



Marching Toward Your Purpose

Dr. Darryl L. Jones

Copyright © 2018 Dr. Darryl L. Jones

All rights reserved.

ISBN-13:978-1981742806

ISBN-10:1981742808

DEDICATION

My wife Tisa - For your continued love, encouragement, motivation and support throughout the writing of this book and our marriage.

My Children April and Chris, Darryl and Chesmonti, Michael, Kennedy -For allowing me to just be dad!

My Granddaughter Naomi Elise Jones - For making me feel young

My Mom Idella Louise Davis (Mama) - For showing me how to get the most out of the least.

My Grandma Ida Kate Bridges (Mudear) - For showing me how to have a relationship with God through prayer and faith.

My Sister Darsha Freeman - For being the best sister in the whole world.

My Champions 4 Christ Church Family - You are the best!!!

CONTENTS

1	<i>In The Beginning Was The Beginning "Before I Was; GOD IS!"</i>
2	<i>God Given Purpose</i>
3	<i>There's A Purpose For Our Problem</i>
4	The Faith Principle Of Our Purpose
5	Possessing The Promised Purpose
6	Nobody Said It Would Be Easy
7	Purposeful Relationships
8	The Purposeful Pain Of Integrity
9	Prepare For Your Purpose
10	Stay Faithful To Your Purpose
11	Pray For Your Purpose In Relationships
12	Receiving A Righteous Purpose

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book would not have been possible without the divine inspiration from God. I am especially indebted to all Pastors, Preachers, Teachers, Evangelists and other Spiritual Leaders, who have been supportive of my journey and goals and who worked actively to provide me with the encouragement to pursue those goals. I am grateful to all of those with whom I have had the pleasure to work with during all my other stops on my career path.

I would especially like to thank all of you who have written on the subject of purpose.

Most of what I have learned and/or included in this book was inspired from your books and teachings. Nobody has been more important to me in the pursuit of this book than the members of my family.

I would like to thank my all of my biological and nonbiological family members, and friends, whose love and guidance are with me in whatever I pursue. They are the ultimate role models. Most importantly, I wish to thank my loving and supportive wife, Tisa, and my wonderful children, April and her husband Chris, Darryl and his wife Chesmonti, Michael and Kennedy and my lovely granddaughter Naomi, who provide unending inspiration.

Introduction

Marching toward your purpose. At a very early age I was attracted to historically black colleges and universities (HBCU's) marching bands. I would go to football games to watch my aunt and uncle perform with their high school band. So, on one Saturday when I was 10 years old my uncle Milton took me to see an HBCU football game that featured a battle of the bands at the Atlanta Fulton County Stadium. It featured the bands from Morris Brown College (MBC) and Florida A&M University (FAMU). It was my first time ever seeing marching bands with so many musicians.

I was familiar with the marching wolverines band of MBC, but I was unfamiliar with the band from FAMU.

When FAMU band entered the stadium, I knew without a doubt I wanted to be in a large marching band. As they high stepped into the stadium it looked like they had about 400 musicians marching in. From that moment I found myself attracted to learning an instrument so that I could also play in a marching band.

As I started to craft my musical skills on the brass instruments of the mellophone, french horn and trumpet I would eventually be awarded a band scholarship to attend Morris Brown College after graduating from high school. It was there where I would begin to apply the marching band analogy as a direction toward purpose. When I started relating the effort of the long hours of strenuous and laborious daily practice for a 15-minute performance. It was then when I started to learn the principle of the importance of the dedication required to move toward a desired purpose.

The purpose of our marching band was to leave the crowd of spectators with a lifelong memory of seeing and witnessing an outstanding performance of musicianship, precision marching skills and an electrifying performance.

It is that backdrop that inspires me to march toward my purpose in life to inspire, encourage and lead others who read this book toward their God given purpose in life.

Let me be the first to say, I know that there are plenty of books you and others can read. This book is directly and indirectly influenced by many of the writers of those books and I owe them for leading the way in writing about our purpose. So, what makes this book different?

First, this book is written as a thank you to God for giving me the ability to share some motivating and inspiring words with you.

Also, that you may be inspired, encouraged and committed to seeking your God given purposeful and abundant life.

Have you ever thought to yourself; One, some and/or all the following questions. Why am I here?

What's the meaning of my life? Does God really care about me? If we are honest we all can say yes to one or all these questions.

Growing up I would often want to know the meaning of things. When I was around five years old I remember passing this place that had beautiful grass and flowers and huge marble stone rocks. I asked my Great grandfather what kind of yard was that?

He said that's a cemetery. I said what is a cemetery? He said that's where dead people are buried. At the time I hadn't quite grasped the meaning of being dead. I didn't ask any more questions about cemeteries but over time as we would pass that location I would point and tell whoever was around me, look at the cemetery that's where they bury dead people. A couple of years later when I was about seven years of age, I would get my first encounter with death. My little brother Duane died at the age of six months to what was called crib death. I had never encountered such sadness before in my life as I watch a majority of my family mourn the loss of Duane. After the funeral we all went to a cemetery where my little brother Duane was buried.

Before then I didn't have any understanding of life and death, but I was told and believed that God was in charge of the entire world and Duane served his purpose and his time on earth was completed. Now, knowing that we don't know when our life on earth can end, I started to believe that I should not take life for granted.

I started to think about what it is I wanted to be when I grew up and I had no idea at the time.

However, there was a family friend more particularly my great grandfather friend whom we called "Uncle Jones" (no relation) who would constantly speak about how smart I was. He stated it so often, that I really believed I was smart. He went even further to suggest I would become a doctor. He even showed his belief by giving me a black doctor bag equipped with a stethoscope and tongue depressors.

I don't know if he ever knew how powerful his words and action was to my academic journey. Even when I would encounter difficult subjects I would remind myself of Uncle Jones and his belief in what I could do.

I had the privilege of growing up in the church. As long as I can remember, the church experience was always a valuable part of my life. My family belonged to the Pleasant Hill Missionary Baptist Church in Northwest Atlanta and our pastor was Rev. C.S. Surry. My spiritual foundation was developed at this church. This church was full of loving people who constantly displayed love and encouragement.

Our church received the message of a loving God who loved us so much that He gave us the very best gift that He had to offer us by giving us His Only Son Jesus.

Our church offered opportunities for young people also. Once when I was around five years old I was asked to recite the 23rd Psalm during church service which I did. The people of the church

on that Sunday offered so much encouragement to me as I concluded saying the 23rd Psalm from memory. My grand-mom Ida Kate Bridges (Mudear) was so excited that she took me to get an Ice Cream cone later that afternoon.

As I look back at my life I see that there was a plan, purpose and a promise for my life. That Sunday when I recited the 23rd Psalm was the first of many Sundays I would speak in a church on Sunday mornings. As I would continue my growth through pre-teens and as a teenager, I was known for being smart by doing what was right and staying out of trouble.

What's more accurate was the fact that I was not as smart as I could have been, and I was not always doing what was right and staying out of trouble.

But, I knew I had a purpose in life and I have been on the journey toward my purpose. My desire is that this book will show you how to march toward your purpose.

Chapter 1

"In The Beginning Was The Beginning "Before I Was; GOD IS!"

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. (John 1:1-5)

Before I Was, God Is...

Before I Was David and Louise first baby.

Before I was even given my name.

Before I was a Grady Baby...God Is.

I'm under the belief that the potential of something is related to its source.

I also believe that everything in life was created with potential and possesses the potential principle. When we study the scriptures of the

bible we find that creation abounds with potential because the Creator God Himself is the potential principle.

When we describe God, we often say He is omnipotent.

Omnipotent means that God is always potent. Made up of two words:

Omni, meaning "always," and potent, meaning "full of power," omnipotent means that God is potentially everything. He has within Him the potential for all that is, was, or ever will be. He is omnipotent!!!

How many of you know that...EVERYTHING COMES FROM GOD?

Me, you and us, everything that was, and everything that is, was in God. That's a very important concept. Everything that was and is, was in God.

So, we must start with God. Before God made anything, before He created things, there was only God. So, before anything was, God is.

God is the root, or source, of all life.

Before anything was, God is.

Before there was time, time was—but it was in God. Before God created a galaxy or the Milky Way, they existed. Before there was a universe or a planetary system with the third planet called earth revolving around the sun—before any of that was—they were.

I wonder what it must have been like when God was just by Himself. Let's try to imagine that for a minute. Here's God. He steps out on nothing to view nothing, for there was nothing except God.

And so, God is standing on top of nothing, looking at nothing because everything was in Him.

IN GOD WAS THE BEGINNING

The Bible tells us: "In the beginning, God..." That means before there was a beginning, there was God. Therefore, God began the beginning and verse 0 of the first chapter of Genesis might possibly read: In God was the beginning. Everything that is was in God. Everything that has ever been made was made by God.

When we connect *Genesis 1:0*—in God was the beginning—and *John 1:1*—in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God...He was with God in the beginning—we see that the Word was with God in the beginning, not at the beginning.

Before there was a beginning, there was God.

Everything that is was in God.

The Gospel of John also tells us that all things were made by the Word.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life... (John 1:1-4).

Nothing that was created was made without the Word. In the Word was life. Life came out of God. Therefore, before you knew life, life was.

All things were made by God.

Everything you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch was in God before they came to be. Even what you discern first existed in God.

Now let me be a little ridiculous to prove my point. God had cockroaches and mosquitoes and rats in Him. He had suns and clouds and planets in Him. The cows to make for that expensive leather bag and designer leather shoes...the oil and gas to run our cars...—all these things were in God.

Everything on this earth is God's property. If God would ever repossess His property, we would be in big trouble. All things were in God and thus belong to Him.

God, in the beginning when there was nothing, contained everything that man has seen. He also contained everything man will ever see.

Thus, if you had talked to God on the highway of nothingness, you would have been talking to millions of cows and horses and mountains and trees and limousines and hotels and beaches.

They all were in God. They were in Him, but nobody saw them. That's why we call God omnipotent. He's always full of the potential to bring forth what you see. God is pregnant with the universe.

In essence; if you met God on the highway of nothing, by the corner of nowhere, before there was anything, and you shook His hand, you would be shaking hands with everything, but would not know it. You would be with potential.

THE INVISIBLE BECAME VISIBLE

In the beginning, God was pregnant with the universe and all things were made by Him. But how did these things come out of Him?

How was the universe formed? All things were formed at God's command.

He spat them out—Boom! From the invisible came the visible.

Things that are seen came from things that were unseen.

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible (Hebrews 11:3).

God always had everything in Him, but we couldn't see it. All we now see was once in an invisible state. Everything that man has ever seen first existed in an invisible state. (Please note that invisible does not mean nonexistent.)

All the buildings we see and the businesses we frequent—people making money and investing money—all that stuff began as ideas. We couldn't see them because they were in somebody's mind.

The stores where we shop, also everything on the shelves and racks in those stores, began as ideas in someone's mind. They didn't exist before, yet they did. Although they weren't present in their

current form, they existed as lumber and concrete and nails, cotton and wool and flax, steel and pulleys and motors.

Someone had an idea. Through work they put their idea into things that are visible. Today they take your money.

Everything starts in the invisible state. Everything we now see used to be unseen.

In the beginning there was only God. At creation the entire unseen universe became visible.

Everything that has been created was made by the word of God. Although it already existed, God spoke so that what was invisible could become visible. You would never have known it existed, except God spat it out in faith.

By faith God spat out what was in Him. Everything in Him started to come forth. What we now see was birthed by God from what was invisibly within Him. Whatever you see came from the unseen—nothing exists that was not at some time in God. Thus, faith is not the evidence of things that do not exist. It is the evidence of things that are not yet seen.

Everything we see has always been. It became visible when God spoke it into being. God is the source of life.

SPOKE IS HARD WORK

What happened when God spoke at creation? How did He get the invisible to become visible? First let me broaden your idea of the word spoke.

Spoke was a process. What God spoke into visibility began as an idea in His mind. God first conceived in His mind what He wanted to create.

He didn't just say, "I want this." The prophet Isaiah tells us that God created the earth by first planning its foundations (Isaiah 48:13).

After the plans were in His mind, God spoke them into existence.

When God was ready to speak, it was just a matter of taking what was in the plan and putting it on the site.

Spoke was a process.

God laid the groundwork for the earth and spread out the heavens.

He created the sun to shine during the day and the moon and stars at night. He gave every star a name. He ordered clouds to fill the sky and breezes to blow. He made the waves to roar in the sea. He sent rain to water the earth and grass to cover the hillside. Thunder and lightning were created by His command; hail and sleet were formed by His word.

A wool-like blanket of snow He produced for winter; frost and dew He designed.

God was full of imagination. He was pregnant with many thoughts.

His thoughts became ideas, and the ideas became images. Everything that is, came out of God as He spoke those images.

The unseen became seen—the invisible became visible.

God's speaking was much like the contractions of a woman in labor.

With effort He pushed out each detailed creation. Then God began organizing the things that appeared. He was busy as He set them up, organizing and organizing and reorganizing. Finally, God said, "This is good."

God didn't create the world by just thinking the whole thing into being. He worked it into being. After creating a plan in His mind, God spoke to make visible the invisible. (Speaking was one of the ways He worked.) All that was made came from God. Through work He created the world.

For six days God created the heavens and the earth. On the seventh day He rested.

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 2:2-3*).

Speaking must be a serious thing. If God, who is almighty and all powerful, had to rest after creation, speaking it must have been very hard work.

When creation was completed, God rested. God was the first one to sabbat—He intended the Sabbath to be a blessing.

He knows that life produces work, and work creates the need to rest.

THE WORK OF CREATION IS NOT YET COMPLETE

The work of God is not complete—He has not delivered all His babies. He will keep on delivering as long as you deliver, because you are the continuation of His deliveries. God can still create. When you ask for something in prayer, God doesn't have to shift things around because He is going broke.

If it doesn't exist in a visible form, God will speak it. He'll make whatever is necessary. He continues to be pregnant with many things.

Because all things are in God, you can ask God for anything. An idea is around in God a long time before it comes out.

Nothing we think or do is new (*Ecclesiastes 1:9*). Everything that has been done will be done again—what we think is new has already been here for a long time.

Nothing we think or do is new.

There's a guy in China right now who is thinking about the idea you thought was yours. When the idea came out of God, many people got it.

Because everything comes out of God, you all received the idea from the same Source.

Until that idea is transformed by action, God will continue to leak that idea into women and men. Why? Because God is a God of potential.

Although He is the source of all things, He shares His omnipotent powers with His creation. We, like God, are pregnant with many things.

We are full of imagination, having the potential power to be more than we visibly are. There are dreams, visions, plans and ideas in us that need to be released. God wants us to tap His power and use it, because God made us with potential.

PRINCIPLES

Everything that was and is, was in God.

God is the Source of all potential.

All things were formed at God's command, so the invisible became visible.

God planned the world in His mind before speaking it into existence.

Chapter 2

God Given Purpose

To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven. (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

We were born with a God-given purpose and fulfilling that purpose must be our primary mission in life. Our fulfillment, satisfaction and peace of mind are all tied to that purpose!

So? "How do we find our God-given purpose?" That is a question I believe many would love an answer to. So many people are lost when it comes to knowing why they were born. My prayer is that In this vital life-improving book we'll learn how to learn our God-given purpose.

Every human being born has entered into the earth realm with a God-given purpose,

We Were Born With a Specific God-Given Purpose (See Ecclesiastes 3:1). Let me start off by saying...

- No man or woman ever born, came without a God-given purpose, (*See II Timothy 1:9*).
- Everyone was born with gifts, talents and abilities to assist us in fulfilling our God-given purpose, (*Romans 11:29*).
- It is the responsibility of each of us to learn his or her God-given purpose, (*Romans 12:2*).
- We must be able to convey our God-given purpose to others, (*Habakkuk 2:2*).

If we fail or refuse to learn our God-given purpose, our options automatically become: Our own personal vision for our life, society's vision for our life, or the devil's vision for our life.

With these plans, we may experience great financial success, but in the end, none of these visions will bring us fulfillment, satisfaction or peace of mind, (See Proverbs 19:21).

We Don't Find Our Purpose - We Learn It!

We don't find our God-given purpose any more than we find mathematics or aerodynamics. To find means to come upon, often by accident.

When it comes to mathematics or aerodynamics, we learn them! We do the same with our God-given purpose. We learn it!

Here is the first crucial point to learning our God-given purpose: God hid His purpose for our life deep within the recesses of our heart.

Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out. (Proverbs 20:5)

In order to draw His purpose out of our heart, we must be a woman or man of understanding. I'll show you how to become that man or that woman!

Using the illustration of a man drawing water from a well, the Lord makes another crucial point. If we don't draw out our God-given purpose from deep within our heart, we will never learn it. He goes on to say.

Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war. (Proverbs 20:18)

Without proper counsel, we will not be able to learn our God-given purpose. During my senior year of high school, my guidance counselor (Ms. Wyche) was a nice lady.

She was intelligent, had a college degree and had comprehensive training to assist students make life-altering career decisions.

She said my test scores revealed that college was best for me.

The problem with her professional assessment.

As sincere as she was, she was not my designer or manufacturer. Though I did go on to college. As a matter of fact, I went so far that I earned a doctoral degree which is a terminal degree, that mean the end of formal education in a particular course of study. She had no idea what I was capable of because she was not the one who installed the gifts, talents and abilities within me. But, she was in the ballpark.

To ask any man or woman, including our parents, to tell us what our God-given purpose is, is like asking the Ford Motor Company, "What is the purpose and capabilities of a B-2 Spirit Stealth Bomber?" The folks at Ford have some sharp minds, but they cannot answer that question for one reason.

They did not design or manufacture that aircraft.

If we want to know our God-given purpose, we must go to our manufacturer, (*See Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:7*).

When the Lord God created us, He gave each of us an operator's manual. It is called the Bible - the Written Word of God.

Our operator's manual tells us which counselor to inquire of concerning this critical issue.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6) [Emphasis added]

Our counselor is none other than the Lord God Almighty!

He is not just any counselor. *Read (Isaiah 9:6) again! He is our Wonderful Counsellor!*

He is the only one who can reveal to us our God-given purpose.

When we seek His counsel, there is no possibility of us failing in life because His counsel is excellent in working, (See *Isaiah 28:29*). Read how the prophet Habakkuk sought out the Wonderful Counsellor, then became a man of understanding and got clear on his God-given vision.

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd.² And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that read it.³ For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. (Habakkuk 2:1-3)

Note the sequence of events...

- We must engage in earnest prayer, (*Habakkuk 1:1-17*)
- Next, get quiet before the Lord, (*Habakkuk 2:1*)
- The Wonderful Counsellor will speak to us, (*Habakkuk 2:2*)
- When He speaks, write the vision down, (*Habakkuk 2:2*)
- Be ready to convey our God-given vision to others, (*Habakkuk 2:2*)
- Rejoice, because God's vision for our life is coming to pass, (*Habakkuk 2:3*)

We must earnestly pray, "*Lord, what is my purpose and what did you put in me?*"

I have some great news for you! When you ask the Lord those questions, He will always answer you, "*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you*". (*Matthew 7:7*)

How long will He take?

He will answer you immediately, but how you hear Him depends on your level of spiritual growth and development, *for everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:13-14)*

The people who are attentive, quick to listen, quick to obey, quick to forgive and quick to repent, effortlessly hear God's voice and act on His Word, *But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred. (Mark 4:20)*

The people who are distracted, slow to listen, slow to obey, slow to forgive and slow to repent, have a harder time hearing from God, *Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. (Mark 4:18-19)*

After praying the prayer, "*Lord, what is my purpose and what did you put in me?*" you need to analyze and take inventory of your gifts, talents and abilities.

For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Romans 11:29

Prior to our birth, God installed in us all the necessary gifts, talents and abilities we would need to fulfill his purpose for our life. Those gifts, talents and abilities help define our purpose.

Some have said that parts of Alaska have been said to be so cold that when we breathe, our breath would instantly freeze and fall to the ground. With the proper protective clothing, a human being could withstand that type of cold, but only for a short period of time.

If you do some study on Polar bears, you will learn that they are superbly adapted for survival in freezing weather. They are so well

insulated that they experience almost no heat loss. They can withstand temperatures of minus 37 degrees Fahrenheit. Because of their insulation, they tend to overheat in warm weather.

They cool down by diving into the ice-cold waters. Polar bears are champion swimmers. Using their partially webbed forepaws, they have been clocked swimming as fast as six miles per hour. They also have excellent underwater vision. Scientists tell us that polar bears can spot food up to 15 feet away while submerged.

BUT! If you take the Polar Bears from the Far North and place them in the Sahara Desert, they will eventually die prematurely. The gifts, callings and abilities of the Polar Bear are ideally suited for the Far North, not the Sahara Desert.

The Polar Bear's heavy insulating fur and thick blubber layer was made for the ice cold, not the heat.

The Polar Bear's swimming abilities, fur, blubber, webbed forepaws and its ability to withstand extreme cold, help to define its purpose.

It is the same way with everything!

Also, you will find when studying eagles, you will learn the wings of the eagle reveal that the eagle was made to fly. The eyes of the owl reveal that it is more suited to hunt at night. The anatomy of the fish - the scales, slime coat, gills, ventral, pectoral and dorsal fins, and fact that they have no arms, legs or wings, reveals that they were designed for the water.

How Were You Designed?

What do you like to do? Sports? Solve mathematical problems? Play chess? Sing? Create music? Write? Build things? Invent things? Paint? Design things? Are you artistically inclined?

Do you have a love for biology, nature or medicine? Do you have an analytical mind? Are you mechanically inclined? Are you a

bookworm? Do you enjoy baking? Do you like to teach or train people? Do you love working with children?

Do you like watching attorneys litigate? Do you have an inquisitive investigative mind? Do you love to make delectable culinary dishes?

What You Naturally Gravitate Towards - Helps Reveal Your Purpose

I was told I started reading when I was 3 years old. I can't explain it. One day I picked up a newspaper sports section and just started reading in a rhythmic flow. By the time I reached high school, people were asking me to read and explain things they couldn't understand themselves or from the teacher.

I noticed something else while in high school. I had this knack for teaching and leading others, either in the band or ROTC. That gift carried over into my career and ministry.

I spent nearly 10 years working in Banking and finance. But even after I saw little success and the success of the men and women who worked with me, something was still missing. I was not fulfilled.

The problem?

I was fulfilling (my vision) for my life and not my God-given purpose!

The Lord put within me the gifts, talents and abilities to lead men and women to find and fulfill their God-given purpose through Christian principles. I could not fully accomplish my God-given purpose, while training people to understand banks debits and credits, general ledgers and spreadsheets. I was on a path that many wanted to be on. But once I learned my God-given purpose, my life completely changed. It became fulfilling and satisfying!

I have no greater joy than being able to help God's people walk in the Truth and fulfill His purpose for their lives!

What Happens After We Learn Our God-Given Purpose?

Once we know our God-given purpose and have taken inventory of our gifts, talents and abilities, go for it with all our might!

Whatsoever thy hand find to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest. (Ecclesiastes 9:10)

What is the Lord saying? Don't take your gifts, talents and abilities to the grave! Get busy about fulfilling His purpose for our life! Give it all that we've got!

Chapter 3

There's A Purpose For Our Problem

²⁵ After exploring the land for forty days, the men returned ²⁶ to Moses, Aaron, and the whole community of Israel at Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran. They reported to the whole community what they had seen and showed them the fruit they had taken from the land. ²⁷ This was their report to Moses: “We entered the land you sent us to explore, and it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk and honey. Here is the kind of fruit it produces. ²⁸ But the people living there are powerful, and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak! ²⁹ The Amalekites live in the Negev, and the Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites live in the hill country. The Canaanites live along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea^[a] and along the Jordan Valley.” ³⁰ But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. “Let’s go at once to take the land,” he said. “We can certainly conquer it!” ³¹ But the other men who had explored the land with him disagreed. “We can’t go up against them! They are stronger than we are!” ³² So they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites: “The land we traveled through and explored will devour anyone who goes to live there.

All the people we saw were huge. ³³ We even saw giants^[b] there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them we felt like grasshoppers, and that’s what they thought, too!” (Numbers 13:25-33 NLT)

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. ⁴ He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others.

When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. "2 Corinthians 1: 3-4"

So many people in this life want everything without any effort.

We see that doctor or lawyer home and say (I'd sure like to have a home like that) but we don't want to go to school for 18-20 plus years, so we can make that kind of money, so we can buy a home like that.

We see that young man walking through the mall, it looks like his muscles has muscles and they're about to bust out of his shirt, and we say (man I'd like to have muscles like that) you can if you go to the gym 5 times a week and pump iron till it feels like your arms and legs will fall off.

Or we see that pastor of a large church, they're prosperous and drives a nice car and lives in a beautiful home, and we say (I want a church like that and a car like that and a home like that).

The question is, are we willing to do what they did to get it?

Are we willing to be faithful over a handful of not so perfect people, seek God, study God word, obey God when it doesn't make sense, be persecuted and publicly criticized and humiliated?

Unfortunately, many believers have the attitude that just because they are saved and in the family of God, that now God is supposed to give them everything they ever dreamed of without any effort, or work or discipline on their part.

The fact is, our purpose costs what it costs, and it never goes on sale.

Yes! God wants to prosper us and bless us, but sometimes we're going to have to go through something.

Sometimes we will have problems, sometimes we must struggle, and sometimes we must fight.

It's important that we all understand that there's a purpose for our problem that is necessary to becoming what God has created us to be.

There's a story that tells two reasons why God left giants in the promised land on purpose. First, because the Israelites needed to learn how to fight. Secondly, because giants distinguish the difference between professors and possessors.

It's one thing to confess the promises of God, it's another thing to strap on your sword and go toe to toe with your giants and possess your promises.

- Giants expose the grasshoppers in the crowd (When giants show up grasshoppers speak up).

Grasshoppers usually blend into their environments, but giants uncover them.

Remember, grasshoppers don't eat grapes; you will never have promise land faith with a grasshopper mentality.

- You get to know yourself during problems (the real you come out under pressure).
- You get to know your God, you realize that God is your only help.
- You get stronger, you forget about your haters, you dig into the word and prayer.
- You become aware of the excesses and unnecessary things in your life.

Our problem produces thankfulness (example) someone survives a tornado, their house is gone, their car is gone, but they are so thankful that they are still alive, the family is together.

When you know you had to fight for what you got:

- You appreciate it more.

- You won't let anyone take it from you.

Problems test our level of commitment

The only way to truly gauge your level of commitment is through problems

Our Problems qualifies us for rest

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)

Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. (Hebrews 4:11)

Our Problems qualifies us for our reward:

David heard them speak of a reward, but he knew the reward was only for the person who would fight and KILL Goliath.

Have you seen the giant?" the men asked. "He comes out each day to defy Israel.

The king has offered a huge reward to anyone who kills him. He will give that man one of his daughters for a wife, and the man's entire family will be exempted from paying taxes!" "1 Sam 17:25"

We should understand that many times our problems, our fight, our warfare, our praying, our waiting patiently, our enduring, is as important as the blessing or reward.

While we are looking at the reward, God is looking at the development that is taking place through our problem.

Faith is forged in the furnace of adversity.

The first-generation children of Israel forfeited their inheritance because they would not fight.

How many of God's people have forfeited their destiny or promise, just because they refused to fight?

When the heat was on they bailed out, backed down, laid down their swords and conceded to the enemy.

As long as everything was going smooth they were right there shouting with the rest of the army, but when the problems came they caved in and gave in to discouragement and fear and doubt.

If we will be truthful: What has made us what we are in God, is our problems

Yes, it was that which we had to fight for, fight against and overcome that made us who we are.

The caterpillar goes through a process of metamorphosis through which it changes from an earthbound crawly worm, into a beautiful butterfly.

But this process is a problem...

To forsake this problematic process would rob the butterfly of its destiny.

The baby chick in the egg goes through a process of growth inside of the egg until it begins to outgrow the egg, but it must peck its way out of the egg.

This problem strengthens the baby chick and prepares it for life outside the egg.

To forsake this problematic process would severely injure if not kill the chick.

Through all of its problems it gains the strength it needs to survive and thrive in its new environment.

And here is one of the best thing about our problems:

It qualifies us to help others.

When we've been through something we can help somebody else.

When we've stood our ground and fought our battles and conquered our giants we are qualified to help someone else through their battles.

One thing that has really helped me through my problems is (the thought of) how many people I am going to be able to help and encourage because of going through this?

The devil wants to make it all about you, give you tunnel vision (he wants you to focus all your attention on the problem).

But God! God wants you to realize that even though the devil sent it to take you out, God is going to use it to take you up, and when you get up you will be able to help somebody else get up.

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. ⁴He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

Through our problems God is bringing us to a place of greater influence and blessing to our brothers and sisters in the lord.

Yes, I may be going through some problems but I'm growing through my problems

I'm developing some spiritual muscles, I'm developing some compassion, some patience, some endurance.

Some long-suffering. I'm developing the ability to put myself in the position where others are and to feel what they feel, so I can speak a word in season to them.

Yeah, I may have problems right now but don't feel sorry for me, there's something in my problems so I can become what God has created for me.

Pray for me, not to get out, but to go through.

God did not deliver Daniel from the lion's den, he delivered him through it.

God did not deliver the three Hebrew children from the fiery furnace, he delivered them through it.

David needed Goliath!

The children of Israel needed the giants!

The 3 Hebrew children needed the fiery furnace!

Sampson needed the Philistines!

And we need our problems!

There is no testimony without a test and no victory without a battle. A victorious life is not a problem free life, it is a life in which we overcome our enemies by struggle and fight. Finally let me say: The problem doesn't last forever.

Weeping may endure for the night but joy cometh in the morning.

Our problem is an instrument of transition. Our problem means we are on our way somewhere.

The devil wouldn't fight you if you were not going somewhere.

Our problem prepares us for our future purpose.

Our problem is an indication of transition...Don't feel sorry for me, I'm just in Transition. Yes! There's a Purpose for our problem...

Chapter 4

The Faith Principle Of Our Purpose...

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.² For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.³ By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. Hebrews 11:1-3

Do you only find faith as the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen? And even if you do, what does that mean in your everyday life? Let's look at this word faith and understand how God can change our perspective and begin to change our reality on what God has to say about our faith perception.

My faith understanding. The community of faith is generally used in a global since from a secular view when they want to pull out a segment of a community of faith that's ecumenical in its faith principle.

But, let's use it like this... faith is from within your soul, heart and life; faith lives in there, but it doesn't live alone.

There's a whole community around your faith

I don't care how faith filled you are, your faith is not holding down that block by itself.

Across the street from faith is doubt, upstairs from faith is fear, around the corner from faith is anxiety and down the street from faith is depression. All of them live in the community of faith.

When we walk out of our doors in the morning we take our whole community with us.

When we get on social media we act like we have no doubt...

But everyone has some level of doubts,

Everyone has some level of fear,

Everyone has some level of some level of anxiety,

Everyone has some level of depression;

All that stuff lives in our community...

It depends on what happened to you that day...

It depends on what you read that day...

It depends on what you hear that day...

and what you are confronted with that day...

So, how do you react to all of that?

Our goal as leaders of faith in God is that we communicate the Word of God to you, so it may gradually gentrify your community until faith begin to dominate and take control of the community one house at a time until you start.

Walking by faith

Talking by faith

Living by faith

Thinking by faith

Raising by faith

Doing business by faith

Facing Adversity by faith

Trusting God by faith

If you don't have faith in God, it means nothing.

You can live clean as a whistle, you can live so Holy that your breath doesn't stink in the morning.

If you don't have faith in God, it means nothing.

Righteousness apart from faith will not get the job done in your life.

There's only one thing you need to survive and that is to have faith in God.

Have faith in God is not just having faith, but having faith in God...

I have faith in God even when I don't have faith in me...

It's not because I'm Righteous,

It's not because I'm Perfect,

It's not because I'm Holy,

It's not because I've prayed all day but,

It's God's goodness, grace, mercy, love and kindness that brings us out.

You should understand that this faith principle is very important.

I don't care how nice you are and how polished and smoothed you are if you don't have faith in God you don't have nothing!

You can join every auxiliary and pay your tithe and offerings but if you don't possess faith in God you don't possess nothing...

If there's one thing the devil is after, he's after your faith...

The devil doesn't want your husband,

The devil doesn't want your wife,

The devil doesn't want your children,

The devil may attack things and people in your life, but the devil wants your faith...

Everything that the enemy is attacking in your life right now, he is attacking to get your faith...

He is attacking to get our faith, our faith is a valuable commodity, our faith moves God, our faith shakes heaven, our faith rebukes the devil, our faith rebukes disease, our faith gives us courage, our faith gives us confidence, our faith reaches in the Spirit, our faith snatches the promises, our faith embraces the word of God, it is our faith, so, hold it tight and use it often.

I'm not one of those people who tell people not to take medication, you should take what you need when you need it

Jesus heals the leper, but He still sent them to show themselves to the priest for a checkup and confirmation...

There are some people who say they won't take medication because they're walking by faith.

Maybe God is using your sickness to witness to the doctor.

Faith is our perception.

We must choose to walk by faith in God.

God won't make you walk in faith, we must choose to walk in faith.

I don't know too many people who don't feel like they have been under some type of attack from the enemy.

The enemy has been plotting on you all your life, He's been after you for a very long time...

The only way to survive is to walk by faith.

It's easy to sing about faith.

It's easy to preach about faith.

It's easy to teach about faith than it is to walk about faith.

We need our faith to be the strongest when our fear is the loudest.

That's why coming to church is important. Coming to church is important. At church we're being armed with weapons that are not carnal, so you can do spiritual warfare with fellow soldiers to discuss various warfare to defeat our enemies...

Chapter 5

Possessing The Promised Purpose

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: 2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curse thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. 7 And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him. (Genesis 12:1-3,7)

The Abrahamic covenant is an unconditional covenant. This means that God's promises are without qualification. Fulfillment is dependent upon God and not man.

While enjoyment of the blessings of the covenant may be conditioned upon obedience, the fulfillment of the promises is not.

For example, ownership of the land God promised Abraham was unconditional.

The enjoyment of the land, however, was conditional upon obedience to enter in and possess it.

When God confirmed this covenant, He said, "I promise". This is strong language. God promised by Himself that the promises He made to Abraham and his seed would be fulfilled. Nothing will stop God from fulfilling this covenant in your life:

When God made [His] promise to Abraham, He promised by Himself, since He had no one greater by whom to promise, Saying, Blessing I certainly will bless you and multiplying, I will multiply you. And so it was that he [Abraham], having waited long and endured patiently, realized and obtained [in the birth of Isaac as a

pledge of what was to come] what God had promised him for his purpose of fatherhood.

Humankind indeed swear by something greater [than themselves], and with them in all disputes the oath taken for confirmation is final. Growing up as a kid when we wanted to convince someone of our true intentions we would say and/or do things such as swearing before God, swearing on our mother's grave or putting hand on the bible.

Likewise, God also, in His desire to show more convincingly and beyond doubt to those who were to inherit the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose and plan, intervened (mediated) with an oath.

This was so that, by two unchangeable things [His promise and His oath] in which it is impossible for God ever to prove false or deceive us, we who have ran [to Him] for comfort might have mighty indwelling strength and strong encouragement to grasp and hold tight the hope appointed for us and set before [us].

[Now] we have this [hope] as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul [it cannot slip and it cannot break down under whoever steps out upon it--a hope] that reaches farther and enters into [the very certainty of the Presence] within the veil. (Hebrews 6:13-19)

God promised by Himself, so that we could function from a position of knowing, convinced and beyond doubt. God has promised, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips" (Psalm 89:34)

As you begin to learn these powerful provisions, remember what you already know: Every promise is yours to claim. You are a spiritual heir of these powerful proclamations.

In this passage, God promised Abraham that he would give him a land, make him a great nation, make his name great, bless him, and make him a blessing to others. God also promised to bless those who blessed him and curse those who cursed him.

How does this apply to your and my life? God has a spiritual “land”—a divine destiny for your purpose. He has a specific plan for your life, and an expected end:

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. (Jeremiah 29:11)

God wants to bless you so that through you, the nations (families) of the earth will be blessed. You are blessed to be a blessing.

God has promised to bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. When people rise up against you, you won't need to defend yourself. God will deal with your enemies because you are walking in the provisions of this covenant. You won't have to fight. You won't have to struggle.

For all the land which thou see, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. 16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. 17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee. (Genesis 13:15-17)

In this passage, God promised Abraham that the land—his inheritance from God—would be his forever and that he would pass this blessing on to his seed. While this has a specific application to the nation of Israel, it also applies to believers today.

The inheritance God has given you for your purpose is eternal, without end. No exclusions. No disclaimers. You can receive this blessing and pass it on to your children and your spiritual seed.

You can't even pass on your lottery powerball and mega million winnings to future generations.

God also promised Abraham that his seed would be as the dust of the earth. Even if you are barren and without natural children, God

wants to birth from you a spiritual seed that will reproduce throughout the nations. God declares over you:

When you embrace the provisions of this covenant, you will need to enlarge your borders and fulfill your purpose.

You must put aside small thinking, because the blessing God is about to pour out on you will not fit within the parameters of your natural reasoning.

It will not be limited.

You will break forth on the right hand and the left.

You will inherit the nations.

You will march into the ruins of sinful communities, violent neighborhoods, dangerous prisons, and drug houses to deliver people from the very gates of Hell.

God commanded Abraham to walk through the land and declared that He would give it to him. Applied to us spiritually, this means we can walk through “the land” of our households and claim our children for God.

We can walk through the slums of our cities and nations, knowing God has given this spiritual territory into our hands.

Rise up today in the spirit world. Walk through “the land” of your household, your ministry, your community, and your nation.

As an heir of the Abrahamic covenant, God has declared: “I will give it unto you!”

God declared to Abraham “I am thy shield.” This is one of the most powerful declarations of the covenant: God is our shield! (Genesis 15:1)

This one promise, “I am thy shield,” encompasses every need in your life. It lifts you from the despondency of painful experiences

This shield protects you from evil and enables you to stop the enemy in his tracks. It provides salvation, faith, strength, and joy.

You don't have to struggle for these things—they are yours because God is your shield.

God also told Abraham, “I am thy exceedingly great reward.” This promise includes both spiritual and material blessings.

Abraham was not only blessed spiritually by his relationship with God and through his ministry to the nations, he was also blessed materially.

He possessed great wealth, as did his immediate heirs Isaac and Jacob.

God blessed Abraham materially because He knew that he would honor God with the tithe (*Genesis 14:18-20*). God knew that Abraham would use his wealth wisely for the extension of God's purposes.

God wants to bless you with both spiritual and material rewards. God is the one who gives you the power to get wealth, declaring:

...thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he swear unto thy fathers, as it is this day. (Deuteronomy 8:18)

The power to get wealth is part of the Abrahamic covenant. God gives you the power to get what you need for yourself, your family, and your ministry.

Cast aside “welfare mentality”, rebuke all negative thinking regarding your finances, and make this declaration of covenant today: “He gives us the power to get wealth so that He can establish with us the covenant He made with Abraham!”

But remember: God blessed Abraham because He knew Abraham would use his resources wisely to extend God's purposes. If you

will put the Kingdom of God first in your finances, you will be blessed:

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:33)

The financial blessings of the Abrahamic covenant are released when you give of your resources to God:

God reconfirmed that Abraham's seed would inherit the promised land—their destiny.

God set Abraham's boundaries, and all the wars of history in and about Israel have not changed these parameters. It is theirs. Forever!

God has brought you out of sin, shame, and bondage to bring you into your God-ordained destiny.

All the battles you face will not change the promises God has made. Your promised land—your divine destiny—your purpose is yours. Forever! All you must do is claim it!

God will use the difficulties, the pain, the abuse, and the rejection you have experienced to touch the lives of multitudes.

Every difficulty in your life has simply set you on course to your purpose.

In this passage, God also promised Abraham, *“thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age”* (Genesis 15:15).

He promised Abraham long life, followed by eternal life with his ancestors who had passed on.

Now God is not promising that we all will live as long as Abraham, but He is declaring that we will live to a “good old age.” You may ask, “But what about those who die young?” When we live under the Abrahamic covenant, we will live long enough to

fulfill our God-given purpose. For some, that will be sooner than others.

For example, the life of Dr. Martin Luther King was 39 years.

In this provision, God also guarantees eternal life, that in the end, “we will be gathered to our fathers”—those saints of God who have preceded us in death:

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: And the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

God declared again in Genesis 15 that from Abraham’s own body would come an heir and that his descendants would multiply as the stars of heaven.

What a tremendous promise... I encourage you to believe the Word of the Lord that is coming to you.

Accept these covenant promises for your purpose! Begin right now—today—to take possession of every word of this divine revelation.

We have even more powerful promises to claim...Are you ready?

Chapter 6

Nobody Said It Would Be Easy

Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness for these forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would obey his commands. 3 Yes, he humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. 4 For all these forty years your clothes didn't wear out, and your feet didn't blister or swell. (Deuteronomy 8:2-4)

Do not become proud at that time and forget the Lord your God, who rescued you from slavery in the land of Egypt. 15 Do not forget that he led you through the great and terrifying wilderness with its poisonous snakes and scorpions, where it was so hot and dry. He gave you water from the rock! 16 He fed you with manna in the wilderness, a food unknown to your ancestors. He did this to humble you and test you for your own good. (Deuteronomy 8:14-16)

Did you notice the bible says God let them get hungry, He let them get thirsty, He let them get in tight places, and times of distress and discomfort?

Do you know that sometimes God will let you get in trouble?

He will let you get hungry sometimes, He will let you get in a place with your back against the wall, He will let you stand before a red sea with the Egyptian army closing in on you, He will let you go through the fiery furnace, He will let you spend the night in a hungry den of lions

Why? So, He can prove you, put your faith to the test, find out what is purposed in your heart.

Here's the thing: It's temporary! The Bible calls it Temporal which means... For a while, for a season, short while, lasting only for a limited period. (*2 Corinthians 4: 15-18*)

Remember God said: *To do thee good at thy latter end.*

What you're going through won't last forever, (the storm won't last always).

That emotional battle isn't eternal

That financial struggle isn't eternal

That sickness isn't eternal

That job that makes you miserable, isn't eternal

That problem that makes you cry, isn't eternal

That pain of betrayal and deception, isn't eternal.

It's all temporary:

We may be crying today, but we'll be smiling again soon!

We may be broke today, but we'll have more than enough soon!

We may be in pain today, but our healing is on its way!

We may be walking today, but our car is on its way!

We may be living paycheck to paycheck today, but our overflow is on its way!

Nobody Said It Would Be Easy...It's Working for Our Good

Like when they must turn the water off to fix the pipes...

Like when our internet services get interrupted...

Like when our T.V. program gets interrupted and they say please excuse us we are experiencing technical difficulties...

Or they shut off our lights because we couldn't pay our light bill...

Or they threaten to kick us out because we're behind on our rent or mortgage payment...

It's temporary.....Nobody Said It Would Be Easy

Life is full of temporary inconveniences.

Nobody enjoys them, but there is a positive side to them. (It sure makes us feel good when the lights come back on, when the internet service is restored, when our water comes back on) when our T.V. program comes back on the air.

Did you know that the wilderness was never supposed to be fun; it wasn't supposed to be comfortable or enjoyable. But it was part of the purpose.

It was supposed to be difficult and undesirable...

It was supposed to be hot during the day and freezing cold at night...

The ground was supposed to be hard...

They were supposed to get hungry and thirsty...

They were supposed to hate the wilderness and find it undesirable...

They were supposed to hate being surrounded by deadly poisonous snakes, and scorpions...

They were supposed to love God and be thankful for His daily provisions but hate the wilderness.

God intended for it to be a Temporary...

He wanted them to hate the wilderness so much that they would run into their promised land.

The problem was: they got adjusted to a wilderness mentality just like people today, they got comfortable just scraping by, and they got satisfied with just enough...

Just enough of God to put gas in the car, just enough God to buy some milk and bread, just enough God to keep the lights on, just enough God to survive, just enough God to keep our sanity but not enough to sleep peacefully at night.

Just enough God to have faith to believe we'll go to heaven when we die, but not enough God to believe we can walk in divine health and wealth here and now.

Yes, God gave them just enough, God gave them manna from heaven, and water from the rock, and their clothes didn't wear out, and their shoes didn't wear out, (But all of that was just provision for the journey) it was to sustain them until they came to the promised land.

They were supposed to transition from the wilderness of just enough to their purpose in the promised land of more than enough.

Nobody Said It Would Be Easy!

Yes, God has been good to us, but we are going toward our purpose.

Sometimes we hear people talk about midnight (It's not morning and it's not night, it's midnight)

The midnight hour is critical because that's when it can go either way.

More people miss their purpose at their midnight hour.

Here's the deal...The Good news is: Nobody Said It Would Be Easy.

The good thing I like about Midnight is: (It's gone in 60 seconds).

In 60 seconds we can go from problems to praise,

- From sadness to gladness.
- From dark to light.
- From lost to found.
- From regret to rejoicing.
- From broke busted and disgusted to blessed by the best.

It doesn't take God long to bless us when we stay focused on our purpose.

This is a good time for us to praise God like we believe the word of God...Nobody Said It Would Be Easy!

When trouble comes to sidetrack us from our purpose just say to our self: It'll be over in a minute.

Yes! Job got sidetracked with troubles and pain, but it was only for a 9-month period of his life, and God gave him double for his trouble.

God will give you double for your trouble.

Even when the devil is tempting us, and attacking us, attacking our body, and lying on us, and attacking our marriage, attacking our finances, attacking our mind, and our ministry...Nobody Said It Would Be Easy!

It may not feel good right now, but the bible says...

*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord and are the called according to his purpose.
(Romans 8:28)*

This is when we tell our self the following:

I know how to pray now, I know how to praise now, I know how to stand on the Word of God now, I know how to rebuke the devil now, I know how to sing in the midnight hour.

There will come times when we must look within our own heart to stay focused on our purpose.

Let's look at this word "Look" this word means: To consider, think on, contemplate, regard, observe, set your attention on. Yes, I know there are giants in the land, (But I choose not to look at them,) I'm not regarding them, or considering or observing them.

Why? Because I'm regarding, contemplating, considering and observing something else...

In other words: We have our eyes full of the Word, full of Love and full of the Power of God:

We can't see sickness anymore (All we can see is, by his stripes we are healed).

We can't see that financial problem and debt anymore (All we can see is) My God shall supply all our need.

We can't see us struggling through the wilderness of just enough anymore, (All we can see is) My God is able to do exceedingly and abundantly above all that I can ask or think according to the power that works in me.

When we look for purpose in the heart of the people of God, we see great things. We see us blessed, We see us Healed, We see us loving everybody.

We see us forgiving everybody.

We see us in our new anointing.

We see us praying and fasting for power and clarity.

Then, something gets in our eye.

It's called Vision, It's Called the Eternal

It's because we're seeing something.

I know it may sound strange, and it might not make sense to you (but we're seeing something). Yes, we're experiencing some technical difficulties, but it'll be over in a minute and we can make it because we've caught a glimpse of the eternal.

The things which are seen are Temporal: Temporal (subject to change). So, get ready for change.

Get ready for your purpose.

Start talking about where you're going instead of where you've been. Start talking about what you're expecting instead of what you're experiencing

We can make it through the temporary inconveniences as long as we stay focused on our purpose. As long as we keep our eyes on the word and love of God we can make it to our purpose.

I don't know what you may be going through as you read this book, but nobody said it would be easy!

Chapter 7

Purposeful Relationships

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, [a] against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 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.

14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which, you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— (Ephesians 6:10-18)

If we could take a pill to have a bodybuilder's body, we would.”

If we are honest, most of us are undisciplined, flabby, out of shape and unprepared for any kind of real contest or struggle. In fact, most of us would be easily defeated by an opponent who only offered us minimal resistance.

With that fact firmly in focus, we all would probably admit that we could use a little toning and conditioning.

If we are honest, we all need some body-building and sculpting. Most of us need to improve our bodies.

Now, I'm not simply talking about our physical bodies. Although, it is unhealthy and at times even dangerous to be out of shape, flabby and weak; there are greater dangers we may face.

We may be asking, "If I'm not talking about the physical body, then what body am I talking about?" I am talking about the body of relationships we are involved in daily.

The relationship between you and your spouse

The relationship between you and your children

The relationship between you and your parents

The relationship between you and your brothers or sisters

The relationship between you and your co-workers

The relationship between you and the other parents at little-league

The relationship between you and your friends and associates.

The "body" of relationships that make up the church, which is called "The Body of Christ."

This body of relationships that we all have is the context in which we live life. Now, I don't know about you, but I tend to think that life can be kind of difficult at times.

I believe that life is naturally hard. Therefore, I am glad that we don't have to just endure life. We can thoroughly enjoy life and live it to the fullest. Jesus tells us *"I come that you might have life, and life more abundantly."* (John 10:10)

The full life that Jesus came to give us starts in a personal relationship with him, and it is daily lived out in the context of the

relationships we have with others, inside the church, inside the home, inside the office, etc. Jesus wants us to live the abundant and full life and He gave His very life so that we can do just that

It is His free gift, offered to us. But, for us to experience all the fullness that He offers to us, we need to make sure that the body of relationships we live in is a healthy body.

We must build the body of our relationships...

The principles for building a better body are found in the Bible, which is God's Word to us. The biblical principles I am sharing can be applied to our relationship within our church and they can be applied to our relationships with our families.

These principles can be applied to any of the relationships we have, at church, at home, at work, in the gym, at school, wherever.

These above biblical principles, can be applied to every relationship we have. In fact, they are essential if we want to build healthier, stronger relationships.

If we want to truly have a purposeful relationship, then we must learn to allocate true strength.

Let's face it, maintaining healthy relationships is hard work. It takes a maximum amount of strength, and most of us don't feel like we have the strength or energy to do what is necessary to maintain healthy relationships in all areas of our lives.

I would love to put more energy and effort into my extended family and friends, but it appears the demands on my time don't always allow me to.

Considering the time, I spend strengthening my marriage with my wife, time spent with my adult children, a ministry and a full-time career makes it extremely difficult to find time for the countless of other people who I love dearly. I'm certain many of you can relate to my story.

Though, I would love to spend more time calling, texting and visiting with those who are dear to me,

I pray that despite my limited contact I want all my extended family and friends to know that I love them.

I also communicate that I do respond when contacted. With that being said, let us resist the urge to give up on each other because your relationships matter...

Keeping a relationship healthy involves a high degree of maintenance.

And relationship maintenance means using a lot of our strength.

It takes mental strength, it takes emotional strength, it takes spiritual strength to keep a relationship happy, and when we must apply that strength to the relationships we have at home, at work, at church, etc. we quickly begin to run out of strength.

The fact is, neither you nor I have enough strength to really keep all the relationships we have in a state of good health. We are just over stretched. However, the good news is this.

There is a source of strength that we can have as strength is needed. Our strength can be supplied from God Himself.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. (Ephesians 6:10)

Paul, the author of this letter, tells us exactly where we can find the strength we need. We find it in the Lord, (that's Jesus Christ) and in His mighty power.

If I don't have the strength myself to keep things healthy, then I must turn somewhere else to get the strength I need, and that somewhere else is really a someone else! It is Jesus Christ who gives me the strength I need. *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* (Philippians 4:13) That "all things" includes

maintaining the health of the countless relationships I must exist within.

Why is Paul so adamant that we find our strength in God? Because Paul understands that the struggles we face go beyond just time constraints and personality issues. He knows that the real battle we face comes from a strong enemy.

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12)

Paul knew that satan loves it when our relationships are in turmoil. Because when our relationships are in turmoil we cannot focus upon God as we should. It is hard to draw close to God when we are having people problems at home at work and at church or anywhere else.

Thus, since we lack strength on our own and since we are fighting a very strong, very crafty,

very dangerous and evil enemy, we must find our strength in God and God alone.

So, if God has the power and I need it, how do I allocate that power or strength to use it in purposeful relationships? I’m glad you asked.

There are five (5) steps we need to take to get the strength we need, when we need it, to maintain healthy relationships that honor God.

WE MUST

Admit-Affirm-Align-Ask-Act

I. Admit That You're Weak Without God

Let's be honest for just a minute. 99.9% of us don't like to depend upon other people. We don't like to depend upon anyone but ourselves. If we have trouble the first thing we do is bear down and try to get through it ourselves.

We're raised that way.

Our nation was founded with the ideals of independence and rugged individualism at the center of all that we believe. We view people as being weak who normally must lean on others to get through it.

However, if we are so good at being independent, then why are broken relationships at epidemic levels in our society? If we are so strong and have the power to fix things ourselves, why is the divorce rate as high as the marriage rate in America?

Why is the divorce rate as high as the marriage rate in our churches?

Why are we in a relationship crisis in our society? The reason is that we are weak, we simply don't want to admit it. However, if we are going to allocate strength from God, we must admit that we are weak without Him.

“We can't be filled with the power of God until we first empty ourselves of the pretense that we can get by on our own.”

Relationships are hard work. It's a tough business to maintain healthy relationships and we need to admit that we cannot do it alone. We need to admit that we need strength from God.

Power is available for all of us. There is no secret chant or special ceremony necessary to access this supernatural power from God. We simply need to acknowledge that we need it.

We are weak without His power. Jesus said *“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”* (John 15:5)

That last sentence sums it all up. We cannot do anything without Him!

We cannot build a healthy marriage.....without Him!

We cannot be the parent our children need.....without Him!

We cannot be the church member we need to be.....without Him!

We cannot have relationships at work that are marked by integrity.....without Him!

If we don't have his strength, we cannot do what we need to do!
We simply need to admit it.

Admitting that we need His strength does not make it any more or less true. It is true regardless of whether we admit it.

But admitting we are weak without God does put us in a position that allows Him to start giving us his strength.

The first step to allocating the strength of the Lord is to admit that we are weak without God!

There is a second step we must take to allocate strength. We need to affirm God's power and presence!

II. Affirm God's Power and Presence

The second step in allocating the power we need from God is to affirm God's power and presence. What does affirm mean?

Affirm: To assert strongly; declare positively.

Another dictionary put it this way: To put into words positively, with conviction!

If we want to allocate strength or power from God, then we need to strongly declare, with conviction that God does indeed have power. We need to recognize that He has power and that He is the source of our power.

*Seek the Lord and His strength; "Seek His face evermore!
Remember His marvelous works which He has done, His wonders,
and the judgments of His mouth. (I Chronicles 16:11-12)*

Trust the Lord and his mighty power. Worship him always. Remember his miracles and all his wonders and his fair decisions.”

If you want to affirm the power and the presence of God, then spend time remembering the times He has worked on our behalf. If we can't think of any such times, then open the Word of God and read about His miracles and His wonders.

This book is full of accounts of God working wonders and miracles. It contains true story after true story of His power working on our behalf.

He led Moses and the Israelites out of Egypt and through the Red Sea! That's power.

He knocked down the wall of the city of Jericho! That's power.

He enabled weak and frightened Gideon to take 300 men and destroy an enemy army numbering in the tens of thousands! That's power.

He enabled little David to take out big Goliath! That's power.

He healed the lame, the blind, and the demon possessed! That's power.

He raised the dead! That's power.

He raised his only Son, Jesus, to life-never to die again-after he had died for our sins and been in the tomb for three days! That's power.

The Bible is full of stories of God's power at work and that power is available to us.

One reason a lot of people who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior continue to be weak in their faith and continue to struggle is that they don't know the Bible. They don't know the stories of God's power. They don't know the God who uses his power for the good of his people.

If you want to allocate the strength of the Lord, then affirm his power by spending time in the Word, getting to know the stories of the great things he has done!

No relationship will work and stay healthy until we acknowledge God's power and admit our need of that power.

"Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." (Ecclesiastes 4:12)

King Solomon is writing about companionship, friendship, relationships here. He says one person alone is easily defeated. Two can defend themselves. But if he's talking about two people, and the context of this passage shows that he is, why does he mention a cord braided of three strands?

God is that third strand in our relationships. It is his power, that we can allocate, that gives our relationships true strength.

We need to affirm God's power and His presence in our lives and in the lives of men and women throughout the history of our faith. We can't access the power until we acknowledge that it is there.

So, in allocating strength is to admit we are weak without God, the second is to affirm, with conviction his power and his presence, but there is a third step we must take.

We must be willing to align ourselves with God's will.

III. Align Yourself with God's Will

The third step in allocating the strength of the Lord is to align yourself with God's will.

There are few things more dangerous than a person who has power of some sort and yet doesn't know how to use that power.

Give a 10-year-old the keys to your car and you'll see what I mean. Either they will destroy something, they will hurt someone, or they will hurt themselves. A ten-year-old child has no business trying to drive a car.

The same applies to the power or strength that we can allocate from God.

We shouldn't think we'll receive any such strength if we don't first know how to use that strength. You see, many of us want God's strength, God's power, so that we can accomplish what we want in life and so that we can get what we want from our relationships.

We often ask for power from God without first asking what God's will is and then aligning ourselves with that will. That is why we lack power many times.

"You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives..." (James 4:2b-3a)

Can you relate to that? How many of you have asked God for strength in dealing with "people problems" not so that you could fix the broken relationship or so that you could be a witness to the other person, but so that you could get your way, or at least get comfortable again?

If we want to allocate the strength that God makes available to us, then we have to take the time to find out what God's will is and then align ourselves with His will.

Jesus gives us the greatest example of praying for strength and receiving the needed strength as he aligned himself with God's will.

In Luke 22:39-46 Jesus is earnestly praying for strength, not to do what he wants, but strength so that he may accomplish the will of God.

Here is Jesus, on the night before his trial and execution upon the cross praying so earnestly to God that the blood vessels in his skin rupture and he sweats drops of blood. He needed strength to go through all that he was about to face. He was going to be humiliated. He was going to be beaten. He was going to be killed.

But the greatest agony of all was that he was going to be separated from God and found guilty of every sin ever committed!

It says an angel came and strengthened him. Jesus needed strength, not to do his own thing, but to do the will of God. *"...yet not my will, but yours be done."*

If we want to allocate the strength that God has for us, then we must first align ourselves with His will. That means we must be willing to submit what we want to what He knows is best.

It means giving up our desires, our plans, our designs for our relationships and letting God have His way. That sounds like a scary proposition, but it isn't. If you think about it, it's a win, win situation. God wants for us only what is in our best interest. He wants for those we are in relationships with only their best interest, and the two need not be mutually exclusive!

God's wants our best and He wants to give us the strength so that we can do what is needed to achieve His ideal. All we must do is let Him call the shots.

If we want to allocate the strength of the Lord then we must first admit we are weak without Him, we must then affirm His power and His presence and then we must be willing to align our-self with His will. But there is another step we must take if we are going to gain access to the strength that God has for us. We need to ask God for the power we need

IV. Ask God for the Power You Need

It's a simple enough equation; ask and receive. It's not hard and yet we make it so much more complicated than we need to. We need to be willing to ask God for the strength we need.

Too often we want and need the strength of God in our lives, we want His intervention, but we beat around the bush. God wants us to ask Him for what we need.

"You do not have, because you do not ask God." (James 4:2) All we must do is ask. Yet so often we fail to do this simple act.

We'll acknowledge our weakness, we'll affirm God's power, we'll align ourselves with God's will and then we sit around and wait for something to happen.

I believe God is a perfect gentleman, He's not going to force Himself on us. He will patiently wait for us to ask for His strength. We need to come right out and express our need for strength to Him openly.

When we need strength, stop and openly ask God for the strength we need.

We need to admit our weakness without Him. We need to affirm His power and His presence.

We need to align ourselves with His will and we need to ask for His power.

But what happens when we have done those four things and we don't feel any different? What happens when we have taken these steps for allocating the strength of the Lord, but we don't feel any stronger?

We must take a fifth step to finally realize the power that is at our disposal. We must act in obedience to God.

V. Act in Obedience to God

Even if we have done all the above, admitting our weakness, affirming God's power, aligning ourselves with His will and

asking for His power, we may not feel powerful. We may not feel like we have the strength needed. But it's there.

What we need to do is to step out and act in obedience. We need to move forward, in faith, believing that God has and will give us the strength. And as we obey Him the strength we need will be given to us.

God's strength is not primarily "potential strength." He doesn't have this big battery full of strength and power waiting for us to tap into it.

God's strength for us is primarily "kinetic strength." Strength in motion, power in action.

After the Israelites had left Egypt and spent 40 years wandering around the Arabian desert, the time had come for them to enter the land God had promised to them. However, there was a major obstacle. The Jordan river, which was the eastern boundary of the Promised Land at that time was at flood stage and they had to cross it. But God had a plan. He promised he would part the waters, like he had done with the Red Sea, but this time he worked just a little bit differently.

He told them he would part the waters as they stepped into the river and moved forward. As long as they stood on the river bank waiting for God to part the waters nothing happened.

But when they acted in obedience and stepped forward, the water parted. (*Story found in Joshua 3*)

God wants the same kind of faith to be exhibited in our lives. He wants us to step forward in obedience and as we act in obedience, he gives us the needed strength.

Application: Relationships are hard work. Relationships at home, at work, at church, where-ever take hard work. The body of relationships that we find ourselves existing within must be maintained and built up.

Because of that we're look for principles for building purposeful relationships. But to really do this we must have strength. We need to have real power and real strength that comes from a source that is bigger than us. That's why the Apostle Paul tells us to "*be strong in the Lord!*" The strength we need to keep our relationships purposeful is a strength that we don't have, but we do have access to it. We need only to allocate it.

How do we allocate the strength offered so that we may "Be Strong in the Lord in our purposeful relationships?"

- 1. Acknowledge our weakness without His strength.**
- 2. Affirm His strength and His presence.**
- 3. Align yourself with His will.**
- 4. Ask for the strength you need.**
- 5. Act in obedience.**

So, where do you need strength? What relationship needs a degree of strength that is beyond you? Is it your marriage?

Is it a relationship with a parent? Is it a relationship with a child? Is it a relationship with a coworker? Is it a relationship with someone in the church? Is it your relationship with the church or more importantly, is it your relationship with Jesus Christ that needs a special infusion of supernatural strength? Whatever purposeful relationship you have, I assure God wants to give the strength you need, real power to make it work. Decide now, start to take the steps necessary to allocate his strength and He will supply you beyond your wildest dreams!

Chapter 8

The Purposeful Pain Of Integrity

Growing pains may consist of tenderness caused by overworked muscles during hard exercise. We don't feel sore while we're working out or having fun; only later, when the muscles relax, then the pain comes. I lifted weights yesterday and last night the pain came, and I had to get up and take some Advil.

When we are in a new relationship and having fun, there is no pain. The pain comes when we relax.

Pain is a part of the process of getting stronger and strengthening our relationships. In fact, no one has truly increased their strength without pain. Like it or not, pain is essential to the process of getting stronger. In fact, people who have never experienced pain in their lives can be described by two words, sorry and lazy!

Now, not all pain makes us stronger. But pain with a purpose is necessary at times if we are going to have stronger bodies. Pain with a purpose is also necessary from time to time if we are going to have stronger, healthier relationships.

We don't have the strength needed to keep all our relationships healthy.

We need to turn to an outside source for strength, and that strength comes from God.

Many times, our truthfulness and our integrity cost us pain and sometimes a great deal of pain, but it is still necessary to build healthy relationships. Thus, we need growing pains!

During my time working for the Georgia Department of Revenue we were required to complete an annual standard of conduct and ethics training.

After going through the powerpoint presentation I realized that most churches don't currently require this much from its members.

Since we live in the world of relationships, there are few targets more appealing to Satan than the relationships we have.

If he can sabotage and destroy our relationships, he can sabotage and destroy our faith. Thus, these tools and weapons that are available to the Christian can and should be used in defending and strengthening our relationships.

The first item Paul mentions is "belt of truth." The belt of the Roman soldier served to provide support and protection for the soldier. It supported his back and his midsection in battle. It protected his kidneys from a blow from the enemy. The belt was essential in supporting and protecting the soldier. Paul calls this the "belt of truth."

Truth and integrity are essential if we are going to have relationships that are well supported and protected. Without integrity, our relationships begin to crumble.

As I said, I want to discuss some necessary pain for building better, stronger, more God-honoring relationships. I want to take just a moment and point out some truth that we often like to overlook when we're talking about integrity.

Often, integrity is costly.

At times, being truthful brings pain.

The fact is that being a man or woman of integrity is counter culture.

And anything you do that goes counter to the culture you live in can, and usually will, bring some degree of pain.

But just like working out brings pain with a benefit, so being a person of integrity brings pain, but with a benefit. It is costly, but the cost always, pays off.

I want you to consider the need to act with integrity if we are going to have healthy relationships.

When we act with integrity in all of our relationships, it supports those relationships in three ways.

Acting with integrity will PROTECT our relationships.

Acting with integrity will PROPEL our relationships.

Acting with integrity will PRESERVE our relationships.

“The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.” (Proverbs 10:9)

“Righteousness guards the man of integrity, but wickedness overthrows the sinner.” (Proverbs 13:6)

Healthy, intimate, life-enhancing relationships are an endangered species. More and more we are living in isolation and it is taking a toll on us.

We are designed to be social creatures, but we are becoming more and more disconnected from one another.

In a sea of thousands and thousands of people, we drift alone with very few real, meaningful relationships.

Since good relationships are so rare, it is essential that we actively seek to create more.

But it is also essential that we aggressively protect the relationships we do have.

One of the greatest means of protecting our relationships is to make certain that they are marked with integrity.

The truth must be a central focus of our relationships.

The enemy, satan, wants to destroy our relationships. He knows that we must live out our faith in the context of our relationships and if he can wreck our relationships, he can wreck our faith.

He can destroy our witness by destroying our relationships. He can destroy our credibility by sabotaging our relationships.

Our enemy, satan, is actively and intentionally attempting to destroy the church one family at a time.

So, if you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I assure you that you and your family are on his hit list.

Thus, we need to make certain we can protect our relationships and one of the greatest means of protecting those relationships is with the truth.

How is it that the truth protects our relationships?

Integrity builds trust.

When our relationships are marked by integrity trust will be present.

When you do what you say you're going to do, people trust you.

When you are the same person at home when no one is around as you are here at church on a Sunday morning, trust is the result. When you continue to live an upright life when nobody's watching, trust is earned.

Trust is an essential purpose in building a healthy relationship, but it is also a powerful tool for protecting a relationship.

Tisa and I have a relationship that is built upon trust and is protected by trust because integrity is a key ingredient in our relationship.

Tisa don't have any worries about me and I don't have any worries about her. Do you know why? Because we trust each other.

And we trust each other because every time we've said that's what we're doing, that's what we've been doing.

That's called integrity. We trust each other because we know that what you see is what you get with us and that trust protects our relationship.

It protects us from false accusation It protects us from jealousy
It protects us from envy It protects us from uncertainty

It protects us from all sorts of attacks brought on by satan because we know each other, we love each other, we have integrity in our relationship and as a result we have trust in our relationship.

The same is true for you in your relationships.

And it doesn't just have to be the relationship you have with your spouse or your children.

It goes for the relationship you have with your fellow employees, or your employer, or your clients.

If you are a person of integrity, if every time you open your mouth you are speaking the truth, then it shows up and trust is the result and you begin to have stronger relationships that allow you to do better and be blessed, and it allows you to be a witness.

By the same token, when integrity is not an essential part of your relationships, when your life is not marked by the truth, then trust is destroyed, and your relationship sits on shaky ground, ready to collapse at the slightest tremor from the enemy!

A lack of integrity undermines trust.

And when you are not honest with your spouse about what you've been doing, where you've been going, and what you are thinking you jeopardize your relationship. When trust is undermined then the devil has a stronghold in your relationships.

The devil can come in and rip a home apart and shipwreck your faith because trust was gone and the lack of integrity in the relationship left you open to attack.

Integrity protects your relationships against such attacks.

If you routinely lie, cheat or steal you lack integrity and the relationships you have are at risk and your Christian testimony is worthless.

God won't bless your life, you'll be spiritually stunted. But more than all of that, you put your relationships, at work and at home, at risk. Because that lack of integrity cannot be compartmentalized into your work life. It carries over to every area of life.

I remember when I was young, the life insurance man would come to our house to collect insurance premiums and my mom would say "tell him I'm not at home!" I'm glad I was smart, and I didn't say "My mama said she's not home..."

Beloved, when we lack integrity in any area of our relationships, home, school, work, church, we destroy our witness, we pass the shame on to others and we leave our relationships without protection. We become easy prey for the enemy.

The belt of truth, real integrity, supports our relationships by offering protection. But the belt of truth supports our relationships in another way as well. When we act with integrity it is easier for us to drive our relationships.

"The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity." (Proverbs 11)

We all know what a GPS is. It's a device that helps us to know what direction we are going. If we're lost in the woods and we know that there is a road somewhere to the north of us, a GPS can be a huge help.

When we make a wrong turn using our GPS it will recalculate or correct our wrong turn.

God designed us to have relationships that are VALUABLE relationships.

We are to be pleasing to God by honoring the people we are in relationships with. We need integrity and real, unchanging truth to be the centerpiece of our relationships.

When all else fails use the truth. When our relationships are marked by integrity it is much easier to drive them. We can navigate the rocky, treacherous waters of our society successfully only when we act with integrity in all our relationships.

If you need help in knowing how to drive your relationships, rely on integrity and truth. Now, I'm not going to sugar coat anything here.

Doing what is right and integrity is often a costly proposition.

Getting your relationships on the right track, headed in the right direction is sometimes a painful ordeal. But it's always worth the pain.

Following truth puts our relationships on a track that bring out the best in others and brings glory to God!

When our relationships are marked by truth and integrity they can and will be successfully guided through the difficult passages of life.

Integrity, the belt of truth, serves to support our relationship by protecting them. It serves to support them just like a belt that hold up our pants.

"In my integrity you uphold me and set me in your presence forever." (Psalm 41:12)

Integrity will protect our relationships from the attacks of the enemy.

Integrity will allow us to be successful in propel our relationships through the dangers of this life.

But integrity will also preserve our relationships.

Preservation equals staying power.

When a relationship is preserved it is a relationship that will finish strong.

Like it or not, all relationships in this life will come to an end.

They may end because of distrust...

They may end because they are broken...

They may end because one person walks away...

They may end because we “drift apart...”

They may end because of distance and losing contact...

Or, they may end because of death.

But eventually every relationship, in this life, will finish.

However, we shouldn't let our relationships finish badly.

In fact, there is no reason for relationships to end due to distrust or broken-ness or “drifting apart.”

The only real reason a relationship must end is because of death.

And relationships that are preserved, that have “staying power” are relationships that don't end by some he say/she say...

It seems that so many relationships either sour or fade over time.

There are very few people who have the joy of experiencing deep, life-long relationships.

Do you have relationships that will last and last and last? Do your relationships have staying power?

If you want to preserve the relationships, you have then you need to make certain those relationships are supported by truth and integrity at every point.

Integrity is a relationship preservative.

Think about it. The relationships we have that are marked by integrity and truth are relationships that last.

Not only do they last but they are relationships that improve over time.

Why? Because when our relationship with another person is marked with integrity and truth, when we have the belt of truth strapped around us, we can speak into another person's life.

When we have a friend that is risking their family because they have an inappropriate relationship with someone at work, we can sit them down and speak to them in honesty about it.

It hurts, they may pull back a bit, but if we have a relationship that is built on the truth and is marked by integrity we can speak into their life and correct them.

When we have a friend, who is risking their career by making some unethical choices at work, if there is integrity in our relationship, we can speak into their life and help them correct the course they are on.

Is it difficult? Yes.

Can it be painful? Yes.

Does it mean taking a risk? Yes.

Is it worth the risk and the pain? Yes!

Speaking into one another's lives helps to preserve our relationships because it deepens and strengthens them. But it can only be done when the truth is a cornerstone of our relationship.

As we read in *“Psalm 41:12 “In my integrity you uphold me and set me in your presence forever.”*

When integrity is a part of our life, God will preserve or “uphold” us. He does the same for the relationships in which we live out our daily lives.

Relationships are a valuable, essential, part of our lives.

They need to be preserved.

The goal of this chapter is that integrity and truth are essential if we are going to protect our relationships, if we are going to guide them through the rocky waters of life and if we are going to preserve them. But integrity often hurts.

Integrity is not easy.

Integrity will cost you.

When lying at work is “just the way of doing business” and you start being truthful it will cost you.

It will cost you financially, it will cost you in ridicule, it could cost you your job.

When integrity marks your marriage, it will cost you.

It will cost you humiliation at times...

It will cost you convenience...

It will cost you in time.

Integrity is expensive. Make no mistake about it. It’s not an easy fix, it’s not a magical cure, but it is necessary.

Having God’s hand of blessing on your life, having your relationships protected.

Being able to pilot them through the rough waters of life.

Preserving those relationships. The gains far outweigh the cost. With integrity there is cost, but there is always a greater pay-off.

Relationships are where we live our faith.

Relationships are where the enemy seeks to shipwreck our faith.

If we will base those relationships on and fill those relationships with true integrity we will find that they are stronger, last longer and are much more effective in bringing glory to God.

What relationships do you have that need a healthy dose of integrity?

What step can you take now to begin infusing your relationships with the integrity that God expects of us?

Ask yourself: How much integrity is there in my relationships?

Am I willing to risk being a person of integrity in order to improve all of my relationships, even if that integrity means cost and pain?

If I am not acting with integrity in my relationships, what is keeping me from doing so? Make a commitment now to make certain your relationships are marked by integrity. Buckle the belt of truth around you and allow Christ to support you!

Chapter 9

Prepare For Your Purpose

We've seen our need to find our strength in the Lord for without His strength, our relationships will suffer.

We've seen our need to make certain that our relationships are supported by and grounded in integrity. Without that belt of truth strapped around us, we cannot stand and our relationships crumble.

Many of us understand the need to access the righteousness of Christ. We need to be right with God before we can be right in our relationships with others, and the way we get right with God is we allow the righteousness of Christ to be given to us. And then we ask him to fill us, to dwell in us and change our character so that we are truly a righteous people.

Now let us consider our need to be actively preparing to advance in our God given purpose. The motto of the Boy Scouts is "always be prepared." That's a great motto, and Paul understood the need to be prepared. When he told us to have on or put on the shoes of readiness that result from the Gospel he was telling us to be prepared. A man without shoes is not prepared for much.

In order to be prepared for action, a soldier on the front lines will sleep with his boots on at times. Having shoes on your feet is a symbol of readiness. It means you are prepared for action. You are prepared to go somewhere.

Paul knew that the soldier in his day wore shoes that kept him prepared for action. Often when we think of the shoes worn in the Mediterranean world of the first century we think of sandals.

But the sandals worn by the Roman soldier were different than the sandals worn by the everyday citizen.

The sandals of the Roman soldier were designed for war, not for peace. When on duty he kept his sandals on so that he would be ready for action.

To be prepared for combat you need a different shoe than you do for going to the shopping center. These were specialized sandals. They had a thick sole to protect the soldier's feet from the hot sand and from sharp rocks. They also had nails driven through the soles, giving the sandals the ability to hold firm on sandy or slippery ground.

Good footing was essential in winning a war and these shoes gave the soldier the good footing they needed. They wouldn't slip or lose ground because the spikes would bite into the earth and help him hold firm.

These shoes also helped the soldier to advance. A retreating army is rarely a winning army, but an army that can advance and take ground is an army that wins wars. The shoes of the soldier are designed for taking ground, advancing, and holding that ground, standing firm.

A soldier in bare feet was of little use to his army. He was not prepared for action. He could not stand his ground and he was ill-prepared to advance when the call to move forward came. Having on the right shoes was essential to preparation.

Paul uses this analogy when he tells the Christian to put on the "shoes of readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace."

Ephesians 6:10-18 says:

Ep. 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Ep. 6:11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

Ep. 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Ep. 6:13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Ep. 6:14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

Ep. 6:15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

Ep. 6:16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Ep. 6:17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Ep. 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

We are called to be ready and we find our readiness, our preparation in the Gospel of peace, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

What is it that we are to be prepared to do?

There are three things we need to be prepared for if we are going to preserve and protect our relationships. And the Gospel of Jesus Christ helps us to be prepared for these things.

Prepared to Act

The first thing we must be prepared for is action. We must be prepared to act. Relationships are fluid. They are not static, as a matter of fact, they are in constant motion.

As our situation change, as life happens, it affects our relationships. A relationship that is static is a relationship that is dead.

But living, active, growing relationships are in a constant state of continuous change.

Therefore, we need to be prepared for action in all situations if we are going to maintain and build up healthy relationships.

We can Act by speaking a needed Word

(Capitalized “W” because I’m referring to the Word of God, not just “words.”)

The fact of the matter is, like it or not, that we often must maintain our relationships by taking the time and taking the risk to speak into another person’s life. Sometimes the action we must take is the action of addressing people with the right words at the right time and in the right spirit. We must be prepared to speak!

“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction.” (2 Timothy 4:2)

Paul is addressing the young pastor, Timothy, with these words, encouraging him to be prepared, at all times, to speak the Word of God.

He tells Timothy to be prepared to preach, but Paul’s words need not be limited to ministers who preach the Word as a full-time vocation.

Anyone who knows the Word, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, has the right, in fact, they have the responsibility, to proclaim that Word,

not just from the pulpit, but in every relationship and in everyday life.

How is it that we act in speaking to others? What are we to say with this Word, this Gospel, to other people?

We should be prepared to act by speaking a needed word of...

Rebuke – When we rebuke someone we warn them. We take the risk and tell them that they are out of line or that they are headed in the wrong direction. A rebuke means that we tell someone they are wrong and warn them. A rebuke is often harsh. It may be spoken in love or out of concern, but it is still, most usually, a harsh word spoken to someone. It's how we get their attention and let them know that they are on dangerous ground relationally and spiritually.

Correction – A word of correction is like a rebuke but with one key difference. Whereas a rebuke is simply a warning or telling someone that they are out of line, a word of correction tells them that they are out of line, but it also offers the needed support and direction to help change the course. When a friend or a family member or a fellow church member is off course, we speak a word of correction to help them get back on track. We don't just warn, but we warn and attempt to help them change directions.

Both a rebuke and a correction are difficult to do. They are both risky because they are often not received graciously if at all. They are risky because they involve poking a hole in someone else's pride.

They are risky because no one likes to be humbled and to receive a rebuke or to receive correction means someone else has humbled us rather than we are humbling ourselves and that's hard to swallow.

Fortunately, being prepared to step into action by being prepared to speak isn't all negatives and risks. There is another manner of speech we must be prepared with if we are going to build up

healthy relationships and if we are going to honor our Lord by speaking his Word, the Gospel. We need to be ready to speak words of encouragement.

Encouragement - Often we assume encouragement is simply being a cheerleader, but it is much, much more than that. The actual Greek word that we translate as “encourage” means, “to come along side of and offer comfort and support.” That’s much more involved than simply being a cheerleader for someone.

Cheerleaders make a lot of noise and can get the crowd excited, but they can’t get on the field and help carry the ball. A true encourager gets on the field.

There’s a very familiar story told of a young boy who was sent to the corner store by his mother to buy a loaf of bread. He was gone much longer than it should have taken him.

When he finally returned, his mother asked, “Where have you been? I’ve been worried sick about you.”

“Well,” he answered, “there was a little boy with a broken bike who was crying. So, I stopped to help him.”

“I didn’t know you knew anything about fixing bikes,” his mother said.

“I don’t,” he replied. “I just stayed there and cried with him.” That’s encouragement.

He didn’t just cheer the other fellow on; he came alongside him and helped carry his grief and disappointment. He was a true encourager.

We need to be ever ready to speak words of encouragement. We need to be constantly looking for opportunities to come along side of one another and offer kind words of encouragement.

To build healthy relationships we need to be prepared to act, by being prepared to speak a needed Word.

But we also need to be prepared to act by always acting out our faith.

Act out your faith - Another cliché that is also a real foundational truth is “Actions speak louder than words.”

It’s great if we are prepared to act by speaking, but our speaking is hollow and meaningless if we don’t act out our faith.

“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such a faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. “But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.” (James 2:14-18)

All the words of rebuke, correction and encouragement in the world are totally without meaning if they are not accompanied by true action.

Preaching every sermon ever preached, speaking the entire Bible to friends and family members means nothing if you are not living out your faith in your day to day actions.

If you want to see your relationships change, grow and become healthier, then start to live out your faith in them. Your words are important, but your words, when not backed up by your faith, are empty and meaningless.

When we strap on the shoes of the Gospel, we are prepared for action. We are prepared to act in Word and we are prepared to act out our faith!

But we must be prepared in another way. We must be prepared to answer!

Prepared to Answer

We need to make certain that we are prepared to answer when an answer is required of us. There will be times when, in our relationships and in other arenas of life, we will have to answer for who we are in Christ Jesus. At those times we need to have on shoes of readiness so that we may be prepared to answer.

Answer when you are accused

Jesus made it very clear that the world will not understand Him, and it will not accept Him. He also made it clear that those who know and love Him will also be misunderstood and, at times, mistreated by those in the world.

That includes some of the people you find yourself in relationships with.

Perhaps you are the only believer in your family.

Perhaps your spouse or your children or your parents don't understand you as a Christian and maybe they don't like you as a Christian. Christ said this would happen.

Maybe your co-workers just don't get it or maybe the people you live next door to don't understand your commitment to Christ. Be prepared.

In fact, we are to be prepared when those people who don't understand us bring accusation against us because of our faith.

“On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witness to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it.

At that time, you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”
(Matthew 10:18-20)

In this passage we see that His Holy Spirit will bring to mind what we are to say when we stand accused because of our faith in Christ. However, he didn't say we can't be prepared. That doesn't mean we have a ready-made answer for all those who would attack our faith. Paul clearly says that our preparation comes from the Gospel of Peace.

The best way we can be prepared to answer when accused is to
KNOW THE WORD OF GOD!

When we have been putting the Word of God into our minds and hearts on a regular basis, when we know the Gospel, the Holy Spirit can and will bring it to mind so that we are prepared to answer when accused. We can't be prepared with the Word until we know the Word.

Not every answer required of us will come from a hostile source.

If we are acting out our faith, then others will see it and questions will arise. We need to be prepared to answer simply when we are asked.

Answer when you are asked

Peter writes "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." (1 Peter 3:15)

When your life is different, the people you share relationships with will see it and will want to know why.

We must be prepared to answer their questions.

The number one means of evangelism is people sharing their faith with their friends in a day to day context.

When you live your faith, they see it. They'll ask about it and if you are prepared to answer, the Holy Spirit will use that to bring

them into a lifesaving relationship with Jesus Christ. But you must be prepared to answer.

The gospel of Jesus Christ prepares us for action and it prepares us to answer. It also prepares us to advance.

Prepared to Advance

An army wins wars when it can move forward and take ground. It must advance.

During the Gulf War they would show images on the news. Many were in awe at the incredible power of our air force.

We could target, with pinpoint precision, targets of strategic interest or of psychological importance and hit them from miles away.

Our bombs were bigger, smarter, faster and deadlier than those of the Iraqi army and air force. But, we could not win the war until we took ground and you can't take ground in an airplane.

It required real soldiers, in real uniforms, wearing real boots, to go into Iraq and take ground and ultimately defeat the enemy. But no victory occurred until the soldiers were able to advance.

Paul calls us to use the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Gospel of peace, to be prepared to advance. He speaks of our spiritual enemy, the devil.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6:12)

And then mentions the armor of the spiritual warrior.

Too often we think of this armor in terms of defense against the enemy. But the boots of a soldier prepare them to advance, they must move forward and engage the enemy.

As we have heard before, our relationships are in the sightline of the enemy.

He knows that if he can shipwreck our relationships that he can shipwreck our faith, our homes and our churches. Rather than sitting by and trying to defend ourselves against his attacks, should we not go on the offensive and be aggressive about protecting and strengthening our relationships?

When we take the Gospel of Jesus Christ into all our relationships, not ramming it down the throats of others, but living our faith and answering the questions that faith generates, we advance the Gospel of Christ and we enhance every relationship we are a part of.

How is it that Jesus enhances the relationships we have when we are prepared to advance the gospel?

It's like the story told of the two young boys who were decorating a float for their church to be in the towns Easter Parade. The boys had a small wagon and they had put a cross in the wagon. They were decorating the cross with beautiful flowers and garland. It was a very, very attractive little cross.

As they were working the pastor of the church came along and seeing the beautiful cross said, "No, no, boys you have it all wrong. The cross that Jesus died upon was not beautiful.

It was an instrument of death. It was rugged, and ugly and harsh. There was no beauty about it." At this one of the boys replied. "We know, but we thought you said that Jesus never touched anything and left it the same." How true that is. Jesus never touches anything, even our relationships, and leaves them the same. When we are prepared to act with our words and to live out our faith, when we are prepared to answer for the hope we have, we can

advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the truth of salvation in our relationships. Protecting them and enhancing them with the touch of Jesus.

Application: We are called to be ready. We must be prepared. One of the greatest things you can do for any relationship you have is allow the Gospel of Peace, the story of Jesus and His incredible love for us, to prepare you for action. So, what do you need to do to be actively prepared?

Do you need to make certain your words are words of truth that correct and encourage?

Do you need to begin acting out your faith rather than just talking about it?

Do you need to know the Word so that you can be prepared to answer when an answer is required of you?

Do you need to begin advancing the gospel in every relationship you find yourself? Paul calls upon the believer to be ready.

Chapter 10

Stay Faithful To Your Purpose

As we stay faithful to our purpose let us explore the role that faith plays in our relationships with others, and in our relationship with God.

If a part of the reason we exist is to bring glory and honor to God, if we are to please God, then, by necessity, we must be a people of faith. *Hebrews 11:6* tells us “...without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

If our relationships are going to be healthy, growing, God-honoring relationships, they must be marked by true faith.

We also need that faith if we are going to honor others in our relationships.

Paul tells us to “take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.” In Paul’s day the shield of the Roman soldier was a large rectangular shield made of

wood, leather and metal. When a company of soldiers would stand shoulder to shoulder and hold their shields out in front of them it made a wall that protected the whole company from the flaming arrows sent their way by the enemy.

Often, in first century battles, an army would take a team of archers who would dip their arrows in tar and light them on fire. They would then launch volley after volley of these flaming arrows at an advancing army.

Having flaming arrows shot in your general direction tended to slow you down a bit. Being hit by one was even less helpful.

So, the soldier's shield was designed to take the hits from these arrows, allowing the flames to flicker and die, keeping the advancing army safe.

Our spiritual enemy is very good at shooting flaming arrows in our direction and he especially love to target our relationships. Often, he will fire in an arrow of jealousy, or of distrust. Sometimes he'll shoot at us with temptation. At other times he may launch a volley of frustration and misunderstanding into our relationships. He has many arrows aimed at your relationships at home, work, church, and so on. That's why Paul tells us to take up the shield of faith.

When we exercise true faith in our lives and express it in our relationships, the arrows of the enemy can be deflected or extinguished, preserving our relationships.

We need to take up that shield of faith daily. We need to assert our faith.

So, how do I assert my faith? How is it that I live out faith in my relationships daily? There are three simple ways to assert your faith.

Believe in the Word of God

The first step to asserting real faith in your relationships is to believe in the Word of God. This may seem a bit simple.

Perhaps it seems so obvious as to wonder why bother mentioning it. But it is essential that your faith start at the beginning and there is nothing more foundational to our faith than the Word of God, the Bible!

I won't take much time on this step because, the entire focus will be the place of the Word of God in our lives and in our relationships.

For now, I'll simply say, that we must have absolute belief that the Bible is indeed the Word of God.

Believing that the Bible is the Word of God is foundational to all other areas of faith in our lives.

I believe that the books of the Old and New Testaments constitute the Holy Scriptures.

They are the inspired and infallible written Word of God, fully inerrant in their original manuscripts and superior to all human authority and have been transmitted to the present without corruption of any essential doctrine. I believe that they contain all things necessary to salvation; so that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man or woman that it should be believed as an article of faith or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.

Both in the Old and New Testaments life is offered ultimately through Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and humanity.

The New Testament teaches Christians how to fulfill the moral principles of the Old Testament, calling for loving obedience to God made possible by the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit.

Our Church believe in the Word of God as a matter of constitutional policy.

But the Word of God is its own best witness as to why we should believe in the Bible.

“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:31)

Genuine faith involves belief – accepting the facts of what God has told us in His Word.

You cannot be saved or have genuine faith if you do not believe the Bible. Faith is built upon belief.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16)

“For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:21)

It is essential for our faith that we first believe in the Bible as the inspired Word of God.

You may say, “Great, the Bible is essential to all areas of faith in our life, but how does believing that the Bible is the Word of God affect my relationships on a day to day basis?”

It’s simple really. There is no greater book on how to handle our relationships than the Bible. There is no greater set of guidelines for healthy, happy, homes that honor God and honor others.

When the principles found in the Bible are applied to our relationships they work every time.

Thus, if the Bible is truly God’s Word, if we believe the Bible is accurate, then shouldn’t we have a greater desire, even an urgency, to put the principles found there into practice in our lives and in our relationships?

There are four points I like sharing on the authority of Holy scriptures.

All of it is God’s Word.

Its instruction is alive and profitable.

It is comprehensive.

It can completely equip us for both life and ministry.

That last point is the one that impacts our relationships most directly. The Bible equips us for both life and ministry. Therefore, if we'll take the Word of God and make it the foundation of our life, it will help us live out every relationship we have in a way that is pleasing to God and honoring to the people we share our relationships with.

This faith in the Word of God puts out the flaming arrows that the enemy would shoot at our relationships.

When the Word is foundational in our lives, when we understand it and when we know it, we can apply its principles to the defense of our relationships. Jealousy need not arise when we learn what God's Word teaches about trusting others and trusting him. Fear need not grip us when we understand that God's perfect love has conquered and cast out all fear.

Loneliness need not haunt us when we know God's promise to never leave us or forsake us.

The list goes on and on as to the arrows that are extinguished by our faith in the Word of God. But believing in the Word of God is only part of the picture. That belief in the Bible, to truly impact our lives and our relationships, must lead to a Trust in Jesus the Christ.

Trust in Jesus the Christ!

Believing the Bible is the Word of God is a necessary first step, but our belief must turn into trust.

The logical next step after believing that the Bible is the Word of God, is putting complete trust in Jesus the Christ, not simply as your savior, but as your Lord as well.

Why is this the next logical step? Because of what the Bible says about Jesus.

It is possible to believe the Bible is true and to accept everything taught in God's word on a mental level only.

We can believe with our minds and yet doubt with our hearts. Head knowledge is not the same thing as real trust!

I once read about story that happened in 1859 when a French daredevil named Charles Blondin stretched rope 1,100 feet across Niagara Falls. He then proceeded to walk across the rope, 160 feet above the falls, while blindfolded. The crowd that had gathered cheered wildly. He then walked over the falls pushing a wheelbarrow. Some accounts of this story claim that he filled the wheelbarrow with 150 pounds of dirt. When he completed this feat, the wildly cheering crowd again greeted him.

Blondin then asked the gathered crowd, "Do you believe I can walk over the falls again with the wheelbarrow?" And the crowd responded with a hearty "Yes!"

Blondin then asked the gathered crowd, "Do you believe I can walk over the falls again with the wheelbarrow?" And the crowd responded with a hearty "Yes!"

Blondin asked, "Do you believe I can walk this tightrope with someone in that wheelbarrow?" Again, the crowd responded with a hearty "Yes!"

"Who then, will get into the wheelbarrow?" Blondin asked.

And you can guess the response of the crowd. There was not a single volunteer.

The crowd believed firmly that Blondin could take a person across the tightrope in a wheelbarrow. However, believing it wasn't enough.

You see; there is a difference between "belief" and "faith".

Belief is mental assent. Belief is the head knowledge that something can be done, but faith is putting your trust in something or someone.

It is not enough to believe that the Bible is true, we must believe to the point that we are willing to put our trust in Jesus.

“You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder.” (James 2:19)

Believing, according to the Word of God, is not enough. There must be trust and faith in Christ that leads to obedience.

And it is at this point that many of us fall short. We believe the Bible is true, we believe that Christianity is the only true religion.

We believe in the concept of salvation and we believe in the idea of being forgiven.

However, our faith does not rest with a concept or an idea but with a person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Most of us do not trust Jesus enough to let him have control of our lives.

We are willing to let him into the car, but we would prefer it if he would please keep his hands off the wheel.

I'll do the steering. I'll do the navigating. I'll do the accelerating and the braking. Jesus, you are welcome into my life, but please leave the controls in my hands.

When we respond to Christ in this way, we make Christianity out to be just another religion. We believe what we're taught, and we are willing to follow the rules. That should be enough.

But, being a Christian is not about following a religion. In fact, it's not about religion at all. True Christianity is about having a relationship with Jesus Christ that is based on faith in him; trusting him for every need in life. Trusting him to the point that we are

willing to turn over control of our life completely to him. It means we must get into the wheelbarrow.

In order to assert true faith, we must put our trust in Jesus Christ alone. And, as I said just a moment ago, real faith leads to obedience and that's the third step in asserting our faith.

When we believe in the Word of God and genuinely trust Jesus, we will begin to act in obedience to God's Word.

Act in Obedience to God's Word

This is where the rubber really meets the road. True faith always leads to obedience. You can believe anything, but your true faith always shows up in your actions.

If you trust Jesus to forgive you, you are willing to forgive others.

If you trust God to be in control, you don't feel the need to control others.

You get the picture. When we truly believe that the Bible is the Word of God, and when we truly trust Jesus, then we have no problem with obeying His Word.

When we really trust, obedience is the natural result.

However, obedience to the Word of God is more than the result of faith, it is also an act of faith.

We must step out in faith to obey the Word of God because the Word of God runs contrary to our society, to our education, to our nature.

And it always takes faith to do what doesn't come naturally. It always takes faith to live out what we may not fully understand.

But I assure you of this. If you will begin to respond in faith and act in obedience to the Word of God, you will discover that it has the power to transform your life and the power to transform every relationship you have.

The Word of God is powerful, it is effective, it is living, it has the power to transform the people you are in relationships with. More importantly, it has the power to transform you!

Stepping out in faith, getting into the wheelbarrow, and acting in obedience to the truth you have in God's Word will transform your life and all your relationships.

You may say, "I don't know that much truth from the Bible? There is so much I don't understand."

Do not let your lack of Biblical knowledge be a roadblock to your faith and obedience.

There are two practical steps you can take to increase your faith and your obedience if you feel like you're still a novice in the Word of God.

Act in obedience to the things you do know.

Begin to study the Word to learn more.

When you walk in the light you have, (what you already understand) and make a conscious decision to learn more, you begin a journey of life and relationship transformation.

Once we believe and after we have started to trust Jesus, we must then begin to act in obedience.

Application: So, what do we do with all of this? Faith is essential if we are going to please God with His purpose for our lives. It is also essential if we are going to build strong, God honoring relationships.

Without faith we cannot please God and without faith we cannot apply the principles of God's Word and bring them to bear in our relationships.

So, let me challenge you to take a risk, step out in faith and believe the Word of God is true. Step out in faith and trust Christ; get into

the wheelbarrow. Step out in faith and begin to obey the Word of God.

The transformation that will take place in your life will amaze even you.

Chapter 11

Pray For Your Purpose In Relationships

Our daily goal should be how we can build healthy, God-honoring, Christ-centered relationships.

Everything in our life is lived out in the context of our relationships. In fact, the most important thing in life is relationships.

As hard as it is to believe, nothing else really matters. Because, everything boils down to relationships. My relationships matter, your relationships matter and our relationships matter.

When it comes to building better relationships through prayer, we must understand some truths about our institutions that are built on relationships...Christianity is not my religion...It is my relationship with Jesus Christ.

My marriage is not an institution...It is my relationship with my wife.

My parenting is about my relationships with my children.

My church is about my relationships with fellow believers.

My job is about my relationships with those I work with.

We as people come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior because of relationships. Someone or the act of someone led us to Jesus.

Everything in our life is about relationships. That being the case, if the enemy attempted to damage our faith and destroy our prayer life, the target would be through our relationships.

We have strength from God. We must ground our relationships with integrity and truth. We must be confident in the role that faith

plays in our relationships. We must allow Jesus to change our thoughts, our minds, so that our relationships honor him.

We must understand the role that the Word of God plays in our relationships. There can be no positive, Godly changes in our lives or in our relationships if we do not make the Word of God a central component of our lives. The Word of God, is what enables us to change our minds.

That's why we find the words recorded in the 6th chapter of Ephesians verses 10-18...

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age [a] against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 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. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which, you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

The Bible is God's Word, it is living, it is powerful, it penetrates to the heart of the matter and it changes us from the inside out allowing us to build relationships that honor Christ.

We must understand how prayer impacts our lives and our relationships. It is through prayer that we put on the armor. It is through our prayer that we can build our body of relationships into a healthy, God-honoring body.

If we really want to make a godly change happen in our relationships, we must approach Jesus in a true spirit of prayer. Prayer is the greatest weapon we have in defending and strengthening our relationships.

When we pray, we are allowing God to control and direct our prayer life. I believe that so often we miss the mark in prayer.

We pray but we pray weakly and being unbelieving that our prayer will have an impact.

Unfortunately, most Christians don't really believe that the Bible is relevant today. You may be offended by my statement, but it's true.

Because if we believed the Bible was relevant we would spend more time reading, studying and learning it than we do.

The same is true with prayer. Most people don't believe prayer really changes things. We know we should pray. We even offer up a prayer when things get difficult, but most people don't believe prayer works. I know this because I know that most people don't spend much time praying.

I believe all behavior is based on belief. If we really believed prayer was powerful and could influence the kind of changes we need in our relationships, we would spend quality time praying.

Part of the reason we don't believe prayer is powerful and effective is because, when we do pray, we don't pray in the power of the Holy Spirit. So often our prayers are self-centered and watered down.

But, when we spend time in God's presence asking Him how we should pray for the situations we know we need to pray for. We ask Him what His will is so that we can pray for His will rather than just praying for what we prefer.

If we really want to make a difference in our relationships, we will pray on a continual basis.

That doesn't mean that we spend 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on our knees praying to God. We can't be. It's nearly impossible.

What is meant is that we must be willing to pray on every occasion and in every situation and we must be ready to pray on every occasion and in every situation. For us to be able to pray without ceasing, we need to keep the relationship between God and ourselves in good standing.

Too many of us never communicate with God until we're in trouble and we need something "right now!"

Too many of us don't keep our lives clean and our minds clean and our attitudes right, and then we want to come to God when we have trouble and we wonder why we struggle to have our prayers answered.

We need to be people who are seeking to keep the relationship with God clean and open so that at any time we can enter His presence and carry our needs and our joys to Him.

If we are going to pray in such a way that it impacts our relationships in a way that honors God, we must always be ready to approach God in prayer.

We must have the right mind, the right attitude, and the right spirit so that we can pray continually.

We must be specific and not general with our prayers. I know we like to say things like "God bless my marriage." No! God, strengthen my marriage and draw my heart to my wife and draw her heart to mine. Help us to fall in love with each other every day.

I know we like to say things like "God help our church." No! God, our church needs to reach out to our community better than we do.

Help us to discover what the specific needs of our community are and then give us a vision and creativity and workers to help us meet that need.

I know we like to say things like “God watch over my kids.” No! God, please protect my son or daughter from the bad influences from their peers.

Help them to be able to distinguish between right and wrong when the time comes. Give them courage to say no to sin and help them to stand for you.

You get the idea. We need to stop being general. Our relationships are worth fighting for and they are worth praying very specific prayers for.

We need to be specific when we approach God in prayer.

Here’s the point...

We all need and desire to have stronger, healthier and better relationships; relationships that honor God.

God has given us some wonderful and powerful tools...

If I’m serious, if you are serious and if we are serious here are some exercises that we are to use to build a better body of relationships.

We are to put on His strength...

We are to ground our relationships in His truth and integrity...

We are to be right with God so that we can be right with others...

We are to advance the Gospel of Jesus in our relationships...

We are to maintain faith in God...

We are to align our thoughts with God...

We are to immerse our lives and our relationships in the Word of God...

And we are to be praying for our relationships.

We are to pray with faith.

We are to pray continually, we are to pray persistently, and we are to pray specifically.

Outside of the Word of God, there is no greater thing we can do to improve every relationship of our life than to commit ourselves to prayer. When Prayer Meets Faith, We Win!!!

So, let me encourage all of us to cover every relationship we have in prayer.

As we pray over our relationships, God will begin to take over our relationships, giving us greater fulfillment, greater joy, greater peace and greater opportunities to serve and honor Him than we could ever imagine.

Chapter 12

Receiving A Righteous Purpose

Now, let us see how righteousness plays in our purposes and relationships. Also, let us see how our righteousness before God and an indirect approach to looking at how it will affect our human relationships. You see, until our relationship with God is right, all our other relationships will suffer.

We cannot be right with others until we are right with God!

We cannot be right with our spouse if we are not right with our Lord.

We cannot be right with our co-workers if we are not right with our Savior.

We cannot be right with our friends until we are right with our Maker

Paul, in describing the tools available to the believer, is using the analogy of the armor worn by a Roman soldier. We've already seen that he said to buckle the belt of truth around your waist, giving true support to your relationships.

The next item he mentions is the Breastplate of Righteousness.

The soldier in Paul's day wore a vest made of small metal plates that were woven together by leather straps. The vest provided protection against blows from the enemy. It protected the vital organs of the heart and lungs.

Without such a vest the soldier had a very short life expectancy in battle.

The closest equivalent we have today would be the Kevlar vest worn by police officers that protect them from bullets. As we've already seen, a bulletproof vest can save your life.

Wrapping that vest of protection around your vital organs keeps you alive. That's the type of protection the Apostle Paul is talking about when he says to put on the breastplate of righteousness.

That breastplate provides a protection for you and for your relationships that cannot be penetrated; it is a protection that comes from the righteousness of Christ. Why is it that protection from Christ is so dependable? It is so effective because Christ has already won the war. When he died upon the cross, was buried for three days, and rose again, he defeated our enemy Satan. The devil lost the war in the resurrection of Christ.

He is still a dangerous enemy, but he is a defeated enemy. And when we will wrap ourselves in the righteousness of Christ we allow his righteousness to defend us against the attacks of the devil, protecting us and protecting our relationships.

In 2014 Georgia was beating Auburn 24-7 with the football game pretty much decided but Coach Mark Richt didn't protect running back Todd Gurley.

Coach Richt left him in the game where victory was eminent, and Todd Gurley tore an ACL and was lost for the year.

Yes, we have the victory and has won the battle but satan can still cause injury and pain...

Why Do We Need to Get Right (Righteousness From) With God?

Perhaps, before I explore the ways of accessing righteousness, we should take a brief look at what righteousness is.

Righteousness, according to Webster's Dictionary, is 1: acting in accord with divine or moral law: free from guilt or sin. 2 a: morally right or justifiable.

This is a straightforward definition of righteousness. Yet it is also a definition that, when we apply it to our lives, leaves all of us wanting.

And that is the primary reason we need to access righteousness is that we don't have any.

We can't get right on our own (have no righteousness).

How many of us, in our daily lives have a natural tendency to act in accord with divine or moral laws? Most of us don't, it's not natural for us.

How many of us can say that, on our own, we are free from guilt or sin? The answer is that none of us can say that.

In Romans 3:23, the Apostle Paul makes it very clear that none of us can lay a claim to righteousness. *"For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."*

If righteousness is being free from sin or guilt, and if all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory, then no-one can lay a claim to righteousness in their actions, their thoughts, their attitudes, etc. To put it plainly, we are not righteous.

That is why we need to access the righteousness of Christ. We need to take His righteousness and make it our own.

Think about the fact that all our relationships are made up of people that have no righteousness on their own.

Every relationship we are involved in has two people who have sinned, are guilty and lack righteousness. That's a tough starting point for any relationship.

Since we don't have any righteousness on our own and since we are in relationships with people that don't have any righteousness on their own, doesn't it make sense that we need to access the righteousness of Christ to improve our standing with each other in our relationships?

Beyond that, since we have no righteousness in and of ourselves, we have no standing before the God of the universe.

In our lack of righteousness, our guilt, we are separated from God and have no access to him.

However, when we access the righteousness of Christ, his righteousness is given to us.

Getting a hold of the righteousness of Christ can seem a bit complex.

To understand it fully, we need to understand two different words.

Imputed and Imparted...

When I accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, His righteousness is imputed to me.

Imputed means: To assign as a characteristic, to charge; to ascribe; to attribute.

What this means is that, when you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, God looks at you and sees the righteousness of His Son on you, and not your true behavior or standing.

God doesn't turn a blind eye to sin, but when we accept Christ and the sacrifice He made on our behalf, God forgives us and assigns the characteristic of righteousness to us, though we have not been righteous in thought or action.

The next word I want us to notice is the word imparted. When we access the righteousness of Christ, when we ask the Holy Spirit to make us holy and sanctify us, to change our character and when we consciously choose to be like Christ he imparts his righteousness to us.

Impart means: To bestow a share or portion of; to give, grant.

When we access the righteousness of Christ he gives it to us. Our actions and attitudes change because we become righteous.

We are changed. Not on our own, or with our own strength, because we can't make that change. But in the power of the Holy Spirit we are made righteous. We put on the breastplate of righteousness and are made holy.

So, accessing the righteousness of Christ, allowing him to give you his righteousness and power to live a righteous life will make a difference in every relationship you live within.

The first reason we need to put on that righteousness of God is that we don't have any on our own. But, not only does accessing the righteousness of Christ make it possible for us to stand as pleasing and acceptable before God, it also provides protection in our lives and relationships in two very practical ways.

Getting Right With God Offers Protection from Pride

Let's be honest, people without righteousness have no reason for pride. However, being the frail humans, we are, we tend to find ways of being prideful in all of our relationships.

Putting on the breastplate of righteousness protects us from spiritual arrogance.

Putting on the breastplate of righteousness protects us from esteeming ourselves better than others.

Putting on the breastplate of righteousness protects us from self-confidence (rather than Christ-confidence), and from self-righteousness.

The enemy satan is extremely clever at slipping in this deception on believers.

Some are especially susceptible to it. And often, when we have been drawn into it, we don't recognize it in ourselves.

We may think that we are being spiritual, when we are only being arrogant! If satan can deceive us here, we are greatly hindered in our effectiveness for the Lord.

And our relationships, with God and with others, are at risk when pride enters the picture.

But Getting right with God protects us from that pride.

It reminds us that we have no righteousness. It reinforces that any right thing we do in any of our relationships comes from the power of the Holy Spirit working within us.

Getting Right With God Offers Protection from Condemnation

Guilt destroys a lot of relationships too. Many times, if our relationships aren't shredded by pride, they are pulled apart by guilt.

The Breastplate of Righteousness protects us from overwhelming vague feelings of condemnation and guilt (because of past sins).

Without the breastplate of righteousness, we can be paralyzed by feelings of unworthiness, worthlessness, hopelessness, and discouragement because of past failures.

Without it we can feel so undeserving that we don't expect anything from the Lord. And we expect that others can't or won't love and accept us either.

Again, satan knows that many Christians are susceptible to defeat at this point. It's easy to make us feel so guilty and unworthy that we feel we can be of no use to the Lord. Great damage has been done by the enemy with this weapon on God's people.

The Breastplate of Righteousness keeps the effective spiritual warrior balanced between these two ungodly extremes.

The purpose of getting right with God protects our relationships from pride and from condemnation and it puts us in a right standing before the Lord. And without that foundation, no relationship can truly last.

Not only must we consider the why we need to get right with God, we need to take a moment and consider the how to get right with God.

How Do We Get Right With God?

Maybe we live in such a complex world that we cannot wrap our brains around the idea of simplicity.

Maybe debt has become such a part of our lives that we think in terms of monthly payments rather than in terms of a debt being paid in full once and for all.

Maybe it's the fact that we are routinely lied to by the legal system, the government, the media and the people we live and work with has destroyed our faith and trust so much that don't believe a transaction of any value can ever be completed without a contract signed in blood.

Whatever the case, most people, no matter what we may have learned about God, cannot believe that he would freely give us forgiveness for our sins and throw in the righteousness of Christ also. We just can't believe, in faith, that God wants to give us anything at all.

And that lack of trust, that disbelief, that cynicism we carry around with us prevents us from receiving and using the gracious, free gift of righteousness that God wants to give us.

We need to understand that there is nothing we can do to achieve God's righteousness. No amount of acting right, doing right, saying the right things will ever make us righteous.

We can't become righteous by being good or saying and thinking the right things.

We can't do anything to become righteous because righteousness is not achieved, rather it is received.

We receive God's righteousness when we ask, in faith, for God to give it to us.

Yes, it's that simple. Yes, it's that free. Yes, it's real and we don't sign a contract or make monthly payments. We don't have to worry about God not coming through on his end of the bargain.

He already has. 2000 years ago, He sent His one and only Son to die on a cross, not just forgive us of sin, but to provide us with righteousness.

When we ask God to send His Holy Spirit and fill us and give us the righteousness of Christ He does just that.

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish will give him a snake?

If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! (Matthew 7:7-11)

When we go to our Father, in real faith, and ask Him for the righteousness of Christ, when we are willing to surrender completely to Him and allow His Holy Spirit to take control He will give us true righteousness, not just imputed, but imparted.

He will not simply see us as righteous, He will make us righteous.

When we ask God to give us the Holy Spirit and to make us righteous, He will give us power and strength that we have not previously had, and He will give us a desire to do what is right that we have not had previously, and our actions will be different.

We're not merely seen as righteous, we are righteous because we are allowing the Holy Spirit to act within us and through us.

How do we access the righteousness of Christ that will make us right with God and will protect us and our relationships from pride and condemnation?

We access that righteousness by humbly coming before God and asking, in faith, for Him to fill us with His Holy Spirit and to give us that righteousness.

Here's the point: For our relationships with other people to work, we must first be in a right relationship with God, the author of all relationships.

So, let's recap Why we get right with God.

Why?

Because we are not righteous or holy on our own. *There is no one righteous, not even one! (Romans 3:10)*

Because it will protect us from pride. When we get to thinking too much of ourselves it wrecks our relationships. Acknowledging that we must get our righteousness from a source outside of ourselves keeps us humble before God and man.

Because it protects us from condemnation. The world wants to condemn us, and the enemy wants to condemn us. Yet when we are wrapped up in the righteousness of Christ, when our character has been changed and we have been made righteous, the past is no longer an issue.

We are free from condemnation.

Being right with God, being protected from pride and being protected from condemnation puts us right with ourselves and allows our relationships with others to be right!

How do we get right with God?

We get right with God by humbly approaching him in faith and asking him to make us righteous.

And when we'll ask in faith and when we submit ourselves to Him He will fill us with His Holy Spirit and make us righteous. We can't achieve it, but we can receive it, all we need do is ask!

So, what can we do about it right now? Let me encourage all of us to step out in faith and ask God for the strength and power to live a righteous life. Ask Him to fill us with His Holy Spirit, to sanctify us, so that not only our position before God is righteous, but so that our practice, our life before God and man is righteous.

When we ask for His Spirit, His righteousness, He promises to give it to us and more. So, step out in faith and access God righteousness. Make sure that we are right with God so that we can be right with each other!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Darryl L. Jones was born, raised and live in Atlanta Ga. Along with his wife Tisa they are blessed to have 4 wonderful children (April and her husband Chris, Darryl "DJ" and his wife Chesmonti, Michael, Kennedy and a lovely granddaughter Naomi and two grandsons Solomon and Michael Jr.. Dr. Jones was raised in the church as a child. At the age of 17 he accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior along with receiving his baptism.

He grew up singing in my church choirs and serving in several ministries within our church. Dr. Jones serve a group of some wonderful people as the Senior Pastor of Champions 4 Christ Christian Church located in Atlanta Georgia. Dr. Jones and his wife started their church in 2011 with a few family members and friends. Dr. Jones is eternally grateful to be able to see some of the great things that are being done to share the good news of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ through their church. Dr. Jones received his Doctorate of Ministry degree in Leadership Administration from Liberty University (Lynchburg Virginia). In addition to that he graduated with a Master of Divinity degree in Pastoral Care and Psychology of Religion from the Morehouse School of Religion at the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) Atlanta Georgia and he received his Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from Morris Brown College in Atlanta Georgia. Dr. Jones took an early retirement with the Georgia Department of Revenue serving in the Compliance Division as a Revenue Agent.

His other professional background also includes serving years in Bank Accounting, Management and Christian Education.

Dr. Jones is the founder of www.bebetteronpurpose.com and Dr. Jones along with his wife Tisa are owners of "Your Relationships Matter" www.yourrelationshipsmatter.com where they teach and coach groups and individuals in maintaining and strengthening healthy relationships skills via workshops, seminars, individual and group consulting, blog and newsletter. Dr. Jones is a humble servant of the Lord who was called to preach but was born to worship. He has a unique way of blending biblical truths and academic scholarship into everyday language.

Dr. Darryl L. Jones

Email: darryl@bebetteronpurpose.com

Phone: 404-862-6827

Website: www.bebetteronpurpose.com

