

Unleash His Spirit

by

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Introduction

The seeds of this book were born more than ten years ago while my wife and I were home “on leave” as missionaries in Asia. It was a brief conversation between two friends – Ray Noftsinger and Al Stephens. They asked me if I understood what God’s covenant meant for us today. We began to discuss the word “covenant” and how it is applied in the Bible. For the last decade their question has never been far from the front of my mind. Are God’s promises made in the Old Testament still true for me today? What does covenant mean in today’s vernacular? If the promises within God’s covenant are really true, then can I fully give my life beyond a place of private faith and publicly live out these promises?

Through interviews, conversations with dear friend, Eddy Leo (in Jakarta, Indonesia), mountaintop and valley experiences – including a near life-ending poisoning in the Middle East – I have turned again to the understanding of our spiritual journey that was passed on to me by my parents. I have concluded that God’s promises are real, and His greatest desire is to demonstrate His love for all people by keeping His covenant with those who call upon His name.

I wrote this book in the first person with the hope that you would use it as a tool of prayer and confession; and that you would discover at least a glimpse of the incredible love of God and favor He extends to you and all those who call on Him. I encourage you to read each day, expecting the voice of His Spirit to speak to you, building up and encouraging your faith in Him. You are so important to God, not because of what you can accomplish for Him, but because of the simple truth that He chose to live His life through you!

Many are already using this tool as a source for weekly house church teachings; others use this as a daily devotional. However God leads you to “digest” this book, be sure to read it with a pen - underlining, jotting notes, or if you prefer, click to www.ericwatt.com, and let’s talk about it together.

May God’s unending love and everlasting covenant increase your courage to walk with Him every moment of your day.

Eric Watt

Step One

Walking in the Right Direction

Day 1

God Has a Personalized Plan for Me

Do I know and accept that God created me for good? In fact, even before I was born He carefully mapped out a personalized plan to guarantee my success. The Bible says it this way in Psalm 139:16:

"You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your book!"

It is an amazing thought to ponder, the One who created the universe and everything in it – including me – has also taken the time and energy to create a guideline for my benefit.

"I know what I am planning for you... I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you hope and a good future." Jeremiah 29:11

Much more than a list of do's and don'ts, God's destiny for my life is about joining Him in His plan for the universe. That's right. I have been invited to join with God in carrying out His mission of love and peace. Since the beginning of time God has been on a mission to unleash His Spirit within every person, including me, guaranteeing our participation

in His Kingdom and bringing hope to a world in desperate need.

My greatest challenge, believe it or not, is accepting God's plan and living it out every single day. For the next 31 days, I will partner with the Creator and put into practice what it means to *Unleash His Spirit* in my life. I commit to take the time each day to read, journal and share this with someone else; I will learn to live a powerfully fruitful and abundant life that will impact my world.

Power Words: Psalm 139

Reflection:

What is God's purpose for me?

Day 2

His Way...The Better Way

From the very beginning of time, God has desired to express His love to me. As the Creator and Father, He intricately designed the universe, the endless stars in the sky, the beauty of each sunset, spectacular mountain ranges and the peaceful calm of ocean waves – all for the sole purpose of sharing them with me! As if this was not enough, more than 2000 years ago God took the form of human flesh, living on this earth as Jesus Christ, so that there could be no mistake of His good purposes for me.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

Unfortunately, the generosity of God’s love has been met with skepticism and rejection since the first man and woman walked the face of the earth. Why? Perhaps the simplest answer is that (like other human beings) I, as the created, think I know better than the Creator. I seem convinced that with a little ingenuity and extra energy on my part I can solve many of life’s problems on my own. But God has a better way.

Just as there are “ground rules” to help guide me to success in relationships, God has similar “rules” to help me in my relationship with Him. In fact, as we see in Deuteronomy 28:1-14, God created a “covenant,” or guidelines, so that every person would have the freedom to be completely successful in every aspect of daily life. To live life within the boundaries of these guidelines brings a sense of meaning and purpose to my life. But, to live outside these boundaries brings complication, difficulty and sorrow.

I know that there is a better way to live than following the selfish and destructive instincts that control me and lead me into all kinds of evil. By choosing to live life according to His plans – allowing the Spirit of Christ to be unleashed in me – I will begin to experience a new abundant way of living.

Power Words: Deuteronomy 28

Reflection:

In what ways can I expect favor and blessing from God when I wholeheartedly obey His word?

DAY 3

Taking Steps Toward God

Every day the choices I make will either be guided by His Word or my own evil inclinations (Ephesians 2:1-3). I can choose to begin to put an end to evil in the world (addictions, violence, poverty, crime and corruption) by starting with a change in my own heart. The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah gives me a clue as to why evil exists today.

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked." Jeremiah 17:9

Jesus further describes, in the story of the Prodigal Son, the plight of every person (Luke 15:11-24). He defines three basic steps that I, and every other person, instinctively take AWAY from the love and care of my Heavenly Father. First, the young man selfishly demands his inheritance on his own terms. His primary concern was for his own immediate benefit and not for his father or others around him. Second, he chose to manage his affairs his own way, leaving the family that brought him protection and wisdom in life. The result of these two decisions is the third step – poverty. The young man acted selfishly with his inheritance, left his family, isolated himself

from those who could help him, and then lived in a self-destructive manner ending in poverty.

I am no different. I selfishly choose my own way, often leaving the helpful relationships I have been given, isolating myself from the very people who could help me. The consequence is self-destructive behavior that ends in poverty.

These three steps: 1) selfishness, 2) leaving God's family and 3) self-destructive behavior are at the core of every evil action in the world. These steps AWAY from God attempt to control me, my family, my nation and my world by taking me away from my rightful relationship with God.

But there is a way BACK toward a meaningful life. Ridding the world of evil can only come with a change of heart. Evil will not be eliminated with more education, increased or decreased government, the environment or any other man-made effort. The real answer has to be found by following the guidelines, or covenant, that God set in place for me.

That way begins with TURNING back to God and changing my conduct to find blessings in a relationship with Him. When I do this, He promises me the rights and privileges of being His own child.

“He came to [us]...yet to all who received him [Christ], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become the children of God.” John 1:11-12

Though I might be walking away from God’s covenant and the corresponding blessings, TURNING BACK to Him requires that I begin walking in the direction that God has for me.

Like the prodigal son, I can take three steps BACK toward a healthy relationship with my Heavenly Father. Luke 15:17-21 describes these steps in simple terms. First the son realizes, or owns up to, his own predicament. He realizes that his course of action has caused his own poverty. Second, to put an end to isolation and loneliness, he makes the decision to come back into a relationship of accountability with his father and his family. This, he knows, will give him protection from continually making bad choices. Third, as his father runs to greet him, he completely and fully confesses, or admits his own sin.

These, then, are three steps that guarantee complete restoration to a healthy relationship with the Creator, my Heavenly Father: 1) realize my own shortcomings, 2) come back to accountability with God and His family and 3) confess, or admit my wrong doing to Him.

This is Great News! I can live without guilt in

the freedom of a healthy and bountiful
relationship with God.

Power Words: Luke 15, 1 John 1:9

Reflection:

How am I like the Prodigal Son?

Is my life walking AWAY or TOWARD God?

Day 4

Trusting in the Good News

I was made to be in a 24/7 continual connection with my Creator. In fact, the Bible even says that there is a “place” inside of me that is God-shaped and can only be filled with the eternal and all powerful presence of God.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that “...he has also set eternity in the hearts of men...”

The Creator of the universe desires to connect with me. Since the beginning of time, He has been making a way for me to live out each and every day with Him. This is the GOOD News.

“Now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God – all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in making us friends of God.” Romans 5:11

How do I get there? I first have to come to grips with the reality that we all start off heading in the wrong direction. I have sinned (missed the mark) and therefore come way short of God’s presence.

“For [we] all have sinned and fall short of God’s glorious standard.” Romans 3:23

Plus, as hard as I or any other person might try, I cannot, by myself, climb back into a place where my conduct is deserving of God's presence; He is holy and pure. Whether by religion, human effort, education or work, I know that my shortcomings deserve judgment that leads to death.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the [free] gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."
Romans 6:23

The only way out of this predicament is to turn from the way I used to behave and turn toward someone who can save me. Fortunately, God knows I can't do this on my own, and so He sent to us a Savior, Jesus. I can be restored to right relationship with God today! Right now – if I will simply follow the instructions of Romans 10:9-10.

"For if you confess with your mouth 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified [made right with God], and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

The choice is mine. I can continue on a journey that takes me AWAY from the One who created me and who has my best in mind. Or, I can turn BACK to God, choosing to walk

toward the good plans that He has for me.

I choose His plan! I choose to be re-connected with God!

How do I get there? Two words help me understand my part in walking with God. The first word is TURNING – turning toward God and His Kingdom with my mind, my heart and my actions. The Bible puts it this way:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” Mark 12:30

The second word is TRUST. Trusting who? Trusting God, that He has my best in mind and that He has charted the right course for my life. When I make the decision to follow God’s ways, trusting His path to eternal life and to present-day abundance, it requires a diligent pursuit of His Kingdom and His reign in my life. More than just a “decision” or a verbal exercise, following Jesus requires a total commitment of who I am.

Putting TRUST in the One who made me has to be one of the simplest and wisest moves I could ever make. Jesus wants the best for me. He said...

“I come that you might have life and have it to the full [abundantly].” John 10:10

Since God created me and knows what is best for me, why not follow His path to a fruitful and abundant life?

Power Words: Psalms 51; John 3-4

Reflection:

How can I turn toward God and increase my trust in Him?

Day 5

The Penalty Has Been Paid

Scholars suggest that more has been written about the person, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, than about any other single figure in history. Debates have raged, wars have been fought and crises born all due to what people think or believe about Jesus. Some believe He was a good man (He was); others suggest He was a prophet (He was that, too). Some people view Him as a timid and fear-filled person (He was anything but) while many claim that He was God in the flesh and came to earth to pay the ultimate price for my sin – this is the view of the Bible.

Who was Jesus really and what was His purpose on earth? The gospels, written shortly after Jesus died, attest several key characteristics to Jesus' life and authority. Jesus came announcing the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15). By this, Jesus announced the end of one era and the beginning of a new era. The days of unsatisfactory sacrifices to God were completed, and the day of an all-sufficient atoning sacrifice had arrived.

"... [here is] the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29

The Gospels tell story after story testifying of the mission of Jesus:

“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” 1 John 3:8

But what did Christ come to do about the penalty of my own sin? The Bible says very clearly that:

For God made Him [Christ], who had no sin, to be sin [the offering for our sin], so that we could be made the righteousness of God [right with God through Christ]...” 2 Corinthians 5:21

His perfect life cancelled the debt I owed to God for my sin. He enabled me to have a love relationship with God and to come out from underneath the curses of sinful behavior. He paid off all of the effects of humankind’s sinful rebellion by accepting the curses I deserved when He died a cruel death on the cross.

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.” Galatians 3:13

What does this mean for me today? The great news is that by accepting, believing and following after Christ, I can be free from the impact of a cursed life.

“He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to

Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit..." Galatians 3:14

Power Words: Galatians 3, 2 Peter 2:21-25

Reflection:

What part of the "curse" of evil can be broken in my life by following Jesus?

Day 6

Freedom from the Curse

The Gospel of Mark begins with this exciting declaration: *"The beginning of the gospel [good news] about Jesus Christ, the Son of God."* Over the next 16 chapters an incredible story unfolds. God himself took on the form of humanity to live a life free from sin; to usurp the authority of spiritual and carnal evil in the world and to bring freedom to every person who calls on the name of Jesus.

"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved..."
Mark 16:16

What is the good news? Since the beginning of time every person has instinctively walked AWAY from God – through their own selfishness, leaving the relationships God gave to each of us for making wise decisions, and entering into self-destructive behavior. The consequences of walking away from God's best for my life has meant that I choose to live outside the guidelines of His blessings and I invite the consequences (or curses) of sin to dominate my soul.

"If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all His commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on

earth. All these blessings will come upon you...however, if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands...all these curses will come upon you and overtake you.” Deuteronomy 28:1-15

The covenant blessings God designed only come to those who are walking BACK to God through total forgiveness and complete obedience. Since my instincts are to walk AWAY I need a Savior to *Unleash His Spirit* within me so that I can be free from the curse of sin and enjoy the blessings meant for those who believe.

“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who are baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ...If you belong to Christ, then you are...heirs according to the promise.” Galatians 3:26-29

Jesus Christ paid the price for me to be free from the bondage and entanglements of my sinful nature. He created in me a new spiritual nature to live and act according to His promises.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” 2 Corinthians 5:17

Power Words: Galatians 5:1-13

Reflection:

What has God granted to help me remain free from the curse of sin?

Step Two
Committing to His Journey

Day 7

God and God Alone

I have a spiritual compass within me that finds its rightful position only when every facet of my being – my spirit, soul and body – is lined up in accordance with the One who made me. Put another way, the Creator does have an effective plan for me, the created.

“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through; May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and He will do it.” 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

From the beginning of God’s relationship with man, the Heavenly Father made it very clear that He requires a priority relationship with Him and Him alone.

The first of the Ten Commandments says *“You shall have no other gods before Me.” Exodus 20:3.*

To find my spiritual compass I must worship only the Creator and not other aspects of the creation. This means that I am not allowed to worship nature, animals, possessions, men or women, the dead or spirits. Why? Because they are not the One true God and the ruler of the universe. He alone is my Source. Here is how the Psalmist penned the idea in Psalm 8:3-

5:

“When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet; all flocks and herds and the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth.”

If I choose to worship an aspect of creation and not the Creator, I disrupt the heavenly order of creation and lower my own self-worth, becoming ruled by the very created thing that I worship. God’s desire to bless those who follow His covenant can be canceled by people who chose to sin by worshipping plants (tobacco, marijuana, opium, cocaine), animals (bacteria, virus, germs), nature (disasters, mountains, holy places), man and man-made products and spirits.

When I place any other entity in the leadership position of my life, I am not worshipping God as the Supreme Being in my life and in the universe. As a result I separate myself from God’s best, and I am limited by my own foolish understanding and left to my devices.

“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.” Romans 1:21

Power Words: Exodus 33

Reflection:

What is the Holy Spirit saying to me about who or what has priority position in my life?

Day 8

Serving One

When Bob Dylan penned the lyrics to the famous song, "Gotta Serve Somebody" he described the reality inscribed on every heart – humans are created to be worshippers.

*"You're gonna have to serve somebody,
Well, it may be the devil or it may be the
Lord, But you're gonna have to serve
somebody."*

When God established the guidelines for extending His covenant blessings to me, He created a life-pattern to bring hope and meaning in my life. Knowing that I organize my life and give "authority" to whatever I perceive to be my top priority, God instructed His followers to maintain complete allegiance to their Maker. Exodus 20:4-5 (NKJV) says it this way:

You shall not make for yourself any carved image or any likeness of anything... You shall not bow down to them nor serve them."

Many people live in a society where the idea of idolatry – a carved image – is not an easy concept to grasp. Even still, we all naturally

derive meaning, identity and personal confidence from a source other than the One who made us. Perhaps it is a pre-occupation of good health, recreation, materialism, entertainment, sexuality, "family," excelling at work or at home.

Here is a way to measure my own priorities in life. In my own eyes or in the eyes of others, where do I get my "credibility"? If it is from any source other than God, then the "image" or "reputation" I maintain is an idolatrous image.

Is there a consequence to finding credibility in other sources and granting authority in the wrong places? YES. I am designed for good, but if I violate the guidelines created for me with my best interest in mind, disaster will strike. Here is just a partial list of the curses and consequences of idolatrous living from Deuteronomy 28:15-25: sickness and disease, stupidity and madness, accidents/death, poverty, broken marriages, barrenness, defeat in war.

Lest I think that God is in heaven waiting to rain down trouble in my life, remember this promise...if you *"fully obey the Lord... blessings will come upon you..."* (Deuteronomy 28:1-2). The decision to receive blessings is mine, and the choice NOT to have idols in my life is mine.

Here's the good news. The "curses" listed above can be lifted from me! The Bible tells me in Galatians 3:14:

"He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit."

Power Words: Psalm 119

Reflection:

Where do I gain my credibility?

Day 9

Honor His Name and Character

I was designed and created by a loving and caring God who thought out every detail of my life and planned them for good. The “good” happens when I follow the guidelines God made for me, called covenant blessings, and by honoring the “owner” and creator of my life. The Apostle describes giving honor to the One who loved me enough to redeem me back from my own sinful instincts in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20:

“...your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.”

The covenant blessings God desires for me are like a protective shield keeping me from evil. However, when I dishonor God with my words and actions, I step out of this protective covering and announce to God, to others, to Satan and his evil powers in the world, that I do not want to be found under God’s protection.

The 3rd Commandment found in Exodus 20:7 reads: *“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.”* This commandment warns

me to honor God's name, His character, and the nature and actions of God in my life. When I make fun of God's name, or mention God's name without meaning (in vain) in phrases like "Oh my...", or even using slang words related to Jesus or God, I am stepping out from His covenant blessing.

I also dishonor His name, when I "claim" that a thought or judgment comes from God when it is really personal opinion. This also dishonors His Name. There are also times that I hear people wrongly declaring, "God told me this," or "God says" when in fact they using God's name to add authority or importance to their own opinion.

I can be sure that I am surrounded by God's blessings when I choose to honor His name and His ways.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us, in Him, before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love he [surrounded and guaranteed] us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ." Ephesians 1:3-5

Power Words: Psalm 91

Reflection:

How can I learn to better honor His name today?

Day 10

Keeping Things in Order

In the very beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, He established the principle of creation – six workdays and one resting day.

“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.” Genesis 2:2

Following the same pattern of work and rest, God created another guideline for my benefit. Exodus 20:8 says, *“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”* The seventh day of the week is to be a DISTINCTIVE day, to be set aside as special for God.

God created a life-pattern of work and worship, of toil and worship, so that I continually trust in His provision and re-focus my daily activities on the priority of honoring God. In fact, in Exodus 16:26-30, God promises that if I cease from work on this Sabbath day then God will make up the work loss by insuring my provision. A Sabbath day also

grants me a reprieve from the pressures of my week, allows God's Word to take root in me and gives meaning to the responsibilities I hold.

In today's world of 24/7 work schedules I recognize God's wisdom in working six days and taking one day of rest. I can prioritize time spent for prayer, worship with others, and fellowship with family and friends (including meals). It is a day of rest and worship that focuses on my values and behaviors as a believer.

For centuries, Christians living in Western cultures have chosen Sunday as the "Sabbath" day. People of Jewish heritage choose Saturday – the actual seventh day of the week. Believers living in the Middle East often choose Friday. Rather than arguing which day is proper, I will encourage others to consistently put God first in one 24 hour period and make it a holy day to God.

I must trust that God will provide for my needs, care for my business and my family by living out a Sabbath day each week. Following this command is a habit to insure my dependence on Him.

Power Words: Deuteronomy 6

Reflection:

How will I start keeping the Sabbath?

Day 11

Honoring My Parents

I may wonder, Why is an instruction about family the first commandment with a promise? Exodus 20:12 says: *"Honor your father and mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you."*

I would not exist without my parents; and most parents do their best in raising their children. For the most part, even though we all make mistakes, I know that most parents would do anything to make the lives of their children better.

But why does the commandment about honoring parents hold a promise for the one who keeps it? I see the answer! The first four commands focus on my relationship with God, and the last five concentrate on my relationships with others.

The middle commandment – the one about honoring my parents – has to do with right relationships with God and with others, but even more than that – the 5th Commandment is about modeling. Children learn about God and His covenant blessings by listening and watching others, including me. And they learn

about how to love and how to live with others by listening and watching. What an incredible responsibility to know that right now, kids, my own or someone else's, are watching me!

Parents have the responsibility to teach God's commands "*diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.*" Deuteronomy 6:7 (NKJV)

I, regardless of my age, have a responsibility to honor and follow this biblical model. I honor my parents by giving them esteem (Leviticus 19:3) and revering them both as people and as the ones God gave to rear me. I am to seek their advice and counsel, comfort them in need, and return the care they have provided for me.

Paul, in 1 Timothy reminds us to "*put your religion into practice by caring for your own family and so repaying [your] parents and grandparents for this is pleasing to God.*" 1 Timothy 5:4

The hardest and most rewarding job in life is parenting. My parents deserve my praise and adoration for their best efforts. God holds out the promise of a long and fruitful life for me as I live out this command. My children are watching how I treat my own parents and will follow my example.

The Bible says in Galatians 6:9, *“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”*

Power Words: Ephesians 6:2-4, Proverbs 30:17

Reflection:

How may I better honor my parents?

Day 12

Do Not Murder

God is for life! In fact, the very nature of God is life. The creation account in Genesis tells me that He breathed life into the first man and woman. He created a perfect garden for Adam and Eve and placed within it a tree of life.

"The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being." And the Lord God...in the middle of the garden placed the tree of life." Genesis 2:7,9

John 1:4 tells me that when Jesus came to this earth: *"in Him was life, and that life was the light of men."* Jesus himself came to give me life saying in John 10:10 that, *"the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that [you] might have life..."*

Since God is the creator and authority in life, He can not offer His favor of anyone who attempts to subvert that authority by injurious or hateful comments – or even worse, actions that cause damage to another person.

In Exodus 20:13 the 6th Commandment sums up the whole issue in the clearest terms, *"You*

shall not murder." In each moment of my day, I need to choose life because He is life. To take another's life without God-given authority (like the police or soldiers do when acting in proper authority) actually puts me in a spiritual position where I am serving as the eternal judge over another person. This role is reserved for the One who created life, not for His creation.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus likened hateful thoughts and anger to the act of murder. Why? He wants my words to be full of life and hope to others. It seems that many in Jesus' time were sticklers for rules, careful not to take the physical life of others. But apparently their words sucked the life out of people's hearts and emotions. Perhaps this is why the Apostle Paul encouraged the church in Philippi with these words:

"...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things."
Philippians 4:8

If hateful thoughts, wounding words or the act of murder is in my past, I can start fresh today by the power of forgiveness offered to me in Christ Jesus. The Bible says in I John 1:9:

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and

will forgive us our sins and purify us from all [unrighteous behavior]."

I choose His forgiving power today and choose to be a life-giver with my words and actions.

Power Words: Matthew 5:21-26

Reflection:

Do my words bring life or death to others?

Step Three

Loving My Neighbor

Day 13

Do Not Commit Adultery

When God created Adam and Eve, He created two beautiful people and one incredibly perfect union. They were perfect in every way – emotionally, physically, spiritually – they were (and so am I) created in the image of God. Genesis 1:27 says,

“God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

In those moments surrounding creation, Adam was awestruck by the perfectness of Eve. Genesis 2:23-24 records these words of incredible connection. Adam said:

“[She] is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man.” The Scripture continues, *“for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”*

These words are much more powerful than an act of physical intimacy. There is a spiritual union that takes place when a man and woman “create” together. The act of giving of myself

to another in marriage, when offered in health and selfless love, could be considered one of life's most beautiful moments.

This sacred beauty of creative love should be protected at all costs. It reflects God's love for me. It illustrates Christ's love for the church and it impassions the deepest fiber of my being. Anything, absolutely anything that destroys this beauty is a gross and deep violation of God's love for me.

The destruction of marital love is called adultery. In the 7th Commandment God firmly declares, "*You shall not commit adultery.*" Since God created man and woman, He knows what is best for them. The singular, lifelong commitment to my marriage is God's best for me.

But let's face it. In today's over-stimulated world it takes a heroic effort to follow the creed of Job who said, "*I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a woman.*" (Job 31:1) God's greatest earthly gift to a man and a woman (outside of salvation) is the joy of a healthy marriage. The enemy of my soul, Satan, would like nothing better than to destroy this sacred gift by diverting my attention and my desires away from God's best.

So what is adultery? It is any pre-meditated

thought or action that counters the beauty of the love God has designed for a husband or wife. This includes physical activity or even looking with my eyes at others in a desirous way.

There's good news. Since the word of God promises to "cleanse us from all unrighteousness" if adultery has been in my past or in my present, when I confess my sins to Him I can start fresh and stay clean by making a covenant to stay pure with my eyes and thoughts.

Power Words: Matthew 5:27-30

Reflection:

How can I show increased honor to my spouse and to the opposite gender?

Day 14

Do Not Steal

When God created the heavens and the earth, He also made a system of rewards. From the principle of seedtime and harvest (Genesis 9:22) to the idea of work and rest, God put in place a pattern for me to be rewarded for the work that I do.

This reward pattern, or creative principle, has been placed in me. This is why I have a sense of accomplishment when a task is completed, a flower garden blooms, a house is clean or a work project is finished. Deep within me is a godly desire to work and to enjoy the benefit of my toil. The Psalmist described it this way in Psalm 90:17 (NRS):

“Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and prosper for us the work of our hands – O prosper the work of our hands!”

The 8th Commandment found in Exodus 20:15 provides a protection for me to be able to enjoy the work of my hands: *“You shall not steal.”*

Stealing is the act of taking someone else’s possessions – goods, time, or rights – without the owner’s permission. This would include shoplifting, robbery, theft, not giving a full

days' work to my employer, cheating on my taxes or wrongfully taking a privilege from someone else. This is where we get the phrase, "she was robbed."

What prompts someone to wrongfully take something that is not theirs? Perhaps it is the desire to hurt another person or an attempt to take advantage of another's work. But at the core, stealing is choosing not to depend on God and His best. What are the consequences of violating God's law of rightful ownership and work? Stealing always produces a life bound by self-inflicted curses that is absent the joy of delighting in the "work of our hands."

Power Words: Psalm 90

Reflection:

How can I be careful to depend on God and obey God's law of rightful ownership and work?

Day 15

Do Not Lie

The 9th Commandment found in Exodus 20:16 says: *"You shall not lie."* Certainly straightforward, isn't it? In the language of the Bible, lies do not have color (white, gray) or size (little or big), but they do have a damaging impact on me and others.

At the root of this commandment is an understanding that I am to live a life that defers to others. I am to honor and give dignity to every person, treating them better than myself. Philippians 2:3 says it this way:

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves."

When I lie it grieves the Lord and it ruins my relationships with others. The act of "bearing false witness" – that's what lying really is – verbally breaks trust in relationship and injures another person for selfish gain. Think of it in the simplest of terms. A little boy is asked by his parents if he ate all the home made cookies. With crumbs clinging to his lips and a reddened face, he boldly declares, "No, I didn't eat the rest of the cookies." But Mom

and Dad know that he did. His untruthful statement is both self-benefiting and self-protecting. His words are an attempt at a cover up from wrongdoing.

At a deeper level, the little boy is also saying to his parents, "You don't deserve to know the truth, because I am the one who should be in charge." The drive for self-preservation, coupled with a desire for control is at the root of an ungodly lie. I may lie out of embarrassment (I really didn't see that movie) or because I value the opinions of others more than truthfulness. But God honors truthfulness.

Here's how I can put truthfulness on center stage in my life. First, I will concentrate on finding my confidence and identity in Christ. I know that I am "fearfully and wonderfully" created by the hand of God and that, as a believer, my life is now guided by the Spirit of Christ within me.

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20

Second, I am to measure my words so that they are neither self-benefiting nor injurious to others. I will make an effort to defend truth and honor the relationships that God has

placed in my life.

A life filled with truth is a life of great reward.

Power Words: Psalm 139

Reflection:

Are my words filled with gentle truth?

Day 16

Do Not Covet

Contentment. It's a powerful word, but one that is sometimes hard to come by. When I think of being content several things come to my mind: reading a great book, a beautiful sunset, time with my family, a bike ride, a work out, a nice quiet dinner. Most of us could list activities or possessions that bring contentment in our lives.

The natural drive to improve and excel in various facets of my life is actually an instinct to create greater contentment. The innate passion to rise above mediocrity to excellence is a good character trait that helps me overcome obstacles, difficulties and to provide a better place for my friends and family.

What robs me from being content? It is first the wrong belief that material possessions bring long-term satisfaction. Second, it is a craving desire to possess what I have not earned. The 10th commandment says in Exodus 20:17, "*You shall not covet.*" I should choose a life that avoids greedily pursuing something I do not have or deserve.

Jesus put it this way in Luke 12:15: "*Watch out!*"

Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Turning my attention away from the good and valuable things that God has provided me to focus on the things that I do not have also opens the door to all kinds of evil.

"For the love of money is the root of all evil." (I Timothy 6:10)

Living a life of contentment, without coveting what I do not have, requires a daily discipline to choose to enjoy what I do have and to honor the God who has given it to me. The Apostle Paul said these words to the Philippians (4:11-13):

"...I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through Him who gives me strength."

Now I see the secret to living a life that does not covet – I will choose to do all that I do through the eyes of the One who made me. When I delight in Him and His purposes, even the desires of my own heart will be met. (Psalms 37:4)

Power Words: Psalms 37

Reflection:

How may I demonstrate contentment every day?

Day 17

Receiving His Inheritance

The Creator of the universe breathed life into this world. It still belongs to Him. He sustains it by His desire to share it with me and He wants me to enjoy it. In fact, His compassionate concern reaches from the tallest building to the farthest remote village.

The Psalmist declares, *“The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world and all who live in it.”* Psalm 24:1

Every person who has ever lived – every person – has benefited to some degree from the creative and merciful love of the Creator. But God’s purpose for me is much more than reveling in the air I breathe, the mountain splendor or the majestic skies. God designed me to enjoy His blessings as an inheritance throughout my entire life.

His plan is simple and straightforward. Since He created the world with all its complexities, it’s best for Him to keep control of the universe and help me get control of my life. Receiving and benefiting from God’s inheritance all begins with the confident assurance that all I

have and all I do is for Him. These are the words of the Apostle Paul written in Colossians 3:23-24:

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

I can live in the abundance of His covenant blessings, and fulfill God’s destiny for me, when I unlock the key of living in God’s inheritance without greedily attempting to own what He has provided. Managing his “inheritance” is a concept called stewardship.

Stewardship is a word that helps me remember that God is “in charge” and not the money in front of me. When I properly transfer “ownership” of my possessions – of my time, talent and treasure – back to God there is a tremendous release of energy that comes to me. His covenant blessings begin to operate in my life. I don’t have to be ultimately responsible for something that was never intended to be mine. I am free to manage, or steward, God’s abundance in my own life and extend His Kingdom in the lives of those around me.

Power Words: Deuteronomy 8; Colossians 3:23-24

Reflection:

How may I walk in God's inheritance today?

Day 18

Positioned for a Blessing

Before my first breath, God already had a plan for my life (Jeremiah 1:5). Since He created me, loves me and knows all about me, God desires more than anything for me to walk out my life in wholeness. He wants every part of me – my spirit, my soul, and my body – to operate in accordance to His plan and best interest.

Once I transfer the “ownership” of my life – my time, talent and treasure – to Him and commit to be a follower of Christ, He plants within me the incredible potential to grow and be strengthened. I must remember, for me as a believer, all of God is in Christ, and all of Christ is in me.

“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.” Colossians 2:9-10

This potential of abundance and blessing grows within me as I apply several key principles of His kingdom. The first principle is transfer of ownership or surrender. Jesus said: *“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.”
Matthew 16:24-25

The second principle is learning to be a good manager, or steward, of His covenant blessings. God has established a pattern for me to continue to learn and grow in His blessings. God’s blessings do not usually appear mysteriously from heaven or rain down from the sky. He does not hand me wealth (emotional, physical, spiritual or financial); but he does give me the strength (or power) to obtain wealth.

“...Remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the [strength and] ability to produce wealth, and so confirms His covenant.”
Deuteronomy 8:18

As a follower of Christ, God has planted a seed of His blessing in my life. From now on I do not need to try to persuade God to provide His gifts and blessings to come to my life. He is already for me. He has already promised to bless me and has put in place guidelines that, when obeyed, will cause His blessings to flow. My responsibility is to understand His covenant and start living it out.

God’s part was to provide me with every spiritual blessing. He did this in the very beginning when in Genesis 1:28 he created

Adam's covenant and *"blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and [manage] it'."* Then through the work of salvation in Jesus, I am told: *"Jesus Christ...has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world."* Ephesians 1:3-4

When I do my part, God will do His. Listen to these words in Isaiah 54:10:

"Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed...my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace removed."

Power Words: Isaiah 55

Reflection: How can I increase the sowing of God's blessing in my life?

Step Four

Giving My All for Him

Day 19

Strengthened to be a Blessing

God's promise to me is not instantaneous wealth but the "strength" to become holistically successful in all aspects of my life (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). God is good and He is for my good. He outlines in His Holy Word guiding values that will create "holistic" wealth in my life. They are LISTENING to the Holy Spirit and obeying His commands, LIVING out His perfect Word, and LEADING all people to His transforming power.

Here is how it works. In Deuteronomy 28:1-2 it says that if I *"fully obey the Lord and carefully follow His commands"* God will pour out blessings in my life. My responsibility is to listen to God's voice and follow ALL of God's commandments faithfully. His part? It is to bless me so much that I am a conduit of blessings to others (Genesis 12:2-3). Psalm 112:1-10 retells the same truth in a different way. When I live with fear and awe of God, delighting in His commandments, God will pour blessing out on me and my children.

Why has God ordered the world in this way? Why has He chosen the *"foolish things of the world to confound the wise"* (I Corinthians 1:27)?

The answer is remarkably simple. When I learn to apply God's Word in my life, the "increase" in favor and blessing is effective and contagious. The Spirit of Christ within me grants me the ability to inherit the promises of God (Galatians 3:26) and to walk them out before a world that desperately needs to be re-connected to the Maker.

Ordering my life by God's Word brings peace, joy and great reward. His Word is the answer to every perplexing problem I could ever face.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes." Psalm 19:7-8

What does this mean? I no longer need to strive and compete for success because God is on my side. He is not only the victor for eternal life but His Word, now living inside of me, is life itself (Galatians 2:20).

"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." Psalm 119:11

God has promised me to be "heir" of His covenant blessings. This means that success in every aspect of my life will come through obedience to God and the daily walking out of His Word.

Power Words: Psalm 119

Reflection:

How will I listen more intently to God and walk out His Word before the world?

Day 20

Walking Toward His Promised Land

I have a “promised land” that God has designed for me. Once I surrender my own rights and transfer the ownership of my life to God, I start an incredible journey of adventure. God’s journey for me has been so carefully crafted, it is unique to me and me alone. As I yield all of my time, talent and treasure to Him, He then begins to make the journey path clear. I am given many opportunities to live a life beyond myself, to give more than I could ever dream of – and in doing so God brings increase to my life.

What’s the next step in this incredible journey? Accepting God’s Word as true and contemplating on it as the final word in my life. Believe it or not, God’s Word is not just a good option for me to consider, nor is it “food for thought” along the way for me to make my own decision. God’s Word is the very light that I need to find the way in my life’s journey.

“God’s Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” Psalm 119:105

He has already planned out His best for me and outlines it in His Word. Accepting it as

the final authority in my life will ALWAYS release His covenant blessings over me.

In Deuteronomy 11:18 God instructs me to: *“fix these words of mine in your hearts.”* Consider this, since God has good things in store for me and desires to provide clear direction for my present and for my future, applying every part of His Word to every part of me guarantees His truth to begin operating in my life.

The key ingredient is total acceptance that God’s Word is real, true, unmistakable, infallible and perfect for life, faith and practice. God’s desire for me to enter into and enjoy His abundance is so strong that Deuteronomy 11: 12 says this:

“It is a land the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord are continually on it.”

Do I want to inherit and be the manager of God’s blessings? Pay careful attention to these words:

“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” James 1:19-22

Power Words: Proverbs 16

Reflection:

What steps can I take to walk toward His
promised land for me?

Day 21

Creating New Kingdom Habits

I am a creature of routine. Whether I have ever consciously thought about it or not, I have a set pattern for the way in which I bathe, get dressed, set the dinner table, eat and sleep. By the time I am an adult, I have also put into practice spiritual habits creating a "routine" in my relationship with God. Perhaps, like most other people, my "God time" is more catch as catch can "on the run," than an intentional acceptance and contemplation of His Word followed by taking action on it and sharing it with others.

Growing in the strength God has given me requires a change in my spiritual habits. God has already placed within me the ability to grow spiritually, but He leaves me the choice to obey and receive the benefit of His covenant.

I can hear words of clarity and life:

"Anyone who listens to the Word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law [God's

Word] that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it – he will be blessed in what he does.” James 1:23-25

I have an incredible opportunity to exercise my spiritual aptitude by putting into practice, on a daily basis, the practical and personal wisdom given to me in God’s Word. Creating a habit of obedience insures the focus of my priority and aligns my actions to grow in God’s covenant blessings.

When I begin to live out His perfect Word an amazing thing begins to occur. I become “set apart” from those around me...as if I have a direct connection to God and His ways. God Himself chooses me as His own and pours out favor in my life. The Apostle Peter says it like this:

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.” I Peter 2:9

The best way for my own physical body to grow in strength is to use it – to exercise. It is no different with my spiritual life. The more I accept, contemplate and take action on God’s Word, the more He will grant me the privilege of sharing His goodness with others.

Sharing my covenant blessing relationship

with God with others has a direct impact on my own life. It will re-affirm God's truth, my surrender to Him and will give me ample opportunity to dig deeper into the wisdom of God. Plus, sharing what I have been given with others increases my ability to be a conduit of His blessings to others. Jesus said: "*freely you have received, freely give to others.*" Matthew 10:8

Power Words: Psalm 112

Reflection:

What new Kingdom habits can I begin today that will reap a destiny of Godly character?

Day 22

Living On Purpose

God originated His covenant with humankind for a definite purpose. In the creation story God made Adam to fulfill a vision: to be created in His image. He also gave him a mission: to multiply God's image and to expand the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1:27-28). As the story of God's relationship with man continues, I learn that God gave Abraham the vision of being the father of those who carry out His blessings. He also gave Abraham a mission to multiply this blessing by influencing cities and being a blessing to the nations of the earth.

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you." Genesis 12:2-3

How can I apply this to my life today? Galatians 3:29 teaches me that: *"if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."* God gave the vision to Adam, to Abraham and through Christ to me to reflect and live in His image. And He gave me and others one common mission: to

expand His kingdom of covenant blessings on the earth. This is why Jesus came with such great authority saying, *"the kingdom of God is near."* (Mark 1:15)

God's mission for me is to be a blessing to families, cities and nations. If I choose NOT to live out God's mission for my life then God will not continue to bless me abundantly. His covenant blessings are for the INCREASE of His Kingdom. The prophet Isaiah declares in chapter 9:7 *"of the increase of His government [reign] there will be no end."*

Perhaps I, believe it or not, choose to squander the incredible covenant blessing stored up for me by spending His gifts on myself. There are in fact two predictable uses for the wealth God grants. The first is called self-indulgence. This is the practice of building bigger homes, buying more toys and concentrating on creating more for now. Jesus said to the self-indulgent:

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven...for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:19-21

You could describe the second use of God's wealth as an uphill battle, contrary to the ways of this world and yet a most exhilarating

experience in life. What is it? Creating wealth to be used for the expansion of His Kingdom now; and for the preparation of Jesus' return is my mission in life. Jesus is my example. He used all the blessings given to Him to expand His Father's Kingdom. Here's the good news. A life spent on God's mission is a life lived with incredible reward.

Power Words: Deuteronomy 11

Reflection:

Whom has God placed in my path so that I can extend His blessings in their life?

Day 23

Christ in Me

I can be a part of the greatest miracle ever recorded. When I make the decision to forego my own self-crafted plans and follow Christ, the Bible says I have turned from death to life and become a brand new person – an incredible miracle takes place on the inside of me. Here's how the Apostle Paul describes the "new" me in 2 Corinthians 5:17:

If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has gone and the new has come!"

What is this "new" all about? It certainly is about a change of heart and long-term satisfaction. The old me was driven by a never-ending craving deep down on the inside that could never really be satisfied. Pursuing the ways of this world meant that I was, by nature, not instinctively following God's design for me. Instead I was reaping the consequences of poor decisions. But God poured out His love for me, providing a new life to be found in Christ. Listen to the words from Ephesians 2:3-5:

"All of us also lived among [the disobedient] at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature

and following its desires and thoughts. But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ.”

From the first moment that the Spirit of Christ dwells inside of me, He brings me to a place of peace, harmony and purpose. I have peace with the One who made me, and as I follow His guidelines, He brings harmony into my relationships with others and a defined meaningful purpose to my life. I might think of it this way; God’s ultimate plan for me is first for His Spirit to be IN me...dominating my soul and body. Second, He provided me a covenant of blessings to walk in that promises me hope and harmony in my relationship with others. Third, the Spirit of Christ within me brings to life my gifts, talents, and abilities creating the potential for me to do great works for Him. I was saved not just from evil but FOR His plan.

“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that...He might show the incomparable riches of His grace...for it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for you to do.” Ephesians 2:6-10

Power Words: Joshua 1:1-11

Reflection:

What part of God's plan for my life will I begin today?

Day 24

I Am in Christ

I have been hand delivered an incredible destiny. Once I decide to no longer pursue the short-term empty pleasures of this world and to follow Christ, He begins to change my heart, my desires, and grants me the power to keep my mind focused on His goodness.

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of the God. Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you will also appear with Him in glory.” Colossians 3:1-4

The amazing grace of Christ not only cleanses me from sin, but it offers me practical wisdom to navigate the issues of life. His Spirit is in me, ready and able to provide the knowledge I need to get through each and every day. Equally important is the reality that I am hidden in Christ. I can think of it as being encapsulated by the completeness of purity, love and goodness. I am now positioned to live in a spiritual place of forgiveness, mercy and understanding. I can choose to keep my mind

and heart away from confusion and focused instead on the God-given practical wisdom provided by His Spirit. He has given me real time 24/7 access to His presence, the truth of His Word and the guidance of His Spirit to make right decisions.

Being "hidden" in God is far better than being surrounded by the best wisdom I can muster. He exceeds my greatest efforts, surpasses everything the world system has to offer, and offers the eternal hope of being protected from erroneous thoughts, misguided actions and hurtful relationships.

On the day of final judgment, I will give account of my actions, my attitudes and my life's contribution. May I choose to be hidden in Christ, setting my thoughts and pre-determining my actions to His good works, because when He *"appears, then you will also appear with Him in glory."* (Colossians 3:4) God, the Father of all, will see me hidden in Christ's forgiveness and wisdom, and the Creator of the Universe will welcome me in to His eternal presence, saying: *"Well done, my good and faithful servant."* Matthew 25:21

Power Words: Matthew 25:31-40

Reflection:

What part of my daily routine needs to be hidden in Christ?

Step Five
Celebrating God's Favor

Day 25

Growing With Others

God fit me perfectly into a spiritual body. When the Creator looks down from His own dwelling place – heaven – He sees me as a very important part of a whole. Here is how the Apostle Paul describes it in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13:

“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body.”

It is so assuring that God loved me enough to make me unique AND to fit me together with others. I am not supposed to be able to figure out life all by myself. God has given me His Spirit, and He wants me to connect with other believers to be His pure, holy Body. How does this work?

The Apostle Paul continues in I Corinthians 12:18-20:

“...God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part [all thumbs] where would the body be? As it is there are many parts, but one body.”

This means that as a follower of Christ I have more in common with others than I have differences. Because we are connected together by our faith in Christ, many of the instructions in the New Testament have to do with loving, serving, caring, strengthening, honoring and blessing one another. Even when another stumbles or misses the mark, I am instructed to be there for others.

“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:1-2

Doing life together as believers is so important that the first Christians met every day! They would share a meal together, listen and learn about Christ and the Kingdom from teachers among them and make sure that everyone had their basic needs met.

“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2:46-47

The best way I can grow in the Lord is to commit to God AND to serve others. In the

early days of the church people met regularly to learn, to worship the Lord and to work out the details of their lives together. I will choose today to follow their example and encourage others, serving God and others, and honoring each person's unique design by God and His plans for their lives.

Power Words: Acts 4:32-36, Acts 2:42-47

Reflection: To what part of God's family am I attached and serving?

Day 26

Inviting Others to Know Him

I am part of God's #1 plan for the world. After the resurrection, Jesus appeared numerous times to His followers encouraging them to believe, to love God's family and to be filled with His power in order to live as a witness of all they had seen and heard of Him.

Then He left. Jesus' plan for the reconciliation of the world was turned over to me and other believers! The perfect God turned over the eternal destiny of my neighbor, my colleague at school and work, and my family – to me! Listen to the words of 2 Corinthians 5:18-21:

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."

It just couldn't get any better. The God who created me, fills me with His own Spirit at salvation. He uniquely designed me with

passion, gifts, abilities, personality and experiences so I can change my world. My eternal purpose – what really matters and will bring ultimate meaning to me is simply this – I was made to be an ambassador of God’s great salvation and eternal hope. That’s right! He made me just like I am so that I could be placed right where I am to communicate to others the good news.

There is nothing more important – no job promotion, no family, no hobby or ability – that can surpass my job to share love with the unloved, the light to those who sit in spiritual darkness and hope with those lonely and wounded. I was uniquely designed to bring others to the wonderful and matchless love of Christ!

He has placed on our shoulders the responsibility to demonstrate the whole plan of salvation for the world. As an ambassador of the Savior, the world awaits the message that I have bottled up inside of me.

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone [speaking] to them? And how can they [speak] unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’” Romans 10:13-15

Power Words: John 3

Reflection:

Who has God placed in my life for the sole purpose of me sharing the Good News of eternal life?

Day 27

Abundant Life

God's love for me is absolutely beyond comprehension. Not only did He pursue me with His own redemption, bringing me back into relationship with Himself, but He outfitted me with every spiritual blessing! Fitting me uniquely with a design no one else has, God affirms me over and over with His love.

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God."
John 3:1

I want nothing but the best for my own children and my heavenly Father is no different in His commitment to me. He wants me to have His very best. He sent His only begotten Son to live, endure incredible suffering, die and be resurrected - all so that I could live in an abundant relationship with Him.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him." John 3:16-17

God's greatest gift to me is life with Him. The greatest tragedy anyone could experience is life without Him. Which do I have? Do I have a life with Him? Or without Him? Are my days filled with the tangible 24/7 conversational presence of the One who loves me most? Or do I spend most of my day fending for myself.

The easiest way to live in the abundance of His presence is to first invite Him into my life. Revelation 3:20 says,

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me."

The next best step to being with Him is to follow Him at all costs and this requires loving God with my actions. I can have *"confidence before God and receive from Him anything [I] ask, because [I] obey His commands and do what pleases Him."* I John 3: 21-22

No one but Satan purposes evil in my life and no one but God himself can bring sustained life-giving abundance.

"The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy but I come that you might have abundant life." John 10:10

If I want a life filled with His abundant presence, I begin with asking forgiveness of the God who made me, being reconciled back to God by the love of His Son. I will begin to carefully and fully obey His covenant blessing...doing the work of a God ambassador! Abundance will be mine!

Power Words: 2 Timothy 2:1-7

Reflection:

How can I experience a greater measure of God's abundance in my life?

Day 28

Increasing Your Blessing Capacity

God designed me to be a conduit of His blessings to others. My mission as an ambassador of His kingdom is to “be a witness” of everything God has promised for humankind. The first assignment Jesus gave His church was to receive His power so that they would be a witness to the whole earth.

“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8

Becoming a witness of Christ’s Kingdom begins with an ability to holistically live out the covenant blessings that God has in store for each of us. “Being” actually means much more than telling, it describes a process where every part of us – our spirit, soul and body – are demonstrating God’s covenant blessings to others. For years many followers of Christ have been instructed that essentially all that was required was for their words to testify of God’s mercy, but being a witness challenges every part of me to experience and conform to God’s best for my life.

Every day people are examining my actions more than my words, hoping and searching for a clue that will bring wholeness to their own lives. The thrill of sharing Christ and His Kingdom with others begins with using my time, talent and treasure to invest in others.

How can I be ready for this opportunity? I must organize my life to be free from the entanglements and distractions around me.

"Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin which so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out." Hebrews 12:1

This begins with managing the time, talent and treasure assets given to me by the Lord. In every case, I must learn to be faithful and maintain the right priorities. This means my life should focus on my basic needs of food and clothing (I Timothy 6:8-10) and not my wants and desires. Beyond my primary needs I must be careful to budget God's investment in my life. This includes a personal financial budget as well as the "asset" allocation of my time and talent. If I am faithful to be a good manager of what God has given me, He promises to increase His blessings in my life.

If however, my life is riddled with debt and I am overly strapped to my own personal commitments, there is little left for God to use. If I desire to be used mightily of God, I must

decide to become debt free.

Here's how it works. I will take time to count all of my time, talent and treasure obligations and what I owe in each area in a monthly "treasure" budget. Then begin working to eliminate debts that burden me, obligations that limit my opportunity to be a blessing to others. As I follow a Kingdom budget and create more "wealth" of available time, talent and treasure, God will increase His power in my life to be His witness.

Power Words: Luke 16:10-12

Reflection:

Where can I adjust my "time, talent, treasure" budget to increase my Kingdom efforts?

Day 29

Spreading and Sowing

God has a pattern for me to increase in His wealth, and it is completely opposite of everything I have read or learned in school! The world system teaches that I should hoard, save and invest my blessings in order to gain more over time. But God's way is different.

"One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." Proverbs 11:24-25

Once I have "freed up" my time, talent and treasure resources, following God's principles of giving will create further opportunity for me to be blessed and bless others in every area of my life.

When the Bible speaks on the subject of giving and blessing, I should take notes and start making adjustments as fast as I can in my own life! The more I operate my life according to His Kingdom plan and become a witness for Him, the more He will increase bounty into my life.

The prophet Malachi challenged those around

him (and me) to bring all resources (time, talent and treasure) into the storehouse so that blessing would flow from my life. If I fail to prioritize God's blessing as a gift for His Kingdom, then I will fall into the traps and curses of this world. Listen to these words:

"I the Lord do not change...[if you will] return to me, I will return to you...You are [now] under a curse...because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the Lord God Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the windows of heaven...and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."

Malachi 3:6-12

What does this mean for me today? It is very simple. God has organized a pattern of blessing that will show the whole world what it means to live in His Kingdom. When I give of my time, talent and treasure in God's predetermined portion (10%), He responds by blessing me abundantly. His predetermined portion – called a tithe – is like a fence around me. When I give of my time, talent and treasure it builds a fence around all God has for me, protects me from ruin and gives me the opportunity to increase my spreading of His Kingdom in every facet of my life.

The tithe of my life is the "fence" around my field. Above the tithe I should be regularly,

faithfully and consistently sowing seeds of blessing: in caring for the poor, in evangelism and missions, in offerings for spiritual leaders, in giving for God's facilities and resources. The more I invest all of me into His entire Kingdom, the more He in turn will give to me to bless others.

Power Words: 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

Reflection:

Where should I direct my financial sowing?
How can I change my lifestyle to increase my opportunities to invest in His Kingdom?

Day 30

The Law of Reward

God wants to reward me. That's right. He has put in place eternal principles of work and reward so that when I begin investing in His Kingdom He will begin to reward me with a healthy, holistic and bountiful life.

God wants me to not be dependent on others and has planned blessings for me when I choose to work hard. I could call this the Law of Reward. When I do my best, working to provide for my needs and investing the rest in God's Kingdom, then God makes a way for me to enjoy His goodness.

"Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth. He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son." Proverbs 10:4-5

The key to inheriting God's blessing is to trust in His consistent and never-ending covenant. As I remain faithful to God's covenant, He not only provides me with holistic blessings, but He also provides me an abundance to pass on to others.

"Give and it shall be given to you. A good measure,

pressed down, shaken together and running over will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” Luke 6:38

However, the Old Testament story of Lot teaches us that it is possible to work outside of His covenant and be materially wealthy (Genesis 14:11-12). Lot was a wise person investing and growing his family...but outside of the covenant of blessings. He was not careful to fully obey God's commands and when testing came he had no foundation of God's covenant to stand upon.

God wants to bless me and reward my efforts for Him. When I trust in His goodness and remember to tell others the reason blessings are in my life, God is pleased and will honor me again and again (Deuteronomy 8:18).

Power Words: Deuteronomy 8:10-18, 28:1-9

Reflection: How can I begin to live by the Law of Reward?

Day 31

Finding the Fount of Wisdom

God's wisdom empowers me to live a life in His covenant blessing. There are many people in life that might be successful in one or two areas of their lives – family, work, understanding, fitness – but only God's wisdom can bring holistic and complete blessings to me. Wisdom from God brings physical blessings in long life, honor in my soul, material blessings and real spiritual blessings. Proverbs 3: 13-16 offers me this insight:

“Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she [wisdom] is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold...long life is in her [wisdom's] right hand; in her [wisdom's] left hand are riches and honor. Her [wisdom's] ways are pleasant ways, and all her [wisdom's] paths are peace. Wisdom is a tree of life...those who lay hold of her [wisdom] will be blessed.”

Every bit of my future is tied to my understanding and complete obedience to God and His covenant ways. When I honor God with my whole life by making Him my eternal source, He in turn grants me strategies, key

understandings, to help me gain victory over the difficulties and obstacles in my own life.

“Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths.” Isaiah 2:3

When I turn to God for everything I need, His wisdom creates within me patterns of success and holistic blessing (spiritual, emotional, physical, and provisional). This blessing belongs to God, and when I manage His blessings, my wisdom will continue to increase. Listen to these words from James 3:17-18:

“But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest in righteousness.”

How can I increase the source of wisdom in my life? As I begin to live connected to others sharing God’s covenant blessings, helping one others overcome life’s setbacks and investing Kingdom blessings in others, His best wisdom begins to flow in my life! Wisdom increases in me when I invest what I have in others; and when they begin to invest Kingdom blessings in my life.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Colossians 3:16-17

Power Words: Proverbs 4

Reflection:

Who will hear of my grateful and thankful heart?

Epilogue

Fueling a Life in the Covenant

God has made a way for me to live 24/7 in His goodness. Believe it or not, how I internalize and speak of God's Word has a great deal to do with the outflow of God's covenant blessings in my life. My ability to articulate, or confess, God's ownership in my life and His purposes for me release His protection, presence and provision in my life. Listen to the words God spoke to Joshua as he was about to enter the Promised Land:

"Be strong and very courageous, be careful to obey all the law...do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; Meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."

Joshua 1:7-8

The central controller of what I do each day begins with the attitudes and thoughts in my mind. That is why it is so important to fill my mind, will and emotions with the Word of God! When I choose to follow Jesus a powerful transfer takes place in my spirit. Hear these words from Hebrews 8:10:

“This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

When I speak out and guide my life by the words God has placed in my mind and imagination, it begins to shape every part of my life. That’s why the Psalmist says: *“Your word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against you.”* Psalm 119:11

There is even more good news! I can make the choice every day to live in God’s strength or be limited by own ability. The prophet Jeremiah declares:

“Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives.

But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green...and always bear fruit.”
Jeremiah 17:5-8

Depending on God means trusting and believing that He has my best in mind. It also means that I release my dependence on ME being the source and dare to trust everything in my life to the One who made me.

God's covenant blessings are secure to everyone who trusts Him in times of suffering and hardship and in times of plenty. As the Apostle Paul said, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* Philippians 4:13

I can move with confidence into tomorrow because I know that God's Word is powerful in my life and always having an impact. Isaiah 55:11 says it this way:

"It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it."

Jesus used the Word of God to strengthen himself when He was under attack from Satan. He said, *"Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."* Matthew 4:4

When my daily conversation declares the truth of God's Word, it will build faith in my life. The Apostle Paul says in Romans 10:17: *"faith comes by hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."*

Perhaps the best way to keep God's Word and His covenant promises at the forefront of my day to day life is to consciously praise Him and give Him thanks in every situation. Starting the habit of natural praise and thanksgiving prioritizes my day and keeps me focused on the reality that God is the One in charge. Most important is the reality that a heart full of God's Word, confessing His truth and praising Him in every situation, is a heart that is placed under God's sovereign throne. It speaks of a life in covenant blessing!