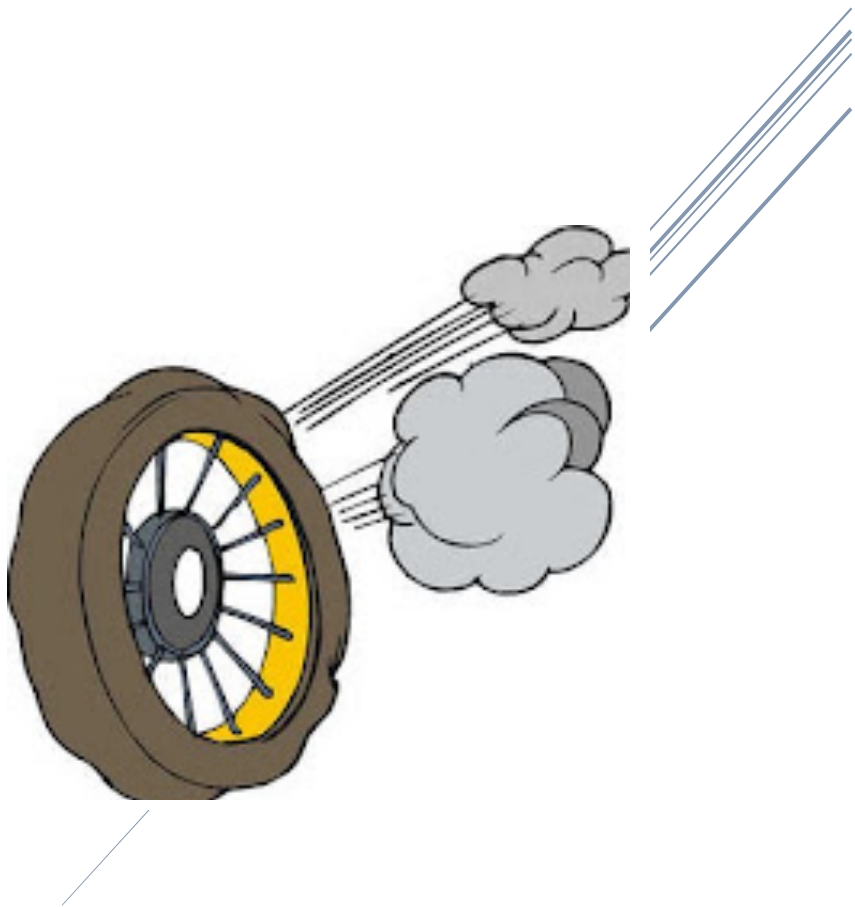


# LIVING A BALANCED LIFE



JOHN TANNER



# Your Special Invitation

You are invited to participate in a time of reflection that will result in wonderful personal growth and a deeper understanding of what it means to “walk with God.”

Most of us experience times when we are tired and struggling to meet the needs of our family and those around us. If we have come close to being “burned out,” then even the smallest things feel like “the straw that broke the camel’s back.” We can become irritable and anxious about the future. If you are feeling frail and tired right now, then it is time to stop! Somehow, your life is out of balance!

In an ideal world you would take time off and rest. You would set aside some time for prayer and study of God’s Word to gain guidance for the next chapter of your life. But that is not always possible in a busy world. So, if you cannot stop and have a total rest, then please accept this special invitation and set aside 30 minutes a day for just a few weeks to reflect, meet with Jesus and be refreshed!

You will find a short Bible devotion for you to read each day. After each devotion there will be some questions to help you to reflect on what is happening in your life. I suggest that you also write your thoughts, answers and prayer points in a journal. In this way you will have a record of all that the Lord has said to you. This journal will be your guide for the future.

The questions follow a pattern drawn from Dr Bobby Clinton’s book called *The Making of a Leader* published by Navpress. Bobby teaches that a key habit in the development of a leader

is the ability to reflect on what is happening and to grow through the experience. The pattern contains five steps. They are:

- God initiates intense processing to gain the attention of the leader.
- The leader is forced to do serious reflection about ministry, life and ultimate reality.
- The leader does an evaluation that results in formative thinking and commitment to growth measures learned in the processing.
- The leader experiences a renewed determination to know God more deeply.
- God blesses the commitment and the renewed determination by deepening the relationship between Himself and the leader.

We can see a real life example of these five steps in the Bible's story of Moses and the burning bush.

As an important part of each day's devotion, you will find questions based on all of the five steps above. The wording may be a little different, but the pattern will remain the same.

- 1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?*
- 2. What issue, habit or event is Jesus highlighting for you that demands you think deeply about it? What was the root of this and what is the fruit that is visible?*

3. *Have you made mistakes that need to be corrected? Do you need to change? What will you do to grow to maturity because of this time?*
4. *Will you be determined to know Jesus in a deeper way? How will you do this?*
5. *Give thanks to God because He has begun a good work in you and He will perfect it in His time.*

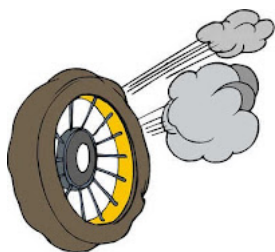
As you reflect on what God is doing in your situation, may you find your own “burning bush,” and encounter the Lord who speaks, challenges and equips for His service.

# Day 1

## Living a Balanced Life

***But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened. But in your hearts, set apart (revere or sanctify) Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. 1***

Peter 3:14,15



Have you ever driven in a car that had one or both of the front wheels out of balance? I have. It is an awful experience! Because one or both of the wheels are out of balance, the tyres fail to grip the road properly, the wheels wobble, the steering

wheel shakes in your hands and the car becomes dangerous. The driver cannot control the vehicle! Fortunately the problem is easily fixed. A good mechanic will adjust the wheel by adding weights to it where needed, and soon it will be good to go.

I am afraid that many believers today are suffering from “the wobbles,” just like a car that needs a wheel balance. The reason? Their lives are not in balance – too much of some things and not enough of others that they need. Fortunately, Jesus is the Master Mechanic and when we come to Him for a check-up and repair, He will help us to have a balanced life. Please let me explain.

I remember reading somewhere about the “life in balance” that Christ means us to live. The author described the Christian life as a journey using three categories. They were:

- The Outward Journey
- The Inward Journey, and
- The Upward Journey

If you think carefully about the verses above from 1 Peter 3 you will see that they contain each of these three elements of a balanced life. The outward journey – “be prepared to give an answer.” The Inward journey – “In your hearts revere Christ as Lord.” And the Upward journey - “the hope that you have!”

Our problem today seems to be that we fail to have a balance of these three in our personal lives and in our Churches. As a result, we are often tired and burdened by the needs of others. We lack the spiritual power and the Holy Spirit’s guidance because we become “needs focused” and out of balance. I am writing this for the benefit of others who feel a compulsion to be faithful to Jesus in fulfilling His Great Commission to go and make disciples of all peoples. I share your vision and your commitment because lately, I have begun to feel that my life is getting out of balance. I am constantly responding to the needs of people, both in practical ways and in my own prayers. Living for others is what it means to walk the “Outward Journey.”

1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?

2. What issue, habit or event is Jesus highlighting for you that demands you think deeply about it? What was the root of this and what is the fruit that is visible?
3. Have you made mistakes that need to be corrected? Do you need to change? What will you do to grow to maturity because of this time?
4. Will you be determined to know Jesus in a deeper way? How will you do this?
5. Give thanks to God because He has begun a good work in you and He will perfect it in His time.



# Day 2

## The Outward Journey



***“My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work!” (John 4:34)***

Jesus was constantly available to the crowds and to His disciples. Wherever He went, the people followed Him! He was constantly in demand. Yet

Jesus never allowed His life to get out of balance. He told His disciples, *“My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work!”* (John 4:34) It is one thing to do the will of God, it is another thing altogether to persevere until all God’s assigned work has been completed. When Watchman Nee commented on this verse, he said that our food is meant to nourish us and energise us! Then Nee asked all Christian workers, “Does doing the will of God energise you or exhaust you?” Doing God’s will and persevering to the very end energised Jesus! Serving God nourished Jesus and made Him completely alive. How did Jesus cope with the continual pressure of human need? It was not because He was God and possessed superhuman powers!. He grew weary just like the rest of us. Jesus was successful because He made certain that His life was always in balance. More about this later.

**Ministry is all about people. If there were no people, there could be no ministry.** People come to us with their needs.

One person may come seeking forgiveness from the Saviour; another might come with a broken heart; another's need might be very basic, they need food to feed their family tonight. People who have a need are often the most responsive to our ministry. Jesus found this to be true. The rich young ruler was unresponsive; the Priests and Pharisees became antagonistic. But thousands of the poor, sick and hopeless crowded around Him every day. This prompted Jesus to say, *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick... I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners"* (Mt 9:12,13). I cannot think of any human need that can be satisfied in a few minutes. Every act of ministry will lead to more ministry. Think about these examples in your own context:

- A woman comes to your house because she has no food to feed her family. Of course you will give her some food for her children. But what other needs does she bring in secret? Is her husband able to work? Is there sickness in her family? Are her children able to attend school? How can you help her to find work/money to feed her family? And most of all, does she have Jesus in her life to help her to cope with the many pressures that she faces. It may take just a few minutes to give her a some food, but how long will it take to meet all of her deepest needs?
- A man comes to you for help. He is seriously addicted to drugs and alcohol. As a result he has wasted all his money and his marriage has broken up. His wife and family are now homeless and the nearest family members live in another State. What are the needs that

he brings to you, and through you to Jesus? How many people desperately need your help in this case? What resources are available to you to help this family? Will you spend hours, days or weeks trying to bring this family into Christ's Kingdom and into a new normal life?

True Christlike ministry requires God's servants to give of themselves to others, assisting people to find the answers to all their needs over a long period of time. My point here is that as we succeed in helping people, our workload will grow over time. Our success does not mean less work. Success brings more and more people to our door. I am sure that you have found this to be true.

We are called by the Saviour to reach the lost people, and to -

- disciple the new believers into a mature faith
- restore those who fall
- live and preach the truth of God's Word
- train up new leaders
- care for the hungry and the sick
- visit the prisoners, and
- pray without ceasing.

And we are to do all this without becoming exhausted and spiritually dry ourselves!

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3. Have you made mistakes that need to be corrected? Do you need to change? What will you do to grow to maturity because of this time?
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5. Give thanks to God because He has begun a good work in you and He will perfect it in His time.

## Day 3

***And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*** Colossians 3:17

How is it possible for us to give ourselves constantly to others without becoming tired and spiritually dry?

It is only possible if our lives are in balance. We cannot be faithful to the Great Commission and find our ministry to be our “spiritual nourishment,” unless we are faithful in the Inward Journey and the Upward Journey.

**Before I go any further, let me explain how we can maintain the balance in our lives. This is very important to understand.**

Irene, my lovely wife, continually reminds me that I am a logical, sequential thinker. When my mind identifies a problem or opportunity, I then begin to work out what can be done, and in what order it should be done. So my mind thinks, 1,2,3. When people who are created to think in different ways to me consider a problem, they often see many ways to solve the problem. Their minds do not think 1,2,3. In their minds they can see 6,4,9,1,8,5,2,3, and 7. I value people who think like this in my team because they can introduce issues that do not occur to me. But I also know that people with this kind of mind often have trouble getting the job done because they can see so many possibilities. My mind helps me to be a teacher, a problem solver and to remain focused, and for that I am grateful.

If you think in the same way as I do, then you might assume that our journey is a matter of working sequentially at each aspect. For example, you may have already decided that for you the order goes something like this:

First, the Inward Journey, then  
Second, the Upward Journey, and  
Finally, the Outward Journey.

But you would be wrong! Life and ministry are not packed away in separate boxes to be opened whenever our diary says we are to do so. Life is mainly messy and even when we make

our plans, we depend on the Lord to provide the outcomes (Prov.19:21). So our life is not within our control.

**This is what I want you to understand. Our Inward, Upward, and Outward journeys are not sequential, they are simultaneous! Any one part of the journey cannot be separated from the others. They are all occurring at the same time!**

### **Can we learn to operate in the power of the three journeys at the same time?**

Last week someone posted a funny video to Facebook that made me laugh and laugh. An Indian man had joined the army and he was learning to march. I laughed because the poor man could not work out how to march by putting his left foot forward, and swinging his right arm forward, at the same time. Maybe it was just a joke to brighten my day!

It reminded me of my experience when I studied at Secondary School. In my first year I joined the army cadets. We were given a uniform, boots and a hat and we practised every Monday afternoon, sometimes using old rifles without any ammunition. In the army cadets, we learned how to do many things at the one time. We had to make sure that our uniform was correct in every detail; we had to obey the sergeant's every command. There was a correct way to march. You had to remain in line a certain distance from the next person. And whatever else happened, you never, ever dropped your rifle! While we stood still, there were not too many things to think

about, but when we began to move, we often had to do several things at once.

In my second year, they called for volunteers to join the army band. I thought that I had mastered the art of standing, marching and stopping after a year, so I joined the band to play a trumpet! I realize that this might surprise some of you! No more rifles! Now we had to learn how to march in line front to back and side to side while watching the band master carefully because there were no more shouted commands. He directed us by signalling with a long stick called a “mace.” If we missed a signal while reading the music and blowing our trumpets then all kinds of embarrassing things would happen - a band pile up with instruments, for example. So we quickly learned to multitask!

Here is my point! Marching and playing your trumpet in a marching band is much the same as living a balanced life and serving the Lord Jesus. We can learn how to do it. In fact, we must learn how to do it for our own sakes, but more importantly, for the Kingdom of God’s sake!

1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?
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5. Give thanks to God because He has begun a good work in you and He will perfect it in His time.

## Day 4

I began with the Outward Journey because I know that this is where we spend the most time and feel the greatest public pressures. But to a very large degree, our success in the Outward Journey depends on our success in the Inward and Upward journeys because they occur simultaneously.

It is time for us to consider what is meant by “The Inward Journey.”



### The Inward Journey

***But in your hearts, revere Christ as Lord.*** 1 Peter 3:14

You will know by now that I admire the Apostle Peter. I have learned many lessons from his life and writings. In 1 Peter 3:14 and 15, Peter described elements of each journey, combining them to illustrate how we need to operate out of each journey simultaneously. Consider Peter’s words.

*But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.*



*But in your hearts, set apart (revere or sanctify) Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

Did you notice how Peter blended all three journeys in these two verses? Look closely.

### **Inward Journey**

- *Do right, if you suffer you will be blessed* (integrity the inner commitment to do right.)
- *Do not fear what others fear* ( Emotional control - do not be controlled by fear)
- *In your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord* ( Ensure that Christ is in control and being honoured)

### **Upward Journey**

- *The hope that you have* ( Despite suffering, God's plan is working out. Jesus reigns!)

### **Outward Journey**

- *Be prepared to give an answer to everyone* ( Proclaim your reason for your hope)
- *Do this with gentleness and respect* ( Speak lovingly and humbly)

In these two verses, Peter teaches us about the balanced life with all three journeys in operation simultaneously. Earlier, we began with the outward journey because most of us find ourselves involved in our ministry most of the time. Our

problem is that we become so focused on “doing” that we neglect “being”, which is the real powerhouse of our ministry.

## **What is involved in our Inward Journey?**

The key to success is found in Peter’s words, *“But in your hearts set apart Jesus Christ as Lord!”*

In their effort to help modern believers to understand the meaning of this phrase the NIV translators have used the words, “set apart.” Now, to some readers, this phrase could mean to “put Jesus aside so as to ignore Him.” Nothing could be further from the truth! Other translations use the expressions, *“sanctify the Lord Jesus in your heart,”* and others, *“revere Jesus!”* Another translation tells us *“to allow Jesus to be the Lord of everything in our life.”* I love what A.M. Stibbs says in his commentary about this verse.

“It is noteworthy that the sanctuary in which Christ is to be acknowledged and worshipped is the heart. Even in times of persecution, when access to Churches may be denied, believers are exhorted, whatever their circumstances, to enjoy living communion with Christ. This can be done by realizing His indwelling Presence and by maintaining inner heart reverence towards Him...For Christ has promised to manifest His presence, not in particular buildings, but with His people, in their hearts and in their midst.”

From the order of the words in this verse, we learn that the purpose of worshipping Christ is to allow Him to bring everything in our lives into submission to His Lordship! Everything in the remainder of the Inward Journey will flow

from this great truth! The Inward Journey allows the Lord Jesus, our Redeemer, to shape us wholistically into His image. It involves our mind, our heart, our will, our emotions and even our bodies.

1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?
2. What issue, habit or event is Jesus highlighting for you that demands you think deeply about it? What was the root of this, and what is the fruit that is visible?
3. Have you made mistakes that need to be corrected? Do you need to change? What will you do to grow to maturity because of this time?
4. Will you be determined to know Jesus in a deeper way? How will you do this?
5. Give thanks to God because He has begun a good work in you and He will perfect it in His time.

## Day 5

***Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. Col.3:1,2.***

## How can we describe the Inward Journey that grows out of a heart that is focused on Jesus?

**It is a Christ- centred life** (One where the Lord Jesus is revered).

Jesus is not simply our Saviour and Lord. Jesus is everything in the life of the believer. He is our peace; He is our righteousness; He is our truth; He is our High Priest; He is our guide; He is our love and He is our future! He is much more than we can ever know. He desires to be everything to us. Our problem is that much of the old “self” remains in each of us. There are habits, attitudes and values that have yet to be transformed by Christ’s power. Nor will they be transformed until we see them as hindrances to the work of the Spirit and repent of them sincerely. Jesus is fully aware of all the blockages in us that hinder Him. Our problem is that we are ignorant of them. That is why our Inward Journey needs to provide a space for us to listen to the voice of Jesus so that He can guide us and correct us. We need a “listening place” in our lives that is quiet and away from everything else.

There were times in the life of Jesus when He felt the pressure of constant ministry and the need to withdraw to an isolated place alone to commune with the Father. Then, flowing out of those times of quiet communion, Jesus could say, *“The words that I speak are not just my own words, rather it is the Father who is living in me who is doing His work.”* (John 14:10) Prior to the cross, there was not one second of His day that Jesus was not aware of the words and works of His Father! Only our sin

could break that Divine connection, and only the power of the resurrection could restore it!

God speaks to us through His Word and guides us into His truth. The Bible is *"the Sword of the Spirit."* Each of us needs to create a listening place where we can love Jesus and allow Him to speak to us and to shape our lives into our destiny. If this is not a priority in our ministries, we will soon have no ministry because we will dry up spiritually. Jesus said, *"The words that I have spoken to you, they are spirit and they are life!"* (John 6:63) When we make time to revere Jesus as Lord in our hearts, we will often emerge from listening with some spirit/life words to preach or to share with someone who needs to hear them. Then there will be amazing results!

**Here is a warning!** In our three journeys we must remain a listener at all times. It is our responsibility to know what Jesus is saying wherever we are – in someone's home, sharing God's Word, praying for the sick and yes, even in a committee meeting!

The purpose of having a "listening place" in our hearts and in our daily program is not simply to listen. It is to be changed! This is what it means to *"revere Christ in our hearts."* In the quiet place, we discover a personal freedom which comes from the Holy Spirit. (2 Cor.3:17) And as we gaze unhindered at Jesus in His perfection and holiness, *"we are being transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit!"* (2 Cor. 3:18)

When we are too busy and too involved with other people's problems, we can neglect to gaze upon the Lord Jesus. Then we fail the transformation test. True power and true effectiveness in God's service comes from "being like Jesus."

I have a pastor friend whom I admire. He has always been faithful, caring and a good teacher of the Word in all his Churches. My friend went on a ministry trip to another country where there was revival in the Churches. He hoped to learn new ministry lessons. During his overseas visit, the brother became involved in the revival and God touched his life. He returned to his Church and preached the following weekend. The next morning, the secretary of the Church called me and told me that he wanted to meet with me urgently. He lived about 200 miles away from my office. We arranged to meet. When the brother came into my office, he said, "I had to see you. When my pastor returned from overseas I went to meet with him. There was so much holiness about him that I was immediately convicted. He is a changed man! I want to be just like him!" Transformation!

When we live a Christ-centred life there will always be transformation in us. Mostly, this transformation relates to our inner nature or our character, but transformation can also reach our emotions and even our physical fitness levels. In Day 6 we will look at some ways that Christ may change us.

1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?
2. What issue, habit or event is Jesus highlighting for you that demands you think deeply about it? What was the root of this and what is the fruit that is visible?

3. Have you made mistakes that need to be corrected? Do you need to change? What will you do to grow to maturity because of this time?
4. Will you be determined to know Jesus in a deeper way? How will you do this?
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## Day 6

### A Godly life.

***Train yourself to be Godly.*** 1 Tim.4:7

This is an old word that means “being like God.” Paul instructed young Timothy to *“train yourself to be Godly.”* Then he explained that *“godliness has value for all things, holding promise for the present life and the life to come”* (1 Tim. 4:7,8). Godliness never goes out of date! Why then do we not hear much about it these days? Jesus told His disciples in the upper room, *“He that has seen me has seen the Father.”* Jesus could say, *“Do you want to know what God is like? Then look at me!”* Can we dare to say that to our friends or family members? Remember Paul’s words in 2 Cor.3:18, *“We are being transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory!”* When we take the time to reverence Jesus as Lord in our hearts, the essential work of transformation takes place.

Is it possible for someone to see Jesus in us? It certainly is! We have some close friends who have been Solomon Island missionaries to Australia for more than twenty years – Roy and Janet. Sadly, Janet suffered from a series of strokes some years ago and lost her mobility and her ability to speak. Roy and Janet attended our Church's Christmas service where we introduced them to two other friends – the wife came from a Catholic background and her husband was not a believer at all. In a later conversation with us, the unbelieving husband spoke appreciatively about Janet. She had made an impression on him. He told us, "I could see Jesus in her!" The power of Godliness!

1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?
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# Day 7

## An Exchanged Life.

***I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.*** Galatians 2:20

For many new believers, their biggest problem is not sin. It is self. Our old self is often the source of many sinful failures. So when they find Christ, they soon understand that many of their old habits and words must go. They often struggle to find victory over the old ways and they feel that they have failed. If you have a poisonous tree growing near your house, then it is not enough to pick all of the fruit and destroy the fruit before your family eat them and die. You must protect your family by digging out that tree by its roots so it can never prosper again. Our old self is like that poisonous tree. Paul teaches us about what we must do about this problem in Romans chapters six to eight. In Romans 6:6,7 Paul tells us, *“For we know that our old self was crucified with Christ so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.”* Praise God that on the cross, Jesus made sure that my old self-life was crucified with Him. The sin factory in me has been dealt a death blow by, and in Jesus.

What remains for me to do then? *“In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus!”* (Romans 6:11) The expression “count yourselves” belongs to accountants – people who have to count money. The point is that counting money is an action that can only deal with the

facts. So God wants us to accept these two statements as absolute facts. They are:

1. My old self is dead to sin, and, I live because
2. I am alive to God in Christ Jesus!

Go to God right now in your listening place. Thank Him for the wonderful thing that He has done in you – dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus! This is what some have called the “exchanged life.” In Galatians 2:20 Paul says, *“I no longer live, but Christ lives in me!”* When we know that this is true in our individual lives, then godliness is possible!

1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?
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# Day 8

## A Holy Life.

***Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit...therefore glorify God with your body.*** 1 Cor.6:19,20

As we sanctify (set apart) the Lord in our hearts, He instructs us and changes us into His likeness from one degree of glory to the next! The result is that our lives become increasingly set apart for His use. Paul taught the Corinthians about the dangers of immorality. He called it *"a sin against your own body"* (1 Cor.6:18). Then Paul taught us how we are to think about our total person. *"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God. You were bought at a price. Therefore honour (or glorify) God with your body"* (1 Cor.6:19,20). Our whole person is to be holy, living only for God! When people hear us and look at us, they must see God's holiness. It is increasingly essential that believers should stand out in our societies around the world. We must be seen to be "different," not in a crazy way, but in a way that depicts God, who is altogether holy. Nothing can be allowed to detract from God in us!

Once I was invited to speak about the local Church and missions at a large city Church. I dressed up appropriately in my best suit and tie. When I had given my message and the service was ended, I stood near the front of the Church to greet the people. A leading businessman and Church elder shook my hand and said jokingly, "I like your necktie, when it has pups can I have one?" All that he took away from my

message was my coloured tie! When I returned to my home I said to Irene, “I can never wear that tie again – it was a hindrance to someone seeing Jesus!” We are called to glorify God, even in our bodies. What is there about you that will cause people to look at you instead of Jesus? Are you afraid to be “different” from friends because of your attitude towards sin?

1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?
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## Day 9

### A Growing life.

***Grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 3:18***

This final exhortation from Peter to all believers comes at the end of his second letter. As we gaze in reverent awe into the face of Jesus and learn of Him, both our knowledge of Him, and our ability to live in grace, increases. We ought to expect to grow, not remain the same. The knowledge that we acquire from our fellowship with Jesus is both a knowledge about Jesus and a knowledge of Jesus personally. While these two are linked, it is possible to know about Jesus yet not know Him in a personal way. It is a little like standing at your nearest bus stop counting how many buses stop there. You may know a lot about the frequency of the bus service, but unless you climb on board the bus you will never travel to your destination! Knowledge about Jesus is meant to lead people to know Jesus as their personal Friend and Saviour and understand His grace.

John the Apostle, an eyewitness of the life of Jesus, was greatly impressed with the grace that Jesus demonstrated through His life. In John 1:14,16 John wrote, *"The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth....From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another."* God's grace always surprises us because grace gives us blessings that we can never deserve. Jesus was full of grace! The greatest example of His grace is recorded in the words of Paul, *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich"* (2 Cor. 8:8,9).

How much do we know of this grace in our lives and ministries? Jesus was full of grace. From that fulness, He could distribute numberless blessings to many. We so often operate out of “right” and “wrong”, rewarding those who do good and ignoring those who are not “on our side.” Grace gives freely of time, effort, energy and prayer to all in need. Grace constantly thinks about what is best for the other person, not what is best for me! Grace is never legalistic or harsh in judgment; suffers long and gives generously. For those of us called to serve the Lord full-time, grace is required for us to be thankful when someone shows kindness to us that humbles us. When we are determined to grow in our knowledge of Jesus, then our understanding of the grace in which we live will also expand.

This is only the beginning! Peter instructs us to “Make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1: 5-8). Imagine a weight lifter competing in a contest to lift 150 kilos. Every muscle is straining and the facial expressions reveal total concentration. That is what it means to make every effort. Act as though you may only have one chance to win the prize and use all your energy to add to your faith!

Why do we need to grow? Our growth will bring glory to Jesus! Our growth will prove the power of the Gospel. And our growth will be evidence of the transforming work that Jesus can do in a human life. This is not so that we can boast but so that Christ can be glorified in us!

1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?
2. What issue, habit or event is Jesus highlighting for you that demands you think deeply about it? What was the root of this and what is the fruit that is visible?
3. Have you made mistakes that need to be corrected? Do you need to change? What will you do to grow to maturity because of this time?
4. Will you be determined to know Jesus in a deeper way? How will you do this?
5. Give thanks to God because He has begun a good work in you. He will perfect it in His time.

## Day 10

### A Dependent life.

***You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you shall be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth.***

Acts 1:8

Jesus lived His entire earthly life in unbroken fellowship and total dependence on His Father and the Holy Spirit. All those who set out to serve the cause of the Gospel soon discover that in themselves they are inadequate to convince others to follow Jesus and totally unable to convert even one soul. That is why, when Jesus returned to His glory in His Father's Home, He released the Holy Spirit to guide the Church and partner with us in God's spiritual work. Jesus is our example of how we are meant to live in partnership with the Holy Spirit, so that God's plan can be completed. God's power is released when we depend on the Holy Spirit to do His work in and through us. At the moment we are born again (by the Spirit), we are gifted with some of the gifts of the Spirit that will enable us to play our ministry role within the Body of Christ. Some gifts may be given at a later time if needed. As we grow, the fruit of the Spirit becomes evident in our lives.

When we become involved in ministering to others in Jesus' Name, we need to experience what it means to receive the power of the Holy Spirit, how to live in the Spirit, and what is involved in being filled with the Holy Spirit.

When we try to witness without the power of the Holy Spirit bringing conviction, we are like someone offering an empty cup to a person who is dying of thirst. Our witness is the cup, but only the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, the Living Water that Jesus promised, will satisfy the thirsty soul! That is why Jesus said, *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you shall be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth"* (Acts 1:8). So we must depend on the Holy Spirit to



bring conviction and life to those who hear our witness. Have we received God's power to witness?

In Galatians chapter five, Paul tells us about the war within and how we might attain freedom. The sinful nature (or self) wants its own way with us. But Christ has placed His Holy Spirit within us to bring freedom from the demands of the sinful nature. Our sinful nature wants to produce all kinds of terrible sins. Paul calls these "*the acts of the sinful nature*" (verse 19). (Think of these like a factory belching out filthy plumes of polluting smoke and a horrible level of noise.) On the other hand, the Holy Spirit is there to produce His own beautiful fruit – love, joy peace, patience and more! This introduces a different picture altogether. Think of a peaceful orchard growing in the fresh air and the quietness of the country. The Holy Spirit and the sinful nature are at war within us. Who will win? The Holy Spirit will win and we will have freedom if we learn to "*live by the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit*" (Gal.5:25). It is up to you! You must choose to allow the Holy Spirit to produce His fruit in you. You must say "no" to self, and "yes" to the Spirit continually. When you keep in step with someone, you walk with them; you talk with them, and you depend on them to guide you in the right way. Our relationship with the dear Holy Spirit must not be broken or we lack His guidance when we most need Him.

The secondary school I attended was in the city. To get there I caught a train to the city every day and then walked along the city streets and up the hill to my school. I will never forget seeing a horrible sight one day on my way to school. There was a man lying unconscious in the gutter with traffic passing

close by. His body was filthy, and in his arms, he cradled the last of a bottle of alcohol. His life in that moment was totally under the control of the alcohol that he had consumed! Now, think about Paul's words in Ephesians 5:18, *"Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit."* This statement is not a contrast, but a comparison! A study of the Greek language used by Paul reveals the truth. The English translation is inadequate to give us the full meaning. What Paul wrote was, "Be continually being controlled by the Spirit!" In exactly the same way that a drunkard is totally controlled by his wine, we are to be under the continual control of the Holy Spirit! It is legitimate for me to ask you, have you gone where you wanted to go today? Have you seen the people that you wanted to see today? Have you done the tasks that you wanted to perform? Yes? Then what did you do today because the Holy Spirit was in control of you? We are meant to live our lives under His control, serving His plan, and not ours!

This is what it means to live a dependent life.

1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?
2. What issue, habit or event is Jesus highlighting for you that demands you think deeply about it? What was the root of this and what is the fruit that is visible?
3. Have you made mistakes that need to be corrected? Do you need to change? What will you do to grow to maturity because of this time?

4. Will you be determined to know Jesus in a deeper way?  
How will you do this?
5. Give thanks to God because He has begun a good work in you and He will perfect it in His time.

## Day 11

### A Peaceful life.

***Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*** John 14:27

Jesus is the Prince of Peace and He came to impart peace to all. The concept of peace in the Bible has two primary meanings. Firstly, it has to do with relationships. God has made peace between Himself and all those who will trust in Jesus through the reconciliation made possible only through Calvary's cross. Also through the cross, reconciliation was possible between Jewish and Gentile believers in the One Body of Christ. Even nations can make peace with each other and be reconciled through God's power. Because God's heart longs for peace between all His warring children, He has given a special role to those who will be the peacemakers. "*Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God*" (Matt.5:9). Human sins and abuse of power are the twin

causes of war in God's world. It will remain so until the last great war when the nations of that day, led by the Antichrist, will rise up against the righteous reign of the Lord Jesus. Then He will defeat them just by *"the breath of His mouth."* Until then, there remains a role both in the Churches and in our communities for the peacemakers. In this first meaning then, to live a peaceful life means not to be at war with God, with others who may disagree with you, or other believers in the Family of God. So when we are on the inward journey we need to ask the Holy Spirit to search our hearts and show us where we should make peace with others.

The second meaning of peace in the Bible derives from the first. Because of Jesus, the war is over between our righteous God and ourselves. We have been reconciled through the cross. Jesus warned us that in the world there would still be trouble. Look around you. Look in the Middle East and see the nightly reports of people in Gaza, including believers, being bombed; look on the African continent. Believers are being persecuted and murdered there in the thousands. We live in a time of the worst persecution of believers ever. Jesus knew it! *"In the world you will have trouble."* But listen to what Jesus said to His troubled disciples, *"Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid"* (John 14:27). The peace that Jesus imparts to those whose hearts revere Him is wonderful. It is peace in the midst of trouble. It is perfect peace because it is Jesus' own peace – *"my peace I give to you."* There are many things that can intrude on our sense of peace. Our concern for our war-torn world can rob us of our peace. A disagreement within the family can steal our peace.

An issue at work can steal our peace. Even something wrong that we have discerned in our Church can steal our peace away. If something has robbed you of your peace, then you are at risk! Take the Inward Journey and sit before the Lord. Tell Him your concerns and give them over to His hands for Him to resolve. Do not leave His presence until His peace reigns again in your heart! Peace is Christ's personal gift to all believers for these troubled times.

Earlier, I spoke about the place of peacemakers in God's Kingdom. Perhaps God has placed you in position to be a peacemaker. Then do it in His strength! Not all of us are positioned or gifted to be peacemakers, but all of us are privileged to be "peace carriers." My wife, Irene's name means "peace" in the Greek language. And she is a peace carrier. By her quiet presence and gentle words she brings a sense of peace into all different situations. I notice it in the family, but I have also seen how her influence with almost total strangers has a positive effect. People who hardly know her open up to her and talk about things that they would not say to others. She carries the peace of Jesus with her. What about you? Peace is a rare commodity in our modern world. Nations are either fighting or they are on the brink of war in many continents. Too often, our leaders act like crazy adversaries attacking each other in public. There is tension between the wealthy companies and people struggling to survive. Many families are dysfunctional and marriage break-ups are increasingly common. Hope is absent and suicide rates are rising. Oh how we need peace everywhere! Not the world's kind of patched up peace, but the peace that only Jesus can

impart. First we need to find Jesus in the Inward Journey and become certain that His peace fills our own hearts and minds. Then, in the Outward Journey, we can be peacemakers and peace carriers in our troubled world. It will cost us, but it will be worth it!

*"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy."*  
(Heb. 12:14)

1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?
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3. Have you made mistakes that need to be corrected? Do you need to change? What will you do to grow to maturity because of this time?
4. Will you be determined to know Jesus in a deeper way? How will you do this?
5. *Give thanks to God because He has begun a good work in you and He will perfect it in His time.*

## Day 12

### **An Attentive Life.**

***This is my beloved Son whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!*** Matt.17:5

Remember Martha's complaint about her sister Mary? Martha was the manager of the household. No doubt whenever Jesus visited, Martha was concerned that the house was clean and the food was ready. The problem was that whenever Jesus came to visit, Mary left all her household duties and she gave her full attention to Jesus! We can understand why Martha was upset because we are often too much like Martha and not enough like Mary. When Jesus heard Martha's complaint, He responded with a loving rebuke to Martha and an endorsement of Mary's behaviour. *"Mary has chosen the better part!"* Our ministry demands are ever with us. But if we fail to take time out to listen to Jesus and tell Him of our love, then our ministry will soon dry up! Even Jesus felt the need to withdraw from the crowds and to spend time alone with His Father. And He is our example. To be "attentive" means to give all of our energy to listening and connecting with the Lord. These times alone with Jesus will fill our hearts with calm and our troubled minds with peace. We will hear His precious words to us clearly and understand His heart better. Then we will go out from our times with Him with new direction, new energy, new love and a clearer vision! It is important to the Father that we focus on hearing the voice of Jesus. The voice that came from Heaven to the astonished disciples on the mount of Transfiguration said, *"This is my beloved Son whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!"* (Matt.17:5) And hear Him we must!

We have thought about seven different areas of our lives that will be changed as Jesus exercises His lordship over us when we reverence the Lord Jesus in our hearts. There are many more. Perhaps you have thought about some of them as you

have been reading. What are they? Why not make a study of them for yourself?

It was Mary who anointed Jesus' feet with precious ointment and wiped His feet with her hair. Mary really understood what it meant to revere Jesus as Lord. What an amazing privilege it is for us in our busy world to be able to sit at Jesus' feet too. That is where the Lord establishes His reign over every area of our lives for His glory!

So far we have thought about our commitment to follow Christ daily on the Outward journey – the world of doing. Then we considered how we might do better at the Inward Journey- the world that grows us in our being. But what of the Upward Journey? Does this relate to our final translation through death to Heaven? Well – there is much more to it than that.

1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?
2. What issue, habit or event is Jesus highlighting for you that demands you think deeply about it? What was the root of this and what is the fruit that is visible?
3. Have you made mistakes that need to be corrected? Do you need to change? What will you do to grow to maturity because of this time?
4. Will you be determined to know Jesus in a deeper way? How will you do this?
5. Give thanks to God because He has begun a good work in you and He will perfect it in His time.



# Day 13

## The Upward Journey



**Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.**

Hebrews 12:2

For the Upward Journey I have chosen a key verse and a picture to help me to describe what is involved.

The key verse comes from Hebrews Chapter 12 verse 2 which begins like this –“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.” The order of words in the Greek goes like this, “Looking away to the author and perfecter of our faith, Jesus!” The Upward Journey takes us regularly into the Throne Room of Heaven where our Saviour and Lord who suffered shame for us, now sits at the right hand of the Throne of God! To fix our eyes on Jesus requires faith! And where does this faith come from? It comes from Jesus Himself, the Author of our faith! How does our weak faith grow? Faith grows through the lessons and experiences that Jesus teaches us throughout our lives. He initiates our faith and He perfects our faith.

The picture that I have in mind as I think about looking to Jesus in the Upward Journey comes from an experience that Peter had. There was a frightening storm on the lake. Peter witnessed Jesus doing the impossible. Jesus came to their

boat walking on the water. Picture the scene. Wild waves crashed into their boat. The wind howled like a wild animal intent on destroying them. Then Jesus came to them walking on water! Impulsive Peter asked Jesus for permission to walk on the waves also. And Jesus said, "Come!" (Matt.14:28 ff) *Then Peter got down out of the boat and came toward Jesus. But when Peter saw the wind he was afraid and, beginning to sink, Peter cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. "You of little faith," Jesus said, "why did you doubt?"*

While Peter fixed his eyes on Jesus, he was able to do the impossible. But when he looked around at the waves, Peter began to sink. It was only as Peter looked back in desperation at the Lord and cried out for help, that Jesus caught Peter in His strong hands and saved him. We can be like Peter! Sometimes when we are in the midst of the Outward Journey, serving Christ, we encounter opposition. We are out of our depth! What can we do? We can stop and fix our eyes on Jesus. His strong hand will reach out to us and save us! Or, it may even be that we are journeying Inward and some revelation of our own failures has caused us to be depressed. The waves wash over us! Who can deliver us? Jesus can! He is the Lord. He is the merciful One. He is the miracle worker. Cry out to Him and be saved!

All of our three Journeys are essential, but it is the Upward Journey that most regularly allows Jesus to intervene and work His miracles in us and through us! So let us explore the Upward Journey together as we *"Look away to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith."* The writer here paints a picture of

the early games. All the saints who have gone before us are in the crowd, cheering us on (Heb.Ch 11). We are running the marathon of our lives! As happens in all marathons, the runners are soon separated by small and large distances and cannot see the leader. But where we are running, it is possible for all of us to see the "file-leader." It is Jesus and He is leading all of us on. The going is tough, but Jesus knows how to endure all kinds of suffering. That is why we are to persevere in the race and not give up. We are not to look at the runners as if they are our competitors. No! We must run our race, looking away to the Leader, Jesus, all of the time. We are running in the marathon of Faith! We are only eligible to run because Jesus has been the author of our faith. And we will certainly be victorious because Jesus is also the perfecter of our faith. But it is imperative that we run our race with our eyes fixed on Jesus and no one else!

1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?
2. What issue, habit or event is Jesus highlighting for you that demands you think deeply about it? What was the root of this and what is the fruit that is visible?
3. Have you made mistakes that need to be corrected? Do you need to change? What will you do to grow to maturity because of this time?
4. Will you be determined to know Jesus in a deeper way? How will you do this?
5. Give thanks to God because He has begun a good work in you and He will perfect it in His time.

# Day 14

**If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else.** Galatians 6:3

## **What will happen when we run with our eyes fixed on Jesus?**

The answer is that we will witness many miracles within ourselves and among those to whom we minister. Let me try to describe some of the miracles that you might see yourself.

### **We will remain humble.**

It is the Lord Himself who has called us into a leadership role. We must be careful that we understand our role in terms of Jesus' example to us, and not in the way that the world views leadership. Jesus came to serve and not to be served! When our people love us and respect us because of our role, they place us at risk. We can easily become proud because we are the leader that everybody needs. Or we can understand our value only in terms of our role. We may become proud of the fact that we are leading a bigger Church than our brothers are. Or we may fall into the twin traps evident in the Church at Corinth where spiritual gifts were common. Some believers there became arrogant (we have better gifts than others), and

some became diffident (we have no need of you!) Paul combats all of these arrogant attitudes in Galatians 6:3 where he writes, *"But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else."* Pride, and too much of self, has meant the downfall of many great men of God. How do you rate yourself when you compare yourself to others – better than this person, but not as good as another? While you are comparing yourself with others, you are failing to look upward! Like Peter, you are rapidly sinking and you do not realize it. Look away to Jesus, our Divine Leader. He has endured terrible suffering, but He has triumphed. He is totally secure in His own self-image. He does not need the praises of His followers to feel satisfied. All that He does is perfect! So when we look away from ourself to Jesus we say like Paul, *"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect!"* (1 Cor. 15:10)

Gazing at Jesus certainly changes us. I read the story of a little girl who lived in Italy in a town where there were famous white marble statues. While walking down the street she came across a marble statue of a lady in a long white robe. The little girl stood there staring at the statue. She looked at the lady in her white robe and then she looked down at her torn, dirty dress. She looked up again and then down at herself again. Then she ran off. A short time later the little girl returned and stood there again staring up at the statue. But this time she

had a pleased look on her face and a little smile. She had gone home and washed her dirty face and limbs and changed into her best dress. Somehow, looking at the purity and the beauty of the robed statue had shown the little girl that she was dirty and ragged. And it inspired her to change. It is just the same with us. We should not compare ourselves with others. We should look away to Jesus and compare ourselves with Him. Only then will we discover how well we are really doing in our service. Only then will we serve Jesus with true humility.

1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?
2. What issue, habit or event is Jesus highlighting for you that demands you think deeply about it? What was the root of this and what is the fruit that is visible?
3. Have you made mistakes that need to be corrected? Do you need to change? What will you do to grow to maturity because of this time?
4. Will you be determined to know Jesus in a deeper way? How will you do this?
5. Give thanks to God because He has begun a good work in you and He will perfect it in His time.

## **Day 15**

**We will have victory.**

***Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*** James 4:7

The devil is not your friend! He is your accuser! He is always trying to tempt you, discourage you and make you feel a failure! He is the father of lies. He will tell you that God can never forgive you. How can we overcome him? By looking up to Jesus who Himself was tempted in every way just like us, but without sin! *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you”* (James 4:7). These instructions are a call to action! Submit to God! Resist the devil! And the result will always be the same – he will flee from you! In Jesus we have the victory!

## **We will be kept in peace.**

***You keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you!*** Isaiah 26:3

Isaiah 26:3 contains an expression of thanks to God, *“You keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you!”* God’s perfect peace is available to all those on the Upward Journey. Peace does not come out of the storm, but from the Lord, when we focus our minds on Him in humble trust. We pray, “O Lord, I cannot do this, but you can. I trust you to do a miracle!” Let me share how I found this to be true in my life.

When the Church leaders appointed me to be the Principal of a Bible College in the Solomon Islands I was very inexperienced in cross-cultural ministry. The leaders also told

me that they wanted the College to become financially self-sufficient, to double the number of married families enrolled, to increase the intake of female students, and to enlarge the college buildings to take the larger numbers. The College was located in an isolated position with no services at all. I remember returning on the ship to my home and going straight to my study. I prayed, "Lord, you know that I am inexperienced and this burden is too heavy for me to carry. So I will live day to day this year caring for my family, staff and students. If you want us to study for the whole year, then you must send the finances for us to do that. If you only want us to study for part of the year, then you send the finances for part of the year. If you really want the new buildings constructed, then you send the people and the money to complete the work. If I worry about all this I will go crazy! So I will not ask you again. I put all this into your hands. Have your way almighty God! And I will faithfully do the work that you put in my hands each day." My mind was stayed on Jesus! And even though all of us worked hard in the following year, we all had peace! And I can happily report that all the plans that God had put in the Church leaders' hearts were fulfilled because "God is FAITHFUL!"

1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?
2. What issue, habit or event is Jesus highlighting for you that demands you think deeply about it? What was the root of this and what is the fruit that is visible?



3. Have you made mistakes that need to be corrected? Do you need to change? What will you do to grow to maturity because of this time?
4. Will you be determined to know Jesus in a deeper way? How will you do this?
5. Give thanks to God because He has begun a good work in you and He will perfect it in His time.

## Day 16

**We will be filled with hope.**

***And hope does not disappoint us!*** Rom.5:5

The world's hope is often empty because it is too often based on emotions. A young boy hoped that his parents would give him a bicycle for Christmas. When his present was a soccer ball, he was disappointed. Biblical hope is different from the world's hope. Biblical hope is certain because it is based on God's truth! Paul writes, "*And hope does not disappoint us!*" (Rom.5:5) In Romans 5:1-5, Paul teaches us that we have been justified by faith; we have peace with God; we have access to God's grace; and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God! Because of this unfailing hope, we can persevere in times of suffering, grow in our character, and experience even greater hope! Our weary world needs hope today more than ever before! When we look away to Jesus, God enlightens our

hearts to know the hope of His calling and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. If today, you are feeling helpless and hopeless about your situation, look away to Jesus and pray Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:18. God will answer you!

1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?
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## Day 17

### **We will receive guidance.**

***In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.*** Prov. 3:6

Sometimes it can be very lonely being a leader because it is the leader who has to know the way, and the leader who has to walk first into the fire! All of us encounter times in our lives

when we need to know God's guidance. His guidance will come when we look upward! Let me take you back to a time when a leader faced a horrible problem. His people were in imminent danger of being invaded and slaughtered by three foreign armies. The leader was King Jehoshaphat, and the story is found in 2 Chronicles Chapter 20. When the King heard the news that a vast army was invading his country, he felt alarmed (v3). He *"resolved to inquire of the Lord and he proclaimed a fast."* People from every town in Judah came together to *"seek help from the Lord"* (v4). So we learn that Jehoshaphat's first response to the threat was to look upward to seek God's guidance. His second response, was to inspire all his people to seek help from the Lord! They deliberately looked away from the problem and fixed their eyes on their God. The King led the nation in a prayer honouring God for His overall sovereignty and care for them. At the climax of his prayer the King acknowledged two truths before God.

They were: (v12)

1. We have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us, and
2. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you!

How often have you stood in the sandals of Jehoshaphat? When was the last time you prayed, "Oh Lord, we have no power... we do not know what to do!" Did you surrender at that point? Or did you struggle in your own strength to find a way out of trouble? If you had simply added "our eyes are upon you!" then you would have been given God's strategy. If we seek God's guidance, He will surely answer us! The Spirit of the Lord came upon a prophet and he said, *"This is what the*

*Lord says to you; do not be afraid or discouraged... for the battle is not yours but God's... you will not have to fight this battle. Stand firm and see the deliverance of the Lord" (vs 15-17).*

Whenever we honour God by looking up to Him for guidance, He always answers us. And He does not leave us discouraged and defeated.

The very next morning, the army went out led by the choir who were instructed to *"sing to the Lord and to praise Him for the splendour of His holiness, saying – Give thanks to the Lord for His love endures forever!"*

And as the singers praised the Lord, the Lord fought against their enemies and defeated them totally. Did you notice that the mood changed in just a few hours? At first the King and his people said, *"we have no power and we do not know what to do."* Then, after hearing God's guidance and obeying Him, their despondency changed to praise! Our problems can be changed to praise points too, if we learn to be like the people who said, *"but our eyes are upon you."*

1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?
2. What issue, habit or event is Jesus highlighting for you that demands you think deeply about it? What was the root of this and what is the fruit that is visible?
3. Have you made mistakes that need to be corrected? Do you need to change? What will you do to grow to maturity because of this time?
4. Will you be determined to know Jesus in a deeper way? How will you do this?

5. Give thanks to God because He has begun a good work in you and He will perfect it in His time.

## Day 18

### We will know His eternal provision.

***Your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given you as well. Matt.6:32,33***

An old, respected leader led in prayer for his Churches. He prayed, "O Lord, give us a vision that is so big that we can never achieve it; a vision that demands resources that we do not have; a vision that requires harvesters that are not available to us; a vision that will bring glory only to you when it has been fulfilled. Amen!" Our calling is bigger than any one of us or even all of us together. And we are constantly hindered by our lack of resources to complete God's plan. Why is this so?

Our lack is due to our failure to trust God. When I served as a missionary I was dependent on a support team for finances and prayer. We needed assistance not simply for living expenses, but to supply the needs of the people that we served. I knew that prayer to God and effective communication with believers overseas went hand in hand. On a few occasions, when we were praying for finances for

new projects and the money was not coming in, I found myself starting to blame friends and supporters for not responding. This was my failure! I had taken my eyes off God and begun to look to people to supply my needs. I learned quickly from my mistake. I was looking in the wrong place! Are you worrying that you do not have sufficient money for your family? Is your ministry hindered by lack of resources? Then listen to Jesus when He says to you, *"Your heavenly Father knows that you need them"* (Matt. 6:32). *"But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given you as well"* (v33). We lack resources because we are looking in the wrong places. We are worrying and fretting as though our Father neither knows nor cares! Look away from your worries! Look up to your Heavenly Father! *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives"* (Matt. 7:7,8).

Is it wrong to expect God to supply our needs sometimes through others? No. It is not wrong. The Bible makes it clear that we are to carry one another's burdens and work together in loving partnership. What is wrong is asking other people before we ask God what to do. His answer may be that we are simply to trust Him. It may be that He directs us to approach someone whom He wants to supply the needs. The question is, "Who am I seeking – God, or some human to meet my needs?" If our God is able to grant us eternal salvation through His Son, and build us a city in Glory where we will live with Him forever, then He is able to provide people and money for ministry according to His plan.

1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?
2. What issue, habit or event is Jesus highlighting for you that demands you think deeply about it? What was the root of this and what is the fruit that is visible?
3. Have you made mistakes that need to be corrected? Do you need to change? What will you do to grow to maturity because of this time?
4. Will you be determined to know Jesus in a deeper way? How will you do this?
5. Give thanks to God because He has begun a good work in you and He will perfect it in His time.

## Day 19

### We will have our strength renewed

***Those who wait (hope) upon the Lord will renew their strength...they will soar like eagles...they will run and not be weary!"*** Isaiah 40:31

*"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble"* (Ps.46:1). There is not one of us who possesses the strength required to run the race successfully and to fulfil the plans that God has for us. Isaiah 40: 30 tells us, *"even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall."* Yes. It is true. All of us grow weary and feel our strength fading away sometimes.

What can we do? The Master has called us to finish the race! Who will relieve our tiredness and renew our strength? God will, if we play our part.

Have you ever complained to God or other friends that God seems to have forgotten you or that He seems to be not interested in your ministry? You are not alone. *"Why do you say, O Jacob, or complain, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God!' "* (Is 40:27)

God's people had come to a place where they could not make any more progress. They thought that God must have forgotten them. But their feelings were a betrayal of the very nature of God. *"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and His understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak!"* (Is.40: 28,29) God's strength created all that exists and yet nothing makes Him feel weary. He never grows tired! And He is willing to impart new strength to us on one condition.

*"Those who wait (hope) upon the Lord will renew their strength...they will soar like eagles...they will run and not be weary!"* (v31) New strength, greater strength, is available to those weary ones who will look upward! To *"wait upon the Lord, or to hope in the Lord"* here means that we are to come to God fully believing in His power to deliver, and express our confidence in Him by patiently waiting for Him to fulfill His promises. When we have this confidence in God, He exchanges the strength we have for a better strength - a strength like His own. Even youths will grow weary and



stumble, but those who wait on the Lord will receive the strength to persevere to the end!

These are just a few of the benefits of the Upward Journey. No doubt you have experienced many more and together we can praise the Lord Jesus for His constant intercession and for His divine intervention through miracles all around us.

The Outward Journey, the Inward Journey, and the Upward Journey. We need to strengthen each of these areas of our lives so that we can be people who “make a difference where we live.”

1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?
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3. Have you made mistakes that need to be corrected? Do you need to change? What will you do to grow to maturity because of this time?
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5. Give thanks to God because He has begun a good work in you and He will perfect it in His time.

# Day 20

## A Practical Example

***I have not yet reached my goal, and I am not perfect. But Christ has taken hold of me. So I keep on running and struggling to take hold of the prize.*** Philippians 3:12 in CEV

Those of you who have a life-time of experience will have already recalled examples of how you have experienced each of these three journeys. But for the benefit of the younger leaders who may be reading my story, I will try to give some examples from my own experience to guide you. I will give an example of a “typical” day in leadership to demonstrate how we need to operate out of each of the three journeys to keep our lives in balance. I will use true examples from the time when I was the leader of a movement made up of about 90 established Churches and ten Church plants. Their locations stretched almost 2000 klms from north to south and 1000 klms from east to west in our big State. I was the leader responsible for the care of all the Churches and pastors, the planting of new Churches, and leading a team responsible for the development of evangelism, Christian Education and Youth ministries. In addition, more than eighty per cent of our pastors had less than 10 years of pastoral experience. They needed regular encouragement and guidance.

## **Inward**

My day always began with spending some quiet time with the Lord, reading His Word and praying for all the people under my care. This was my time to sit with Jesus in the quietness. Wherever I travelled, I always made this time a priority. It was my time to listen for the Lord's directions for the day and for my life. After a few years, the pastors and Church leaders came to know me. They understood that my ministry often involved a lot of travelling. I began receiving phone calls at home from six in the morning until midnight most days. This interrupted my time with the Lord. I bought a phone answering machine so that people could leave a message for me and I could determine how urgent the call was. (Today, I will put my mobile phone on silent or leave it outside! ) A little later, there were so many calls that I told everyone to contact me through my secretary and I would reply to them quickly. In this way I was able to safeguard my daily meeting with the King of Kings! Most days I had to drive either to the office or to meet with a leader early in the morning. I found it helpful to write a verse from my morning reading on a card and look at it through the day. In this way I could meditate more deeply on what the Lord had said to me.

## **Inward, Outward and Upward**

Before I entered a meeting with anyone, I always prayed and asked the Lord to clear my mind of all distractions, to help me to listen well, and to focus on what He wanted to do in the meeting. This was my brief inward journey. As I listened, I would often commit the needs that were being expressed to the Lord in my mind. Then, towards the end of the meeting I

would never finish without inviting the other person to join with me in looking upward to Jesus who Himself was the answer to every need.

If the meeting was with my team, then we often paused to reflect and worship Jesus. And we always ended positively by looking upward to the One who had called us, giving Him all the glory for what He was planning to do. Many of these meetings involved personal ministry to or with the people involved – the outward journey.

As I think back, I can clearly recall many times when I was deeply challenged by situations that came my way unexpectedly. Many of these challenges had the potential to upset my balanced life. In addition to my other responsibilities, I served as the leader of a Church planting mission that was faith-based. Even though the Church Planting Mission served the Denomination, it received no funds from the Annual budget. The Church planters were called by Jesus and all went out in faith. The mission was responsible to find the money to fund housing, transport of household goods and provision of necessary facilities on the field. Late one afternoon, the dear brother who served as the administrator of the Mission came to see me in my office. He was deeply concerned. He reported that the next day we had to pay out \$60000 to transport two missionary families to their place of service and to pay for accommodation. We did not have the funds! I looked upward immediately, “Lord, we need your guidance here.” I told my administrator that I would come to the office the following day. He very kindly stated the truth, “Why come in, there is nothing that you can do!” I

replied, "God has never failed. If He is going to fail tomorrow, I want to be here to see it." What I should have said was, "God's work, done in God's way, will never lack God's supply!" (See Philippians 4:19) When I returned to the office the next morning, my heart was full of a quiet confidence. My friend met me at the door. A cheque for \$20000 had come to his desk that morning. It had been delayed in the main office! But where was the remaining \$40000? We prayed together and I felt prompted to ask to see the account books. As we leafed through the various pages together, we discovered a record of two gifts that had been given two years before. They had not been used and they had been given to meet the very purpose of our project that day. There were two amounts of \$20000 - total of \$40000. God had indeed proven His faithfulness! Together we looked up to our miracle working God and praised Him!

## **Maintaining the balance while preaching**

Sometimes in the evening I had a preaching appointment following the day's activities. I knew that if I rushed from the day's activities into a time of speaking for the Lord, then my mind was not properly focused on the task. So my plan to prepare to speak would firstly involve making time to retreat and to go over my message to ensure it was clear in my mind. Then secondly, I needed to sit for some time at the feet of Jesus. (The Inward journey). I asked Him to try me and see if there was any wicked way in me, to clear my mind of all unnecessary thoughts, and to fill me anew with His Holy Spirit. Then I would go Upward to the Throne Room of Heaven. I could only speak with the love and the authority of the Lord

Jesus when I depended on the Holy Spirit to do His work of conviction and revelation. I know that I need God's miracles if I am to represent Him! I prefer, if possible, not to become distracted by talking to anyone before I speak. As others worship, I give myself freely to the Spirit of worship so I am in tune with Him before I say a word. Then, as I speak, I try to maintain the Inward (listening to God,) Upward (pleading with God to work,) and the Outward journeys speaking out of a heart filled with love for Jesus and His people. I have not always succeeded in maintaining the balance. When I have finished preaching, then it is the time to be available to people who may need some ministry.

## **Finishing each day on the Upward Journey**

At the end of the day I have always made it a point to return to the Lord with a thankful heart. Even if the day has been difficult, He remains faithful and unchanged!

## **Now what about You?**

Not all of my readers will be called to the same responsibilities that I had. Some of you may work in an office or school. Others may be working in management or the medical field. I am sure that you all have your own story to tell. Whatever your calling, God wants you to make sure that you stay in balance. Remember, wobbly wheels are inefficient and can even lead to accidents. Where does your life need some repairs today? Do not allow your busyness to make you into a person who is no Heavenly use. I pray that now you will make the

commitment to live a balanced life so Jesus can be honoured in you! To Him be all the glory!

1. What has Jesus said or allowed to happen in your life to get your attention?
2. What issue, habit or event is Jesus highlighting for you that demands you think deeply about it? What was the root of this and what is the fruit that is visible?
3. Have you made mistakes that need to be corrected? Do you need to change? What will you do to grow to maturity because of this time?
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