

DEVOTIONAL

POWER
#15
SERIES



The Art of Becoming

Devotionals in Spiritual Growth
and Maturity

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ICOC Nigeria Publishing

**THE ART OF BECOMING:
DEVOTIONALS IN SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND MATURITY**

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EDITOR'S NOTE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Happy New Year to all God's People! What better way to begin the year than at the Lord's feet, listening to Him, learning from Him and being filled with Him?

The Theme of this year's devotionals is "The Art of Becoming" and it is based on Isaiah 64:8 and Ephesians 4:13.

Isaiah's words remind us how we are carefully, thoughtfully and consistently being crafted in the hands of God to become who He wants and created us to be. Paul shares this vision with the Ephesian disciples and with all believers; God's vision of us becoming mature and attaining Christ's full measure and stature. What a glorious goal!

Let us look forward to all the ways that God will speak to us, mold us and transform us in the coming days and weeks.

Talking of the ways that God speaks, I am very excited that this year, the Spirit has enabled us for the first time, to translate the Power Series in 4 main Nigerian languages; Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa and our very own pidgin English! May many more souls be reached through these translations. We have continued the good work with our electronic copies, videos on all our social media handles, our audio version and now language translations on Spotify.

I wish to acknowledge the rich resources provided by the teaching material from Dr Robert Carrillo's Spiritual Formation course in the Mountain Theological Seminary, USA.

I cannot say a big enough thank you to the faithful men and women across our church who made this edition a reality through their dedication and selfless service. Our contributing writers, old and new, worked hard to meet the earlier deadlines we set for this year's project. Though many have served for several years, their eagerness to keep learning and improving their writing skills is truly admirable. Our meticulous editors did not flinch in their duty. The vibrant creative

team continued to churn out new ideas for the presentation and dissemination of this work. I wish to particularly appreciate the men and women who worked on our audio version and translations. Most had no prior experience but were willing to learn all the technicalities involved and often did recordings at odd hours and far-away locations in order to get the best effects. Our production team was hands on and to God enabled us to produce this edition well before the new year. Everyone involved has served *pro bono*. May God reward you as only He can.

Thank you to every brother, sister, family member or friend who devotes their heart and time to God's word by means of these devotionals. May you be blessed and fulfilled, and may you become all that the Lord wants you to be.

To God be all the glory!

Titi George

Editor-in-Chief

PREFACE

Welcome to the 15th edition of the Power Series, an annual devotional publication of the ICOC Nigeria. This year's theme is "THE ART OF BECOMING." It implies that we participate in a process - God's process of making us who He wants us to be. With this understanding, our Christian life becomes a spiritual adventure as we journey with the Lord, able to embrace all that He takes us through and all that He commands us to do because we know God's goal for us.

This year we have 40 devotional topics for 40 days and a day of reflection at the end of each chapter. The purpose for this is to create the needed space for us to slow down, ponder, assimilate and recalibrate before we dive into each new chapter. The reflection questions are also useful for small group discussions or discipling times.

CHAPTER ONE (Day 1-7) YAHWEH: I AM WHO I AM

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God.

In becoming, we do not start with ourselves but with God. It is in Him that we "live and move and have our being" Acts 17:28. Therefore, whatever we will become must be rooted in Him – His purpose, His plan and His mighty Hand.

CHAPTER TWO (Day 8-16) IN GOD, WE KNOW WHO WE ARE

1 Jn 3:1 See what great love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are.

Who we are is not something we earn but rather it is God's gift to us as His highest creation and the whole new identity bestowed on us

by virtue of our union with Christ. Knowing who God made us to be will transform our perspective and the way we live our lives.

CHAPTER THREE (Day 17-25) WHAT WE ARE IS WHAT WE DO

John 13:17 Now that you know these things you will be blessed if you do them.

Life teaches us that we become what we constantly do. In this chapter we focus on the practical actions that will help us on the journey to becoming.

CHAPTER FOUR (Day 26-35) MATURING IN CHRIST

Eph 4:13 ... that we may all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature...

Living things must mature in order to fulfil the purpose of their existence. If we are consistently maturing in our walk with God, we will eventually become who God wants us to be. This chapter will focus on the marks or characteristics of Christian maturity.

CHAPTER FIVE (Day 36-40) BECOMING WHAT GOD WANTS US TO BE

Isiah 64:8 We are the clay; you are the potter; we are the work of your hand.

In our maturing, God's Spirit will lead us, mold us and refine us to become what He wants us to be. We are God's handwork, His masterpiece; created for the good that He has always intended.

May you be inspired through the power of God's word and may you be enriched by the insights in this book. Do share your insights as well, for we are all a part of God's unfolding story.

May this be a rewarding and fulfilling journey for us all.

POWER SERIES CREATIVE / SOCIAL MEDIA FEATURES



We launched the Power Series creative and social media features last year and to God's glory more and more readers and viewers can access and be edified from God's word.

This year we're doing it again!

In addition to our traditional hardcover edition, you can enjoy the daily devotionals on your phone, tablet or other mobile device via our E-book, Facebook and Whatsapp handles. You can view engaging weekly videos on Instagram, YouTube and Tiktok. You can listen to the audio versions of your favorite devotionals on [Spotify](#).

And this year, for the very first time, we have translations in 3 official Nigerian languages – [Igbo](#), [Yoruba](#) and [Hausa](#) as well as our beloved lingua franca - [Pidgin English](#)!

We thank God for the heart and talent of brothers and sisters from all across our churches in Nigeria who contributed tirelessly and selflessly to this project.

So, let us read, listen, view and grow. Let us share these various channels with others also so that together we can become more and more like our Lord Jesus and all that He wants us to be.

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ISAIAH 64:8

Yet you LORD, are our
Father.

We are the clay; you are
the potter; we are all
the work of your hand.

EPH 4:13

...until we all reach
unity in the faith and in
the knowledge of
the Son of God and
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attaining to the whole
measure of the fullness
of Christ.

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Chapter 1

YAHWEH: I AM WHO I AM

I AM – The Unsearchable God

No Other God

God's Greatness

God's Goodness

God's Battle

God's Redeeming Plan Part 1

God's Redeeming Plan Part 2

I AM: THE UNSEARCHABLE GOD.

Scripture Reading: Ex 3:1-6, 13-15 Isaiah 6:1-5

God said to Moses "I AM WHO I AM"

A child stood by the shore of the ocean, staring at the water beyond the horizon in a fixed gaze. The father walked silently behind her and asked, "What do you see?" She replied, "Water, just water." Yes, of course, endless water. How was this child to know the depth of the ocean, the volume of the water, its coral gardens, hidden trenches, and mysterious creatures in their vast array...¹ Such is the task before us as we attempt to dive into the deep and discover the "I AM: The Unsearchable God!"

When God told Moses in Ex 3:14, "I AM WHO I AM", He was not just giving a name—He was revealing His eternal, self-existent nature and assuring Moses of His constant presence. He is the God who was, is, and will always be. Moses' uncertainty showed that he didn't yet truly know this God (Phil. 3:8-14). Before we can walk with Him or represent Him, we must know Him personally through 'yada' (a Hebrew word for 'know'), that is, a deep, intimate, relational knowing that goes beyond head knowledge. Yahweh, the One and Only God, invites us into that intimacy. Through the plagues and the Red Sea, He revealed Himself as the all-powerful, incomparable Deliverer. Today, He continues to show us His wonder, protection, and provision.

In today's reading, we see how God reveals himself to the prophet Isaiah: *"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple."* Isaiah was mourning the death of a great and wise king who made Israel peaceful and prosperous. As he gazed into the future, he was in despair because he saw a vacuum—an empty throne left by

¹ Adapted illustrative story — author unknown.

Uzziah. A secure future was gone. But in the course of time, he “*saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne...*”

Why contrast an earthly crisis with heavenly glory? The fact is that what we see in the physical is minute compared to the divine and magnificent reality that is revealed when we look to the spiritual. Isaiah did just that. He took his view beyond the physical, and what he saw was a wonderful and amazing throne; exalted and majestic. Who was sitting on this amazing throne? Not Uzziah, but the Lord Himself, the One who is superior in every way. Whatever the uncertainties that might be going on in our lives, God is still enthroned in heaven, and He is still in charge.

Sometimes we are blind to the presence and glory of God that surrounds us. This awesome vision of God made Isaiah proclaim, “*Woe to me...*” Why? Because God is too holy to be seen. Even the seraphim used two of their wings to cover their eyes. No one can see God and live. (Ex 33:20) How do we see ourselves when we come into the presence of God? Certainly, his holiness and radiance make us unworthy. When we behold the awesomeness of God, our imperfections and inadequacies are exposed. Yet, the Almighty bids us “*Come!*”

CONCLUSION

Are you still seeking God? How do you respond to His revelation? As we commence these daily devotionals, let us understand that God’s awesome and unsearchable nature does not mean we cannot reach and embrace Him. He is within us! He invites us to seek Him. Are you ready to make this a fruitful and rewarding journey?

CALL TO ACTION

Begin this devotional journey with a day of personal or group worship.

FURTHER READING: Psalms 145, Rev 1:12-18, Rev 22:13

NO OTHER GOD

Scripture Reading Isaiah 45:5-7, 22

"I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God."

From time immemorial, people have sought something or someone to worship. From idols of wood and stone to the modern "gods" of money, fame, and power, humanity tries to fill the longing inside by relying on whatever they believe is powerful enough to save. Yet Yahweh in the Bible makes a bold declaration: *"I am God, and there is no other"*

Yahweh is not one God among many. He is not competitive. Every other so-called god is a creation of human imagination or a distortion of truth. Yahweh alone is the Creator who was not created, the eternal One who has no beginning and no end. An idol can be carved, melted, or broken. But the Lord who split the Red Sea, who sent manna in the desert and who raised Jesus from the dead cannot be reduced, replaced, or rivaled.

For many of us Africans, there is still a mix of old traditions and new faith. We are advised to keep charms "just in case," or to mix church attendance with trust in ancestors or spiritual mediums. But God does not share His throne. If we carry charms in our pockets while carrying the Bible in our hands, then our trust is divided. We are saying, "God, I believe you, but I'm not sure you are enough." When Israel tried to mix devotion to Yahweh with Baal worship, the prophet Elijah challenged them: *"How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."* (1 Kings 18:21). That same challenge comes to us today. It might be money, career, position, power, approval of men, relationships or even

the love of self that we quietly worship. The call is the same; we must choose who we will serve.

No other god listens like Yahweh. No other god sees the oppressed and delivers them. No other god speaks life into dry bones. No other god laid down His life to redeem sinners. And no other god raised Himself from the dead. The cross and the resurrection prove once and for all that our God is like no other. This truth should shape how we live. Our confidence need not be shaken by economic hardship, political tension, or threats from enemies. We live in a society where insecurity and poverty loom large and we can be tempted to look for quick fixes or spiritual shortcuts. But Yahweh calls us to trust Him fully. When we place our security in Him, we are saying with our lives, "I know there is no other God."

This means that prayer is not an empty ritual but a conversation with the living God who answers. It means generosity is not foolish, because the God who owns the cattle on a thousand hills can surely provide for us. It means that refusing sin is not weakness, because we serve the Judge who sees and rewards integrity. It means we can be confident as God's children because we know that our God is God and He is enough.

CONCLUSION

What a privilege that we serve the God who has no equal. He alone is worthy of our worship. Are there any other "gods" competing for your loyalty? To know Yahweh is to dethrone every rival in our lives.

CALL TO ACTION

Examine your heart and lay down anything that you are trusting in more than God. Pray, "Lord, you are my only God. I will trust you alone." Make a bold choice to live with the confidence that the Almighty is enough. Share this conviction with someone today.

FURTHER READING: Isaiah 40:25, Exodus 20:1-6, Psalm 115:1-11, John 14:6

KNOWING GOD'S GREATNESS

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam 7:22

How great you are, Sovereign Lord!

The Bible is replete with words that describe the greatness of God. In today's devotional, we will meditate on, internalise and fill our hearts with these words.

God is great in His authority

How great you are Lord. There is no one like you and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears - 2 Sam 7:22

For the Lord Most High is awesome, the great King over all the earth – Ps 47:2

As surely as I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow before me, every tongue will acknowledge God – Rom 14:11

Consider God's pre-eminence, His excellence, His sovereignty. God is above all and surpasses all. None come close to His greatness and awesomeness. He is to be worshiped with awe-inspired reverence and obedience.

God is great on behalf of His people

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know... his incomparably great power for us who believe – Eph 1:18-19

We are limited in our thinking and ability, yet God's thoughts and actions are far beyond our imagination. Whenever we attempt to bring Him to our level we struggle in our faith. He is the God who raised the dead. (2 Kings 4:32-38) He won battles without weapons.

(Josh 6) He miraculously provided supplies to starving citizens (2 Kings 7) He can do far more than all we can ask or imagine.

God is great in His thinking.

Can anyone hide from me in a secret place? - Jer 23:24.

God fills the universe. Sin causes us to hide but God wants us to be in the open and have a guilt-free relationship with Him.

Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered - Matt 10:30 God knows and is interested in the smallest detail of our lives. Hagar called him "The God who sees me." This is so reassuring.

I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind. (Jer17:10). Imagine God's 'candid camera' recording all our thoughts and actions. If yours is played back right now, will you be proud or afraid of the outcome?

God is great in His character.

To whom will you compare me? says the Lord - Isa 40:25-26.

Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these?

God is incomparable. His creation is matchless. Scripture says His ways are beyond our comprehension. (Isa 55:8,9). He is immortal and invisible (1 Tim 6:15b-16). He is holy. (1 Pet 1:15).

CONCLUSION

Knowing the greatness of God will enable us to stand in awe of Him with all sincerity of heart, soul, body and strength. A lukewarm prayer life and non-committal quiet times are not befitting of our great God. He deserves the best in our worship of Him always.

Since He is all seeing and all knowing, we should serve Him with holy fear and come into His presence with boldness, confidence and humility. We can have full assurance that there is no situation (sins, requests, challenges, etc) that we cannot take to Him at any time.

God sees you and whatever you are going through. He will surely come through in His own time and way.

Personally, I am enjoying that confidence. Nothing is too big or small to bring to Him. That brief prayer asking for direction before embarking on an assignment, an appointment or making a difficult decision, should not be taken for granted or ignored. It has been awesome always having this at the back of my mind. God is great enough to hold the universe and to care for us too.

CALL TO ACTION

Pray through Ephesians 1:18-22: A Prayer for Enlightenment

FURTHER READING: Psalm 139, Isaiah 40:12-14,22, 28

KNOWING GOD'S GOODNESS

Scripture Reading: Exodus 33:19

And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you..."

Have you ever found yourself praying like Moses, "Lord, show me your glory"?

Moses had witnessed and experienced God miracles; the parting of the Red Sea, manna from heaven and so much more. Like Moses, you and I have witnessed God's glory and goodness in our lives, only if we would take a moment to reflect.

When life is smooth, it is easy to say, "God is good". But even when things are rough, when prayers seem delayed or unanswered, His goodness remains constant. In His goodness, God sometimes protects us by not giving us what we think we want.

Reading the whole of Exodus 33, we learn how God delights to show His goodness by His abiding presence with His people. *My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.* (vs.14). Verse 19b, reminds us that God's mercy is sovereign. He has the absolute right and freedom to show mercy as He chooses. Mercy is not something we can demand or earn, it flows from God's own will, it is a gift not based on our merit.

In my over fifty years of life, I have experienced God's mercy and presence in several instances. I recall one occasion many years ago. I had attended my pre-marriage counselling session and had to sleep over at the home of my counselors - a couple who were leaders in the Church. In the middle of the night, the house caught fire. For some

reason The Almighty woke me up and led me through the thick fumes to the couple's door to raise the alarm. That was when frantic effort was made by all of us to call for help. The fire had started from the sitting room, engulfing everything, with the house keys right in the center of the fire and no access to the main entrance/exit of the house. Just when all hope seemed lost, the brother managed his way to the kitchen and found the back door open! That was how we made our escape. Till today, I am convinced that was God's goodness to me and the rest of that household.

God's goodness is not just one of His attributes, it is the essence of His character. Yahweh is all good. His grace and compassion flow from His unchanging, loving nature, giving us peace and security as we trust in His faithful character. Everything He does flows from His goodness - His justice, His righteousness, His faithfulness and His ultimate love for us through the sacrifice of Jesus. (Ps. 111:7, 2 Thess. 1:5-7, Lam. 3:23, Eph 2:7).

CONCLUSION

Knowing God's goodness should make us trust Him, thank Him, love Him, reflect Him and hope in Him the more. His goodness isn't just a truth to believe—it's a reality to live out. As disciples of Jesus Christ, when people see us, they should see His goodness, mercy and kindness. Our life should proclaim His name to the world.

CALL TO ACTION

Think about as many instances of God's goodness as you can recall in your own life. Thank God for these and share with someone today.

FURTHER READINGS: Ps.145:9 Gal 5:22

GOD'S BATTLE

Scripture Reading: Gen 3:15, 1 Cor 3:1-3

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers...

Brothers, I was not able to speak to you as spiritual people but as people of the flesh, as babies in Christ. I fed you milk, not solid food, because you were not yet able to receive it... (HCSB)

From the beginning, God's intent was to make us in His image and establish an abiding relationship with humanity. Gen 1: 27. Everything God created was very good, until sin entered the picture. Evil crept into God's beautiful creation and deceived His children to disobey Him in the garden of Eden. So, God Himself declared a battle in Gen 3:15. From then on, the war between good and evil has taken center stage in the narrative of God's relationship with man. That battle is still raging till today.

Satan's ultimate goal is to discredit God and create fear, mistrust and doubts in our hearts in order to lead us down the path of selfishness, greed and godlessness. The flesh sets in and we become weak and vulnerable to worldly desires. We stall in our spiritual maturing. Content with all the care and love we received at the beginning, it becomes difficult for us to see the need to grow and take on the spiritual battle for our soul.

We know that when Christ gets hold of a life or church, there is transformation. Sin is forgiven. Mercy flows. Lives turn around. As believers, we have a new standing with God quite alright, but our lives in the world do not always reflect it. Our enemy Satan wants us to remain in this state. This is the spiritual battle ground. It is a battle that we must win!

In today's reading, we see Apostle Paul writing a tough letter to the Corinthian believers about the nature of the gospel and how it was to be lived out in the course of their daily lives because they had stopped maturing spiritually as they ought to. Some time ago, we undertook an honest assessment of spiritual growth and transformation to Christlikeness in our family of churches.

Many of our congregations were doing well, but there were also too many that were not. Why? Because what you and I become as individual disciples is what the church becomes. As I reflect on these findings, Paul's letter to the Corinthians seems to resonate. Like them, we can become battle weary, and the reasons are universal, but we must not remain so.

None of us wants to see progress stalled in our lives; be it in our education, our career progression, our business or our relationships. How much more should we hate to see spiritual growth stagnate in God's church!

As Christians we are to experience the new life in Christ every new day. Our connection to Him is a guarantee that transformation is continual. The reality that we were saved from sin should have a daily effect on our lives. When we lose sight of this our growth stalls and we eventually find ourselves in a "wilderness" of strife, jealousy, envy, distractions and many conflicts.

CONCLUSION

Remember, you are in a battle for your soul! Your daily walk with God and fellow disciples is key to spiritual maturity. God is able to give you the victory to overcome. You must stand against the power of the prince of this world and the pressures of our godless culture. You must stand for your Lord and Savior. Stay in the battle.

The longer I live the more I have come to the conclusion that the greatest work I can do in God's name is to stand and take up the full armor of God! - Ephesians 6:12-13

ACTION PLAN

What are your specific areas of weakness or struggle? Write these down and share them with your discipleship partner. Take a day(s) this week to fast, pray and commit this to God.

FURTHER READING: 2 Cor. 10: 3-4, Rom. 12: 1-2

GOD'S REDEEMING PLAN (PART 1)

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:3-7

For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight.

A story: Nala and her friends finally got admission into the university. That same year, sadly, Nala's father died. Her mother had a chronic health condition and was not able to work. Nala had to fend for herself. Her friends encouraged her not to give up. She began school and did her best to sustain herself year after year and to pay her school fees. It was far from easy. She owed a lot and promised the school authorities that she would find a way to pay. Without notice, she lost her part time job in her final year because of the mounting academic workload. She did not know what to do. One day her friends paid her a visit. They presented her with a cheque that covered the amount she was owing the school. Overwhelmed, she asked "How?" Unknown to her, right from their first year, her close friends had set up a charity for her. They gave their widows mite every month and told other people about her plight so they could help out as well. They knew she would need the money most likely in her final year so as not to forfeit her chance to graduate. "What touches me the most" she shared with tears on her graduation day "Is that my friends had a redeeming plan for me right from the beginning! I will forever be grateful!"

The story of God's redeeming plan is the greatest story that will ever be told. Even though it was from the beginning, it is still an unfinished story, because indeed, you and I are part of the unfolding drama. My task, however, is to start the story somewhere. To do this, I must take you way back to the account that was written about 3,500 years ago in the book of Genesis. The truth is that God always had a plan for the redemption of mankind from sin. Therefore, in spite of the sin of

Adam and Eve and subsequently all their descendants (including us) God revealed his plan first to Abraham.

“I will make you into a great nation. And I will bless you...and all peoples on Earth will be blessed through you.” Genesis 12:2-3

We can testify that God has kept every word of his promise, first by raising the nation of Israel from Abraham’s descendants; namely through Isaac, then Jacob then Jacob’s 12 sons who eventually formed the nation of Israel. You will notice that in raising Israel God displayed his amazing grace and sovereignty. Isaac’s sons (Esau and Jacob) were still in Rebekah’s womb yet

“...before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad – in order that God’s purpose in election might stand not by works but by him who calls – she was told, “The older will serve the younger” Romans 9:11-12

It is through the descendants of the younger twin Jacob that the nation of Israel was born, not because he deserved it, but simply because God wanted it to be so. It is Jacob who God renamed “Israel” (Genesis 32:28) There were many twists and turns in the story of Jacob’s descendants and most of the time they did mess up –but God’s plan prevailed regardless. After they became a nation, they sinned numerous times and finally they were punished with exile in Babylon. Yet God continued to make his plan and purpose clear. About 200 years before Israel was banished to exile Isaiah prophesied their return. God promised to

“...bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself”

And that is not all. God never lost sight of his promise to Abraham to bless the whole earth. He went on to say

“I will also make you a light for the Gentiles. That my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth” - Isaiah 49:5-6

The Bible could not be clearer. God chose Abraham's descendants by grace, and he included us in the plan also by grace. "All peoples on Earth" include us folks. You and I are the Gentiles God was referring to in Isaiah 49. God had us in mind from the beginning, and from the beginning God had a plan. In Part 2 tomorrow we will zero in on the culmination of God's redeeming plan through Jesus' death for us on the cross.

CALL TO ACTION:

Spend some time today in reflection on the marvel of God's redeeming plan. Thank Him specifically for your redemption that was part of his plan from the very beginning. Share your reflections with a friend.

FURTHER READING: Acts 13: 47, Romans 3:22

GOD'S REDEEMING PLAN (PART 2)

“Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on The sides and tops of the door frames of the houses...” “When the Lord goes through the land... he will see the Blood and will Passover that doorway and he will not permit The destroyer to enter your houses...” - Exodus 12:7,23

Welcome to Part2 of 'God's Redeeming Plan'. We promised to look today, into Jesus' death on the cross for us, but in order to comprehend Jesus' sacrifice we must first understand how sin affects our relationship with God. Sin has consequences on multiple levels. On one level sin hardens our hearts and destroys our souls systematically over time. On another level, in most cases our sin also affects the people around us and erodes our relationships. Yet beyond this and without exception every sin we commit – whether publicly or secretly or even unintentionally – are all sins against God because He is holy. The offense of our sin immediately creates a debt that we can never fully repay.

The young man Joseph understood the complex effect of sin when he refused to sleep with his Master Potiphar's wife. Joseph knew that such an immoral act would destroy his own soul, as well as his relationship with his master and his relationship with God (Genesis 39:8-9). Such are the consequences of sin. Nevertheless, God is aware of our sinful nature and in His mercy and divine wisdom, provides atonement and grace to close the gap between us and Him which our sin causes. At the pinnacle of his plan to redeem mankind from sin is Jesus' ultimate sacrifice for our sins on the cross. Yet in the Old Testament even before Jesus came, God instituted sacrifices that served as temporary measures to mitigate the consequences of sin. Let us see how these foreshadow Jesus' perfect and final sacrifice. We will briefly consider two examples, namely the first Passover and the Day of Atonement.

We recall that although the descendants of Joseph and his brothers became numerous, they were subjected to slavery in Egypt for 430 years, until the time came for their deliverance (Exodus 12:40) God sent plague after plague to destroy Egypt so that Pharaoh would let the Israelites go. Yet Pharaoh's heart remained obstinate until God wiped out all of Egypt's first-born males. The same night every Israelite home was spared because each household was instructed to slaughter a spotless lamb.

Just as Israel's redemption was purchased through the blood of the lamb, so our redemption is also purchased through Jesus' sinless blood. Yet the sacrificial lamb was powerless to remove sin for all time. Therefore, while Israel was still in the wilderness, God instituted the Day of Atonement when the sins of Israel were "carried away" on the "scape goat" once a year.

"The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place..."
Leviticus 16:22

Just as the goat carried away Israel's sin, so Jesus carries away all our sins. Yet the blood of goats can never permanently atone for sin, therefore the sacrifice had to be made annually. By contrast however, Jesus' sacrifice was superior and was made once for all.

"For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy" - Hebrews 10:14

I consider it amazing that God patiently planned our salvation before we came to be. God's ultimate redeeming plan is Jesus. Let the glory and mystery of salvation through Jesus' wash over you today. How will you live in appreciation of this great salvation?

ACTION:

Thank Jesus for his great salvation, pray, sing and journal your thanks. Share the story of how you met Jesus, with a friend today.

FURTHER READING: Deuteronomy 7:9, Matthew 26:28, John 14:6, Romans 3:25-26, Galatians 1:3-4

A DAY OF REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

Questions for reflection from Chapter One

- 1) What resonated with me the most from this chapter?
- 2) What names best describe God for me? (Rev 1:12-18)
- 3) If someone asks why I have chosen to serve Yahweh and no other, what would be my response? (Isaiah 40:25, John 14:6)
- 4) What aspects of God's greatness and goodness inspire me most? (Isaiah 40:28)
What aspects do I sometimes find difficult to accept or believe? (Hab 1:13)
- 5) Ponder on your redemption journey. (1 Tim 1:13) Ask yourself:
"Where did God start from with me?" "What did He take me through?" "Where am I now?" "What do I appreciate afresh from remembering all this?"
- 6) What am I willing to fight for in my walk with GOD this year? (Eph 6:11)

LET US PREPARE FOR CHAPTER 2: "IN GOD WE KNOW WHO WE ARE" BY READING 1 JOHN 3:1

Or visit WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and Tiktok to view the introductory videos



A scroll with a central white oval containing text. The scroll is unrolled, showing a dark grey surface with a white oval in the center. The scroll is held by two black handles at the top and bottom. The background is a light, textured surface.

A PRAYER

Your love gives me confidence, your justice gives me hope, and Your faithfulness keeps me steady. Let Your Spirit work in me so that my life reflects your goodness to others. Teach me to love as you love, to act justly as you do, and to remain faithful in all things. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Chapter 2

IN GOD, WE KNOW WHO WE ARE

We are God's image bearers

We are Chosen

We are Forgiven

We are Children of the Father

We are Light and Salt

We are the Aroma of Christ

We are God's Temple

We are a Royal Priesthood

We are Saved and being Saved

WE ARE GOD'S IMAGE BEARERS

Scripture Reading: Gen 1:26-27

So, God created mankind in His own image...

Today we begin a new chapter focusing on who we are by God's creative and redemptive design. What is our identity? Who were we made and called to be?

Let us go back to God's initial vision in creating us as stated in Genesis 1.

*Then God said, "Let Us **make man in Our image, according to Our likeness**; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man **in His own image, in the image of God** He created him; **male and female He created them.***

Of all the created beings, God chose us, humankind, to resemble Him in His highest qualities. Just as DNA carries the genetic code of a person's identity, we carry the spiritual DNA of God, reflecting His character and nature. What a privilege!

This concept of bearing God's image is also known as the "Imago Dei." It means that every human being has God-given worth and dignity, not based on their abilities, but on the simple fact that God has created them to share in His identity and to carry His image.

The fact that we are God's image bearers distinguishes us from the rest of God's creation, giving us a special role and capacity to relate with God our Creator in a unique way. It defines who we are and what God is calling us to. An African proverb says, "The prince who knows he is heir to his father's throne tomorrow will not hang out today with drunkards who have no such calling." That is why throughout Scripture,

the inspired writers constantly referred to this aspect of who we are before directing us on how we are to live.

The story of God with humanity began in Genesis 1 at creation, not Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve sinned against God.² When we focus mostly on the latter, it produces an unhealthy emphasis on fixing the problem of sin. The Christian life becomes overly focused on salvation from our sinful nature. But when the story begins in Genesis 1, we can see that God made us inherently good rather than evil and that changes the way we view ourselves.

Others begin the story in Genesis 12 when God singled out Abraham and gave him an assignment. This can lead to a view of Christianity where we feel more special in the sight of God than other people and we spend all our energies on the assignment of redeeming the rest of mankind. We can become self-righteous or end up neglecting the growth of our own identity in God.

But beginning the story in Genesis 1 takes care of both the sin problem and the special calling bestowed on us. We are human beings, not human “doings”. What we do must flow first of all from who we are.

CONCLUSION

How can knowing you are created in God's image impact your self-worth and identity? In what ways can you reflect God's character in your daily life, such as showing kindness and compassion to people, reflecting God's justice in your interactions with others or creatively serving others in your community?

CALL TO ACTION

Reflect on your identity as God's image bearer.

Identify one area of your life to intentionally live out God's design as one who bears His image.

Share your insights with others.

FURTHER READING: Ephesians 4:22-24

² Teaching series by Michael Burns, USA.

WE ARE CHOSEN

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:4, John 15:16

For he chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight...

Have you ever been chosen to represent a group or organisation in an event, to receive an award because you stood out among your peers, or to take on an important responsibility? How did you feel? I remember one year while in secondary school when I was selected as the best student in my set. I must say, I was walking on air! This feeling of self-satisfaction and pride comes when our efforts are acknowledged and celebrated. How much more when God chooses us, not because of how well we've performed or how good we are, but because of how good *He* is.

We are a chosen people, and God didn't choose us just for the sake of it. He chose us to be holy and blameless in his sight. Throughout the Bible, God shows us how intentional he is about us. **Ephesians 1:4** says we were chosen by him "before the creation of the world". Try to grasp the intentionality behind this. Before God created the stars and galaxies we marvel at, he chose us. He was already thinking and planning the best for us. Knowing all the sin we would commit, all the times we would choose our flesh over him, God still called us into holiness and blamelessness. He sent Christ to take the consequences of our sins so that we can spend eternity with him. He wants us to be with him forever. That is amazing!

What is our response to being chosen by God?

Do we take it for granted, because we know God loves us so much? Are we like the believers Paul addressed in **Romans 6:1** when he said ***"Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?"***

Or does knowing that he chose us and was making plans for us to have our best life -before he even made us- move something deep within us? Does it just make us want to give our all to him?

We should strive to live our lives as a people chosen by God. We should have the confidence that comes from being God-dependent. As His people, we should not give in to identity crisis or accepting any lies the world tells us. We should be willing to choose God, as he has chosen us. And we should be willing to live according to his plan for us because we know that he knows what is best.

CONCLUSION

We have been chosen to be holy and blameless in God. Let our lives reflect true holiness, blamelessness and an identity rooted in being chosen by God. Let us be disciplined, purposeful and intentional about choosing God just as he has chosen us. May our hearts align with God's love and purpose for us.

CALL TO ACTION

Choose one friend that you will share today's devotional with.

FURTHER READING

Psalm 139:13-16, Isaiah 41: 8-10

WE ARE FORGIVEN

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:7

In Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins...

If you have ever been discharged from a debt you owed or released from a punishment you were meant to face, then you can grasp the blessedness of being forgiven, as we learn in today's devotional.

The most common New Testament Greek word for forgiveness is **aphesis** (ἄφεσις), which means "to release," "to let go," or "to send away."

The primary Hebrew word is **nasa** (נָסָא), which means "to lift up" or "to carry away."

Together, they describe forgiveness as letting a person off the moral or spiritual debt incurred because of sin.

Forgiveness is God's merciful action of freeing us from sin's penalty and debt through the atoning work of Jesus Christ and restoring us to a relationship with Him. Forgiveness is also the Spirit-empowered decision on our part to free others from personal offenses, reflecting God's grace to a broken world.

Let us consider some truths to help us deepen our conviction about God's great gift of forgiveness.

Firstly, forgiveness is grounded in the blood of Christ. (Heb 9:22) It is not cheap—it came at the cost of Jesus' life. The justice of God required the shedding of blood and Christ's death on the cross met that requirement. There can be no forgiveness without the shedding of blood; and there can be no relationship with God without forgiveness.

Secondly, God's forgiveness is complete and final. (Heb 10:17) When Christ said, "It is finished" (John 19:30), He was indicating that the debt of sin was paid in full. We are no longer condemned. God does not

forgive partially—He forgives completely. Thirdly, nothing we do can earn forgiveness—it is God's gift. (Eph 2:8-9) Grace precedes repentance. It is God's goodness that leads us to repent and turn to Him.

Forgiveness is reconciliation. We have peace with God. (Rom 5:1) Sin breaks fellowship with God and with others, but forgiveness restores relationships. The atonement of Christ reconciles a holy God with sinful humanity.

Also, forgiveness is ongoing in our walk with God. (1 John 1:9) We were justified once-and-for-all when we were saved. But God continues to forgive and purify us as we confess our sins daily. Forgiveness is both a past fact and a present grace.

Finally, God's forgiveness empowers us to forgive others. (Col. 3:13) Forgiven people forgive people.

What does this mean for us? It means stop striving for that which has been freely given to you. Let your heart rest in the cross. Refuse to live in guilt and shame because guilt binds you to your past, while grace frees you to walk into your destiny. Celebrate your relationship with your Father and live like one who has been fully accepted in Christ.

On the other hand, do you carry guilt and fear because you feel unsure of where you stand with God when it comes to the forgiveness of your sins? Jesus bids you "Come," (Matt 11:28) and follow His loving instruction in John 3:3-5 and Acts 2:38.

CONCLUSION

You are not who you used to be—you are who Christ says you are: forgiven, redeemed, and loved. Therefore, walk in the light of forgiveness and let grace shape your life every day.

CALL TO ACTION

Forgive anyone in need of your forgiveness today, for when you forgive, you demonstrate the character of God and unlock healing in relationships. Confess easily, repent sincerely, and trust fully in His mercy each day. Memorize Matt 6:14-15

FURTHER READING Colossians 1:13-14

WE ARE CHILDREN OF THE FATHER

Scripture Reading: 1 John 3:1-3 John 1:9-13

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God...

A displeased client angrily asked a service provider, "Do you know who I am?"

In response, the service provider calmly called a nearby security operative and said, "Can you kindly assist this gentleman? It seems he does not know who he is."

This is a funny but serious reminder that we cannot look to the world to define our identity for us. Sadly, many Christians do not know who they are in Christ.

When asked, "Who are you?" what answers come to mind?

For me, I must admit that my first answers have to do with my earthly/worldly achievements. If we have acquired a few, we feel proud. If we are not too impressed with what we have achieved, we feel inadequate. This is indeed the way of the world. But for the child of God, it need not be so. As today's passage tells us, this world is not a spiritual environment and therefore does not place a premium on who God's children are. However, in the light of eternity, we need to ask, who really is who?

From the account of creation, we know that God is the owner of all things. However, we all lost the right to be called his children because of sin. (Romans 3:23)

About 2000 years ago, the only human being who had access to God and had every right to be called God's child was Jesus Christ and he came to fix the broken relationship between God and man. Many take pride in their earthly inheritance and even misbehave on account of it. They brag about who their parents are. However, at death, they leave

it all behind. As God's children, our wealth and inheritance outlive the time we spend on earth. We are God's children both in time and eternity.

How does it feel to know that your Father is the creator of the heavens and the earth?

How does it feel to know that he has prepared an eternal inheritance for his own children?

How does this help us deal with lack or scarcity while living on earth?

If earthly fathers know how to give good things to their children, how much more our Heavenly Father?

How should this impact how we live daily?

For me, I have found peace of mind in knowing that if my Heavenly Father can create and manage the whole universe, my tiny, yet significant life can never be too much for him to handle. I have jettisoned fear and worries in my life just the same way Aliko Dangote's child or Elon Musk's child will not break a sweat over their daily needs being met.

Our Father is able to do way more for us than we can ever think of or imagine.

CONCLUSION

Those of us who have put our faith in Christ today are indeed God's children. There is no distinction between Jesus and us. We have as much access to God as he does. Indeed, we have become heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. (Romans 8:15-17).

CALL TO ACTION

So, are you a child of God? If yes, can people tell by how you live? Decide on one thing that will change in your life because of this identity. If not, what are you waiting for? Decide to seek Him. Only those who are born of God have access to true wealth and an eternal inheritance.

FURTHER READINGS: 1 Peter 1:14-16, Galatians 4:6-7, Romans 8:14-17

WE ARE SALT AND LIGHT

Scripture Reading: Matthew 5:13-16

You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

In our world today, countless things are competing for our attention. From the moment you woke up, your devices, your work, and the general noise of life have been seeking to influence your thoughts and actions. It's easy to feel pulled in every direction.

But in the midst of this chaos, God speaks a simple, powerful truth over you. He has not merely called you to *be influenced*; He has created you to *be His influencer*.

This isn't about gaining social media followers or building a personal brand. It is about embracing the identity Jesus secured for you and I. When the world asks, "Who are you?" we can answer with confidence rooted in God's Word. Let us reflect on two profound metaphors He uses to describe how we are to live out our divine purpose.

Jesus makes a declaration, "You are the *salt* of the earth." Not "you can be" or "you will be." You have already been made so. He is speaking directly to you.

When we think of salt, we think of flavor, taste, and preservation. But salt does more than that. It enhances the hidden goodness in whatever it touches, causing restoration and healing. This is our first calling as God's influencers. When you interact with others, your presence is meant to draw out the best in them. God, the Master Chef, places you strategically to:

Enhance. Like speaking a word of encouragement that helps someone else see their own value.

Preserve. Like upholding integrity in business or in academics, preventing the decay of compromise.

Bring healing. Like offering a listening ear to someone, helping to restore their hope.

Jesus also warns us; salt can lose its saltiness. In those days, salt wasn't always the pure, refined product we have today. It could be mixed with tasteless minerals. If this impure salt was left on damp ground or exposed to rain or sun, the true sodium chloride—the part that made it salty—would dissolve and wash away, leaving behind a worthless powder. Its appearance was deceptive; it looked like salt but had lost its purpose.

In the same way, our spiritual effectiveness can be “washed away” if we allow worldly values to dilute our faith. *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.* (Rom 12:2) We may still look like a “Christian,” but we lose our impact. You must preserve your God-given saltiness by staying grounded in God's truth, so you can continue to be the positive influencer He has called you to be.

Next, Jesus declares: “You are the light of the world.”

Notice the difference between salt and light. Salt works through direct contact. Light, however, has an impact from a distance. This reveals the second dimension of our influence.

Our lives as believers should be so distinct that people can see the difference from afar. They should observe how we handle pressure, express love, and live with integrity, and conclude, “There is something different about that person.” While your relationship with God is deeply personal, it was never meant to be entirely private. Jesus makes it clear; *Let your light shine...that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.* He made you a light so that others would see Him.

Sometimes we make mistakes. We sin or we fall short. In those moments, the enemy plays a highlight reel of our failures, screaming

that we are disqualified. That is a lie. If you feel you've lost your taste or your shine, God is ready to restore you so you can once again speak for Him, live for Him, and stand for Him.

CONCLUSION

We are called to influence others for Christ. God's plan for expanding His kingdom involves His children living such compelling lives that others take notice and think, "I want what this person has."

CALL TO ACTION

As salt, how can you bring out the God-given value in someone else this week?

Ask God to help you restore your lost "saltiness."

As light, think of one way your public life at work, school, in your community, or online— can shine and point people to God.

FURTHER READING: Colossians 4:6, Philippians 2:14-15, Ephesians 2:10, 1 Peter 2:9

WE ARE THE AROMA OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor 2:12-17

For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ...

If you are like me, then you love the aroma of good food. It's inviting, isn't it? We usually can't wait to be told "Come and eat." In the same way, you will agree that we are put off by a bad smell. Following what we learned yesterday about being salt and light, today we will look at another important aspect of our spiritual identity, which is, "How do others perceive us?"

In today's reading, Apostle Paul was writing to the disciples in Corinth. In these first two chapters, he was emphasizing on the character of sincerity and integrity as a mark of Christ's followers. Christ Himself set this example as Paul described when he wrote,

For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us...was not "Yes" and "No" (1:19) Jesus was a man of integrity. Even His enemies could testify to this. (Matt 22:15-16) Many people loved Jesus for who He was and what He stood for. And for the very same reasons, He had many enemies as well. But one thing was for sure; whether He was liked or not, Jesus' character was respected by all. This should be our identity as well.

When we come to Christ and His Spirit dwells in us, there is always a visible difference. We may not even be aware of it, but others do notice. This is the new creation bestowed on us. If we are not careful however, we can start to forget who we are. When this happens, we will find ourselves slipping back into our old ways of life, or envying and imitating the lives of those around us. However, we are called to be different. Wherever we go and whoever we interact with, we are meant to spread the aroma of Jesus.

Some people will love us because they perceive Jesus' kindness, compassion, sincerity and integrity when we are around them. To them, we are the fragrance of life. A sister told me how, though she is not the first child in her family nor the most educated, her relatives always look to her when important decisions are to be made. According to them, she speaks with "wisdom from God." On the other hand, some people will surely dislike us because our aura reminds them of Jesus' judgement and condemnation of sin. To these, we are the stench of death. A brother once shared how a former work colleague told him he was a threat to them because he would always return unused office funds while everyone else kept such money for themselves. It is common today to see being a Christian in terms of how "well" a person can pray or how much God is "blessing" them. But that is not God's measure. Instead, the Lord calls us to be men and women who are sincere in words and actions. We may ask "Who is equal to such a task?" (vs 16b) No one is. Only through the power of God can we become His pleasing aroma.

CONCLUSION

We are called to spread the fragrance of Christ everywhere we go. What do people know you for? Can they vouch for your character even if they don't agree with your values?

CALL TO ACTION

Honestly assess your personal integrity at work, school, in business etc. Confess any areas where you have not lived up to God's expectations. Ask a friend to hold you accountable for making changes.

FURTHER READING: 1 John 3:2-3

WE ARE GOD'S TEMPLE

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19

Do you not know that you yourselves are God's temple...

Have you ever paused to really think about what it means that *you* are God's temple? We might have heard this so often in church that it starts to sound redundant. But Paul was making a radical statement when he wrote the words: *"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?"*

Back then, the temple was the most sacred place on earth. It was regarded as the meeting point between heaven and humanity. It was where God's presence lived. People traveled from far and wide to worship, sacrifice, and experience His glory there. Yet, here is Paul, telling the Christians of that time that they didn't need to look for that temple anymore. *They* were the temple. Imagine how shocking that must have sounded to his audience.

If you think about it, it's both humbling and overwhelming. The same Spirit that hovered over the waters in Genesis, the same presence that filled Solomon's temple with smoke and glory, now lives in you. He doesn't just visit occasionally or drop by in church on Sundays. He dwells in you!

That means your life isn't ordinary. It can't be. You carry God's divinity within you. Every thought, word, and action becomes a sacred space because God's Spirit is present in you. That's why Paul didn't stop at *"Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit."* He also added, *"...who is in you, whom you have received from God."* He was reminding believers that their bodies — not just their spirits — matter to God. What we do with our body, how we treat it, and even how we think about ourselves should reflect that sacred reality.

No one likes to live in a dirty, chaotic, uncomfortable home, do they? That's why when your room or apartment gets messy, you feel uneasy until you clean it up and make it feel like a place you can call home again. Why? Because you know that where you live affects how you live. Now God says, "*You are where I live.*" How would that make you think about your life: your body, your mind, your habits, your choices? If you wouldn't tolerate dirt or chaos in your physical home, why let things like bitterness, gossip, dishonesty or impurity clutter the space where God dwells?

Making this shift doesn't require perfection; only the consistent awareness that God is in you. It will make you treat yourself differently — with more care, more reverence, and more intentionality. You begin to think twice before you speak or react, not because someone is watching, but because Someone *lives* there.

We also need to see others differently, because if we are all the temple of God, then every person you meet carries something holy. That friend, that colleague, even the person who annoys you; God has placed His Spirit within them. How much kinder, more patient or respectful would we become if we always remembered that?

CONCLUSION

Finally, brothers and sisters, as God's temple, we must guard what enters it. Just like the physical temple in Jerusalem wasn't meant to be defiled, our hearts and lives should be kept pure, out of love and reverence. We should keep the temple holy because we love the One who lives there.

CALL TO ACTION

Let us pray: "Lord, thank You for choosing to dwell in me. Help me to live aware of Your presence. Let my life, my thoughts, my body, my words all be a worthy home for You."

FURTHER READING: 2 Cor 6:16, Rev 21:22

WE ARE A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

Scripture Reading: Ex 19:4-6, 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10

Though the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests...

From time immemorial, priests were special people who mediated between men and their God or gods. They offered sacrifices on behalf of the people, and they were intercessors who prayed for the people. When people wanted to know God's will on a particular issue, they went to enquire from the priest. In the Old Testament, God appointed Aaron and his descendants from the tribe of Levi to serve Him in this capacity. (Num 3:10) It was a high calling, and no other unauthorized person or tribe was allowed to carry out this sacred duty.

But God has always had a bigger and more glorious plan in mind. This is what we see in today's first passage in Ex 19. God's desire was that Israel as an entire nation would be His priests, not just the family of Aaron or the tribe of Levi.

...you will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation

God wanted to showcase His righteousness and holiness to the world through the nation of Israel so that people everywhere would come to know Him and revere Him through them.

But that's not all. God was going somewhere. He has something even bigger on His heart.

Jesus has come as our Great High Priest. He made the ultimate sacrifice by offering His own life as a ransom for all sins and for all time. We no longer need the old order of priests to make blood sacrifices on men's behalf. (Heb 9:11-14) Jesus is now the one Mediator between God and man. (1 Tim 2:5) We do not need to go through any "special" person to get to God.

Our reading from 1 Peter 2 tells us that Jesus has chosen us as His people. Now, from every tribe and nationality, not just Israel, we have become that holy nation and that royal priesthood.

And what is our priestly duty? To offer sacrifices of praise and good works, (Heb 13:15-16) To declare God's praises to the world (1 Pet 2:9) to administer God's grace to others in its various forms (1 Pet 4:10) and to serve our God and Father. (Rev 1:5-6)

CONCLUSION

Jesus, our Great High Priest has sacrificed once and for all on our behalf and He lives forever to intercede for us. Do you see God's glorious vision and your place in it as part of this continuing royal priesthood? Brother and Sister in Christ, no matter who you are, you are a minister for God. As priests we are anointed to bring God to people and bring people to God. What an honour and privilege!

CALL TO ACTION

In your journal, write down what being a priest of God means to you. Ask God to show you the specific ways He wants you to minister for Him this year.

FURTHER READING: Isaiah 2:1-5, Zechariah 8:23, Rev 5:10

WE ARE SAVED AND BEING SAVED

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor 1:18, 15:1-2, 2 Pet 1:5-11

By this gospel you are saved...

Therefore... make every effort to confirm your calling and election.

The day my sins were washed away in baptism was one of the happiest days of my life. I told myself I was ready to die and go to heaven to meet my Savior right away. After all, I was saved! But the Good Lord had other plans for me, as He has for most of us His ransomed children. So here we are. Though we are saved, we must still strive to work out our salvation each day. (Phil 2:12) Why and how do we do that?

In the last few days, we have learned many things about who we are in God. Even before creation, we were chosen. At creation we were made in the very image of God. Though sin caused us to fall, Jesus' finished work on the cross brought redemption. In Christ we are forgiven as God's beloved children and in this new identity, we live as God's light and salt in the world, His aroma, His dwelling place and His royal priesthood. God has done all this for us. May His Name be praised!

As today's reading in 1 Cor 15 says, we were saved and saved completely through faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is what is referred to as "our justification" (Rom 3:30). After we are justified through faith, we must be made holy by the ongoing work of God's Spirit. This is what is called "sanctification" (1 Cor 6:11) or "being saved" because it is a lifelong partnership between us and the Holy Spirit. As we submit to Him, He transforms us to make us like Jesus.

How does this apply to us as followers of Christ?

Firstly, we must be confident in our salvation. The grace of God has saved us. Jesus' sacrifice has rescued us. As someone described it, we have no "outstanding balance" with the dominion of darkness. When

we are assured and grateful for this assurance, we can joyfully help others to find salvation as well.

Secondly, we cannot be complacent in our salvation simply because we have qualified for heaven. The runner cannot be complacent on the track simply because he or she has qualified for the finals. The motivation of the cross, the gift of discipling, mentoring, and the spiritual disciplines we will learn about next are some of the tools that the Holy Spirit gives us to help us add to our faith so that we will not be ineffective and unproductive in our salvation. Then when it is all said and done, “we will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.”

CONCLUSION

Brothers and Sisters, let us remember that we have crossed from darkness to light! Having been justified, it is God’s will that we should be sanctified. We are saved but the journey of salvation continues. Are you still making every effort to add on to your faith? Are you still wholeheartedly working out your salvation?

CALL TO ACTION

From 2 Pet 1:5-7, pick out one or two virtues that you personally want to grow in. Ask for the Holy Spirits help and share this with your discipleship partner.

FURTHER READING: Heb 12:1

A DAY OF REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

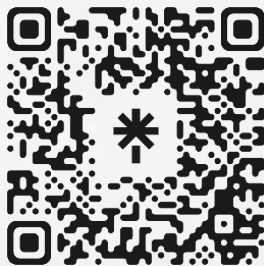
Questions for reflection from Chapter 2

1. What resonated with me the most from this chapter?
2. Think about this truth: "I bear God's image. I am chosen as His beloved child. I am saved and forgiven." (Isiah 43:1,6-7)
How does this make me feel?
What should be different in me as a result of who God says I am?
3. God calls me His light and salt. His Temple, His holy Priest and the aroma of Christ. Do I see myself this way? (Rev 1:5-6)
Why? Why not?

LET US PREPARE FOR CHAPTER 3:

"WHAT WE ARE IS WHAT WE DO" BY READING JOHN 13:17

Or visit WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and Tiktok to view the introductory videos



A grayscale image of a scroll with a central oval cutout. The scroll is unrolled, showing a dark, textured surface. The oval cutout is white and contains text. The scroll is held by two black wooden handles at the top and bottom. The background is a light, textured surface.

Isaiah 43:1

But now, this is what the LORD says— he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

Chapter 3

WHAT WE ARE IS WHAT WE DO

- Loving God with Strength
- Spiritual Disciplines - Prayer and Fasting
- Spiritual Disciplines - Study and Meditation
- Spiritual Disciplines - Confession
- Spiritual Disciplines - Simplicity and Generosity
- Spiritual Disciplines - Telling
- Spiritual Disciplines - Celebration and Worship
- Motives – Why do we do what we do
- Habits and Customs – The impact of consistency

LOVING GOD WITH OUR STRENGTH

Scripture Reading: Mark 12:29-30, Joshua 14:6-14

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength

Have you ever asked yourself why God gave us physical bodies? They are far more than flesh and bones; they are vessels through which we live, serve, and express our love for Him. When Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength,” He reminded us that love for God is not just about emotions or thoughts—it includes our actions and what we do with our physical energy.

In Joshua 14:6–14 Caleb stands as a living example of this truth. At eighty-five, he told Joshua, “I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out.” Those are remarkable words from an elderly man who had endured decades of wilderness wandering. Yet his strength wasn’t only physical—it came from a heart that had remained devoted to God through every season. Caleb didn’t waste his energy on self-pity or comfort; instead, he channeled it into claiming God’s promise. That is what it means to love God with our strength: to use whatever energy we have for His glory.

In our younger years, this might look like serving tirelessly in the church, volunteering for missions, or simply using our energy to make a difference for God’s kingdom. As we grow older, it might show in persistence, endurance, mentoring others, and showing up faithfully even when the body grows weaker. Paul expressed a similar idea in 1 Corinthians 15:10 when he said, “I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.” His love for God energized his efforts. He wasn’t driven by pride or competition but by grace. Grace did not make Paul lazy—it made him active.

Loving God with our strength means allowing His grace to fuel our labour. Whether it's singing in the choir, sweeping the church floor, teaching, preaching, or helping those in need, every act done for God's glory becomes worship.

And this doesn't stop at church doors. Loving God with our strength extends to everyday life—how we treat our families, the effort we put into our work, how we resist sin, and how we use our time and bodies. When we lift a hand to help a neighbour, when we push through tiredness to pray or serve, when we work diligently, we are saying to God, "I love You with my strength." Every bit of energy spent for Him is never wasted. As one might say, "When you spend your strength on God's work, you will never run out of God's strength".

CONCLUSION

Loving God with our strength is not a suggestion; it is part of the greatest commandment. Our bodies are not given for indulgence or idleness but for active devotion. True strength is not measured by muscles or vigour but by how much of it we give back to God. Whatever our stage in life, God calls us to dedicate our abilities to His service.

CALL TO ACTION

Ask yourself, "How much of my energy am I using for God?" Decide on one thing you will do physically this week to honour the Lord. A Prayer - "Lord, help me to love You not only with my heart and mind but also with all my strength. May my energy, time, and physical abilities bring You glory. Amen."

FURTHER READING: Col 1:29 Eccl 10:17, 12:1

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES: PRAYER AND FASTING

Scripture Reading:

Is this not the kind of fast I have chosen... to share your food with the hungry? - Isaiah 58:6-9

Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. - Luke 5:16

Over the next few days, we will be learning about the value of spiritual disciplines. What are they? They are simply practices that grow us into Christlikeness as we do them consistently. Today we will meditate on the ancient and very common discipline of prayer and fasting.

In Genesis 4:26 we see the first mention of people calling on God in prayer. In Ex 34:28 we see the first fast of Moses for 40 days as he received the commandments. Jesus also fasted in the same way at the beginning of His ministry.

Prayer is simply sincere and focused communication with God. In His presence we can pour our hearts to Him and listen for His guidance or instruction. Fasting is a time of denying ourselves of food, water or other bodily pleasures in order to draw closer to God.

You can pray without fasting, but you cannot fast effectively without praying. Jesus told us that some situations can only change through prayer and fasting. (Mk 9:28-29).

Like the disciples in Lk 11:1, most of us have some idea of prayer depending on our religious upbringing. But we must be willing to learn how to pray and what to pray for as Jesus taught. For example, as a young Christian I learned from mature disciples how to pray with the scriptures. I also learned that according to scripture, I am not called to pray for the death of enemies, but rather for their repentance. (Matt 5:44, Lk 6:27-28).

Our prayers should not just be a shopping list of requests. It should comprise **A**-Adoration; **C**-Confession; **T**-Thanksgiving as well as **S**-Supplication (**A.C.T.S**)

Jesus had some regular places and times where he often went to pray and be alone with God. (Matt 14:23-24, Mk 1:35, Lk 5:16) It is the same for fasting. We can imitate the Lord's habit. Some believers wake up to pray at a regular hour when there are less distractions. I know others who have a regular day of the week/month devoted to prayer and fasting. A quiet room or your balcony or backyard can become your sanctuary. Find what helps you connect with God.

When we pray and fast, it is not just what we say but who we are that God looks at. If we harbor unforgiveness, God will not answer us. (Matt 18:35) In Isaiah 58, God tells us that our fasting should produce acts of kindness and not just an outward show of "humility." I remember a sister who inspired me with her fasting. She would always package her meal for that day and give it to the poor instead.

Pray with boldness, courage and without doubts. (Mark 11:23-24). Be self-controlled, alert, watchful and thankful. Pray continually. (1 Thess 5:16-18, 1 Pet 4:7). Remember to pray for your church and nation, for leadership, missions, the sick and the needy.

CONCLUSION

May our prayers and fasts draw us closer to God and may He answer all our prayers this year and beyond. Amen.

CALL TO ACTION

Think of two ways that you want to grow in these two disciplines this year. Choose a prayer partner(s) that you can walk with.

Develop a prayer list and ask others for their prayer needs.

Decide to join any group prayers or fasts being organized in your ministry.

FURTHER READING: 2 Chron 6:19, Acts 4:23-31, Luke 2:36-3

THE DISCIPLINE OF STUDY AND MEDITATION

Scripture Reading: Joshua 1:8-9

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night...

Today we will focus on another important discipline which is studying and meditating on God's word.

From today's passage, we read about Joshua's enormous assignment. Leading an entire nation into the Promised Land after Moses was no small task. Yet, in giving him this daunting responsibility, God handed him one simple but powerful instruction: "Keep My Word close, meditate on it constantly, and obey it." That, God promised, would be the secret to success, courage, and lasting strength.

This principle still holds true for us today. God's Word remains the anchor for anyone seeking direction, wisdom, and peace. I remember a time when life felt overwhelming— there were decisions to be made, responsibilities piling up, and fears quietly whispering in my heart. I turned to people for advice and leaned heavily on my own reasoning, but the more I did, the less peace I found.

One quiet morning, during my devotional, I paused long enough to truly meditate on the passage I had read. In that stillness, it became clear that God wasn't asking me to solve everything alone. He was calling me to anchor my heart in His Word—to study it, meditate on it, and let it shape my thinking and choices. That realization changed everything. True strength and courage don't come from our inner resolve; they come from allowing God's Word to dwell richly within us.

Studying Scripture means taking it seriously, sitting with it, reflecting, journaling, and letting it teach us. Meditation then takes the Word deeper—it moves truth from the head into the heart. When we meditate, the Word becomes part of us. Like a tree planted by streams of water, we become nourished, stable and fruitful.

When we neglect Scripture and fill our minds only with the noise of the world, we grow spiritually weak, anxious, and easily shaken. God's Word is our lifeline. We don't need long hours or theological training to begin; what matters most is consistency. Just a few honest minutes each day, a verse reflected upon, a truth carried in the heart, and a quiet willingness to listen—can transform our entire outlook. Over time, His Word strengthens our courage, shapes our thinking, and anchors us in His presence.

CONCLUSION

The Bible is not just another book. It is life, light, and wisdom for our souls. To become people rooted in His Word, we must treat it as essential, not optional. Do you prioritize studying and meditating on God's Word each day? Is your strength flowing from His truth and His promises or from your own effort? What practical steps can you take to let Scripture dwell more deeply in your heart?

CALL TO ACTION

Make a commitment this year to begin each day in calmness, making room for God's voice before the noise of life begins. Carry a verse with you, repeating it until it sinks into your heart. Then act on what you read—show kindness, patience, and faith in small, daily moments. Surround yourself with Scripture and let it shape your thoughts, words, and choices.

ADDITIONAL READING: Psalm 1:1–3; Matthew 22:37; Psalm 143:5

THE DISCIPLINE OF CONFESSION

Scripture Reading: 1 John 1:8–9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

When I was younger, I often wondered why confession was necessary. I thought, “If God already knows everything, why should I still tell Him my sins?” Over time, I came to understand that confession is not about informing God—it’s about opening our hearts, admitting our guilt, and allowing truth to break through the walls we build inside.

Confession, in its simplest form, is acknowledging our wrongdoing; our actions, thoughts, and attitudes that fall short of God’s standards. As followers of Christ, we are called into a relationship with a God who is holy, spotless, and blameless. He calls us to be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:16). To become like Him, we must deal with the sin that stains our hearts. The first step in that process is confession—being truthful before God and taking responsibility for what we’ve done. God is not looking for eloquent excuses; He desires honesty from the depths of our being, not mere lip service.

When we confess our sins, something remarkable happens within us. The burden lifts, our conscience clears, and our intimacy with God is restored. Confession frees us from shame, fear, and the lies that sin whispers. As Psalm 32:2–3 says, there is joy and relief when we stop hiding and come clean before God. Forgiveness is not earned, it is given. Through confession, we make room for His cleansing and peace to flow into our hearts.

So, to whom should we confess? Scripture is clear that we first confess to God (1 John 1:9; Psalm 32:5; Psalm 51:2–4; Daniel 9:4–5). He is the One whose laws we’ve broken and whose grace we need. Yet,

the Bible also tells us to confess to one another (James 5:16). This may include those whom we've wronged or trusted spiritual companions who can help us heal, reconcile, and stay accountable. Over time, I have learnt that accountability strengthens this discipline—it helps us remain honest and overcome the many hindrances that try to silence confession.

But let's be honest, most of us don't find it easy to confess. Pride is one of the greatest barriers. Sometimes our position, age, or sense of spirituality make us feel too "big" to admit failure. Have you ever thought, "People look up to me; how can I confess?" Or perhaps you've struggled with fear of betrayal; you are worried that your confession might not remain confidential. For others, it's the love of sin itself that hinders confession. We minimize our wrongs by comparing them with others, saying, "At least mine isn't that bad." But before God, sin is sin, whether big or small. Proverbs 28:13 reminds us, "Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy."

CONCLUSION

Unconfessed sins slowly erode our joy, peace, and relationship with God. The good news is that confession restores. When we spend time in God's presence through prayer, worship, fellowship and reflection on His Word—we find the courage to be honest before Him. Confession is not a ritual of shame but a pathway to becoming whole again.

CALL TO ACTION

Ask yourself what hinders you most when it comes to the practice of this discipline. Surrender that obstacle to God in prayer. Have a time of confession and refreshing in your small group this week.

FURTHER READING: Psalm 28:13; Psalm 32:1–5; Luke 15:18–19; Psalm 38:17–18

THE DISCIPLINE OF SIMPLICITY AND GENEROSITY

Scripture Reading: Ecclesiastes 4:6; 5:15, Luke 12:13–21, 32–34

Everyone comes naked from their mother's womb, and as everyone comes, so they depart...

Simplicity is first a state of mind — one that is free from complexity and clutter. It reflects a heart that has learnt contentment, finding peace with little so that what is available can be shared freely with others. But why do we call simplicity a discipline?

As we often say, nothing good comes easy. Discipline requires training, sometimes even discomfort, to achieve something worthwhile. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, discipline is “training that corrects, molds or perfects the mental faculties or moral character.” Choosing to live simply is therefore a spiritual journey that shapes us into the likeness of Jesus, who embodied simplicity Himself.

Christ left the riches, splendor, and glory of heaven for the modest life of this earth, so that through His poverty we might become rich. (2 Cor 8:9) He deliberately chose to live simply an expression of divine generosity that poured blessings on us all.

In Luke 12, we read of Jesus' encounter with a man who wanted his share of an inheritance. Interestingly, the Lord's response was not about the fairness of the request but about the deeper desire driving it — the hunger for more. He then told a parable of a man on the path of luxury, materialism, and self-indulgence who had drifted away from simplicity and was no longer content with what already met his needs. Little did he know that he would enjoy nothing of what he had laid up for himself.

Living a simple life helps us focus on what truly matters — our calling, our priorities, and our relationship with God. When we embrace godliness with contentment, as Paul writes in 1 Timothy 6:6–10, we discover that it is truly “great gain.” Having food and clothing should be enough, he reminds us, for the craving to be rich often leads to needless pain and distraction. A simple and generous life also opens the door to peace and reduces the chaos that comes from endless striving. If one or two cars meet your family’s transportation needs, why buy a third? If a two- or three-bedroom home provides adequate space, why long for more?

Generosity is the natural fruit of a life being shaped into the image of Christ. We can give in many ways, with our money, time, attention, service, or even words of encouragement. The real question is: how are we, as followers of Christ, reflecting His generosity in our daily lives? How does it show in our homes, our workplaces and our neighborhoods?

CONCLUSION

Living generously is not something that happens by chance; we must deliberately make that choice just as Christ did. It does not depend on our wealth but on our willingness. Whether we have much or little, we can decide to live simply and give freely. This intentional way of life mirrors the heart of Jesus and keeps us rooted in what truly counts.

CALL TO ACTION

Take time this week to look around your home. Is there something you have in excess or an item you’ve not used in a long time? Give at least one of such things to someone in need. Let your simplicity open a door of generosity.

FURTHER READING: Eccl 4:6, 1 Tim 6:17–19; Acts 9:36–41; Acts 10:1–4

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE: TELLING

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 6:20–22, Mk 5:18-20

...when your son asks you, “What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws...” tell him: “We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt...”

The story of God has always been passed down through “telling.” Parents were instructed to recount to their children how God delivered Israel from Egypt. This act of telling was not only for the children’s faith but also for the parents themselves, reminding them of God’s mighty hand. To tell is to rehearse, and in rehearsing, we are transformed. Every time we recount God’s work, His truth takes deeper root in our own hearts.

Jesus continued this call in the Great Commission, saying in Matthew 28:18–20, Go and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Telling is at the very centre of disciple-making. When we share God’s story with others, we are not merely passing on information — we are proclaiming a reality that shapes us as much as those who hear it.

The story of the demon possessed man in Mark 5 illustrates this beautifully. After his healing, he was told by Jesus, “Go home... and tell how much the Lord has done for you.” His testimony was both a declaration to others and a confirmation of his own new identity.

Similarly, in John 4:7–30, the Samaritan woman encountered Jesus and ran to her town saying, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did.” In telling, her shame was transformed into bold witness. We also see in Acts 8:4 and 11:19–20 ordinary believers, scattered by persecution, sharing the good news wherever they went. Their hardship became a platform for testimony, and as they told the story, their own courage and faith deepened.

Even Paul saw telling as a discipline that shaped him. In 1 Corinthians 9:27, he describes how he disciplines his body so that, after preaching to others, he himself would not be disqualified. For Paul, sharing the gospel demanded integrity and self-control — it kept him accountable to live what he proclaimed.

So how does telling transform us? First, it reminds us of God's faithfulness. Every time we recount His story, we relive the reality of His grace. Second, it strengthens our faith; what we confess with our mouths reinforces what we believe in our hearts. Third, it keeps us humble and dependent, since we must embody the message we declare.

Finally, telling turns us outward. It pushes us beyond self-focus and connects us to God's mission in the world. When we share what God has done in our lives, we participate in His work of renewal and salvation, impacting those around us.

CONCLUSION

The story of God will continue through eternity, yet He has entrusted us to carry it in our generation. In telling, others hear and believe, but we too are renewed, transformed, and anchored in the gospel we proclaim.

CALL TO ACTION

This week, share your story with a brother or sister who may need strengthening. Consider moments where God has been faithful and let your testimony encourage them in their faith.

Share the story of your deliverance and salvation with someone you know who needs Jesus. Let your testimony inspire and challenge them to seek Him.

FURTHER READING: Ps 145:3-4, Acts 8:4, 11:19-20

THE DISCIPLINE OF CELEBRATION AND WORSHIP

Scripture Reading: Psalm 145:1-7 (NIV)

I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever. Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever...

Worship is honoring, revering, and regarding God with deep, extravagant respect. It is more than a ritual. Celebration and worship are vital spiritual disciplines that nurture our relationship with God. They help us recognize His greatness and unending goodness and they draw us into a deeper connection with Him. Through our worship, people around us are reminded of God's faithfulness and glory.

David the psalmist knew God in an intimate way — the shepherd truly knew his Shepherd. How about you? Does this psalm reflect your daily worship? In our modern lives, it is easy to complain about government inefficiency, reckless drivers, ungrateful relatives, financial hardship, illness, and more. Yet, it is far sweeter and spiritually enriching to bless others with stories of God's goodness. Celebrating His faithfulness, even in ordinary circumstances, strengthens our hearts and inspires those around us.

One may ask, "Why is worship and celebration considered a spiritual "discipline"?" The truth is that too often, we are expressive in worship only when we experience visible answers to prayer, forgetting the unseen victories and blessings we take for granted. It takes discipline to praise God in bad times as well as in good. Perhaps we should remember where the Lord brought us from when He called us into His kingdom, making us a royal priesthood and granting us the privileges of sonship. Thinking of people around us who are less privileged than we are will also deepen our gratitude.

Job reminds us that worship in times of hardship transcends circumstances. It stems from a heart aligned with God's will and demonstrates the discipline of trusting Him, even when life is challenging. Likewise, Paul and Silas in Acts 16:22–26 show that worship can lead to miraculous outcomes. Genuine worship transforms our circumstances and inspires those who witness it.

Daily worship should be our priority. When we start the day in gratitude, recognizing our eternal home in heaven, it sets the tone for a life of celebration and reverence. It aligns our hearts with God's purposes and reminds us of His constant presence and provision.

CONCLUSION

Spiritual discipline through celebration and worship enriches our faith journey. We are called to honour God with reverence, celebrate His greatness, trust Him in trials, and express gratitude consistently. A lifestyle centred on worship transforms our hearts and influences the lives of those around us. When we cultivate this discipline, we will learn to live in continual awareness of God's goodness.

CALL TO ACTION:

Think of one way that your celebration and worship of God can transform your life and that of those around you in 2026. How can your generation commend God's works to another, as Psalm 145:4 suggests?

FURTHER READING: Job 1:20-21, Psalm 95:6; Luke 17:11–19

MOTIVES: WHY DO WE DO WHAT WE DO?

Scripture Reading: 1 Chronicles 29:16-17

I know, my God, that You test the heart and are pleased with integrity...

Wow! Can you believe we've made it to Day 24? Over the past few days, we have focused on doing; that is, the intentional actions or disciplines like prayer, study, generosity, and confession that help us become who we are meant to be in Christ.

But before we take another step, we must talk about the engine behind all that effort: our motives. If the heart driving our actions is impure, even the most righteous act is spoiled. Today, we face a spiritual emergency: keeping our hearts in check.

The spiritual habits we practice are meant to mature us in faith. Yet we have to be real: how can we guard our hearts so that these spiritual actions don't become sources of pride, competition, or comparison? Think about your daily actions. Are you praying longer, studying deeper, or giving more to feel superior to someone else? That is the danger Jesus warned us about in Matthew 6:1:

Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

This is a tough warning! Seeking human applause forfeits God's blessing. Pride is a silent thief, subtly distorting even our best intentions.

I recently realized how dangerous this heart issue can be. I noticed I was struggling with taking corrections, training, and even handling trials because I approached everything defensively. I couldn't accept the counsel of the wise. What was the root cause? Pride. Pride became the filter through which I interpreted everything — it only allowed what made me comfortable, twisting wrong into right in my eyes. That is terrifying! Pride slows spiritual growth; it resists consistency in righteousness, humility, and meekness.

As human beings, we are excellent at deceiving ourselves. We think we are acting for God, but often when we go deeper, we see that it is more for comfort, validation, or applause. That is why the ultimate judge must be God, who alone sees the reality of our hearts.

As Proverbs 16:2 reminds us: All a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the Lord.

The good news is that breakthroughs are possible. Once I took time to trace and confront the root of my heart issues, I was set free. Suddenly, corrections made sense, rebukes felt like love, and advice became pools of wisdom. I could hear and appreciate the voices of close friends that had once seemed muffled. That is what happens when our motives are realigned.

So, what motives does God bless? He blesses the pure motive — the one that seeks His approval alone and focuses on becoming the Christ-like person He wants us to be.

CONCLUSION

We must keep fighting the good fight to guard our hearts, our attitudes, and our words. It is when our hearts are fully surrendered that what we do is truly blessed, and our spiritual discipline bears fruit.

CALL TO ACTION

Let's pray the "Search" prayer together and ask God to remove every trace of pride, defensiveness, or comparison from our hearts as we do what we do:

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23–24)

FURTHER READING: 1 Cor 4:5

OUR HABITS AND CUSTOMS – THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING CONSISTENT IN WHAT WE DO

Luke 4:16–17a; Jeremiah 35

...on the Sabbath day He went into the synagogue as was His custom...

Habits and customs shape who we are, whether for better or worse. For most people, consistency in any daily practice can be challenging, yet it is essential. In learning about the different spiritual disciplines, we are reminded that becoming requires action, not just knowledge.

We may know what is right, but without consistent application, our growth stalls.

In Luke 4:16–17, we see that Jesus was accustomed to going to the temple and reading the scroll. His regularity in worship and engagement with Scripture models the power of routine. Similarly, the Rekabites in Jeremiah 35 are examples of steadfast consistency across generations. They faithfully adhered to their ancestor Jonadab's instructions even when many around them had turned away from God. Their commitment reminds us that consistency in godly living brings divine recognition, honour, and blessing. It builds inner strength, credibility, trust and a reputation that others can vouch for.

It is by consistently practicing the spiritual disciplines — prayer, fasting, study of the Word, and so on — that lasting transformation takes place. These disciplines are not mere routines; they shape our hearts to reflect Christ and to bear the fruit of the Spirit such as love, joy, peace, and patience.

I remember undergoing surgery a few years ago, after which my muscles became weak and needed continual exercise to regain

strength and balance. Initially, I took the exercises for granted since I could walk, but I didn't regain the agility and strength I desired. Only when I became consistent by cycling six times a week did I notice significant improvement. This personal experience reminds me that knowledge alone brings some benefit, but true blessing comes through persistent application. We build our reputation and identity through the habits we cultivate. Just as God commended the Rekabites for holding to their family traditions and Cornelius for his generosity and prayers, He will honour the consistent practice of godliness in our lives.

CONCLUSION

The call to consistency is ultimately a call to discipleship — to become a doer rather than a mere hearer of God's instructions. What will the constant practice of spiritual disciplines produce in your life? What are you known for? Which habits need to become customary in your personal life, family, or community?

CALL TO ACTION

Focus on one spiritual discipline, commit to practicing it regularly, and pray for the grace to make it a habit that defines you.

Pray, "Lord, help me to turn my knowledge into action, my intentions into habits, and my habits into a consistent walk with You. May my life reflect the discipline, faith, and devotion that honour Your name. Amen.

FURTHER READING: Job 1:5 (Job) Acts 10:1-2 (Cornelius)

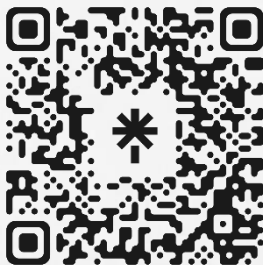
A DAY OF REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

Questions for reflection from Chapter 3

1. What resonated with me the most from this Chapter? (Jn 13:17)
2. How can God's word dwell in me more richly? How can my daily walk with God get Deeper and stronger? (Col 3:16)
3. Do I have any struggles or issues that I need to open up about and get help? Is anything holding me back from doing so? (2 Cor 6:11-13)
4. Is there any "excess baggage" that I should get rid of - whether physical, emotional or even mental, so I can live simpler this year? How can I be generous in my situation? (Lk 12:27-34)
5. What is my story? Who is one person I can tell it to? (2 kings 7:9)
6. How can I have an attitude of gratitude no matter what? (1 Thess 5:16)
7. What is one godly habit I want to be known for without being proud or seeking praise.

LET US PREPARE FOR CHAPTER 4: "MATURING IN CHRIST" BY READING EPH 4:13-15

Or visit WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and Tiktok to view the introductory videos



A scroll with a central white oval containing text. The scroll is unrolled, showing a white oval in the center. The text is centered within the oval. The scroll has black handles on the left and right sides.

A PRAYER

Just for today, help me God to remember that my life is a gift, that my health is a blessing, that this new day is filled with great potential and that I have the capacity to bring something wholly new and unique and good into this world.

Just for today, help me God to remember to be kind and patient with the people who love me and to those who work with me.

Teach me to see all the beauty that I so often ignore and to listen to the longing of my own soul.

Chapter 4

MATURING IN CHRIST

On to Maturity – The Call to Grow

Denying Yourself – Jesus' standard of Discipleship

Understanding Grace and Truth - The Balance

Permissible not Beneficial – Giving up your rights for the sake
of someone's faith

Attaining Godly Wisdom

Standing Alone – Holding to your convictions

True Greatness – Humility

Learning from Failure

Letting Go – Forgiveness

Forged in the Wilderness – God's training in tough times



**LET US GO ON TO MATURITY:
RENEWING OUR DESIRE TO LEARN AND GROW**

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 6:1-3, Matthew 5:6

Therefore, let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity...And God permitting we will do so.

Like an apprentice learning a craft, followers of Christ are called to keep growing. Real spiritual growth looks like a child's physical growth: an increasing appetite signals life. When our appetite for God's righteousness dims, we stop developing. We become steady but immature.

Hebrews 6:1-3 warns a community stuck on basics, unable to move from spiritual milk to solid food. The command "go on to maturity" is both correction and hope — a challenge to leave foundations behind and press forward into deeper understanding and practice. Maturity means wholeness in Christ and depends on God's enabling, so our effort always lives alongside God's grace.

Matthew 5:6 blesses those who "hunger and thirst for righteousness." That language points to an intense, life-sustaining longing, not a casual interest. When hunger for righteousness burns in the heart, it drives a disciple from introductory knowledge to active, courageous discipleship.

These two passages help us to see a clear formation path. First, we must cultivate an inner hunger for righteousness and then we must pursue structured growth that moves us beyond the basics. This is not just about learning more information; it is about being remade so that discipleship shapes our thinking, character, and action. Christ is the Bread of Life and the Living Water who satisfies that hunger and powers our growth.

Watch a child: when appetite stops, we act quickly. In the same way, if our spiritual appetite falters, we must respond with the same urgency — prayer, holy practices, teaching, mentorship, and patient dependence on God. The Spirit invites us to a life-steadying cycle: desire awakened, faithful walking, continuous renewal.

Read Hebrews 6:1–3 and Matthew 5:6 again slowly. Notice the shift these passages make from basic comfort to insatiable pursuit. Ask God to change passive belief into active, hungry devotion that produces fruit, resists false teaching, and presses toward the hope of resurrection.

CONCLUSION

Hunger for righteousness is the engine for our spiritual transformation. To grow and mature, we must have both desire and disciplined formation. We need to depend fully on God's grace while practicing steady spiritual habits.

CALL TO ACTION

Ask yourself these re-orienting questions:

1. What truly stirs my heart when I pray or read Scripture? Is it comfort, duty, or a fierce hunger for God's righteousness?
2. What one small, consistent practice would awaken or deepen my appetite for God? (daily Scripture, silence, service, confession etc.)
3. If God enlarged my hunger for righteousness, what different choices would I start making this week?

Write down your answers. Share these with an accountability partner or with your small group members.

FURTHER READING: Luke 8:15

DENY YOURSELF – WE MUST TAKE UP OUR CROSS DAILY

Scripture Reading: John 12:23-26, Luke 9:23

Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life

In today's world, the prevailing attitude is always "What's in it for me?". Even in church, people make decisions based on what will benefit them most. In the third quarter of 2025, the body of disciples meeting in a hall in Ogba, a suburb of Lagos, had a challenge getting funds to settle rapidly increasing rents. Members were given the option of joining one of the three nearby assemblies. Decisions and complaints of many members compelled a sister to ask an obvious question: 'Are we only in church when it does not cost us much in terms of time and resources? "

Most times, dying to self seems easier in theory than in practice. The two scriptures today compel disciples of Christ to a daily commitment of self-denial and sacrifice, echoing the mystery that to truly live, we must first die to self.

Here, Jesus reveals the paradox that loving one's life in this world ultimately leads to losing it, but hating one's life here, denying selfish desires, secures eternal life (John 12:25). This "death" is not physical death but the daily spiritual discipline of letting go of selfish ambitions, pride, and ease to embrace God's greater purpose.

Taking up the cross is a vivid metaphor for the daily burdens, sacrifices, and sufferings that come with following Christ. It calls for daily readiness to face hardship, persecution, and the surrender of personal desires. This is not about asceticism or merely giving up comforts in order to "earn" salvation, but about a transformed life that places Christ's will above all else. Denying oneself is a decisive refusal of worldly attachments. It is an ongoing daily choice to "put to death" anything that separates us from God's path. Jesus Himself embodied

this principle from his birth to the cross. He emptied Himself of divine privilege, lived humbly, and embraced suffering as the pathway to redemption. His journey to the cross was a journey of selfless love and obedience to the Father's will. Jesus' life showed the ultimate wisdom of sacrifice in a world that celebrates power and self-interest.

Denying self transforms our character and priorities. Pride gives way to humility, a desire for control yields to trust in God, and entitlement is replaced by gratitude. We experience the new life in Christ— a life of fruitfulness, purpose, and eternal reward. The seed that falls to the ground and dies ends up multiplying and producing much fruit for God's kingdom.

Jesus assures us that those who serve Him faithfully will be honored by the Father. We are never alone in this battle. Our crosses, though heavy, are pathways to grace and peace.

Discipleship is a lifelong journey of cooperation with God's Spirit, who empowers us to live beyond selfishness. Following Jesus means sacrificing time, resources, reputation, and sometimes comfort. It means serving out of love rather than for reward and remaining faithful in trials.

CONCLUSION

The invitation to deny oneself and take up one's cross daily is the heart of authentic discipleship. It demands ongoing repentance, humility, and surrender. This is how we find abundant life in Christ. Just as the kernel of wheat must fall and die to produce much fruit, so too must we embrace the mystery of dying to self to live fully in God's kingdom. Each day brings fresh opportunities to choose Christ over self, to bear challenges with grace, and to follow faithfully the One who carried the Cross for us all. In doing so, we participate in the divine paradox: dying with Christ to gain eternal life, bearing His cross to share in His glory.

CALL TO ACTION: Ask the Lord for renewed strength today to carry your cross and follow Him.

FURTHER READING: Romans 12:1

“GRACE AND TRUTH” – BEING BALANCED AS A CHRISTIAN

Scripture Reading: John 1:14

“We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son... full of grace and truth.

One of the most beautiful descriptions of Jesus is that He came “full of grace and truth.” Grace without truth can become empty tolerance; truth without grace can become harsh judgment. But Jesus held both in perfect harmony — He loved sinners without approving of sin, and He spoke the truth without losing compassion.

As His followers, we are called to walk in that same balance. To live a truly Christlike life, we must allow the Holy Spirit to shape our hearts so that our words, attitudes, and actions begin to mirror Jesus’.

Balance isn’t about perfection — it’s about being Spirit-led, grounded in truth, and overflowing with grace. Many of us naturally lean one way: some of us emphasize truth so strongly that we forget grace, while others show grace so freely that they neglect truth.

I can relate — as a young Christian, I leaned heavily toward truth. I was quick to judge and slow to extend grace. But as I’ve matured in faith, I’ve learned to hold both together — to stand firm in truth while showing compassion. Spiritual maturity is found where grace and truth meet, where we love people enough to tell them the truth and love truth enough to speak it gently.

In John 8, when the woman caught in adultery was brought to Jesus, He said, “Neither do I condemn you,” showing grace, but then added, “Go now and leave your life of sin,” revealing truth. Jesus didn’t excuse her sin, but He didn’t crush her with condemnation either. Grace restores; truth transforms. Grace welcomes people in; truth leads them

forward. When we allow the Holy Spirit to work within us, our responses begin to reflect that same balance — merciful yet firm, gentle yet honest, compassionate yet uncompromising. As Paul wrote, “Speak the truth in love.” (Ephesians 4:15) That is how Christ is formed in us and how we can demonstrate the heart of Jesus to a lost world.

Becoming more balanced and Christlike is a lifelong journey — one that deepens as we grow in both grace and truth.

Here are two ways to nurture that growth:

Keep Your Eyes on Jesus:(Hebrews 12:2) True balance isn’t achieved by willpower but by closeness to Christ. Practice: Spend time daily in prayer, worship, and reflection. The more you look at Jesus, the more you become like Him.

Walk in the Spirit: (Galatians 5:25) The Holy Spirit gives us wisdom to know when to be gentle and when to be firm. Begin each day with this prayer: “Holy Spirit, guide my words, reactions, and choices today.”

CONCLUSION/PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank You for being the perfect example of grace and truth. Teach me to walk as You walked, to love deeply, to speak truthfully, and to live humbly. Help me to be gentle without being weak, firm without being harsh, and loving without compromise. Fill me with Your Spirit so that my words and actions reflect Your heart — full of mercy, yet faithful to Your Word. Make me balanced in my faith, steadfast in truth, and overflowing with grace. May Your Spirit guide me daily and make me more like You every day. Amen

CALL TO ACTION:

Identify your weakness in the area of balancing grace and truth. Invite God and trusted believers to correct and shape you.

FURTHER READING: Matthew 11:29, Mark 10:20-21, James 1:19

**PERMISSIBLE BUT NOT BENEFICIAL:
TRADING MY FREEDOM FOR SOMEONE'S FAITH.**

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:23-24

You say, under grace there are no rules and we're free to do anything we please? Not exactly. Because not everything promotes growth in others. Your slogan, "we're allowed to do anything we choose," may be true – but not everything causes the spiritual advancement of others. (the Passion Translation)

The freedom we have in Jesus Christ as His followers is a precious gift. This freedom calls us away from legalism to a relationship rooted in grace and love of God the Father. But even with that, we are saddled with responsibility, and we must be guided by the living word of God. Our freedom must promote righteousness and peace.

In dressing, appearance, speech, food consumption, actions and behaviors, certain things might be widely allowed and accepted, but the question for a follower of Jesus is, "Is it wise, productive or spiritually fruitful?" Even if a lifestyle, attitude or conduct is "permissible" or socially accepted, it may still be harmful if it leads to destructive behavior or enslavement to sin.

Beneficial actions on the other hand, lead to holiness and love, and do not cause harm. If a habit or choice restricts the ability to love God wholeheartedly or serve God and others faithfully, then it is not profitable.

What is the effect of your personal character on others? You may have the right to do something, but does it cause another person to stumble? If so, wisely reconsider that action out of reverence for Christ. The goal is for us to build others up in love (Rom.12:10). In Luke 17:1-2, Jesus warns that "stumbling blocks" will inevitably come, "but woe to the one through whom they come." Jesus' word against the one who causes others to stumble is strong. "So watch yourselves" (Luke 17:3). He is our perfect example of laying down His rights. "This is why the

Father loves me, because I freely lay down my life. And so, I am free to take it up again” (John 10:17-18).

Apostle Paul understood what it meant to make a midcourse correction, and his passion to see people reconciled to God gave him the willingness to approach each situation in a case-specific manner. Becoming all things to all people (1 Cor.9:22), Paul relinquished his rights and gave himself completely to the purposes of Christ. His admonition in Col 3:17 is a guide for us,

Whatever you do, (no matter what it is) in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus (and in dependence on Him), giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Amplified Version).

CONCLUSION

An important mark of spiritual maturity as a Christian is when you are able to voluntarily give up some rights or freedom for the benefit of others. Actions that prioritize God’s glory and benefit the spiritual health of others are beneficial. On the other hand, actions that lead to physical, emotional or spiritual bondage undermine genuine freedom and must be avoided. Habits that dominate thoughts, finances or health can become idols, displacing God. We are called to not use our freedom as an excuse for sin or to indulge in selfish desires, but instead to serve God and others with love and humility.

CALL TO ACTION

Drive, eat, drink, dress, act, react... do everything with the freedom God gives through Christ Jesus, and in a way that benefits others.

FURTHER READING: 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Romans 6:15-23.

ATTAINING GODLY WISDOM

Scripture Reading: James 3:13–17; 1 Timothy 6:20–21

...the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

When I think of wisdom in relation to God, my mind immediately goes to King Solomon. (1 Kings 3) When God offered him what was essentially a blank check—anything he desired—Solomon chose to ask for wisdom rather than long life, wealth, or victory over his enemies. Because of this choice, God not only granted him exceptional wisdom but also blessed him with all the other things he did not ask for. This tells me that seeking to attain godly wisdom is both noble and deeply pleasing to God.

Many people like to display wisdom through eloquent speech or clever words. Yet, James 3:13–17 teaches something very different. It reminds us that wisdom, from God's perspective, is not shown by what we say but by how we live. True wisdom is evident in a life marked by purity, peace, gentleness, submission, mercy, impartiality, and sincerity.

This understanding from the Scriptures challenges me to pause and reflect: If others were to describe me, would they use the above attributes? Would my life, when observed from a distance or discussed in my absence, bear the marks of godly wisdom?

What about you? What do you think would be said about you in relation to these attributes of godly wisdom? In 1 Timothy 6:20–21, Paul warns believers to avoid godless chatter and ideas that contradict the truth of God's Word. This tells us that godly wisdom cannot coexist with worldly thinking or empty arguments.

So, as followers of Jesus Christ, what part do we need to play in attaining godly wisdom?

Firstly, we need to understand what it is—and what it is not. Godly wisdom is humble, peace-loving, and rooted in truth, not in pride or self-glory. Then we should seek it above all other blessings. Like Solomon, we should value wisdom more than wealth or status. Finally, we need to do our best to let our wisdom be seen more in how we live than in what we say. A wise life speaks louder than wise words. We must continually ask ourselves: “Which speaks louder to those in my circle of influence — the things I say or the way I live?”

CONCLUSION:

As we continue to learn and walk with God, attaining His wisdom leads us to grow and mature in Christ — the central theme of this chapter. To *mature in Christ* simply means becoming more like Jesus in the way we think, speak, and act.

Seeking godly wisdom is a lifelong journey. As we let God’s Word and Spirit transform our hearts, guide our choices, and influence our actions, we not only gain more understanding but also reflect His character more fully. In doing so, we show that we are truly growing and maturing in Him.

CALL TO ACTION:

Take a moment to specifically pray to God for His wisdom to guide your thoughts, speech, and actions so that understanding of him will be evident in your life.

As you navigate your day, week, and beyond, pause regularly to pray for God’s guidance so that His wisdom can continually be reflected in all you think, say and do.

FURTHER READING: Proverbs 4:5–7, Psalm 111:10

**STANDING ALONE:
THE STRENGTH OF PERSONAL CONVICTION.**

**Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 18:22-24, 36-39, Matt 26:55-56,
2 Tim 4:16-18**

Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only one of the Lord's prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets."

As we journey through our Christian life we will experience moments when we must stand alone because we choose to stand for what is true. These are moments when our character is tested, and our faith challenged. As disciples, when we choose to stand alone in obedience to the word of God, it is a demonstration of a powerful and unwavering faith. The Bible is replete with stories of people who stood alone for righteousness and in doing so stood with God.

1 Kings 18:22-24, 36-39 tells us about how Prophet Elijah stood alone against 450 prophets of Baal at a time that Israel had turned away from God. Elijah was confident that though he was physically alone, God was there with him. When you are in the midst of family and friends who teach false doctrine, do you speak up or feel intimidated by their number? Your personal conviction while standing alone can lead them to God.

Matthew 26:55-56 also tells us how the disciples of Jesus deserted him and fled. The same people who walked with him and witnessed the various miracles he performed. Imagine your close friends deserting you on some truth you believed in and stood for? The feeling of being alone can be scary but the conviction that God is with you restores hope and confidence. Jesus stood alone so that we would never have to be alone. When others abandon you or misunderstand your

obedience to God keep walking in your calling as your obedience will bear eternal fruit.

In 2 Tim 4:16-18, rather than a feeling of rejection or hopelessness, Paul held on to God and acknowledged His support and strength. His focus was on proclaiming the message that was entrusted to him. What is your focus when it seems like everyone has left you? When we agree to meet in our small groups to share our faith and no one shows up, do you also withdraw for fear of being alone? Paul's conviction did not come from support from others or a gospel that was popular, his conviction came from a deep relationship with Christ.

As an undergraduate several years ago, a friend once offered to help me secure a bed space where I was not entitled to one and was ready to do all the paperwork which I knew was false even though everybody was doing it. I had to refuse his offer, choosing to stay somewhere else in spite of the inconvenience. My friend was initially offended by this, but he later came to respect my convictions.

CONCLUSION:

Standing alone is difficult without personal conviction. It requires living by truth even at a cost. It sometimes demands that you stand when it is easier to sit, speak when silence is safer, and act when it is more convenient to be indifferent, it is a show of courage led by the Spirit through obedience to the word of God. Elijah, Jesus, and Paul were not strong alone but strong with God.

CALL TO ACTION:

When you feel outnumbered remember Elijah, when you are threatened and tempted to turn back, remember Jesus, and when you feel deserted, remember Paul. Their stories are proof that we can make the difference with our personal convictions when we stand alone.

FURTHER READING: Josh 1:9, Is 41:10

BECOMING TRULY GREAT

Scripture Reading: Matthew 23:1-12; Isaiah 66:2
...the greatest among you will be your servant.

When we think of greatness, most of us imagine success in its loudest form — wealth, fame, power, or influence. We picture people who feature on television interviews, stand on the pulpit to preach, hit the big screens as super stars; lead organizations as CEOs or occupy important political offices. From our early years, the world teaches us to measure greatness by visibility and status: the higher you rise, the greater you are. But as I read the Bible, I encounter a striking reversal. God's idea of greatness does not climb upward; it bends downward. In fact, with God, the way up is down. Jesus turned human logic upside down when He told His disciples, "The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." (Matthew 23:1-12). In that statement, He redefined what it means to be great in God's Kingdom. True greatness is not found in lording over others, but in serving them. It is not about how many people honour us, but about how many we quietly lift up.

A perfect example of this can be seen in the life of Jesus Himself. The Son of God — the Creator of heaven and earth — knelt to wash the dusty feet of His disciples. No crown, no throne, no applause — just a towel, water, and humility. That is greatness in God's sight.

I once read a simple story that further illustrates this beautifully. A church janitor, who had worked behind the scenes for decades, passed away. At his funeral, the church was packed. People stood and shared stories — how he prayed for them when no one else knew they were struggling, how he fixed broken chairs, stayed late to clean after services, and left small notes of encouragement. He never stood on the pulpit, but through his quiet service, countless lives were touched. Someone said, "He may never have preached a sermon, but his life was

one." That man may have seemed ordinary in human eyes, but in heaven's record, he was truly great.

Isaiah 66:2 reminds us that God's favour is with those who are humble and contrite in spirit. God is not impressed by the things that impress us. His gaze is drawn, not to prestige or strength, but to the heart that bows low before Him and is in awe of His Word.

This is where maturity begins. In earlier stages of faith, we may be driven by excitement — by doing things for God, serving, achieving and learning. But as we mature, our focus shifts from doing to being imitating Christ's nature of humility, patience, and quiet strength. Maturity is when we no longer serve to be seen, but we serve because love compels us.

James captures it perfectly: "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:10). The lifting, the recognition, the fruit — all come in God's time, not ours. The truly mature believer no longer grasps for position but trusts God to exalt when and how He chooses.

CONCLUSION

To become truly great is to let go of the world's ladder and embrace Christ's towel; to trade ambition for service, pride for surrender, applause for obedience. Greatness in God's Kingdom is not about being above others; it's about holding them up in love. This is the greatness that reveals a life steadily maturing into the likeness of Christ.

CALL TO ACTION

Serve someone today.

FURTHER READING: Psalm 25:9, 1 Pet 5:6

LEARNING FROM FAILURE: A PATH TO MATURITY

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 24:16 2 Corinthians 7:8-11

For though a righteous person falls seven times, they rise again....

Proverbs 24:16

Failure is an inevitable part of life, and it is a universal human experience. We all face setbacks, disappointments, and failures at some point. As we navigate the complexities of life, we often wonder why God allows us to make mistakes, to fail, and to falter sometimes.

During seasons of “failure” it is helpful to keep in mind that maturity and growth often come through the experience of adversity. Failure is often a catalyst towards developing resilience, character, and maturity. In addition, our mistakes serve as opportunities for learning and improvement. We can become better versions of ourselves. Failure can help us recognize our limitations and thus drive us deeper in our dependence on God which in turn fosters a closer relationship with Him.

In order to learn and mature through the pain of failure, we must acknowledge our mistakes and accept responsibility. Be humble to recognize your role in the failure and take responsibility for your actions. If there is sin involved, turn to God in repentance and confess your sins, seeking forgiveness and restoration. Paul commended the Corinthian disciples because even though they had failed in certain areas, they were now eager to make things right. Always learn from your mistakes. Reflect on what went wrong and how you can improve in the future. And remember, do not *go-it-alone*, instead, seek support and guidance by surrounding yourself with supportive people. Seeking guidance from God and trusted mentors is an important lifeline during difficult times.

It is very important to avoid the common pitfalls that characterize a wrong response to failure. Denial and blame-shifting lead to a refusal to acknowledge your role in the failure. Blaming others only traps you

in stagnation and guilt which, if left unchecked, can lead to despair and hopelessness. This negative cycle will continue to spiral downward into emotional turmoil and spiritual darkness. When we realize that we have sinned or fallen short, the sad account of Judas in Matthew 27:3-5 is a reminder to steer clear of such wrong responses. Instead, we should engage in healthy self-reflection in order to break the cycle of repeated failures and prolonged stagnation (Proverbs 26:11).

The next time you realize that you've messed up - own up to it -and see it as an opportunity to foster humility, develop resilience, strengthen your weaknesses, grow in godly character and cope with future challenges. It is important to also remember that you are not the only one who struggles. Your experience can help you show compassion and understanding so that you can empathize with others who face similar struggles (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

CONCLUSION:

Failure is not the end; it's a steppingstone to growth, maturity, and a deeper relationship with God. By responding to failure in a healthy way, we can learn from our mistakes, deepen our spiritual sensitivity, and mature in our faith. As Proverbs 24:16 reminds us, "though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again." May we approach failure with humility, seeking God's guidance and wisdom to learn from our mistakes and emerge stronger.

CALL TO ACTION:

Confess your failings to God. Pray daily for His help to overcome. Speak with a godly friend; share your challenges and confess any weakness or sins that you need to overcome. Ask him/her to hold you accountable and pray for you as God helps you to work through these.

FURTHER READING: Prov 26:11, Acts 3:19,

LEARNING TO LET GO

Scripture Reading: Genesis 45:4-5

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." ... "And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you..."

This scripture is a powerful reminder of what it means to genuinely forgive. If we look deeper into this story, we will see that it was pointing us to the redemption story of our Lord Jesus Christ; the story of forgiveness and God's power to turn unfortunate circumstances to fit into His will and purposes.

Just like Joseph, in **Gen 37:5-7**, who was sharing the good news of his dreams to his brothers, Jesus too, in **Luke 4:18-19** came to declare the good news to his people. In both instances, their message was rejected. Joseph's brothers questioned his dream in **Gen 37:8** *'His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? It was the same way the people questioned Jesus's claim and authority in **Luke 4:22**, "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.'*

Ultimately, they were rejected and done away with by their own people **John 1:11** *' He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.'* Joseph's brothers sold him with the intention that it would lead to his death after initially throwing him into a cistern to die **Gen 37:19-28**. Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver and handed over by his own people to the Romans to be crucified **Acts 2:22-24**.

The mystery behind the story of Joseph was revealed in Jesus. In **Gen 45:5**^b Joseph affirmed to his brothers, "... do not be distressed... *because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.*"

Jesus' suffering and crucifixion also led to our salvation **Acts 2:36**. It was to save us, that Jesus suffered and died.

When Joseph came fact-to-face with his brothers, it all made sense. All the hurts, betrayal, years of trauma, separation from his beloved father and the years of his youth, lost to slavery away from his people hurt deeply. Yet Joseph came to the realisation that those dreams he had would never have been fulfilled if he hadn't gone through those ordeals. And in that moment, Joseph saw beyond himself and saw what God had achieved through all the pains and hurt. It made forgiving and letting go the right choice. I don't think it was easy for him, but he made the right choice.

In **Luke 23: 34** when Jesus was on the cross staring down on those who had betrayed him, He said, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*

I too have experienced hurt and pains. I've had to make a choice to let go. With prayers, talking about my hurts and the help of the Holy spirit, God gave me peace.

CONCLUSION:

Imitating the heart of Jesus in forgiving those who have wronged us is a crucial mark of spiritual maturity. Forgiving is never easy, and God knows. Yet consider what good can God bring out of the hurt. Let the assurance that God blesses forgiveness strengthen your resolve to let go.

CALL TO ACTION:

What hurt are you still holding on to? Talk about it. Pray for the Spirit's help to do what Jesus would have you do.

FURTHER READING: Mark 11:25, Eph 4:32, Col 3:13

FORGED IN THE WILDERNESS

Scripture Reading: Luke 4:1-15

Jesus... was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where for forty days he was tempted...

In reading the accounts of Jesus' temptation, I have often wondered why the Bible expressly says that it is the Spirit that led Jesus into the wilderness. Why was that? What was God's purpose for sending Jesus there?

The wilderness is a dry, empty, desert-like land with nothing bright or inviting about it. Can you relate to a time when your walk with God seemed like a barren land? You were going through the motions of discipleship quite alright, but the joy of salvation had ceased. Maybe this is what you are experiencing right now. Take heart!

You may be wrestling with God over the way He has chosen to answer (or not answer) something you have been praying about. Or you may be struggling to accept God's direction in an important area of your life. You may have experienced situations that have made you pull back and question things about yourself or your relationship with others, about God, His church or your faith in general. Again, it may be a time that you see yourself trying to avoid facing fears or painful experiences that the Spirit is saying you need to deal with in order to get help and healing. Men and women of old went through such times as well. Because we are all different as God's children, the experience of this "dry parched land" will be different for each of us. One brother described it thus, "When I lost my job, I lost my joy. I felt God was not showing up for me as I expected. But this eventually became a defining moment for my faith. Before then, I would say I knew *about* God. But it was in that desert of lack that I came to *know* God." At some point we all have faced or will face defining moments for our faith – a time

when we are at a crossroad with only two options - either to pull away from God or to draw closer to Him.

Think about Jesus in the wilderness. There was no food, no water, no fellowship, no miracles to perform and no crowds to praise Him – in short, there was nothing encouraging. He struggled between considering Satan's juicy offer or relying still on the God who seemed to have left him desolate in a lonely and dangerous place. Jesus chose God's will and we can learn from our Lord's example. The wilderness is God's maturing classroom. The lesson we learn there is the lesson of total surrender. We learn to pray like Jesus "Lord, not my will but yours be done" and to let go of our dependence on the encouragement of speedily answered prayers, the presence of awesome friends or the security of great accomplishments. Instead, God is inviting us to take our relationship with Him to a deeper level.

CONCLUSION

The wilderness is a phase that we must pass through if we are to become mature and finish the race marked for us. Though we may not feel God's loving presence in those seasons, He is at work in us and for us. Let us be determined to learn the lesson of surrender that this experience is meant to teach us.

CALL TO ACTION

Take time today to pray a prayer of personal surrender to God.

FURTHER READING: Ps 42, Matt 26:39

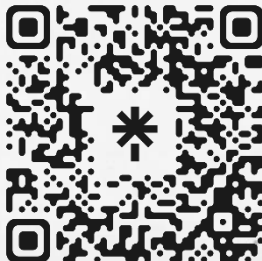
A DAY OF REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

Questions for reflection from Chapter 4

- 1) What resonated with me the most from this chapter?
- 2) How has my spiritual appetite been? (1 Pet 2:2) In general, am I more or less hungry for God? If necessary, how can I improve this?
- 3) Where do I need to be more balanced with grace and truth or with what I prefer and what is of benefit to those around me? (Eccl 7:18)
- 4) What will it take for me to follow Jesus' formula for being wise and being great. (Prov 3:7)
- 5) In what areas do I still need to deny myself? Where do I need to take a stand on my conviction even if no one else agrees with me?
- 6) What did I learn from that recent failure/setback?
- 7) Is there anyone I have a grudge or feel bitter towards? What will I do about it?(Heb 12:15)

LET US PREPARE FOR CHAPTER 5: "BECOMING WHAT GOD WANTS US TO BE" BY READING ISAIAH 64:8

Or visit WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and Tiktok to view the introductory videos



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1 Cor 13:11-12

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.

When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now, we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

Chapter 5

BECOMING WHAT GOD WANTS US TO BE

Moldable and Bendable
Refined as Gold
Purpose Driven
Always in God's Presence
God's Artwork

MOLDABLE AND BENDABLE

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 18:1-5

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: “Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you, my message.” So, I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so, the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

Have you ever seen a potter or craftsperson at work? I have, and it’s a fascinating and intriguing process firstly because of the skillful movement of the potter’s hands and secondly because of my interest in the object that is gradually taking shape.

Charles Stanley wrote that we are either in the process of resisting God’s truth or in the process of being shaped and molded by it.³ His words hold two powerful truths. The first is that God is constantly active in our lives, gradually shaping us, like the masterful potter. This is reinforced in Isaiah 64:8, ***“And yet, O LORD, you are our father. We are the clay, and you are the potter. We are formed by your hand.”***

The second truth is that we sometimes resist God’s hand in our life. The clay doesn’t always adhere to the potter’s intended design. Sometimes, the work must be pressed back down to its original form and reshaped. In the moments where we resist, we stop being moldable.

We see a clear example from the Israelites in Num 9:15-23, of what it means to be bendable. During their exodus, they moved only when the LORD instructed them to and followed His commands to the letter.

At the LORD’s command the Israelites set out, and at his command they encamped. As long as the cloud stayed over the tabernacle, they remained in camp. Sometimes the cloud was over the

³ Charles F. Stanley, “How to Listen to God” 2002.

tabernacle only a few days; at the LORD's command they would encamp, and then at his command they would set out. Sometimes the clouds stayed only from evening till morning, and when it lifted in the morning, they set out. Whether by day or by night, whenever the cloud lifted, they set out."

Obedience is only half the solution. The full answer is revealed in the details. The Israelites followed God's commands to the letter irrespective of the challenges of the times. This is what it means to surrender yourself to the expert hands of the Creator.

CONCLUSION

As disciples, we are in a journey of change and transformation to become like Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. We must trust that He, the expert, is shaping us to be the ideal version of ourselves, fit to face the challenges that life will throw our way.

Only through acknowledging the need for God's expert hand, recognizing that each fold, each bend and each carving is done out of His immense love, can you be prepared to spend eternity with Him. Will you let yourself be both moldable and bendable?

He desires that you work with Him to achieve this amazing transformation so that you can be a presentable and useful instrument for great works, to the glory and honor of His Name.

CALL TO ACTION

Can you identify areas in your character and mindset that need molding and renewing?

Ask God to help you submit yourself to the awesome plan He has for you.

FURTHER READING: Luke 9:21-23, 57-58, Luke 14:33, John 12:24 - 48

REFINED AS GOLD

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet 1:3-7

These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold... may result in glory, praise an honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

On day 35, we learned from Jesus' experience in the wilderness. Yesterday we learned about how we must become moldable and bendable in the hands of our Maker so that he can perfect His purpose in our lives.

Today we will focus on the outcome of God's pruning process by learning something about gold. If you know about the refining of gold, you will agree that it is quite an intense process. No one would like to put on gold in its unrefined state. It looks like a lump of dirt. But when it is passed through intense heat, the impurities in it are separated and removed. The Pure gold can then be made into bars or attractive jewelry.

Today's scripture describes our faith as something worth far more than gold. But, like gold, for it to be proved genuine it must pass through purifying fire. This fire could be hardships, trials, persecutions, testing, humbling, betrayals, doubts, disappointments and many others.

Are you looking forward to heaven? To an eternity with God where we will shine like stars and where there will be no more struggles or sorrows? I am! Our journey from here to that glorious destination is a journey of placing ourselves in God's loving hands for Him to make us ready.

When we allow ourselves to be refined by God's hand, out of that intense heat, like the heated gold, a transformed person emerges. We are still the same outwardly, but our spirit, character and inner man is radically different. What's the difference?

First, we will become surrendered to God. Whereas before, we want God to do *our* will, now, we will desire God's will in every situation.

Also, we will become healed inwardly. When you have a wound, that part of your body is vulnerable. It bleeds easily, hurts more and is more susceptible to infections. It is the same when our heart has been wounded.

We easily get angry, afraid or hurt. Some of us have wounds from before we came to know Christ. Some of us were wounded even in God's kingdom. And some of us have wounded ourselves through our own sinful or foolish actions. Whatever the case, God wants to heal us so that we can worship and serve Him wholeheartedly; that is, with a whole and healthy heart. The refining fire of God's word, honest discipling, confession, repentance, confronting issues and resolving them may be uncomfortable at first, but we are blessed in the end. We can give and forgive where it used to be hard to do so. We become free. And not only that, we will become a channel of blessing to others who need God's healing too.

Another blessing is that we will become aware of our worth. Gold needs no advertisement. Its worth is universal. In the same way, when God refines us, we will be convinced of who we are to Him. We will know our true worth. We can be confident and remain at peace. We won't need to get praise from people or rely on our performance in order to feel worthy of God's love and acceptance.

CONCLUSION

God's refining fire is necessary for our faith to be proved genuine, but it is well worth it. We will shine brighter than gold in this life and we will be ready to spend eternity with him in the next.

CALL TO ACTION

Pray through Psalm 139 today. Ask God to search you, test you and refine you for His glory.

FURTHER READING: Mal 3:2-4

A LIFE OF PURPOSE

Scripture Reading: Acts 20:34

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me...

Have you ever pondered the phenomenon of life's purpose? Do you have an answer? Finding your purpose is a powerful catalyst for transformation. You will gain clarity on what is truly important to you, and this will spark a chain of change reactions. "Becoming" will then be a purpose driven transition which is never too early or too late to embark on.

Today we read Paul's words in an emotionally laden farewell speech to the Ephesian Elders in Miletus. Paul was a man who had clear understanding and deep conviction about accomplishing the task assigned him by the Lord Jesus - the task of preaching the gospel of the resurrected Christ. He was well aware of the risk to his life on this mission. His audience must have been stunned by his audacity in the face of possible death which is the ultimate sacrifice anyone can make in pursuit of a life mission.

Paul's faithfulness was well established. He had suffered horrible experiences on many mission trips. (2 Cor 11:23-29) Once, he was stoned by the Jews and left to die only for the same brutalized man to resume preaching in the next city once he had been revived by the disciples. (Acts 14.) This incredible level of faithfulness to a purpose and mission can only be imagined by many of us in our generation.

When we are irrevocably sold out for a purpose, we can surmount even the most difficult hurdles. My wife and I had assumed from the first day of our marriage that we would offer our home for shepherding disciples and helping those who had accommodation issues. Our purpose was to provide a kind of love that is difficult for most people to offer; an act of benevolence that keeps giving and is laden with

protracted inconvenience. Counting of cost has been ongoing in the face of scarce resources, limited space and particularly the bad behavior and ingratitude of some. However, we are thankful that most of those who have lived with us left our home spiritually better than when they came.

As Christians, heaven is our goal. And we are on a mission in pursuit of this purpose. However, God has given us different talents to function effectively in specific endeavors for building up the church community. When each of us is fully living out our God-given purpose, the church in turn fulfills her mandate on earth.

CONCLUSION

In Eph 4:12-13 God tells us what I believe is the ultimate goal of the project of becoming what He has purposed for us to be both individually and collectively as His people... *“that we may attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”* May your purpose be crystal clear before you so that you can run with perseverance the race God has marked out for you.

CALL TO ACTION:

- Reflect on your values, passions, and strengths.
- Ask God to help you discern your life's purpose.
- Focus on what aligns with that purpose and with eternal values.
- Let go of distractions.
- Draw inspiration from Paul's determination, pressing on through obstacles to fulfill your purpose.

FURTHER READING: John 10:10, 2 Cor 11:23-29, Heb 12:1-3

“Clarify your purpose. What is the why behind everything you do? When we know this in life, it is very empowering and the path is clear.” — Jack Canfield.

“The mystery of human existence lies not in just staying alive, but in finding something to live for.” — Fyodor Dostoevsky

ALWAYS IN HIS PRESENCE

Scripture reading: Ex 34:27-29, 1 Cor 1:9

Moses... was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord

There is a popular notion that when two people live together long enough, they start to look alike. I am not sure if this is always true, but the point is a valid one – we become like who we spend the most time with.

Moses had spent forty days and nights on the sacred mountain, alone with God, receiving the stone tablets of the ten commandments. He was not even aware that his countenance had become radiant. Such is the impact of being in God's presence.

As we mature in our walk with God, He desires that we have an intimate relationship with Him on a minute to minute basis. This is what is called "practicing the presence of God." It is when we learn to make ordinary everyday moments a sacred experience with the Lord. Imagine talking to God while sitting in traffic instead of complaining. Or practicing praise while washing dishes and tidying the house. Think about praying for different people as you pass by them on the street. Or using the opportunity to bring Christ into your next business conversation. God is not only present in our formal worship, such as at church on Sunday. He is just as present in every daily activity. We can learn to live our lives continually in His presence and make our hearts His dwelling place.

You will agree with me that as disciples of Jesus, we love fellowship. There is something unique and special about the uncommon bond we share. 1 Cor 1:9 tells us that this fellowship is what we are called to enjoy with Christ Himself. We can spend time with the Lord 24/7! We can enjoy

⁴ Brother Lawrence. *The Practice of the Presence of God*. Epworth Press. London. Originally published 1692.

His divine presence. What a privilege! If you were to spend a whole day with Jesus, what would you talk about?

Learning to live always in God's presence transforms us from the inside out. It brings peace and contentment as the bible describes in Philippians 4. When our constant focus shifts from ourselves to God, anxiety and restlessness lose their power. Our joy comes from simply being aware that God is near, regardless of any external circumstances. We can face trials with faith because we are anchored in God's love. We become children of humility and gratitude. Because we are conscious of always being with God, we recognize how much we depend on Him for big things as well as small. We are in continuous communication with our Heavenly Father and we develop a spirit of thankfulness in all situations; whether good or bad. This is what Jesus called us to in John 15:4 when He said "Abide in Me"

CONCLUSION

We will become more and more like Jesus as we learn to live always in His presence. God wants us to live a life of worship where everything we think and do is an act of devotion to Him and we begin to experience the peace, contentment and joy of unbroken fellowship with our Maker.

CALL TO ACTION

For the next one week, take up this simple spiritual practice¹

- a) Find a place of quietness or take a prayer walk
- b) Recite Psalm 23
- c) List 3 worries you have and present them to God
- d) List 4 things you are thankful for and present these to God

Think of different ways that you can practice the presence of God in your own daily life activities. Share with your small group members and encourage one another in this.

FURTHER READING: Gen 5:21-23 John 1:35-39

¹ Dr Robert Carillo. Daily Praxis, Mountain Theological Seminary. Denver, USA.

BECOMING GOD'S ARTWORK

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:10

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Every work of art seeks to imitate life, but you are different. You are a masterpiece formed by the hands of the Creator Himself. In Ephesians 2:10, Paul gives us a vision that helps us re-access how we see our lives: *We are God's workmanship.* The Greek word he uses, *poiēma*, means "a thing made" or "a work of art." It is where we get our English word *poem*. Imagine that your life is God's poem, written with intention, rhythm, and beauty.

God does not create by accident. Every color of your personality, every texture of your experiences, even the shadows of your struggles are brushstrokes in His grand design. You are a masterpiece in progress, crafted, refined, and continually shaped to reflect the heart of the Artist.

But there is more to the verse: *created in Christ Jesus to do good works.* This tells us that God's artistry has purpose. He did not craft you merely to exist, He created you to *express* His love through the way you live. The "good works" Paul speaks of are not checklists to impress God but reflections of His grace already alive in you. When you encourage a friend, create something meaningful, forgive someone, or lift somebody's spirit, you are displaying the colors of God's kingdom on the canvas of everyday life.

Through Christ, God also restores what was broken. Like a master restorer repairing a damaged painting, God is an expert at renewing the image that sin once deformed. Your faith journey is His restoration project. He will take whatever has been marred and bring it back to brilliance. Sometimes, you may look at your life and only see the unfinished parts, the rough edges, the areas that feel incomplete. But the Artist sees the masterpiece already taking shape. Every season,

whether of joy or trial, adds depth and texture. In the moments you surrender control, you allow the Divine hand to complete its work.

Becoming God's artwork is not about perfection, it's about participation. You are both the canvas and the co-creator, walking hand in hand with the One who designed you into existence. Each day is another opportunity to let Him write His story through you.

CONCLUSION

As we conclude our devotionals this season, pause and look at yourself through God's eyes. Remember: you are His work in progress. You are His *poiēma*, His living art, His unfolding poem, His reflection of grace and beauty in a world that needs it. You are becoming who He wants you to be. Let your life tell the story of the Artist who never stops creating, redeeming, and revealing beauty in unexpected places.

CALL TO ACTION

Take a quiet moment this week to ask yourself: "Where in my life is God still painting?" Maybe He is refining your patience, restoring your confidence, or rewriting your story after a difficult chapter. Do not rush the process, masterpieces take time.

Look for one way each day to reflect the colors of His grace in your world, through kindness, creativity, or courage. Let your words become brushstrokes of hope. Let your actions display the evidence of divine craftsmanship.

Walk boldly as God's living artwork, created to reveal His beauty in the everyday.

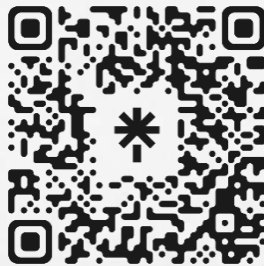
FURTHER READING: JAMES: 1:4 Rev 21:5, 9-11

Lord, thank You for creating me as Your masterpiece. Help me to see myself through Your eyes and live each day reflecting Your grace. May my actions, words, and creativity become brushstrokes of Your love in this world. Amen.

A DAY OF REFLECTION

Questions for reflection from Chapter 5

- 1) What resonated with me most from this chapter?
- 2) “As a person, who am I becoming inwardly?”
(2 Cor 4:16) Ask yourself. Ask someone who knows you. What is good about what you see? What is not?
- 3) “What area(s) of my life do I need to surrender more fully to God this year?” (Jn 12:24)
- 4) What would that surrender look like?



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**What we are is
God's gift to us.**

**What we
become is our
gift to God.**

~Hans Urs Balthasar

POWER #15 SERIES



THE ART OF BECOMING:

Devotionals in Spiritual Growth and Maturity

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