting to the laundromat, she left some clothes behind. When the mother realized this, she became upset. The mother explained, “Now we have to come back to the laundromat again after we finish this load. I was going to

take you out to eat, but we can't go. If you had obeyed my instructions when I first said them to you, you would've received a greater reward." Think about what the outcome could've been if only the daughter had just obeyed her mother's instructions entirely.

Here is my point: partial obedience is still disobedience. If we are going to receive the blessings God has for us, then we need more obedience. In this year of more, let's take the time to let go of EVERYTHING that God has instructed us to let go of. There will always be that one thing that we desire to keep because it still looks good, or it still works a little bit. However, with more obedience comes more instruction for a blessed life instead of a stressed life.

*Father, help us in this season not to hesitate at your instructions, but to follow them in their entirety so we may reap the benefits of obedience. Here we see that obedience is better than sacrifice. You would never ask us to destroy anything that is important for our growth. Thank you for your grace today to get it done.*

*In Jesus' name. Amen*

## 21. MORE SERVITUDE

*The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.*

—Matthew 23:11-12

In the movie *Just Mercy*, Bryan Stevenson (Michael B. Jordan) is a Harvard-trained lawyer who gives up the income, power, and position of his pedigree to move to Alabama and defend people on death row. Rather than choosing the path of prestige laid out for him, he chooses a path of serving the poor and marginalized people, a path of more servitude and humility. We desire to see ourselves like Bryan Stevenson, but the truth is that very few of us move toward suffering the way he does. Bryan Stevenson not only moves towards those who are suffering, but he makes sacrifices to help alleviate their suffering. We might post on Facebook or Twitter, watch a movie, or read an article regarding injustice. We may even feel bad when we hear about the suffering of immigrants at our Southwest U.S./Mexico Border. None of those things are the same as the self-sacrificing and costly work of service; being present with and pursuing justice for our marginalized neighbors. In the words of Bryan Stevenson, we need “to

see those whom we serve like family, for when your family hurts, you are hurting too, to keep a safe distance from suffering is [nonsense].” Advocacy is only accomplished when caring servants are present.<sup>1</sup>

In this passage, the greatest will show their greatness, not by asserting it, but through a life of ministration. If anyone among you would be greater than another, let them be the more submissive, more humble, kinder, and more ready to cheerfully serve others in love. Through His humanity, Jesus teaches us a new way of being human and that is moving toward suffering, offering mercy, and demanding justice. This is our salvation, and our model, and our purpose. Humility is such a greatly under-emphasized quality among humans. We don’t know what it means. We don’t know how to appreciate it. We don’t know how to do it. And we’re not always sure that we want to have it.

Humility is one of Christ’s most blatant expressions. You see, the same Lord who calmed the storm and spoke to the crowds is the Lord who washed feet and died on a cross and held babies in his arms when it wasn’t politically correct. So maybe we need to rethink humility and live like Jesus did. Come to think of it, that’s exactly what we need to do! Let’s be like Jesus and the humility comes along with the character! Jesus demonstrated what it means to put down our privilege and choose the self-sacrificial way of love. The Son of God humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even the death on the cross.

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<sup>1</sup> Freeman, Kathryn. “If You Believe in Just Mercy, You’ll Do More Than Buy a Ticket to Just Mercy?” <https://thinkchristian.reframedia.com/if-you-believe-in-just-mercy-youll-do-more-than-buy-a-ticket-to-just-mercy>. January 23, 2020



*O gracious Father, how and why you chose to become one of us, in Jesus, is too overwhelming to fully contemplate. Let Your service and humility cut such a deep impression in our hearts that we want to be more like You and fight for the people who need it the most. On those days when we feel conceited, arrogant, and big-headed, humble us gently by reminding us of Jesus' willing service to redeem us and bring us into Your family. In the name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.*



## 22. MORE WORD

*Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.*

—Joshua 1:8

**O**ur culture is constantly pushing us for more and crying out for us to follow the crowds. Society tempts us to go after the next best thing whether it is an ever-changing diet fad, the hottest fashion, the newest trend in organizing our lives, or listening to the latest podcast that will immediately change our world. Thankfully, the Word of God has been around for more than 2000 years, and there is always something new, fresh, and relevant the more you read and apply it to daily living. The Bible, God's love letter to us, gives us **Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth**. Its principles are basic truths that remain unchanged, no matter what the situation in life may be. That's why the psalmist (Psalm 1:2) wanted more Word. David delighted in the Word both day and night. He hid the Word in his heart to guard against temptation and sin. He also associated the privilege of knowing and following God's instruction to having great riches. If you expect more from the Word, then you will see more.

In this passage, these words were spoken to Joshua, Moses' successor. He was assigned the great task of leading the Israelites across the Jordan River into Canaan. What made this immense task more difficult was that Canaan was already inhabited by numerous tribes and kingdoms that were very intimidating and strong. Perhaps Joshua had some questions on his mind: How will I ever do this? How can I succeed? The answer that God gave to him is also our answer to questions like these, *Live according to My Word*. This was to be the secret formula of Joshua's success and the importance of engaging in more word. In verse 8 it says, "Be careful to do everything written in it" which implies that there are things to do or actions to be taken in all that is written in the Bible.

From this we can derive three steps to live according to the Word: 1) Expect the Bible to Teach You Practical Truths. The Bible is filled with things for us to do that are practical and applicable to everything that we do in life. This is what you should expect to see each time you open your Bible to read it. 2) Meditate Regularly on the Practical Truths of the Bible. To meditate on God's Word is to ponder over it until it becomes part of your thinking process. 3) Apply the Practical Truths of the Bible Often. Why? Because we all have a rebellious, sinful nature in us which will naturally resist any changes we need to make in our life in order to live according to God's Word.

*Lord, thank You for Your Word. I pray that in the days, weeks, months, and years that lie ahead that I may read, study, apply, and inwardly digest more of Your Word and treasure it in my heart. Help me to guard my thought life from unedifying input so that I may think and live as a Christian according to Your Word. For I desire to prosper in the things of God and to give glory to Your name. AMEN.*



## 23. MORE PRAYER

*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.*

—Ephesians 6:18

Talking to God was a common occurrence in my home while I was growing up. My parents talked to God about everything. As a child, I adapted that same behavior. It was very common for me to whisper to God at school before a test, or whenever I felt afraid. As I grew older and life became more complex, I would talk less about myself and more about others. The more time I spent talking to God, the more I received answers about all of our conversations. Then I figured it out! If I, or someone else, needed help with something, I would tell God about it and he would respond.

These conversations with God are what we call prayer. Prayer is simply talking to God the Father, in the name of Jesus, with the help of the Holy Spirit, and allowing him to speak back to you. Paul, in Ephesians 6:18, encourages us to increase the frequency of our prayers. He says we should pray always; on all occasions with all kinds of prayers. You may be thinking who can

pray that much? Or you may be finding it difficult at times to pray. You see, prayer is an activity that you cannot do in your own strength. You need the assistance of the Holy Spirit. That's why Paul begins speaking about prayer with the encouragement to pray in the Spirit. Praying in the Spirit is relying on the Holy Spirit for assistance when we pray. Dr. Dharius Daniels notes in *Stronger, Closer, Better*: "When we pray with the Holy Spirit's assistance, he places desires in our hearts on what we should pray, as well as intercedes for us according to God's will." It is the Holy Spirit that gives us the ability to pray. Praying with the Holy Spirit allows our prayers to be heard.

Make prayer your default response to every situation. Start by silently asking for help to pray. Pray not just in crisis, but even when you are thankful. Prayer will develop a loving relationship with your Heavenly Father. A relationship that allows you to talk to him about everything, including people he places on your heart. Even when the outcome is not what you expected; it will still be beyond what you could imagine. With God it is always working out for your good.

*Father, increase my capacity for prayer. May it always be my default response during difficult times, as well as when things are going well. Empower me by your Spirit to pray more. Burden my heart with what you want me to pray for, concerning others. Do exceedingly and immeasurably beyond what I could ask or imagine. In Jesus' name, Amen.*



## 24. MORE WORSHIP

*Worship the Lord your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you.*

—Exodus 23:25

Gloria peered over her blanket as the warm morning sun was flooding through her bedroom window. As she squinted her eyes to adjust to the light she remembered: Today is the day! Today she would finally be able to get out of bed for the first time. Today she would be able to attend church for the first time in 8 weeks. Can you imagine not being able to have the activity of your limbs after being able to move unassisted all your life? Can you imagine depending on someone to feed you when you have fed others every Thanksgiving? Well, this was Gloria's new normal. This was her condition after being diagnosed with an ailment that caused her to be bedridden for weeks. This was a difficult time for Gloria because it made her less independent and more reliant on others.

Gloria became depressed at first, but then she remembered a scripture she learned from the book of Exodus that says, if we worship God, his blessing will be on your food and water and he will take away sickness from among us. Gloria began spending her days listening

to gospel music and repeating that scripture. She began thanking God for his promise to bless her and remove sickness from her as she worshiped him. Before long, Gloria was singing songs and worshiping God, even on her most difficult days. The more she worshiped God, the more she felt her body getting stronger.

God began to do such a miraculous work in her that she began to recover from her ailment. Exodus 23:25, was coming alive to her. God blessed, sustained, and healed her as she worshiped him. Today, Gloria would finally have the opportunity to worship God alongside her church family. She was so excited; she could hardly wait. God, once again, had remained true to his word. God responded to her worship. God will respond to yours, too. What are you waiting for? Worship God!

*Father, I worship you because you are my God. I worship you because you are faithful. Whether I'm sick or healthy, you are there. In abundance or scarcity, you are there. Lord, let worship be my default response whenever I think of you. Increase my capacity to worship you. You are worthy of it and I want to always give you what you deserve. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## 25. MORE OUTREACH

*Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. The 'gods' know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.*

—Psalm 82:3-5

**I**n this passage, the guilty are receiving preferential treatment and being protected from punishment, while those who are poor and are without an advocate or proper legal representation receive excessive punishment. It sounds very much like what is happening in our society right now. Prejudice against the poor is not a new problem. This verse seems to be screaming from the rooftops that it is time to defend the weakest and poorest among us. These verses further condemn the wicked practices of corrupt men, and Asaph, the musician and prophet who wrote this particular Psalm, is boldly chastising the cultural leaders of his day for allowing evil to rule at the expense of those who are in need; specifically, the weak, poor, and fatherless.

Proverbs 14:31 tells us that those who oppress “... the poor show contempt for their Maker, but whoever is

kind to the needy honors God.” The poor are important to God and because God cares about them, we must as well. God has called us to do MORE! Many of us have been blessed so that we can extend our outreach past the four walls of our individual homes; to lift up our suffering brothers and sisters. A statement by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., made almost 60 years ago in a speech entitled “The American Dream”, still rings true today: “As long as there is poverty in this world, no man can be totally rich even if he has a billion dollars.”

The Great Commission in Matthew 28 clearly expresses the heart of God. It instructs us to “...go and make disciple of all nations...”, not just the people groups who look like us or live in our neighborhoods; but all nations. It is God’s desire that none would be lost just as it is his desire for us, as his dear children, to defend and advocate for the weak and the needy. Let’s extend more to those whose voices are being ignored... they need us.

*Lord Jesus, we ask that you help us to extend that same love, kindness, care and concern to others that you have shown us. You have placed people in our circles of influence who need more than kind, encouraging words; they need our shoulders to stand upon to lift them up from their dire circumstances. Give us the boldness and the courage to increase our outreach to the poor and needy among us. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

## 26. MORE FASTING

*“So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.”*

—Ezra 8:23

**F**asting has become a trendy phrase in our current culture. The term being thrown around by health experts and their dutiful followers is called ‘intermittent fasting.’ Simply stated, intermittent fasting is an eating pattern that cycles between periods of fasting and eating. The crucial component is not so much what you eat, but when you eat it. This type of fasting should never be confused with the type of fasting spoken of in our text for today.

The spiritual fast referred to in Ezra involves self-denial for the express purpose of focusing less attention on yourself and more attention on God. Some use fasting as a way to gain a better perspective on their lives and to find out how God wants to use their gifts and talents to make the world a better place. Others need miraculous answers from God and have found that denial of any kind forces them to depend on God for their sustenance which clears away the excessive chatter and enables his voice to have a direct and unfiltered passage to their hearts.

In today’s scripture, Ezra is asking some of the leaders of Israel to fast for two specific reasons:

*To humble themselves.* They needed help from God to give them a safe journey. Fasting in this case showed God (and anyone taking the trip) that this task could and would not be done without divine assistance.

*To get a strategy.* After Ezra and the leaders fasted, God not only answered their prayers, but he gave them a strategy on what to do with the offerings and gifts they received from the people (as stated in later verses). For Ezra, fasting brought clarity.

Fasting causes us to suppress our fleshly desires and gain control over them. In so doing, it clears the path for God's desires to become more dominant. When this occurs, we are more open to his voice and he can reveal his game plans for any situation we may face. When we know we're walking out God's plans for our lives, the result is peace.

*Holy Father, we acknowledge that we need instructions from you daily to live this life that you so graciously have given us. All of the clutter and chatter in our lives often makes it difficult to hear what you are saying. So we ask for the discipline needed to slow down and deny ourselves every so often of simple pleasures, in an effort to hear your voice and gain clarity. We praise you in advance for the peace that clarity brings. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

## 27. MORE GIVING

*In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

—Acts 20:35

**T**here I was in the lobby when I crossed paths with one of the candidates we interviewed earlier that afternoon. She looked at me with her outgoing personality for cues as to how she did in the interview. I quickly glanced at her and gave her a thumbs up and that week we offered her the position! After working with us for almost 2 years, she was diagnosed with cancer. After 3 months of treatment, she could no longer afford health benefits to continue. The Lord placed it on my heart to pay one month's health insurance and I asked other employees if they could give toward the following months. As a result, she was able to continue her treatments. She was amazed to tears and grateful that people she had met less than 2 years ago would be willing to pay for her health benefits. This act of kindness was not only healing for her, but for those who gave, the company, and her family. The generous act of givers paved the way for policies to allow

employees to be able to donate their sick/vacation days to other terminally ill employees! Givers made a difference!

The truth is, although we were helping Sandy to get through her plight, Jesus was using her plight to teach us a valuable lesson - it is more blessed to give than to receive. In the book of Acts, Paul was notorious for praying for people and being an answer to their prayers through giving! In Acts 20:35, Paul exhorted the church to help the weak; remembering the words of Jesus that it is more blessed to give than to receive! Always receiving is overrated. Being the giver is where we get an opportunity to see giving from God's perspective! The giver is an extended expression through you and I of God's generosity on earth. For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son (John 3:16). God is an extravagant giver and He takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servants (Ps 35:27). Can you imagine how God feels when He sees His children excited about their blessings? As God gives to us, we give to others so they can experience life, freedom and purpose. We get to share in our Master's happiness and experience what it feels like to be the giver!

Being the giver is like getting in the game and making it happen! The Spirit of the Head Coach is upon you and you are to redeem a win for Him! That win is using our giving to push back the darkness, lighting up the world and manifesting His kingdom that cannot be shaken! When we give, like our Heavenly Head Coach, we push back the darkness of fear, depression, deception, poverty, unbelief and sickness. Can you imagine the world without #Team Christ? Without His players? Giving monetarily, time, talents or service turns into a far greater value—a



value that only God can calculate. I once read an article of how charitable giving lifts the burden of government. Our giving is good for God and good for government! We are special people who chose to share our gift to bring healing and hope. When it's offering time, I get excited! I can't wait to drop 10% to eradicate the kingdom of darkness! Are you ready?

*Father I thank you for blessing me with a giver's heart. I declare you are the greatest giver and as your child, I pray that I will resemble the greatest Giver and advance your agenda to set captives free. For I agree with you that it is more blessed to give than to receive. In Jesus' name. Amen!*



## 28. MORE BALANCE

*A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight.*

—Proverbs 11:1

I went to fill up at a gas station outside of my neighborhood and realized something was oddly strange! The price of my fill up was almost double what I would have paid at my local gas station. I decided to purchase a quarter tank and make a trip to my neighborhood pump. I discussed my concerns regarding the price variance with a coworker who encouraged me to contact the State Office of Weights and Measures. We were later alerted that several gas stations had been deceiving the public and rigging the pumps.

Just like the Office of Weights and Measures regulates fair and just practices for the public, our Heavenly Father is the supreme inspector for His children. He inspects our fruit and teaches us to align with his word by being honest and fair. There are some systemic systems that keep some rich and others impoverished. There are deceitful dealings in businesses, government, online e-commerce, churches, communities and workplaces. We see in Proverbs 11:1 that God takes strong offense to people who are dishonest and cheat others. In biblical history, weighing grain was a form of doing business. Balances

or scales were used to measure all the goods sold in the marketplace. A one-pound weight was placed on one side of the scale...and one pound of grain on the other. When they balanced in the middle, the consumer knew that he was getting one pound for his money. Some owners took advantage of individuals by deceitful measures. While no one was paying attention, they decided to falsely balance the scale.

The purpose of scales was to keep commerce transparent, fair, equitable and just, but like those who rig gas pumps in our day... some found a way to cheat the system. Rather, online or senior citizen scams, real estate, taxes or banking and insurance fraud –without God’s direction we lose our way. This year let’s believe God for more balance and to be more honest, fair and equitable in our dealings with others. Those in leadership roles must recognize that God placed them there for a reason, perhaps to show others who were treated unjustly or abused by former leadership. God’s judgements are always just! He knows exactly the number of chances each person needs to walk out their God-ordained purpose. Good, bad, or indifferent—God always corrects us lovingly; leaving us with our dignity, so let’s do the same for others!

*Jesus, I pray that you shine a light on the areas of my life where I have not been honest or treated others fairly. Help me to see when I have given some an advantage over others, outside of your directives. Forgive me in the name of Jesus. I thank you that this is the year of more. I commit to being more honest and more balanced. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

## 29. MORE DISCIPLINE

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

—1 Corinthians 9:27

**N**o discipline seems pleasant at the time. Why? Because it's painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

Yes, GOD can do MORE than we could ever ask or imagine. But guess what? It too, may take us doing more than we could ever imagine. The key to more is discipline and it isn't easy, well at least not for some. It involves consistency, perseverance, hard work, commitment and sacrifice. We may have to sacrifice in areas such as family, friends, food, and fun or maybe all. This is true for just about every area of our lives where we want to be better and stronger, where we want more. Whether it's emotionally, physically, financially, relationally, or vocationally, getting more, takes more, especially when it pertains to our spiritual growth.

In his resource, *Stronger, Closer, Better*, Dr. Daniels writes about ‘spiritual disciplines.’ He states, “these disciplines help us become closer to God, stronger in our spirituality, and as a result, we will experience better lives” (Daniels). These spiritual disciplines are prayer, fasting, worship, the studying of Scripture, and service. No different than becoming physically fit, spiritual fitness takes exercise. It is a lifelong discipline, and the workout is never over. The book of Philippians says that we are to ‘continue’ to work out our salvation.

As Christians, we understand that our prize awaits us. But “The truth is, the joy is in the journey, in the daily discipline of growing in the details of your mind, body, and spirit” (Bruce & Stan). The motivation is to be a better representative for Christ. But this doesn’t become habitual if we are not disciplined. “Discipline will not make you perfect, but it will make you better” (Daniels – Represent Jesus).

*Lord help me in my spiritual disciplines. I desire to be stronger in my walk with You. I desire to be closer to You and a better representative for Your Kingdom. Thank you for the grace to start over, even when I fall. I trust you with my entire life. In Jesus’ name, Amen!*

## 30. MORE ADVOCACY

*Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.*

—Proverbs 31:8-9

*“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.”*

—Isaiah 61:1

**J**ESUS was the ultimate advocate, not only in word but also in deed. If there were ever a ‘just system’, it would be that of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. His justice is rooted in love and steeped in forgiveness. Jesus had no tolerance for the abuse of power or the mistreating of the weak and vulnerable. In the Word of God, there are instructions for making provisions for the less fortunate. Whether it was to provide for them during harvest time, justice in the courts, fairness during business transactions, or property sales, considerations for the poor were made. As followers of Christ, the same is expected from us. We are told to love our neighbors as ourselves. We are not to

sit idle and watch the abuse of others. When it is within our power, we can do something about injustice, even if it's just a matter of speaking up, writing a letter or reporting it to the authorities.

As Christians, we are reminded, in our daily walk to be more like Jesus. He came to spread the good news about more. That salvation wasn't just for a select group of people, but for all. During that time, it wasn't a popular message. And so, it is today with advocating on behalf of the poor, sometimes it is frowned upon. Nonetheless, if we want to be more like Christ, we have to do more and that includes speaking up for those whose voices are unheard. The parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 should provoke us to pose the question –who will we be?—the Priest, the Levite or the Samaritan?

*Father, I thank you that you came to save us not just from ourselves but from injustice in the world through the blood of your Son, Jesus. Please continue to work in and through me to advocate for others. Teach me how to show grace to those who are in need. Help me to be a voice for those who do not have the strength or know how to speak up for themselves. In Jesus' name. Amen!*



## 31. MORE POWER

*My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.*

—1 Corinthians 2:4-5

**M**ost of us have been in the audience to witness some sort of demonstration. Demonstrations are provided for various products and services by advertisers and salespersons. Also there are times when an activity such as an exercise would be performed by a trainer to demonstrate the correct way to execute the movement. A teacher, after introducing a new concept or method, would proceed to demonstrate the accuracy of the method to prove its validity. Hence, we can conclude that demonstrations serve the dual purpose of showing/displaying and proving.

In today's text, Paul is speaking to the members of the church at Corinth. In Corinth the prevailing Greek culture abounded with expert orators and profound philosophers. People were impressed with skilled and persuasive arguments. Yet Paul makes a contrast between wise and persuasive words and the demonstration of the

Spirit's power. See, you may win a debate, but it takes power to profoundly impact and change a life. Paul is saying, my intent is to demonstrate the Holy Spirit's dynamic power. In other words, Paul desires to show, make known, and to validate the power of the Spirit. In Paul's message, the Spirit of God is the proven source of power.

Although we can appreciate and utilize human wisdom, we must acknowledge its limitations. Human wisdom can only take us so far in life. In fact, we are admonished to trust in the Lord with all our heart and not to lean on, or put our full weight on, our own understanding (Prov 3:6). The way to live our best life is to have a grounded, ever-developing faith in the power of God. God has the power to create, transform, destroy, make alive, heal, provide, and protect. The dynamic power of God can do whatever is needed to accomplish His will. Power belongs to God (Psa. 62:11) yet He invites us to partner with Him in His plans and purposes. Like Paul, we are called to demonstrate the power of God to a lost world. Displaying and proving His power is not accomplished by expounding human wisdom but through demonstrating the transcendent power of the Spirit. Living a Kingdom life provides the greatest demonstration of God's power at work.

*Lord, I know that only your Spirit can transform my life and the lives of those around me. I desire to have you continue to work on me so that you can continue to work through me. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that is changing me so that I can do my part in changing the world. Thank you, Lord, that today my life will demonstrate the transforming power of Your Spirit and bring glory to Your name. In the powerful name of Jesus, Amen.*



## 32. MORE HUMILITY

*Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

—James 4:10

**O**ur examination of this verse opens with the concept of humility. As we endeavor to be more like Jesus, it is essential to live a life of humility. The idea of humility is often misrepresented and subsequently misunderstood. A way to think of humility is the practice of recognizing and yielding. When a driver comes to a yield sign, they must be able to recognize when another car is approaching and make a decision to defer that space to the oncoming vehicle. Both vehicles cannot occupy the same space at the same time so a decision must be made to yield, or humble, that space to another. We can see this concept supported in the scriptures. Proverbs 3:6 admonishes “in all your ways submit to Him...”, as we travel the road of life and recognize the Lord’s way is crossing ours, we should decide to submit or yield to the Lord.

Jesus himself provides us an example of a life of humility. Jesus existed from His seat in heaven (Phil 2:6-7), through His earthly ministry (John 5:19, 30) and at the

agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt 26:42), Jesus yielded to the will of God our Father. Paul in his letter to the Philippians encourages us to have this same “mind” or way of thinking of humility that was exhibited in the life of Christ (Phil 2:5). Walking in humility is a decision that each of us has to persistently make. Isaiah saw the Lord and because of this recognition, he had a response (Isaiah 6:1-5). We must respond in the same manner when we encounter the Lord. James is suggesting that our response should be to humble ourselves.

Circumstances or people may try to humiliate us, press us down and crush us from the outside. Things like negative thoughts, bad memories, and shame could be overwhelming. Yet, if we look for the Lord in all life’s situations and yield to his will, the text makes a profound promise. When we humble ourselves before the Lord, He will lift us up. When we decide to humble ourselves, the Lord decides to lift us up above whatever may be holding us down. More humility means more altitude.

*Father, help me see you and recognize your hand in every area of my life. As I get clarity about your will in these areas by your grace, I will continue to yield to your will. What a privilege it is to know that as I humble myself to your will, you have already decided to lift me up. I sense that you are already in the process of doing that even now, and I rejoice in your faithfulness, mercy and grace. Daddy, lift me up!*

## 33. MORE GRACE

*For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.*

—Titus 2:11-12

**R**ock ‘Em Sock Em” Robots, Cabbage Patch Kids, He-man figurine, G.I. Joe’s, Barbie doll, Ken doll, Andre the Giant action figure, Super Fly Snuka action figure. If you grew up back in the day you may know of some of these toys that I just mentioned. We used to have so much fun playing with them! *Did I take you back?* I think I am going to find a vintage website and do some shopping. These toys more than likely were gifts we received on birthdays or Christmas or for getting good grades in school. What do all these toys have in common? These were all toys we interacted with that did not interact with us in return. Some of us often would change our voices and talk for our toys, allowing us to go as far as our imagination would take us.

After a while in the next generation of toys, we began to see options to purchase gifts for children that offered an educational experience. Toys that a child could enjoy, learn from, and that interacted with them, all at the

same time. One of the most famous line of toys that comes to mind are the LeapFrog products. The co-founder of LeapFrog, Michael Wood, had a child who had difficulties learning how to read. In 1994, He developed the first LeapFrog product which was a phonics desk. These were talking cards with pictures and hollow letter molds that allowed the child to learn to read, write, and spell correctly. The way this phonics desk was set up, the child was destined to learn the correct way to read and have the ability to recognize when a word was spelled incorrectly. Today, we have limitless options for educational toys. Oh, what compassion, grace, and love a father had for his child to succeed. This opened the door for all the educational toy options we have today.

In the day of Moses, we had laws that were written on stone. These laws were not interactive much like the toys from the 70s and 80s. These laws did not speak back, so the children of Israel found themselves taking matters into their own hands, using their own imagination, and doing what they wanted. But thank God for Jesus! Jesus came to TEACH us how to be in relationship with the Father. This gift of grace was a developmental, educational, and interactive gift. We do not have to change our voices and speak for Jesus. He had no problem talking back when He walked the earth and He has no problem speaking through the Holy Spirit right now. In fact, He says my sheep hear my voice and a stranger they will not follow. This gift of grace is portable not stationary. If Jesus is living inside of us, we carry Him everywhere we go. He tells us right from wrong. He leads us and guides us into all truth through the Holy Spirit. I encourage you to seek more of the grace gift



we have been given so freely. I encourage you to spend more time with Him. The more time we spend with Him, the more grace we will have to walk in the purpose God has given us, un-distracted. The more time we spend with Him, our appetite will begin to change and His desires will become our desires.

*Father, we honor and reverence your name. We thank you for the gift of grace through your son, Jesus. Thank you for your compassion and for loving us enough to send your Son. We do not want to be left to our own devices. We pray for the boldness and courage to say no to those things that do not please you. Today we choose to receive more of your grace. We yield to you now. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*



## 34. MORE MERCY

*It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.*

—Lamentations 3:22-23

**N**eglect is a real thing. It can be very damaging; not just to human beings, but to animals and even plants and food. When these things are not nurtured and cared for consistently, this can become potentially harmful. Neglect causes malnourishment, dysfunction, and, at times, death. Just about everything needs consistent attention. Think of the settings on our smartphones and computer devices. They can be programmed to enter into sleep mode if no activity occurs for 15-30 seconds.

I don't know about you, but I cannot imagine living 5 seconds, let alone 30 seconds, without the mercy and love of God. This scripture shows us that our God is not neglectful. He stalks us in an amazing way. Have you ever questioned if God still loved you? Or have you ever thought if He still loved you the same as He did when you first met? If either of those questions ever crossed your mind, the answers are YES and YES! We have a faithful God who loves us deeply. It is in Him that we

live, we move, and have our being. He is the God who is committed to His love for us. He is longsuffering. He is patient. He is kind. No matter what happens the day before, His love is fresh for us. Every morning, we receive brand new mercies. Every day, our relationship becomes new. As the bride of Christ, the honeymoon is never over in His eyes. Even when we neglect Him, he doesn't sleep on us or go dark. He stays right there, with us. His word says that He will never leave us nor forsake us. You see, God will even pick up the slack when others disappoint us. In short, know this: God's got us, and He is serious about our relationship with him.

How deep is His love and mercy toward us! This is that love....that compassion that keeps us alive, nourished, healed, fully functional, and free. This is that love that keeps our heart beating. This is that love that if we really tap in, we will never have to question it. This is that love that keeps us longing, hungry and thirsty for Him. This is that love that makes us more than conquerors. Paul was persuaded that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. And this is true. Absolutely nothing and no one can ever separate us from His love. This is a love we can trust, lean on, and depend on. His love is everything, His love is forever. God, we want more!

*Father, we bless you today. You are faithful to us. We thank you that when we woke up this morning, we already had brand new mercies ready to receive for the day. Thank you for stalking us. Thank you for never giving up on us. Your love is consistent, and without it, we don't know where we would be. We will never doubt your love again. In fact, we want more. We sever every unholy alliance that is keeping us from the full experience of a healthy relationship with you. Give us the capacity to receive the level of favor and love you have for us. In Jesus Christ's Name we pray.*

*Amen.*



## 35. MORE CARE

*“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.”*

—Ephesians 4:32

**S**ome words related to kind and tenderhearted are: sympathetic, affectionate, charitable, amiable, kindhearted, cordial, courteous, compassionate, tolerant, gentle, thoughtful, gracious, considerate, affectionate, benevolent, charitable, compassionate, considerate and forgiving. These synonyms are relevant because sometimes even as Christians, we can forget about being kind and tenderhearted.

Have you ever been in a situation where someone has cut you off while driving? What about the person who is driving under the speed limit and you needed to arrive at your destination ten minutes ago? Or the person who cut in line, while you’ve been standing there waiting patiently, and someone saved them a place in front of you? You have to say something, right? What about being mistreated on purpose for no reason? Our initial thoughts may not be as kind nor tender. But God has called us to MORE.

One of the hardest things to do is to be kind to someone who is not being kind to you. Our first thoughts might be to get even, or to treat them the way they have

treated us. There's a phrase that says, "treat others as you wish to be treated." However, this is actually a biblical concept. We must realize that we can't change someone else's behavior, but we can change our own behavior, regardless of how someone else is treating us. The choice is in how we respond to what others do to us. Every day, I pray that I would respond and not react—that way, Christ can be revealed in and through my actions.

As we think about "More" this year, keep in mind Ephesians 4:32, especially the end that reads: "Even as God in Christ forgave you."

*Heavenly Father, help us to treat others the way we wish to be treated so that you may be glorified. When we want to do life culture's way, help us to do life the King's way. Lord, even when we want to treat people the way we feel they deserve, help us to show grace and forgive them just as you have forgiven us.  
In Jesus' name. Amen.*



## 36. MORE COUNSEL

*“Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.”*

—Proverbs 11:14

**T**here is a story in 1st Kings 12 about a king named Rehoboam, who had to make a decision regarding a question brought to him by the people of Israel. The people wanted to know since he had replaced his father King Solomon, would he lighten their burden. If he was willing to do so, they would serve him. Rehoboam told them to come back in three days and he would give them an answer. He consulted the elders who had served his father Solomon and asked what he should do. Their response was to serve the people and give them a favorable answer, so the people would become his servants. Rehoboam rejected the elder’s advice and consulted the young men he had grown up with and were now serving him. Their advice was to make Israel’s yoke even heavier than the yoke his father Solomon had put upon them.

There is no getting around the fact that some decisions are not easy to make, and that advice is needed in order to make those decisions. It is important to not only seek counsel, but wise counsel. Rehoboam sought counsel twice and made the choice to reject the counsel

of the elders who served his father Solomon and chose the advice of his friends. Godly counsel is wisdom. Sometimes the advice of friends can come from a place of not wanting to hurt your feelings and to keep your friendships. The right kind of counsel will be truthful and be concerned about you, not just your feelings.

Making decisions can be difficult, especially when you have several options presented to you. Should you take the new job being offered in your current position or move to another state where you may have more opportunities for advancement? Both opportunities look promising. Options are something we are all faced with at some point. Remember, good counsel comes from people of integrity and their advice should not be contrary to the Word of God.

*Lord, we trust you. Your word says that the way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice. We ask for your guidance and direction when we need to make a decision. May we be guided by you. May your peace rest upon us and confirm our decisions with your word when it lines up with your plans for our life. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

## 37. MORE COOPERATION

*So we rebuilt the wall. And the wall was joined together to half its height for the people had a mind to work.*

—Nehemiah 4:6

**M**ost sports teams are comprised of several moving parts. Coaches, players of all positions, trainers, and branding teams all work together to achieve a common goal. In order to do this, they must understand the team’s core values and principles, vision, mission, culture, and goals. They have to be committed to achieving the collective goals of the team over their own personal agenda. The popular phrase “*team work makes the dream work*”, is both exemplified and upheld.

We see a similar concept in our own lives through family units. Every member of the “family team” is unique and is expected to undertake significantly different roles for the family to live in harmony. The same thing is applicable in the cooperate sector, hospitals, schools, churches, music and performing arts.

In Nehemiah 4, the writer narrates how the wall was rebuilt. The efforts, expertise, focus and desire of those involved in the rebuilding process was necessary to achieve the task. The task ahead of them was going to

be difficult. There were enemies and other factors present with the aim of discouraging Nehemiah and his team from embarking on the project. But from this text we see that "... the people had a mind to work." Imagine the diversity in Nehemiah's team- there were likely people who had no idea or experience in building, but because they had a mind to work, they were able to complete the task! Amos 3:3 puts it this way "*Can two work together except they are in agreement*"?

When considering the necessity of cooperation, it is important to realize two things: we are not called to play in every team and secondly, there are always enemies, critics, and opponents.. In our primary text, Nehemiah and his team faced two of these opponents. In fact, the scriptures referred to them as "the enemy of the Jews"- Sanballat and Tobias . However, their dedication to the goal was greater than the plot of their enemies.

Let us observe our Lord and Savior, Jesus, who embodied the spirit, character and life of cooperation. In order to achieve His plan for salvation, redemption, and justification of mankind, He had a Heavenly team, His Father and the Holy Spirit and an Earthly team of 12 men (disciples) whom He mentored for 3.5 years. They were always faced with enemies, naysayers, and distractions. Due to the enormity and significance of His assignment, His enemies were commensurately diverse and unrelenting. Thankfully, Jesus correctly dealt with these vices by staying focused and committed to the goal of His Team. Hallelujah! Hebrews 12:2 gives an amazing summary. It says "*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the*

*cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you are not wearied and faint in your minds” (KJV).*

*Lord Jesus, we worship and praise you for being a perfect example of a team player and for giving us an enduring template for cooperation in your life and ministry. We want to be like you and most importantly, to represent you as you have commanded us. Help us to be one body with you and serve as members who understand the uniqueness of our gifts, grace and callings. This, we pray, in your matchless name, Jesus. Amen.*



## 38. MORE VISION

*“Where there is no vision, the people perish; but he that keeps the law, happy is he.*

—Proverbs 29:18

**H**ave you ever wondered what everything would be like without sight? For those of us who have been fortunate enough to be blessed with our sight, the closest we have come to experience a world without sight is during a power outage. Most children (and some adults) experience fear whenever this happens and they are trapped alone in a room or a bathroom. Those moments without sight, give us a glimpse of some issues and struggles sightless or visionless people deal with on a daily basis. Fear, anger, anxiety, uncertainties, depression, emotional detachment, and financial burden grip them.

Like many, I was taught that vision meant the ability to see with the eyes, until I heard Stevie Wonder many years ago say, “just because a man lacks the use of his eyes doesn’t mean he lacks vision. Simply put, blindness is a physiological pathology and lack of vision is a mind issue.”

Proverbs 29:18 describes the consequences of a lack of vision, which is death. Vision is a very critical

aspect to the success and preservation of life. An interesting narrative around vision can be found in the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was continuously asked by God, “what do you see”? Prophets are known for their ability to see beyond the natural realm and perceive with clarity the things God desires for His children, as directed by the Spirit of God, yet God was careful to make sure that His servant, the Prophet, saw correctly. A distorted vision is capable of misleading or misdirecting anyone. Once a blind man met Jesus and requested that his sight be restored. The Bible says that Jesus spat on his eyes and commanded him to go wash his eyes. The man was happy he could see some things, albeit not clearly enough. Scripture says he saw men walking like trees. This is a powerful scriptural narrative in that many of us are going about life with partial vision. The man would have gone home rejoicing that he could now see if Jesus didn’t inquire about the strength and clarity of his vision. These scriptural references tell us that God is particular about the clarity, quality, and authenticity of our vision. He created us in His image and likeness. He expects His children to see things with the strength of His sight.

Jesus was not satisfied with the partial and distorted vision of the man. God is saying to us, *I want to improve and increase your vision.* Your capacity and ability to see things better and accurately is crucial and pivotal. Jesus called the man back and touched his eyes again, giving him perfect sight. That man went home very happy and filled with authentic sight so much so that he was able to start witnessing for Jesus before the high priest. His joy was not diminished even after he was threatened and



warned by the authorities to refrain from testifying about the goodness of Jesus. Verse 18 states “*but he that keeps the law, happy is he*”. God wants us to be happy and we can achieve this kind of joy when our vision is restored, renewed, and increased.

*Almighty God, please increase my vision. I realize that I have been moving around life seeing much less than you created me to see. Help me to see things clearly so that I am led correctly and accurately. My family, church, friends and generation depend on my ability to see correctly. Thank you Jesus because you will touch my eyes again today, in Jesus' name, Amen.*



## 39. MORE PRODUCTIVITY

*“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of your time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”*

—Ephesians 5:15-17

“**S**ee then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.” (5:15) The word “circumspectly” means we are to walk “carefully, diligently, and exactly.” Perhaps a better illustration of this is the story of a preacher’s trip to South Africa. He was staying at a pastor’s home just outside Krueger National Park. As he was preparing for bed, his host told him that the toilet facilities were outside.

But he cautioned, “You must watch for alligators that crawl into the yard from the nearby river. Also watch for lions that might be lurking in the darkness. Be especially careful of the spitting cobras that have a venom range of twenty feet or more and excellent accuracy. They usually spit their venom into their victim’s eyes.” His host told him he had just gotten out the hospital after being attacked by one, two weeks ago. “Oh yes, be very careful not to step on any black mambas, for that would be fatal.”

In the middle of the night the preacher awoke, needing to use the facilities. He went to the door, turned on the flashlight, and with one hand holding the light, the other hand covering one eye and partially shielding the other, he illustrated in a physical sense what it means to “walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.”

Paul is telling us that everything worth doing requires care. We must treat the Christian life as the serious responsibility it is. All is to be brought under the scrutiny of God’s Word. As we walk through the spiritual “mine fields” of this world, we must make sure we do not depart from God’s divine path. Today, commit to being more productive. Do what God says and not what you think you want him to say. Why? Because a productive life is a purposeful life.

*Heavenly Father, we seek you to obtain your will, wisdom, and knowledge. Grant us guidance and direction that leads into the path of righteousness and wisdom. Direct us into your faithfulness to pursue the purpose that you called us to do. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

## 40. MORE JESUS

*“Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

—Hebrews 12: 2

**T**he author of Hebrews calls believers to consider the ultimate example of perseverance—Jesus. Runners in an athletic competition cannot be distracted by peripheral objects. As runners in the race of life, we must “fix our eyes on Jesus.” As we run, we must be looking toward Him in the faith. He is more than our example; He is our final destination. We must run toward Him with all our might, in the promise that we will be conformed to His image.

Hebrews 12:2 says that Jesus is the “pioneer” of our faith. He is the one who blazed the trail. He is the one who made the way into the Holy of Holies so that the rest of us could follow into God’s presence. Jesus is also the “perfecter” of our faith—He is the one who brought it to completion. He did not just start it; He finished it. The verse goes on to explain just how He finished.

Hebrews 12:2 says that Jesus scorned the shame of the cross. Crucifixion was a gruesome, tortuous death,

and it included public humiliation and shame. Jesus was ridiculed as He was hanging on the cross. A sign hung above Him which read “King of the Jews”. This was a cruel irony since it was true, but those who crucified Him did not believe it. Others on the ground mocked Him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.” This passage aims to inform God’s people of the importance of having a faith-based relationship with Him. Through faith we will choose to believe, no matter what the challenge is, that God will get His people through any situation. Jesus is more than enough for us!

*Father, let us be confident that you have the blueprint of our lives in your hand. We trust that we will see this evolution of your intended purpose for our lives, in the end. We thank you for being the author and the finisher of our faith. Grant us peace through this journey. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*