

# *Victorious Mindsets*

**By Steve Backlund**

*I dedicate this book to my wonderful wife.  
Thank you, Wendy, for over thirty years of in-  
spiring me to discover the goodness of God in a  
way I never thought I could.*

**Acknowledgements**

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## About The Author

*Steve Backlund is known for his wisdom and practical insights on “how to do life.” The students in our ministry school, Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry, love him because he always leaves them encouraged and refreshed in their vision. He has an unusual gift to take the mundane and make it exciting, and to take the familiar and make it new. **Bill Johnson, Bethel Church, Redding, CA** - Author of When Heaven Invades Earth*

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## Other Books by Steve Backlund

**Igniting Faith in 40 Days** – Written with Wendy, this book is ideal for a 40-day negativity fast and to pour “spiritual gasoline” on your faith and hope.

**Cracks in the Foundation** – This writing examines the negative effects of religious tradition that neutralizes the power of God’s promises. Its teachings will repair cracks in your faith foundation so that God can build something great through you.

**Possessing Joy** – The joy of the Lord is our strength, and a merry heart is like good medicine. God has called us to serve Him with gladness. This book will give you incredible keys to do so.

**You’re Crazy If You DON’T Talk to Yourself** – LIFE IS IN THE POWER OF THE TONGUE. Jesus did not just THINK His way out of the wilderness and neither can you. He SPOKE TRUTH to invisible forces and to the mindsets that sought to restrict and defeat Him. This book will help you to: 1) speak “life,” 2) overcome word curses, 3) learn how to speak to your soul, 4) set the course of your life by your words, 5) activate the “hearing of faith,” 6) speak TO things and not just pray about them, and 7) prophesy.

## INTRODUCTION

The first teaching in this book, “The Truth Will Make Me Free,” is the best introduction for VICTORIOUS MINDSETS. To wet your appetite, here are some quotes from this book:

- The enemy of our souls hopes we will limit our ministry to times when we feel anointed.
- We will know that our repenting in an area of life is complete when we consistently have glistening hope, based on revelations of God’s goodness.
- We do not go forward by looking backward. We are not called to fix an old life but to find a new life.
- “Steve, how you relate to your leaders will ultimately be how your followers will relate to you when you lead.”
- Ministry does not primarily come from what we know. It comes from who we are.
- Satan “steals, kills and destroys” (John 10:10) because of our ignorance, not because he is powerful.
- We are not transformed by just reading the Bible, but by having our minds renewed with its truths.
- Our ministry of life to others is not giving information, but it is giving imparted grace for them to more easily become victorious in what we have overcome.
- My wife and I started an experimental group a year ago called “Mediocre Anonymous.”

### **You can use this book in the following ways:**

- Read it straight through to get saturated with its truth.
- Read it as a daily devotional alone or with family members.
- Participate in a group study using the book.



## **The Truth Will Make Me Free** **(Overcoming believing in the “zapped” theory)**

“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and **the truth** shall make you free” (John 8:31-32).

There is a difference between believing in Jesus and believing like Jesus. Our Lord told those “who believed Him” that they needed to “know the truth” in order to be free in their life experience. Knowing the truth leads us to believe like Jesus.

I desire and receive prayer from anointed people who can give me an impartation of power, miracles, integrity, blessing or breakthrough. This is an important part of my personal growth plan. It accelerates my life in Christ. **The benefits of such prayer, however, will only last if I believe truth in the area that I was prayed for.** Ultimately, what I believe is more important than the beliefs of the one praying for me. Many experience freedom in a special meeting but cannot maintain it consistently in life because of wrong beliefs about God, others, themselves or their circumstances.

Many are hoping to be “zapped” by an anointed “Super Christian.” Again, there is great benefit in receiving prayer from stronger believers, but there must be greater emphasis placed on changing our mindsets in key areas. Unless we do this, we will be enslaved by lies – no matter how many great meetings we attend.

Jesus said, “The truth shall make you free.” These words are revolutionary. Jesus was free because He believed truth in every area of His life (provision, identity, health, power, personal habits, relationships, etc.) We too are to renew our minds to believe truth in each aspect of our lives. As we do, we will take our freedom beyond a meeting and live it out consistently in our lives. Truly, victorious mindsets will make us free.

## **I Do Small Things in a Great Way**

### **(Overcoming destination disease)**

Helen Keller told the Tennessee Legislature that when she was young, she longed to do great things and could not; so she decided to do small things in a great way. The rest is history.

God's training ground for greater things is everything that is before us right now. **These things may seem small compared to the promises we have been given and are believing for, but our willingness to do them in a "great way" is the key to opening the door to these promises.**

Here is a truth: If we won't do it now, we most likely won't do it then. If we think we are going to kick it in gear when we have a big assignment from God, we are most likely deluded and destined to remain at the level we are at. We must determine to leave mediocrity and do our God-given assignments in a great way.

#### MEDIOCRE WAY

Waiting until tomorrow  
 Selectively respectful  
 Motivated by crisis/pain  
 Complaining  
 Pleasing people  
 Does what is expected  
 Rarely enthusiastic  
 Easily discouraged  
 Rarely encourages  
 Plans to be on time  
 Messy  
 Non-adaptable  
 Thermometer  
 Problems = obstacle

#### GREAT WAY

Today is full of potential  
 High levels of respect  
 Motivated by vision  
 Believing in past prayers  
 Pleasing God  
 Exceeds expectations  
 Regularly enthusiastic  
 Discouragement is enemy  
 Frequently encourages  
 Plans to be early  
 Takes time to organize  
 Very adaptable  
 Thermostat  
 Problems = opportunity

## **Having Done All I Know to Do, I Stand** **(Overcoming being drained by unresolved situations)**

“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, **and having done all, to stand**” (Ephesians 6:13).

Every person has unresolved issues. Whether it is a lingering problem with another person, a circumstance that hasn't changed for years, an emotional struggle or habit that keeps re-appearing, or a new tough situation that has just emerged; we all have challenges before us. It's in these that we learn “to stand.”

When faced with unsettled matters, scripture teaches us two steps to take: 1) Do all we know to do. Seek God for wisdom. Take the steps He leads you to take in action, prayer and faith. 2) After doing all we know to do, STAND. Standing is purposing to not be moved from the belief that God is working in the situation in a mighty way. **Standing is resting, trusting, thanking and obeying the last thing that God said about the circumstance.**

I have found it too easy in my life to fret over what is now out of my control. Yes, if there is more to do, by all means I need to do it. But if I don't have a clear word on further steps to take, I must stand in the midst of uncertainty and unresolved issues. This strong mindset is vital for our development into a strong Christian and is a powerful leadership quality.

The Apostle Paul tells us to “take up” the full of armor God. This is something we all can do. We do this not only to stand against the devil, but also so that we are “able to **withstand in the evil day**.” The evil day represents those times where we are facing a seeming onslaught of uncertainty and tests. This “evil day” can happen to us personally, as a family, a church or even as a nation. Whatever the case, after we have done what we know to do, then we STAND in the midst of the “junk”, knowing that God is powerfully working in the unseen realm on our behalf. Praise the Lord!

## I Am Anointed

### (Overcoming waiting for the right feeling to minister)

“But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you . . .” (1 John 2:27).

Victorious Christians believe they are strong, even when they don't feel strong. They have learned they continually have an anointing (a divine influence on others) that is ready to be released. They function from faith rather than emotion.

Leaders are thermostats, not thermometers. They set the spiritual temperature, not reflect it. They rise above the mood or anointing level in a place (or in themselves) and set a new standard. They understand that going to higher levels requires swimming upstream against the flow of fear, self-doubt, past failures, people's opinions and many inner lies. They overcome merely reflecting the status quo and believe they are anointed to bring positive change no matter how they feel. This attribute is an important aspect of what ultimately makes them a leader in the first place.

**The enemy of our souls hopes we will limit our ministry to times when we feel anointed.** Yes, we need to learn to be led by the Spirit (which often includes our emotions), but eventually we will need to believe we have an anointing that “abides” (does not come and go). Our faith must be in the **fact** of our anointing, not in the **feeling** of it. This belief creates consistency in such things as praying for others, sharing Christ, teaching and prophesying.

It is not uncommon for powerful impartations to be given by those who had little or no manifestation of that power themselves. They are like the infamous Typhoid Mary who infected many with typhoid fever while never having the symptoms in her own life. Like her, those in Christ are carriers of an anointing that is contagious (even when it appears to not be affecting us at all).

Know this: If you believe you are powerful in the Lord, you will be powerful. If you believe you are a revivalist at all times, revival fires will be left in your wake. As you believe you have an anointing that abides, you will impact the world for Christ.

## I Am Called of God

### (Overcoming being regularly disappointed)

“Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord *is*” (Ephesians 5:17).

Many years ago, the Lord spoke to my heart and said, “Steve, you are regularly disappointed by people and circumstances because you don’t understand the nature of My calling on your life. I have called you to bring your light into places that need more light (in other words – into places where there is darkness or negative things happening). Don’t be surprised, therefore, if you find things not as well as you thought they would be. Remember, you are part of the solution. **I call you to focus on contributing instead of trying to ‘get’ your life from where I send you.**”

Everything changes when we believe we are called to go somewhere or be something to a specific group of people. A call creates confidence that we are in God’s will (which generates the power to persevere and overcome obstacles). Without a sense of being “sent” from heaven, we will most likely be on an emotional roller coaster (with our happiness based on circumstances rather than having a godly purpose). Confusion and discouragement will result because we won’t have the proper mindset concerning problems in our midst. Many leave the ministry because of disappointment in the circumstances where they are called. Living as a called one gives us a victorious mindset to face challenges with faith, hope and love.

Victorious people know their assignment and role in the season they are in. It may be a role in the limelight; or it may be one behind the scenes where few, if any, know they are obeying the voice of the Lord. They might appear successful to others, or they might not. These victorious world changers refuse to withdraw from their call because of negative emotions or negative circumstances. They have overcome much and learned to stay in faith, hope and love. They have learned a major key to victorious living.

## **My Prayers Are Powerful and Effective**

### **(Overcoming vain repetitions)**

“And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words” (Matthew 6:7).

Sometimes we are critical of those who pray the same prayers (often written) over and over. “That is lifeless religious tradition,” we might say. “That is vain repetition. I am glad that my prayers are Spirit led.”

The Lord, however, showed me that I was guilty of what I judged others for. “Therefore you are inexcusable . . . who judge . . . for you who judge practice the same things” (Rom. 2:1). While my vain repetitions were different from those I judged, I was still guilty of thinking I would be heard for my “many words” rather than praying in faith. “Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive *them*, and you will have *them*” (Mark 11:24).

I sensed the Lord was saying, “Steve, ask Me less for things and increase thanking Me for how I am working mightily in what you prayed for yesterday (and in the past).” The voice continued, “You pray about the same things over and over without any real expectation that your prayers have done anything positive. You are constantly looking for immediate results to make you believe. Steve, believe and you will see.”

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7). This “with thanksgiving” praying and supplication will bring “a peace that surpasses understanding.” That is a victorious mindset.

Am I saying that we should never pray about the same thing twice? No, there will be situations where we need to do so. However, we must stop the tendency of unbelieving repetitious prayer. So, let’s ask less and thank more concerning things we have already prayed about. It will create a sense of dominion and victory in our hearts.

## **My Soul Is Prospering**

**(Overcoming feeling powerless)**

“Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers” (3 John 2).

Soul prosperity is ultimately more important than receiving a blessing or having a prayer answered. If our soul is moving toward wholeness, we will walk in increasing inner victory even if we are facing much uncertainty and many unresolved issues. And this soul health will be the main catalyst in bringing long-term positive change to these issues, our lives and our descendents.

**Our response to things is almost always more important than the thing that is happening.** Negative reactions like fear, jealousy, anger or manipulation may produce short-term results; but they will lead to inner poverty and ultimately to circumstantial bondage. Those who think “long term” realize that their future quality of life is largely dependent on an increasing prospering of their soul in the Lord (e.g. Psalms 42:5).

I remember late one evening years ago when my wife and teenage daughter convinced me to get a motel room in the middle of Nevada because snow had closed the road ahead. I was resistant to the idea and wanted to take a three-hour alternate route because I did not want to spend the money on a motel. (Yes, it was dumb!) I was overruled and my soul was not prospering! As I lay in bed with my back to my wife, I sensed God ask, “Steve, what is wrong?” So I told Him. He said, “Steve, I can give you the money back, but your poverty spirit will create lack in your future (so My replacing the money won’t help much in the long run). Let go of your small thinking and your poor concept of Me.”

My life was changed that night. I determined to pursue the soul prosperity of 3 John 2. I started to believe what John wrote – that my future quality of life would increase in direct proportion to the level of my soul prosperity.

Soul prosperity is evidenced by inner faith, hope and love; and it can be summed up by Romans 15:13, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Let’s go for it!

## **I Am Going Forward in Life**

### **(Overcoming distraction and spiritual laziness)**

“And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Why do you cry to Me? **Tell the children of Israel to go forward**” (Exodus 14:15).

There is a time to pray; and surprisingly, there is a time not to pray. This was the experience of the Children of Israel in Exodus 14, and it is also often our experience.

A stationary train can be prevented from moving forward by a small board, but a moving train can go through a brick wall. Like locomotives, “moving people” create breakthrough in and around them. This “breaker anointing” exists in the lives of forward moving people.

Back in the 70’s, I heard someone say that he found a similarity in discouraged pastors – they were not reading inspirational books. He said that he had not found any pastor reading this type of material who was depressed in ministry. It is amazing how even one sentence read or heard can change our whole outlook.

Those who exercise or focus on healthy eating habits tend to have a “going forward” life attitude that spills over into every area of life. I just read an article that stated that exercise helps decrease the likelihood of drug or alcohol addictions. This report said that something actually happens in the brain through exercise that makes the “need” for drugs or alcohol much less. Truly, moving forward in one area of life positively affects more things than we can imagine. Just as the Red Sea parted when the children of Israel went forward, things will open up for us, too. To live this out, here are some suggestions for going forward in your life:

- Have a daily time with God (Bible, prayer, devotional, etc.)
- Regularly listen to worship music or audio teachings.
- Go back to school. Get your degree. Acquire new skills.
- Find an exercise buddy and exercise regularly.
- Take one day a month to organize and plan.
- Attend marriage and family enrichment times at least yearly.
- Have special times to seek the Lord.
- Read inspirational books.

## **I Run at My Goliaths (Overcoming procrastination)**

“So it was, when the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, that David hurried and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine” (1 Samuel 17:48).

David’s passion was demonstrated when he ran at Goliath. He did not hesitate, but aggressively confronted the obstacle in his way. He ran at his problem and not away from it. He understood that procrastination would just make the problem bigger (and Goliath was pretty big already!)

I have a question for you: Are you running from things or to things? Those with victorious mindsets are learning to run at those things that are difficult to face. They know that procrastination drains power from life. They know that it usually won’t get easier later, so we must “bite the bullet” now and face our giants.

People who chronically procrastinate are more prone to depression because there is a constant awareness that responsibilities have not been met. This depression causes more things to go undone, which causes more depression and so on. Many would feel better (and have more strength for life) if they developed the habit of running at things that should be done.

There can be many different reasons and roots for procrastination (fear, distraction, etc). We thank God that there can be healing for all of them. One way to bring this healing is to move toward the fear and distraction by:

1. Making lists of things that need to be done and getting in the habit of doing harder things early in the day.
2. Communicating with people about things needing closure (for example, money owed, promises unfulfilled, thanks or apologies not given, etc.)
3. Ask the Lord why you are procrastinating, and then get His perspective and strength to overcome it.

## **If This Doesn't Work Out, Something Better is Ahead**

**(Overcoming hanging on to dead things)**

If we are not careful, we can live in fear that what we have will be taken from us. This can cause us to look to jobs, people, a ministry position or our reputation as the source for our future. This dread of losing things puts our lives in a defensive posture of constantly looking for threats to our future; rather than looking for possibilities, open doors and “suddenlies.” (And what we are looking at will largely set the course for our future.)

Once when I was struggling with an apparent lack of success in a certain place, I sensed God say to me, “If this does not work out, don't worry. Something better will come.” As I heard this, I realized I had not believed that better things would come. I felt I had to hold on to what I had. From that time, I have purposed to build the “muscle” of **optimism** (which is faith in the goodness of God.)

This truth can be risky to teach on. It is like teaching on grace (because one could manipulate the grace message into a license to sin). There is also a risk of abusing “better things are coming” by not seeing the tremendous value of working through tough situations. However, I will take a chance in presenting this vital mindset.

**Believing good things are coming** is really another word for hope. Hope can be defined as “the confident expectation that good is coming”. Hope is an overall optimism about the future. It is rooted in a revelation of God's goodness and His promises.

Hope expects and knows that things will ultimately work out in a good way. It views setbacks and failure as learning experiences, not as a statement about who we are. It knows that our future is ultimately not dependent on people or favorable circumstances, but it is based on our believing God is a good God. And we even look to God to bring our believing to maturity. “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2).

Say with me out loud, “If this does not work out, something better is coming!” Praise the Lord. Praise His mighty name.

## **I Live to Plant into the Future** **(Overcoming being short-sighted)**

“A good man leaves an **inheritance** to his children’s children” (Proverbs 13:22).

My dad told me to leave things better than I found them. For instance, on a picnic he wanted us to not only clean up our things, but also any mess left by previous people (so that others would have a great place to come to in the future).

Daddy God also tells us, “Improve every environment you are a part of – every meeting you attend, every house you live in, every ministry you are a part of and every relationship you have. Leave an inheritance of better things to those who come after you.”

One way to do this is to “not despise the day of small beginnings” (Zechariah 4:10). It is easy to so desperately want revival’s manifestation now that we are blind to the magnificent things that God is beginning and increasing around us. We can forget that every great person started as a baby; every revival started with tiny choices; every powerful church began as a small group; and every truth that has resulted in thirty-fold, sixty-fold or a hundred-fold fruit had a time when only a small minority even believed the truth was biblical.

Those who walk in victorious mindsets live in a tension between dissatisfaction and faith. There is dissatisfaction because we’re not experiencing all Jesus has promised. There is faith in knowing that we are improving things (leaving an inheritance), so that our children (both natural and spiritual) can bring God’s truths and experiences to full maturity. This tension between desperation and satisfaction is vital for us to work out in order to be victorious in life.

“Whatever is not from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23). We are to believe we are making a difference by planting into the spirit realm through the powerful weapons God has given us. As we do, we can have a victorious mindset that propels us to leave things better than we found them – and that will make “Daddy God” happy.

## I Have Healthy Long-Term Relationships (Overcoming being disconnected)

“Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive **the crown of life** which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:12).

I remember praying as a young Christian, “Lord, I want to be a man of God!” He said, “Okay, get married and have a family. It will be more beneficial to you in the long run than Bible college ever could be.” Christian maturity is enhanced when we commit to long-term relationships in family, church and elsewhere.

Now I don’t want to minimize the importance of Christian education or seminary schools, but **ministry does not primarily come from what we know. It comes from who we are.** This is what James was talking about in James 1:12.

When we find the biblical “keys” to deal with the challenges of life (endure temptation), we are given a crown of life. Traditional thinking says that this is something we will receive in heaven, but I believe it is something more – it is the ability to impart life into whatever we have overcome. Our ministry of life to others is not giving information, but it is giving **imparted grace** for them to more easily become victorious in what we have overcome. This is especially true in our relationships.

We must realize that successful, long-term relationships are a goal for all of us to pursue to impart grace (the crown of life). These people in our lives can confirm the genuineness of our Christianity, but also our healthy endurance in these relationships gives us a needed crown of life to give away. Yes, we recognize that there can be relationship breakdowns that are not our fault, but **our pursuing the keys to long-term heart connections with people will do more for our personal growth and ministry influence than we could possibly imagine.** It is more important than Bible college.

We are called to impart life, not just share exciting things. We not only want to be revivalists, but we long to infuse life into individuals and families. Let’s give away a crown of life that creates practical success wherever we go.

## **I Encounter God by Faith, Not Feelings**

**(Overcoming the “something is wrong with me” syndrome)**

I remember when I was a “joy-impaired” and “encounter-impaired” Christian. This was highlighted to me during the mid to late 1990’s when there was a fresh move of God on many lives. During that time, multitudes experienced God in dramatic, life changing ways; but when I would receive prayer, nothing happened. I saw others right by me touched powerfully (shaking, falling, seeing visions, and other ecstatic experiences), but I was like the Rock of Gibraltar. It was frustrating.

The devil would “encourage” me at that time by saying, “There is something wrong with you! Actually, there is something seriously wrong with you. If there wasn’t, then you would be having encounters like everyone else.” I would meditate on those words, believe them, and then try harder to experience God. Things though only got worse.

The Lord finally broke through my condemnation and disappointment. He told me, “Steve, of course there is something wrong with you. That’s why Jesus died for you. Get over it and trust me to take care of anything dangerously wrong with you. And realize that you are misunderstanding how to receive from Me. **You are trying to receive by feeling instead of faith.** It won’t work if you do it that way. You must believe you are being touched powerfully even if you feel nothing. If you believe; then the feelings, experiences and encounters will come.” Oh, how I needed those words, and I am sure that many of you reading this need those words, too.

I followed this heavenly instruction. I purposed to receive by faith everything that was prayed over me. I didn’t care any more if I felt things or not. It was a whole new victorious mindset that God gave me.

I finally relaxed and received. The amazing thing that happened was that I actually began to have my own experiences (because experience follows faith). It is wonderful to trust God!

## **I Am Repenting to Glistening Hope** (Overcoming real spiritual strongholds)

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).

I remember reading the words “glistening hope” by Francis Frangipane (see [The Three Battlegrounds](#)). He was discussing our need to have “glistening hope” in every area of life (and if we don’t have this in an aspect of life, then we are believing a lie in that area and are in danger of having a stronghold of the enemy there).

This truth rocked my world. I did not have much hope in my life and certainly not “glistening hope.” I was being set up for a great journey into the importance of hope that would change my life.

“We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Romans 5:3-4). This passage leads us to Christian maturity. First, we “glory” (rejoice) in tribulation. Secondly, we continue (persevere) in this glorying. Third, we grow in Christian character (making good decisions). One would think that this character is the ultimate goal in Christian living, but it isn’t.

Our goal is ultimately hope (the confident expectation that good is coming). **Our destination is not good actions, but a way of thinking called hope.** It is the soil that faith and obedience put their roots into. Without hope, there can be little positive change in life.

“Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.” Repentance is a change of thinking that leads to a change in actions. It is not a one-time event, but a lifestyle. We will know that our repenting in an area of life is complete when we consistently have glistening hope based on revelations of God’s goodness.

**The kingdom of God moves forward primarily by what we believe, not by what we do.** “Glistening hope” is a kingdom way of thinking that is foundational for having victorious mindsets.

## There is a Way

### (Overcoming hopelessness and mediocrity)

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make **the way of escape . . .**” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

**The above scripture gives hope like no other verse in the Bible.** First, we are told that the challenges we face are “common to man.” Others have and are receiving grace for victory in the same situations. Secondly, it is revealed that God will be faithful to us in the middle of this test. Thirdly, we are told there is “the way of escape” regarding our “temptation.” This truth is the greatest hope bringer of this passage. Let’s explore this further.

**God says that there is a way to get from where you are to where He has promised you will be.** It does not matter how hopeless things appear. It does not matter if your own decisions have put you in a “pickle barrel.” Even if another person has messed up your life, God has a way to get you from disaster into the blessing of His will. Now that is good news! All that we have to do is ask in faith, and we have it.

There is something more to see about the truth that God will “make the way of escape.” Too often we limit this to getting out of a problem or out of a crisis (which is glorious in itself!), but **there is also a way to get out of the temptation to stay mediocre or average in life or ministry.** Actually, the revelation of this is more important than finding our way out of problems.

My wife and I started an experimental group a year ago called “Mediocre Anonymous.” It was founded on the belief that too many of us live between crisis and mediocrity (and only get “urgent” to find solutions when there is an emergency situation). The people of this group are part of a new breed of Christians who are desperate and full of faith in finding the way into their destinies. Again, let’s ask in faith; and grace will be given to us to know it and walk in it.

## I Love Life

### (Overcoming working for God, instead of working with God)

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. **I have come that they may have life . . . more abundantly**” (John 10:10). “He who would **love life** and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil . . .” (1 Peter 3:10).

**Do you love life?** I am not asking if you love God, but something different. Do you truly love to be alive? Peter lets us know that there is a pathway to “loving life.” Jesus also said that He came to give us abundant life, not just eternal life.

The Greek word for *abundant* in John 10:10 is “perissos” which means “superabundant (in quantity) or superior (in quality); excessive; advantage; exceedingly; very highly; and beyond measure.” If we combine any of these words with “life,” we realize we have been promised something wonderful for living now.

**One main way to grow in loving life is to focus on working with God instead of for God.** This perspective will help us be child-like, which will enable us to see life as full of possibilities, adventure and opportunities (because we are friends with a good and big God). Those with a “working for God” mindset can find it difficult to love life to its fullest because of a fear of displeasing God and being ultimately punished for not measuring up.

“Working with God” can be easier with our strengths than with our failures because we wrongly believe we must “get our act together” before reconnecting with God. This mistaken thinking is at the root of why many Christians don’t “love life.” Hebrews 4:15-16 is an antidote to this error and an igniter to loving life. “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses . . . Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace . . . and find grace to help in time of need.” Even in our weaknesses, the Father delights in giving grace (divine enablement), so we can experience the abundant life. Now that is good news!

## **I Don't Have To Be Perfect** **(Overcoming chronic unworthiness)**

The next time you feel like God can't use you, just remember that . . .

Abraham was too old  
Isaac was a daydreamer  
Jacob was a liar  
Joseph was abused  
Moses had a stuttering problem  
Gideon was afraid  
Rahab was a prostitute  
Jeremiah and Timothy were too young  
David had an affair and was a murderer  
Elijah was suicidal  
Jonah ran from God  
Naomi was a widow  
Job went bankrupt  
Peter denied Christ (3 times!)  
The Disciples fell asleep while praying  
Martha worried about everything  
The Samaritan woman was divorced (more than once)  
Zaccheus was too small  
Paul was too religious  
Timothy had an ulcer...  
AND...Lazarus was dead!

A poor background does not disqualify us from a great future or to be used of God powerfully. Everything can change today. Obviously we want to move out of dysfunctional behavior, but praise God, we rejoice in knowing there is hope for all.

## **I Have a Great Work to Do** **(Overcoming being offended)**

“Sanballat and Geshen sent to me, saying, ‘Come, let us meet together . . . in the plan of Ono.’ But they thought to do me harm. So I sent messengers to them; saying, ‘I am doing a great work so that I should not come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?’” (Neh. 6:2-3).

Nehemiah was asked to meet with his enemies in the valley of Ono to “discuss things.” (The name “Ono” should be a tip off that it wasn’t a good idea!) In response to this request, he said, “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.” (He had filled his life with such a positive focus – doing a great work – that he had no room or time to play mind games with the enemy.)

Our adversary is constantly inviting us to meet with him in valleys of “Ono.” One of the things he wants to talk with us about is how we are justified in being offended by the actions of others. Being offended means that we feel insulted, mistreated, snubbed, or disrespected. All of us will experience things like these. It is important, however, to realize that the mistreatment itself does not cause the offense; but we choose to be offended when we place more value on protecting ourselves than for the call we have and the assignment we have been given.

Indeed, forward-moving people are less apt to notice wrong things done to them. Their big vision causes them to not even be aware of many of these offenses, and they know that being easily offended causes a “going down” from the high place of God.

Do you sense God has given you a great assignment to devote yourself to? If you don’t, you will be tempted to go to the valley of Ono to dwell on offense rather than on God’s vision for your life.

## **God's Kindness Leads to Repentance** **(Overcoming disbelief that we have abundant life)**

“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” (Romans 2:4).

God is not angry with us. He has already released His wrath (anger) on Christ at the cross. However, if we believe that God's plan is to primarily motivate us by His displeasure, then it will be difficult to move toward Christian maturity.

Romans 2:4 tell us that the goodness of God will lead us to repentance. (Other versions say it is the “kindness of God” that leads to this repentance.) Many believe though that our repentance leads to God's kindness, not the other way around.

What do we say then about the many biblical passages (especially in the Old Testament) that seemingly reveal a God whose anger is not appeased until there is a change in behavior? Obviously space does not allow for a detailed theological discussion of this, but let me give you an idea to consider.

Imagine a young teenager caught smoking by his parents – parents who greatly desire that their child succeed in life. This father and mother know he is not mature enough to understand the intrinsic dangers of smoking; so they might say something like, “If I ever catch you smoking again, you don't have to worry about tobacco being the thing to kill you.” This fear of “wrath” can motivate him to proper behavior, but the parents are also working on their relationship for a more mature response in future situations.

Understanding God's kindness and goodness will cause us to want to pursue a relationship with Him that will change us from inside out (because we will be responding from love rather than fear). This relationship will ignite us to the abundant life that Jesus promised (John 10:10). We will no longer be focused on performance, but rather on experiencing newer and deeper dimensions of our heart connection with God (His kindness). This will change our behavior like nothing else will.

## **I Can Adapt Well to Diverse Situations & People (Overcoming the need for ideal circumstances to thrive)**

“ . . . I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things . . . I **can do all things through Christ who strengthens me**” (Philippians 4:11-13).

Every believer who has heard Philippians 4:13 rejoices in its promise of supernatural ability and strength. It is wonderful to know that there are no limits on what we can do in Christ. Even so, I would guess that most Christians don't know what the context is for this great promise.

**Paul is talking in Philippians 4 about being effectively and supernaturally adaptable to the different extremes of life.** He says we have divine power to succeed whether we are living in plenty (abounding) or living in lack (abased). This is not just about finances; it is about every area of life.

**We want to avoid having only a narrow set of circumstances in which we can be really victorious.** We have been given divine enablement to be powerful and influential in every situation. This would include times of financial abundance or lack, under different kind of leaders, in various kinds of churches, in diverse seasons of life and in different geographical locations (“everywhere and in all things,” as Paul said).

It is not only varied circumstances that we are to adjust to, but we also must be able to relate to all kinds of different people in a winning way. If we can only succeed in relationships with people of one type of personality; then we will be limited in our influence, in what we can learn from others, and in future open doors.

There is a way to thrive in every circumstance or geographical location. Today's history makers find a way to bloom where they are currently planted. Praise God that we can truly do so “through Christ who strengthens us.”

## **I Do Everything in Faith**

### **(Overcoming doubt in decision-making)**

“One person esteems *one* day above another; another esteems every day *alike*. **Let each be fully convinced in his own mind**” (Romans 14:6).

There are many things in scripture that are indisputably clear concerning what is right and wrong, but there are other matters that are left up to the convictions of the individual believer. Romans 14 speaks to this truth concerning such matters as what foods to eat, whether to drink wine or not, what day to observe the Sabbath, etc. Paul says in this chapter that we are to make our own conclusions in these matters in a way that is “unto the Lord” and not a “stumbling block” to others.

**God has not created us as robots. He allows us freedom to draw our own conclusions in many aspects of life.** Our beliefs will differ from others. Two believers could have contrary convictions on a matter, but both could be right in God’s eyes.

Romans 14 ends with “whatever is not from faith is sin” (verse 23). The opposite is also true. “Whatever is of faith is blessed.” In the things where scripture is not dogmatic, the question is not “what does God think about this?” but “what do I think?” For instance, if I buy the “wrong car” in faith, it has a greater likelihood of being blessed than the “right car” bought in doubt. Identifying and removing doubt in ourselves is one of the most important things we can do.

“Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.” This has incredible potential for power in our lives – if we harness what Paul is talking about. I speak wisdom over you to apprehend this.

## **I Do Everything in Faith (Part 2)**

### **(Overcoming doubt and compartmentalizing our lives)**

A main ingredient of a victorious mindset is to act and think in faith in each area of life. Too often we relegate faith to the so-called spiritual parts of life or only in response to difficulties and needs. It is a mistake to not intentionally live by faith in all we do.

Romans 14 teaches us to choose our Sabbath day by faith, to eat certain foods by faith and to do everything else by faith. Verse 23 of this chapter tells us, “whatever is not from faith is sin.” Conversely, **whatever is from faith will become a positive force in our lives and for those around us.** We must note where we have doubt and where we act without releasing faith.

Something wonderful happens when we choose to do everything by faith. It propels us to live our lives believing that God is with us in **all** of life’s situations. We will attend a specific church by faith, buy things by faith, attend school by faith, take time off by faith, have intimacy with our spouse by faith, move geographically by faith, minister in faith, read this book in faith, worship in faith, create boundaries in relationships by faith, tithe and give offerings in faith, and so on.

Yes, we realize that “there is a way that seems right unto a man and the end of that way is death” (Proverbs 16:25); but even so, we must come to the place of having confidence in everything we do and believe. We can do so through Scripture, through healthy relationships with strong believers, and by burning with passion into a mature relationship with Jesus Christ.

**The elimination of doubt and being double-minded in life’s situations cannot be overemphasized.** We are vulnerable to the devil in whatever area we habitually have doubt. It is vital to go after the root of our doubt and start living by faith.

It is also needful to consciously release our faith in normal activities and believe that we are making a difference, that God is with us in what we are doing, and that what we are doing is right and blessed.

Let’s live in faith and by faith like never before.

## **Today's Events Equip Me for My Future**

**(Overcoming not seeing the value of what I am doing now)**

“Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matthew 25:23).

I have a word for you from God: **It is not just about now, but more importantly, it is about what you are becoming.** God is preparing you for something greater. There will be a divine convergence between your preparation today and a big need or opportunity tomorrow.

I am not saying that we use today's assignment merely as a stepping-stone to greater things. If that is our attitude, then we have not learned true faithfulness anyway. It takes a person of faith and vision to know that their faithful response to today will make them dynamically usable to God in the days ahead.

With that being understood, we can then see every dimension of our lives as preparation for “ruling over many things” that Jesus spoke about in this Parable of the Talents. I am being prepared in my love, consistency, emotional strength, people skills, relationships with others, finances, releasing the Holy Spirit around me, relating to authority, handling difficult situations, maintaining enthusiasm in dead situations, finding solutions for problems, keeping my mouth shut when I need to, and in many other ways.

“Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18). **The more vision we have for the future, the more power we will have for the present.** The belief that God is preparing us for important things ahead gives us a purpose and strength to successfully live today in every way.

Say, “I am being prepared for great things in the days ahead.” You know what? You really are.

## **I Am Part of God's Genealogy for Revival** **(Overcoming feeling insignificant)**

"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6).

One Christmas season I was reading hurriedly through the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew. As I was waiting to get to the "good stuff," I sensed God speak to me. "Steve, you are part of the genealogy of the great end-time revival. You are also included in many other big things that have been done and will be done."

As I read this genealogy, a couple of things struck me. First, none of those mentioned really knew that their highest purpose was for something that would occur after they died. They had a seed in them to pass on that was greater than any obvious assignment. Second, they lived in varied spiritual climates. Some lived in a revival culture, while others were living in backslidden times. Even so, they all were vital in God's big picture of things.

We once helped a church during a tough time when they were without a pastor and had only four people attending. We sent preachers over on Sundays and helped in various other ways. During this six-month period, there were times it looked like the church should be closed. We believed otherwise and persevered. Now they have a new pastor, attendance has skyrocketed, souls are being saved and children are being touched. Praise God!

We were part of the genealogy for that church and community. Our names are written in heaven; and when the full harvest of their destiny is realized, we will be celebrated with the "Josephs and Marys" who participated in the fulfillment of a promise.

**Few see the significance of what they are doing while they are doing it**, but we can walk in a victorious mindset if we realize that we are a part of a chain of events in many different situations. It is like a relay race where only the last runner crosses the finish line, but all the other runners on the team receive the same prize. So, by faith, let's "plant" and "water" like never before. God has promised He will give the increase. We will make a difference.

## **My Past Does Not Have to Determine My Future (Overcoming the “if only” mentality)**

“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy . . .” (1 Timothy 1:13-14).

**Satan has an old lie that has worked on many Christians.** It’s this: “You cannot have a quality future because of the bad decisions you’ve made in the past.” Certainly it is important to seek to make good choices in life (we avoid many hardships by doing things God’s way), but there is hope after mistakes.

We all have regrets. Everyone wishes that they could do some things over again. **Many are plagued by thoughts of if only** . . . “If only I had gone further in school. If only I had not been in that relationship. If only I had not married so and so. If only I had not started doing drugs. If only I had not gotten into debt. If only I had not let anger get the best of me. If only I had served God when I was younger. If only I had not made **that** choice.”

**I am sure the Apostle Paul had big regrets about persecuting and killing Christians before he was saved.** His actions brought great pain to others. Even so, he was able to overcome his shame and live his life to the fullest. So can we.

We must adopt a core belief that our past does not have to determine our future. We must believe God is able to still take us into a great destiny even if we have blown it. Regret means that we are more focused on the past than the future. **We do not go forward by looking backward.** We are not called to fix an old life, but to find a new life.

It may sound harsh, but it is a sin to live in regret. We can and must get over the “if only” syndrome. If there is something to make right concerning our past, let’s do it; but then let’s go on to our future. If Paul found grace to do it, so can we.

## **My Gift Will Make Room for Me** **(Overcoming the fear of being overlooked)**

“A man’s gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men” (Proverbs 18:6).

The Apostle Paul had a word from God in Acts 27 that the ship should not leave harbor, but he was ignored. His life and the lives of others were temporarily messed up by those who ignored him. Later, Paul’s gift came to the forefront and saved the day. He had not allowed his earlier rejection to sour his outlook. He “stayed on the ship,” not just physically but also in his relationships and in his attitude. He trusted God that his gift would make room for him and be recognized by the key people in his life.

Believing the promise that our gift will make room for us will help us to rest in the midst of rejection or unfair treatment (knowing that our destiny depends more upon our enlarging our gifts than whether others see our gifts now). This attitude allows us to passionately pursue our gifts and calling and not be sidetracked by seasons of feeling overlooked or unappreciated.

Many great people in the Bible, like Paul on the ship, had times where they had to trust (in the face of contrary looking circumstances) that their gift would eventually be valued and needed. Moses was alone on the back side of the desert for 40 years. Joseph was forgotten in prison by one who said he would remember him. David was called to be king by God but mistreated and held back by an authority figure over him. Daniel was forgotten by different leaders/kings for long periods of time. There are many other biblical examples of this kind of experience as well.

A proper response to feeling passed over is a lesson for all to learn. Those who don’t do so will unwittingly hinder the release of their gifts (while all the time blaming others and even God). Yes, there may be times when we need to make changes that will allow us to have greater opportunities for open doors, but we better be sure that we are not running from a deep work of God in us that in the long run will open bigger doors for our gifts (if we stay put and serve the Lord with gladness).

## **I Realize That There Are Few “Normal” Weeks** (Overcoming the lie of thinking a lot of activity = progress)

**I have come to the conclusion that there are approximately four “normal” weeks in a year** (in which there are no major unexpected happenings or that are not extremely busy). These “normal” weeks are what we envision when we set goals, plan weekly routines and arrange our daily habits. They are few.

These rough weeks caused me to have an excuse for setting aside my strategy of personal development. “This has been a tough week,” I would say. “Things have been very hectic. I have been busy doing important things.” This is fine on occasion, but I realized that almost every week was like this. I was under a deception of believing that a lot of activity meant I was moving forward in God’s destiny for me. That was wrong thinking.

I am now realizing that **those who grow radically in Christ are those who have found a way to be consistent in powerful habits even in the toughest of times**. Being busy is not enough, but we must focus on following through on repeated “customs” in our activity. Daniel exemplified this when he was commanded to pray only to the king or he would die. “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, **as was his custom since early days**” (Daniel 6:10). Daniel had made a commitment to certain life producing “customs,” and he was not going to let even the threat of death stop these.

Remember, there are few normal weeks. There will always be a reason why we can’t attend church, spend time with God, finish that goal, keep a commitment, minister life to people, be joyful, treat others with respect, or to exercise and eat right.

Every strategy for personal growth must include wisdom to help us follow through on our customs during difficult and busy weeks. The quality of our lives is based on the quality of our commitments in these things. Like Daniel, let’s find the keys to staying focused on the goals God has given us. We can do it.

## **I Have Grace to Make Rock Decisions, Not Sand Ones**

**(Overcoming doing things my way instead of God's way)**

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who **built his house on the rock**: and . . . it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who **built his house on the sand**: and the rain descended . . . and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall” (Matthew 7:24-27).

God has given us the freedom to build our lives (our house) on rock or on sand. We can choose to do things our way (sand) or God's way (rock). If we are born again, we already have an inner desire to follow Christ in every area of life and to do things God's way (and not the world's way). “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world . . .” (1 John 5:4).

We can and must do things God's way concerning the key areas of life. We will build on the rock when we purpose to live in honesty, maintain sexual purity, walk in generosity, serve others and put God first in our lives. This “rock living” will protect us from much heartache and will leave an inheritance of blessing for our descendants.

The focus of this teaching, however, is not about specific rock or sand choices we can make; but it is to emphasize that there is grace (power) available to make the right choices that will lead to protection and blessing. Once we determine to live God's way, we will find a means to do what we thought we could not do. Doors of wisdom and strength will appear as we set our face to do God's will.

If you are building your house on the sand, it is not too late to change your thinking. Cry out to God and watch Him make a way where there seems to be no way (and provide a strength where there seems to be no strength). His grace is sufficient.

## **It Will Get Easier**

**(Overcoming the “it will always be a struggle” lie)**

**“I press** toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14).

I noticed something the other day as I rode my bike up the hill to my house. I became aware that this “uphill journey” was getting easier and easier for me. What used to be hard is now becoming painless.

I’ve been riding consistently from my house to the church and back for about three months now. Even though it is a short ride, there is “the hill” that must be overcome to get home. This hill seemed like a great mountain when I first tried to conquer it. I remember my heart pounding, my legs feeling like rubber, my lungs burning, and thinking I was going to pass out (as I gasped for air) after getting to the summit of this lofty land mass. I wondered if the pain was worth it.

In spite of this initial trauma, I suddenly realized that it is now not that difficult at all. My body has adjusted to the demands placed on it. My muscles have strengthened, and my lungs are able to cope with the higher demands of exercise. Truly, God has made our bodies for increase.

As I pondered this experience, I realized that there is great truth in this beyond exercising. Our Creator has made us so that things will get easier when we keep “pressing toward the goal” of building “muscle” in different areas of life. For instance, we may feel like we are going to faint when we first speak in front of a group; but as we keep pressing into this, it will get easier. This is also true for areas like controlling our temper, overcoming fear, giving a prophetic word, evangelizing, tithing, speaking the truth in love, or choosing to think at a higher level about life and our self.

When we press into superior ways of living, our soul will probably say, “You’re killing me! This pain is too great. Go back to your old way of living where it is safe and comfortable for me!” Ha ha! I am glad that we don’t have to listen to this. Indeed, we should tell our soul, “It may be painful now, but it will get easier because that is the way God has made me. I am going to keep pressing toward the goal of God’s upward call into greater dimensions of His glory and purpose. So, Soul, get over it!”

Thank the Lord right now and say, “It will get easier.”

## **If I Perish, I Perish**

### **(Overcoming the spirit of fear)**

“And Mordecai told *them* to answer Esther: ‘Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. **Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?**’ Then Esther told *them* to reply to Mordecai: ‘Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which *is* against the law; **and if I perish, I perish!**” (Esther 4:13-16).

It has been said that we haven’t started living until we have something to die for. Even though we are to believe God for protection and victory, we still must “bottom line” our faith and say with Esther, “If I perish, I perish.” It is a supernatural mindset that propels us to take the necessary risks for change and breakthrough to occur.

We don’t fully know why we are alive. For now we see in a glass dimly, and like Esther did, we are preparing ourselves for the future to the best of our understanding. But also like Esther, we will have unexpected events develop that will present a whole new set of circumstances for us to respond to. This will be our “for such a time as this” – the main reason we are alive.

In order to successfully respond to these kinds of situations, we must be willing to lay it all on the line (whether it be our reputation, our security, our position or even our very lives). This courage needs to be developed on the smaller things of life long before we are faced with our defining moments.

In Jesus’ name, let’s renounce the fear of man, the political spirit in churches, “using” people instead of “building” people, and basing decisions primarily on economic factors. As we do, we will develop the resolve of Esther that will create the potential for each of us to be an extraordinary leader like Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., Winston Churchill or the Apostle Paul.

## **I Received Impartation So I Am Changed** (Overcoming continually “reinventing the wheel”)

“For I long to see you, that I may **impart to you some spiritual gift**, so that you may be established” (Romans 1:11). “Therefore, leaving the . . . elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works . . . of **laying on of hands** . . .” (Hebrews 6:1-1). “**Now Joshua . . . was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him**” (Deuteronomy 34:9).

**I have always liked shortcuts.** As a child, I remember the joy of finding shortcuts to school, to the ball field or to a friend’s house. As an adult, I am appreciative of those who can help me find a quicker way from Point A to Point B. Nobody likes to go the slow way if there is a faster route available.

**One powerful shortcut of the kingdom is impartation.** This is when someone lays hands on us and imparts (passes on) a spiritual substance in an area of life where they have power and victory. Moses imparted wisdom to Joshua when he laid his hands on him. Joshua did not have to work for it, but it came free as he received by faith what Moses was giving.

Paul wanted to impart a spiritual gift to the Romans, but he apparently could only do so if he was physically present with them for the “gift” to be transmitted. Paul valued impartation and so must we – as it is vital for our spiritual growth and our positive influence on others. (Hebrews 6 actually lists laying on of hands as one of the six basic things to know about our Christianity.)

We can activate impartation in three ways: 1) regularly ask strong and anointed Christians to impart to us; 2) stir up faith concerning past impartations received; and 3) as the Lord gives us favor, we can impart to others in every area where we have gained victory. These three steps keep us from having to “reinvent the wheel” because we can take a shortcut toward learning, power, and growth through impartation.

Who’s imparted to you? Affirm now what you received and believe impartation is vital for your future. You’ll be glad you did.

## The Two Most Important Words in the World

**(Overcoming looking inward rather than outward and upward)**

Recently, I sensed the Lord say to me, “Steve, the two most important words in the world are THANK YOU.” What do you think about that? Did I hear right? Let me try to make my case.

The Bible says, “**Enter into His gates with thanksgiving**” (Psalm 100:4). A gate represents an entry into a different realm. We are to enter into these gates with thanksgiving. Psalms 100:4 tells us that whenever we are preparing for a new level in life or ministry, we can accelerate things by radically increasing our thanksgiving to God and to the people in our lives.

**Jesus also stressed the importance of thanksgiving.**

Once when He healed ten lepers and only one came back to give thanks, He asked, “Where are the nine?” (Luke 17:17). Thankfulness reveals to God (and to discerning people) that the appreciative one is ready to be entrusted with more of the abundance and glory of the kingdom.

**Abundant gratefulness is a sign of a flourishing soul.**

Those who regularly say thank you have their eyes focused outward and upward (healthy focus) rather than inward (unhealthy focus). Prioritizing thanksgiving will help increase our inner health.

**Thanksgiving also increases our faith level concerning life’s uncertainties and God’s promises.** In Philippians 4:6-7, we’re instructed to not worry, but to pray “with thanksgiving” about anything we’re tempted to be anxious about. As we do, we will experience “peace that passes understanding.” This peace comes from deep faith that has been established by thanksgiving. **Even if circumstances have not changed, thankfulness will alter our perspective (from doubt to faith).** We can take this viewpoint even higher by giving thanks concerning things prayed for in the past. As we do, we will come to the place of being fully convinced (like Abraham) and see God’s promise manifest before our eyes.

What are the two most important words in the world? I say they are, “Thank you.” Let’s increase thankfulness and see doors open, faith increase and our souls get healthier. Amen!

## **The Bible – My New Brain**

### **(Overcoming reading the Bible religiously)**

“ . . . **present your bodies a living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable to God . . . And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind** . . . ” (Rom. 12:1-2).

**There is no book like the Bible.** It is God’s love letter to us. It is our instruction manual for life. Some have even said that the Bible is their new brain. It’s THE BOOK to be adored.

I am intrigued about making God’s Word my new brain. Reading the Bible is more than accumulating knowledge or even spending time with God (which are both very important). The question is not “am I in the Word,” but “is the Word in me?” **We are not transformed by just reading the Bible, but by having our minds renewed with its truths.** This renewal is to happen throughout the day, not just in our set times of reading.

**The most important part of our Scripture reading is when we finish reading and close the Bible.** What do we remember? How has our thinking changed? What do we speak to counteract demonic lies (as Jesus did in Matthew 4:1-11)? How has our perspective about life changed? How can we see ourselves as God does?

When we purpose to think and speak the Word, we are ready for growth and transformation. To accelerate this “spiritual makeover,” I suggest you go on a “negativity fast.” As you fast the negative and replace it with God’s thoughts, you will increase your mind renewal. (My book, [Igniting Faith in 40 Days](#), is a devotional that is designed to supplement negativity fasts.)

If you have already offered yourself as a “living sacrifice” to God (desiring that every part of your life honor Him and advance His kingdom), you will find grace and power to have the Bible come alive for you. To activate this grace, ask God to open the Word to you. Then get ready for truth that will literally become your new way to think and see life. If you don’t know where to begin, start with the supernatural mindsets of this book. They will help you think the Bible and not just read it.

## I Cannot Fail

### (Overcoming thinking we are grasshoppers)

**“Then Caleb . . . said, ‘Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.’** But the men who had gone up with him said, ‘We are not able to go up against the people, for they *are* stronger than we.’ And they gave the children of Israel a bad report . . . saying, ‘The land . . . *is* a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it *are* men of *great* stature. There we saw the giants . . . and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight” (Numbers 13:30-33).

I heard a pastor speak of an incredible mindset that he had adopted whenever he counseled others. He said, “I have come to the place where I believe it is impossible for someone to not be dramatically impacted when I minister to them.” He said he believed this because he had such a “big God” in him. When I heard this, I first thought, “Can he really say that? Is that something I should believe when I minister to people (as well as in other areas of my life)?”

Caleb would say, “Yes, that pastor is right! If you believe you won’t fail, you won’t. I said the same thing when I spoke out, ‘We are well able to overcome it!’” Caleb’s attitude was reinforced when he and Joshua later said, “The people of the land . . . **they are our bread**; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD *is* with us. Do not fear them” (Numbers 14:9). They had extreme confidence that they would not fail.

**The walk of faith is to be filled with confidence that we will not fail in what we do in Jesus’ name.** We must believe that something positive will happen in each of our endeavors, and that things will end well in all we do. Yes, we need to stay teachable and accountable, but moving forward in assurance that we will succeed is necessary to ultimately have long-term success.

Caleb believed and so must we. Let’s believe that we cannot fail when we speak, when we pray, when we counsel and when we obey. Like Caleb, we may lose a battle (he had to wait to see his “success”), but we ultimately won’t lose the war.

## **Those Who Succeed Most Will Fail Most** (Overcoming the fear of looking like a failure)

“For a righteous *man* may fall seven times and rise again”  
(Proverbs 24:16).

I can hear what some of you are thinking as you look at this title, and then compare it to the previous one. At first glance, they seem contradictory. This may appear true, but each of these truths is vital. Let me explain here how failure can be our friend.

Becoming great in God requires us to have the attitude of the righteous man who falls seven times but still gets up. He is like the toddler learning to walk as God has purposed. There is a lot of “falling down” before he does it without failure. If he quit after numerous falls, he would be imprisoned to live far below his potential. Unfortunately, that happens too often in our Christian lives.

**Many subconsciously believe that success is not failing at anything**, but the truth is that those who succeed most will also seem to fail the most. Any time we choose to leave our safety and comfort, and determine to “walk” at a higher level in Christ, we will most likely fall down many times. Those who are the most successful in life will attempt to do multiple things (with its inherent risks), and ultimately will have a greater list of “failures” for those staying in safety to criticize. (Ouch!)

God is calling us to **walk** at higher levels in Christ and get beyond **crawling** in mediocre mindsets. The Lord is urging us to try to walk in things like healing the sick, speaking in front of others, sharing Christ with others, prophesying, fasting, ministering in the Holy Spirit, leading a ministry or other higher ways of living. Many have tried to move in these things and have fallen after a few steps, concluding that they could not do them (when indeed they were made to do so). The fear of failing and looking like a failure robbed them of becoming who God intended them to be. We cannot let this happen to us.

We must believe and know that falling as we learn to walk in higher levels of God is not really failing at all. This is a mindset that will take us far into God’s highest will for our lives.

## **I Do More Than Expected**

### **(Overcoming waiting for a title or more money to excel)**

“And whoever compels you to go with him one mile, go with him two” (Matthew 5:41).

**Those who believe that tomorrow’s success depends on what is done today will treat today differently.** They understand God uses people who are dedicated in preparing for the future. One of the ways to do this is to develop the mindset of doing more than is expected in every situation possible.

For instance, if you are earning \$15 an hour but wish it was \$30, then start giving your employer \$30 worth of effort per hour while still earning \$15. Don’t wait for a pay increase to perform in a greater way, but go the extra mile at work. Start now with this mindset by arriving early, staying late, working faster, tackling the tough jobs, being regularly enthusiastic, treating people with high levels of respect and seeking to make your employer successful in every way. You may not receive compensation equal to your effort at this particular job, but eventually you will (because people like this are rare and they are desperately needed).

This same principle also applies to those involved in Christian ministry. Many are waiting for a title to be given to them before they give excellence in serving the Lord. Some are waiting for a paid position before “kicking it in gear.” They don’t realize that positions and titles are given to people who have found a way to excel and bear fruit in the opportunities that are given to them. Titles and salary are ultimately given to those who already are what the new title says they are. When they are given a title, they will simply carry on what they have already been doing.

It may be difficult to break out of the pack of mediocrity and the “doing only enough to get by” mentality, but we must. Others might question our motives or even turn against us, but our preparation for tomorrow requires that we do more than is expected today. The few who consistently embrace this mindset will never lack opportunities in employment or ministry. They are not hoping that people notice them, but they realize that God will open the right doors at the right time. And, believe me, they will open!

## **I Rejoice When Others Are Blessed** **(Overcoming feeling threatened by the success of others)**

“Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father . . .” (1 Samuel 19:4).

There is a test that we will face and must pass if we are to live in the higher realms of victorious mindsets. It is the test of whether or not we will truly rejoice when others are blessed, promoted, honored, thanked, spoken well of or lifted up in other ways. If we can consistently rejoice in their success, we truly have something healthy on the inside of us. Parents instinctively teach their children to be good losers, and Father God desires us to be gracious to those who are having “their day in the sun.”

Jonathon is a remarkable example of this. As Saul’s son, he was the natural choice to become the next king of Israel. God, however, chose another man named David, who quickly was adored by the people. In the face of these events, Jonathon displayed an extraordinary attitude in rejoicing in this and adjusting to what was happening. He developed a deep friendship with David and spoke well of him to others (including his father). He had a powerful mindset that we need, too.

If we struggle when others are blessed and recognized, this could be God’s wakeup call for our lives to help us **overcome the falsehood that other people’s success is a threat to our future**. The truth, however, is that our attitude toward the blessings of others will have more to do with our future than any short-term favorable change in our circumstances.

So how are you doing in this area of life? Have you felt a recent twinge when someone seemingly less worthy than you prospered or was recognized? Remember, this is an opportunity for a higher mindset.

Yes, there will be times when you need to speak up concerning injustice; but ultimately we will want to adopt the spirit of Jonathon to bless and speak well of those who are in a season of blessing and promotion. It will open powerful doors for us in our future.

## **I Take the High Road**

### **(Overcoming burning bridges in relationships)**

“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18).

Before we start this teaching, let me share what I am *not* saying when I urge you to take the high road. I am not saying that you should allow people to continually walk all over you or to allow your family or yourself to be abused. I am not saying that you should never confront people for wrongs being done. With this understood, let's look at this important mindset for your life.

Taking the high road means to do things with integrity and honor even if others are not. David did this when King Saul was trying to kill him (1 Sam. 24 & 26). Jesus did so when He spoke with Caiphas (Matt. 26:62-74). Jonathon took the high road when David was chosen to be king instead of him. Paul also did so with the high priest (Acts 23:1-5). The Bible is full of people who took the high road, and Scripture has numerous truths and commands that show us how to do so (especially the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7). Taking the high road entails believing that doing things God's way will have benefits for eternity and in this life.

When we take the low road in situations; we are usually reacting out of hurt, fear or anger. Our emotions compel us to do and say things that we will most likely regret. We will defend ourselves by tearing others down. We will spread the “truth” about those we believe have wounded us; and when we finally leave the situation, there will be the tendency to burn bridges in relationships by taking a few parting shots fueled by our bitterness.

Those who take the high road realize this truth: If this does not work out, God has something better ahead. They bless those who hate them or spitefully use them. They forgive when mistreated. They do everything possible to keep bridges in relationships so there can be healing and forward movement in the days ahead. They have learned to hold their tongue and trust God for their lives. They live in an incredible mindset of taking the high road in all they do. Let's do it, too.

## **I Lay My Life Down for Others** **(Overcoming selfish living)**

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13).

**Everything we do is ultimately to be an act of love that helps people.** Each choice we make is either to bless others now or allow us to help them in greater ways in the future. We are either giving now or preparing to give in bigger ways in the years ahead. Nothing we do can be apart from this mindset.

In many ways it would be easier to take a bullet for another person than to live unselfishly for a lifetime. Dying physically for someone would take great courage, but this act would be over quickly. “Laying our lives down” on a consistent basis requires us to make regular choices that cause others to thrive in life. This is a huge part of what it means to give our lives to Christ. All that we do must be for the glory of God and to benefit others.

**Laying our lives down for others is more than meeting people’s immediate needs.** Some think that the greatest demonstration of love is to give our time, money and emotional strength to everyone who asks. Even though we need to be willing to give at any time, we also must know it is even more loving to prepare and increase our resources to help in greater ways in the future.

We cannot constantly sacrifice tomorrow to meet needs today. It is actually unloving to do this because we will be unable to love people in our future as God intended. We cannot be constantly impulsive or else we will be in debt in finances, in family relationships, in health, in emotional strength, or in abilities and skills to help people in greater ways.

Laying down our lives for others includes actions that will make us effective years from now (i.e. resting, exercising, learning, investing in having a strong family, having hobbies, strategizing to increase income, eating right, learning how to lead a ministry, attending prayer meetings, spending extra time with God, going to school and a whole host of other things). As we do these things in faith, we are laying down our lives for our brothers.

## **I Put Things in My Path to Bump Into (Overcoming forgetting to do important things)**

It isn't unusual to see on a golf course, next to a green, a golf club left behind by a previous golfer. I have done it and most other golfers have, too. It usually happens when the player leaves his golf bag on the path to the next hole and then takes two clubs toward the green (usually a pitching wedge to hit onto the green and a putter to finish the hole). Before putting, the wedge is put on the ground and can easily be forgotten (unless the golfer either has a good memory or a good plan).

My plan for remembering my pitching wedge is to place it intentionally on the ground between the green and my golf bag. I put it in a place where I will "bump into" it so I won't forget it. This strategy has worked very well for me in golf and illustrates a powerful lesson for us in life and ministry.

There are many things we lose in life (or never have) because we do not "bump into" that which would cause us to remember their importance. People regularly lose their hunger for God, desire to reach others for Jesus, heart connections with family members, good decision-making skills or motivation for personal growth. Wise people regularly position things in front of themselves so that they will do what is really important in life.

Here are some suggested things to put in your path in life: 1) to grow spiritually, commit to a ministry at your church so you need to attend; 2) to read God's Word regularly, put a Bible in the bathroom; 3) to grow in home strength, attend at least one family seminar each year; 4) to meet goals, meet with someone monthly to discuss your personal advancement; 5) to encounter God dynamically, regularly attend special meetings where His power is manifesting; 6) to grow mentally, have books or sermons on CD playing as you start your car; and 7) to avoid making horrible life choices, invite different people to speak to you anytime they have concerns about attitudes or decisions you are making.

God will show you unique ways to remember (bump into) what is important for your life. Ask Him, and He will give great wisdom to you.

## **I Am Not Afraid of Missing Out** (Overcoming the “never doing enough” lie)

“It is finished!” (John 19:30).

In my book Possessing Joy, I write the following: *There is a message that the enemy of our souls repeatedly speaks. It has effectively drained life and joy out of multitudes . . . What are these words? Is it a temptation to lie, hate someone, quit reading the Bible or cheat on our spouse? Even though we will hear things like these, the devil is speaking something even more damaging. It's this: “You aren't doing enough!”*

I go on to say: *Most Christians have heard things like these: “You haven't prayed or fasted enough. You have not gone long enough without sin. You have not read your Bible enough. You have not forgiven enough. You have not loved your family enough. You have not been consistent enough. You are not sorry enough.” Certainly we have spiritual responsibilities; but if we live in the “never enough” mentality, we have embraced a “works of the law” theology that will actually cut off our flow of grace.*

We need to pursue more of God and be willing to do radical things to be ignited in Him. However, **we cannot live in fear that we will miss out on God's will for our lives because we didn't or aren't doing something.** For instance, we can hear a speaker say we must give big in a particular offering or we will miss our opportunity for financial blessing. Another example of this is when God is moving in a particular place, and we worry that our not going will cause us to be left behind in the things of Christ.

**Whatever we do must be done by faith, not out of fear.** We need to give in faith, and we need to not give in faith. We need to go to that meeting in faith, or not go to that meeting in faith. Our belief that we are doing the right thing is more important in the long run than making fear-based decisions that may actually be “right” at the moment. It is also important to realize that **consistency in small things** is ultimately more significant in experiencing victory than the spectacular and big things we do. There is obviously another side to this coin, but the regular fear of missing out on a brief window of opportunity is a mindset that is not victorious.

## Problems Are Opportunities

(Overcoming seeing obstacles instead of possibilities)

“My brethren, **count it all joy when you fall into various trials**, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, **lacking nothing**” (James 1:2-4).

“**Count it all joy when you fall into various trials.**” This is the first step toward abundant provision (**lacking nothing**). We can start an incredible journey by rejoicing in difficult situations.

I used to be a blockage-focused Christian. I constantly thought I was the victim of those things that seemed to block my dreams, peace and joy in Christ. Whether it was a difficult person or a frustrating circumstance, I would think, “If only this would change, then I would be able to soar in my life.” Fortunately, I discovered a higher mindset that transformed how I saw everything.

I remember when the Lord said to me, “Steve, you have been blockage-focused concerning your problems, but I call you to see these things as stepping stones instead. Your proper response to difficulties will catapult you into your prophetic destiny. I want you to see these things not as problems, but as opportunities to see how big I am.”

**At this time, I also learned who Tigger was.** This bouncy, optimistic cartoon tiger from Winnie the Pooh became a role model for my life. He embodies the words of Jesus, “Rejoice in that day and leap for joy” (Luke 6:23). “That day” refers to a difficult time of life. God spoke to my heart and instructed me to leap for joy in my private prayer time about those things I formerly saw as blockages. I would focus on something seemingly troubling, start jumping, and say, “Woo hoo! This is an opportunity to see how big my God is!” Then I would think about another thing and do the same. It was (and is) so freeing to leap and rejoice about things like personal weaknesses, family issues, financial challenges, uncertainties about the future, unresolved circumstances, difficult people and other problems. Let’s see possibilities and open doors rather than blockages. Praise God.

## **I Welcome Resistance**

**(Overcoming the fear of suffering)**

“**I press** toward the goal for the prize of the **upward call** of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14).

I remember a church service I was leading where everything seemed to be going wrong. Our song service seemed to be flat. There were disruptions and distractions. People did not seem to be into it, and then the worship leader’s guitar had major problems and he had to walk off the stage.

At that moment, I felt vision rising up in me. I thought, “Yes! This is our moment! How we respond to these things is more important than when we have ‘goose bumpy’ meetings. We are experiencing resistance, and this is how we build spiritual muscle.”

Weight lifters know that they have to “press” against resistance to increase power. They intentionally look for certain kinds of weights or machines to isolate a muscle that they have targeted for growth. **They are eager to press against this opposition to become stronger.** We need to do the same in our spiritual lives.

When I rejoiced in the difficulty of that church service, I was intentionally strengthening my joy and faith. Instead of seeing a problem, I saw an opportunity for growth that would **increase my load-bearing capacity** and prepare me for any “upward calls” that God had for me in the future.

People who are barrier breakers in spiritual things understand the value of suffering. Just as an athlete suffers through intense and demanding training, we embrace the suffering of pressing into victorious mindsets that seem difficult. These challenges are all around us every day.

It is the wise believer who is able to target areas for growth now and intentionally press against resistance in these areas. Whether it be the development of hope, love, generosity, evangelism, public ministry, faith, prophesying or whatever; we can learn to say, “Yes! This is my moment! I get to press against resistance!” It is a high-level mindset that will make us strong in the Spirit. Praise the Lord.

## I Enthusiastically Serve Leaders

### (Overcoming being self-centered or dull in spirit)

“And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also *do*. Therefore let no one despise him . . .” (1 Corinthians 16:10–11).

**What would ministry leaders say about your participation in their ministry?** Would they share that you are a strong support, an encourager, reliable, truthful, eager to serve and easy to work with? Or would they say something else?

Paul urged the Corinthians to be supportive of Timothy by challenging any tendency to “despise” this young leader (saying they must reject negative attitudes toward him). He also told them to help Timothy overcome fear. Timothy’s success partially depended on the people he was ministering to. Leaders today also need people who feel called to them and who help them overcome weaknesses to be successful. We need to become one of these called ones. Not only will our leaders benefit from this, but we will profit as well.

Our support of leaders will help our own leadership in the days and years ahead. One way to become a great leader in the future is to sow positive seeds now through intentional actions that help other leaders succeed. Once, I sensed the Lord say to me, **“Steve, how you relate to your leaders will ultimately be how your followers will relate to you when you lead.** Steve, you are planting seeds every day for the type of people who will be under your leadership.” When I heard that, I was propelled to be the best I could be for other leaders. I determined to be the person they dreamed about having in their ministry. I decided to do what I wanted others to do for me when I led. I determined to be enthusiastic, arrive early, give feedback, encourage, communicate if I could not fulfill a responsibility, pray for them, speak well of them to others, resolve conflict with honor and respect, and be faithful to what I committed to do. These things may not be easy to do in certain circumstances, but God will honor our hearts as we purpose to actively support the leadership of others.

## **I Am Ignited by a Burning Vision**

**(Overcoming living with no inner fire)**

A young Olympian by the name of Bruce Jenner watched the medal ceremony for the decathlon (crowning the world's greatest athlete) at the 1972 Olympics in Munich, Germany. He participated that year but did not win a medal. When he saw the gold medal awarded to the winning athlete, he experienced a strong physical sensation that caused a burst of confidence that he could become the best in the world. At that moment, he envisioned himself standing on the victory platform in the 1976 Olympics. He knew that if he would dedicate himself, he would win the gold medal.

After the ceremony in 1972, he went back to the Olympic dorms to sleep for the night, but he was too full of vision to fall asleep. He thought about each event of the decathlon and what he needed to do to win. He finally got up in the middle of the night and started training for 1976 right then. While others were celebrating and partying on the last day of the current Olympics, he was training for the next one. This was the beginning of four years of giving himself fully to the goal of being the next world champion.

Jenner's vision of victory changed everything. It caused him to set priorities and make decisions with this goal in his heart. When choices in life would come, he would ask, "Will this choice increase my chances for winning the gold medal in the 1976 Olympics?" His passion for success caused him to willingly sacrifice and experience pain. It all paid off as he won in 1976 with a record-breaking performance.

We too need a life altering experience (vision) that creates a burning belief that we can make a difference for Jesus. Bruce Jenner sacrificed and trained for a temporal prize, but we do so for an eternal impact. Let's be inspired by Jenner's attitude and become a difference-maker for lost souls, broken families, struggling Christians and a society that has lost its direction. Let's ask God to give us a life-altering vision to ignite us to sacrifice for the good of others. He will do it if we believe He will.

## Light is More Powerful than Darkness

(Overcoming the beliefs that give power to the demonic)

“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because **He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world**” (1 John 4:4).

Demonic forces can only operate where God’s light is absent. They cannot control an environment by their own choice, but they must wait for a person to open a door for them through wrong beliefs or ungodly actions. Because of this, our focus in life is not to get rid of darkness but to turn on the light of Christ.

Hosea said, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). **Satan “steals, kills and destroys”** (John 10:10) **because of our ignorance, not because he is powerful.** This understanding will change our spiritual warfare from being devil-focused to one of pursuing revelation knowledge of the truth.

**Truth is light.** Wherever we believe truth, the light dispels darkness; but when we’re ignorant or reject knowledge, we create a playground for our enemy. This was illustrated to me when I was told of demonic manifestations in a home that had been recently blessed, prayed over and “cleansed” of evil that might have been left by previous renters. I was asked for advice on what to do. I said, “You must believe that the prayers worked and that you have authority over darkness. The enemy is hoping that you doubt this. When manifestations come, thank God that your home is blessed and protected. This belief ‘turns the light on’, and your experience in your home (freedom) will catch up to what you believe.”

When confronted with darkness, the first question we need to ask is, “How can I get light into this situation?” not “How can I get rid of this darkness?” We need to believe we are light, and that what is in us is greater than anything “in the world.” Our beliefs are the key factor in whether our spiritual warfare will be successful or not. Whenever we believe the truth about the disarming of the devil (Colossians 2:15) and our authority over the demonic realm (Luke 10:19), we will turn the light on all around us and darkness must flee.

## **I Will Stay Hungry for God**

### **(Overcoming subtle hardness of heart)**

“As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” (Psalms 42:1).

When we are hungry physically, eating causes our hunger to decline. However, “eating” spiritually increases hunger, but not doing so creates a decline of yearning for God.

The psalmist proclaims his thirst for God. He was a seeker of God’s face, not just His hand of provision. We are also to be seekers of God, not just churchgoers or moral people.

**Many Christians start out hungry for God but end up losing their “first love”** (see Rev. 2:4-5). Often this is not realized when it is happening. Some signs that this may be the case are: not crying out for more of God, not having extended time alone with God, avoiding prayer meetings and altar calls, disinterested in special meetings, losing the heart to reach others, not talking about what Jesus is doing, being critical of people with passion for God, and losing the wonder of knowing God.

Our enemy wants to eliminate our hunger for God. He uses such things as disappointment, distraction and love for the world (1 John 2:15) to hinder our spiritual thirst. He also uses **good things** such as family, church and career responsibilities to take us away from the **best things**. The battle to keep our hunger is one of the most important that we will face.

Our desire level for God is primarily in our hands. Here are some simple ways to increase this: 1) ask God for more hunger; 2) spend time with seeking Christians, not just churchgoers; 3) attend meetings with people who have consistent encounters with God; 4) avoid the hardening of heart by consistently responding emotionally to His promptings; 5) feast on worship music; 6) take short moments alone with God in the lifting of hands in love and adoration; 7) read inspiring books; and 8) pray in the spirit often. These will help increase our desire for God – and that is a needful thing for all of us.

## I Am First a Worshiper

### (Overcoming a wrong focus in life and ministry)

David was called “the man after God’s heart” (Acts 13:22). Even with all his failings, his passion for worship set him apart from all others in the eyes of God.

Worship is more than singing a song in church. It is more than saying “Hallelujah” or “Praise the Lord.” It is more than closing our eyes or lifting our hands. These are all an important part of ministering to the Lord (worship), but they can also become a religious ritual that is not true worship. We can worship God with our lips while our hearts are still far from Him (Matthew 15:8-9).

Worshippers understand the importance of having a deep heart connection with God. This was illustrated when a “serving Martha” complained to Jesus about her sister Mary who was “just” sitting at Jesus’ feet. Jesus said, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But **one thing is needed**, and **Mary has chosen that good part**, which will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41-42). Mary was a worshipper.

**Worship is to be prioritized because it helps create and maintain the revelation of how powerful and good God is.** When we do not worship, we lose sight of God’s true nature; and thus see our circumstances with a natural, hopeless mindset.

True worship also imparts a progressive revelation of the wonders of God. This will lead us into new depths of faith to empower us in life. Without living in this wonder and fascination of God (and His love for us), our soul will eventually look for less worthy pursuits for satisfaction and excitement.

Certainly, we need to be active in serving the Lord, but we cannot underestimate the power of worship in advancing the kingdom and seeing the enemy defeated. In 2 Chronicles 20 a great foe was destroyed when the people chose **first** to worship and praise. David had a profound revelation of this truth and was “the man after God’s heart.” These knew that **one thing is needed** above all else. Let’s purpose to do the same and have our personal identity primarily rooted in this: I AM A WORSHIPER!

## **I Restrict My Behavior Because I Love Others** **(Overcoming not caring how my actions impact others)**

“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify” (1 Cor. 10:23).

Good parents understand that their behavior teaches more to their children than their words ever will. They realize that being an example is more powerful than rules and lectures. Becoming a parent causes them to reassess behaviors that may be “lawful” but are not helpful or edifying to their children. This is also true for those who want to increasingly influence others for Christ.

Spiritual leaders purposely restrict themselves so as not to be a “stumbling block” (Romans 14:13) to weaker Christians. As they become spiritual parents, they reevaluate lifestyle choices, words and attitudes in light of how these might influence others.

Some use a supposed hatred of the religious spirit as an excuse for reckless choices. If this attitude goes unchecked, it will create a culture that lacks integrity and character (and revival will not be sustained). Certainly we don’t want to be bound up in legalism and rules, but we cannot go to the opposite extreme of not considering how our actions impact others.

Some areas where this principle applies includes our vocabulary, modesty in dress, dating philosophy, use of alcoholic beverages, the kinds of food we eat, our attitudes, the types of places we go to, how we conduct ourselves with the opposite sex, the types of jokes we tell, media choices, how we deal with conflict, how we spend our money and many other areas.

There will be some things that we have liberty to do in our private lives but not in groups or in public. It is not hypocritical to make these distinctions, but it is wisdom and love.

We are each called to become spiritual parents. As we embrace this calling, we will automatically begin to adjust certain things we do. God will help us as we trust Him to show us anything that is not helpful or edifying. Amen.

## **It's Working**

### **(Overcoming needing proof to believe change is happening)**

“Then he said, ‘Take the arrows’; so he took *them*. And he said to the king of Israel, ‘Strike the ground’; so he struck three times, and stopped. And the man of God was angry with him, and said, ‘You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Syria till you had destroyed *it*’” (2 Kings 13:18-19).

In this story, the prophet instructed the king to carry out a prophetic act. Little did this ruler know that his response would determine the level of future victory for the people and for himself. When the king passively responded, the prophet was upset that a great opportunity had been missed. While we could focus here on the king’s poor response (and its many lessons for us), there is something even deeper to explore.

The prophet implied that the king’s actions would make a deposit into the invisible spirit realm. This deposit determined their future quality of life, thus teaching us that something must happen in the spirit realm before happening in the natural realm. This is illustrated in Mark 11 when the cursed fig tree first “dried up from the roots” (in the unseen) and then to the visible parts of the tree.

As people of faith, we believe that our past prayers, declarations, godly choices and prophetic acts are working powerfully and effectively in the unseen realm. We avoid withdrawing our faith when it seems it’s not working. We keep away from this tendency by thanking God for past spiritual seeds planted. Our thanksgiving nurtures these seeds into great fruit.

“It’s not working” is probably second only to “I can’t” in non-victorious mindsets. This lie must be battled with the truth. Even if things don’t seem to change in the short term, it is impossible for long-term transformation not to happen as we stand firm in faith.

Say out loud with me, “It’s working. God is moving in the unseen realm. The roots of evil are drying up. My past prayers are still working. My righteous acts are still causing a ripple effect in the heavenlies. My faith declarations are influencing many things. I will not withdraw my faith. It’s working!”

