

## *Excerpts from The Power of Perspective*

### **INTRODUCTION**

**O**liver Wendell Holmes once said “Man’s mind once stretched by a new idea never regains its original dimension”. My prayer for you after reading this book is that your mind will never be content until its parameters reach the boundaries of the universe concerning your perspective on intimacy with God and your purpose in life. You’ve selected to read this book based on its title. What you will learn in this book is that ***purpose is not a destination reached but a series of opportunities along life’s journey that present themselves for us to be in position physically, mentally and spiritually to fulfill a need that destiny has placed before us, that will serve our fellow man and glorify God.***

The chapters of this book will build on each other and help raise your consciousness and awareness of your significance in the circumstances and the relationships you experience. You will learn the obedience to listen and search for your cues that your spirit instinctively knows. You will be clued into the powerful mechanism of your life that you may have been unconsciously aware of.

Perspective is a mechanism that we have been unconsciously using since our toddler years. We have been choosing whether to allow a simple matter to cause us to cry and throw a tantrum or simply blow it off. Once you see how this cycle of opportunities operates in life, you will become consciously aware of its benefits and more focused and disciplined in your thought process and your actions. Through this God given ability you will then become intimately involved with your purpose and value in almost every situation you enter.

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Unless the value of something is determined, its abuse is inevitable. If you continually sell yourself short and allow others to use and take advantage of you, your spirit will become oppressed. Why? Because your spirit is formed and fashioned by the only force ever in creation that brings life to a spirit, and that is God. God fashions purpose into every spirit. This spirit within you knows its purpose the same way you know your mother or your father’s voice. Their tone and pitch was wired into your psyche the moment you had the consciousness of knowing what sound is. Jesus came to earth knowing His purpose. Even though there were times that He became discouraged, He persevered and saw His purpose through. Our level of obedience will either help that purpose to be realized or push it

deeper and further from the guidance of God.

God had a plan for your life when He created you. God knew the circumstances that you would be born into. God knew the provisions your spirit would require in order to fortify you for the challenges that lay ahead. God also knows the environment that will best foster the elements within you that will help you flourish. Certain species of plants grow best in shady and damp environments, while others need lots of sun and not much water.

You are not an accident nor are the circumstances in your life random. In fact everything and everyone you encounter regardless of the choices you make come as no surprise to God. God intends to use everything you have done, or has been done to you, as a means of instruction and a testimony to those you will one day teach. Are you up to the challenge? Do you struggle as a single person? Do you struggle in your marriage or with raising your children? How about your perspective? Does your mind play tricks on you concerning how you perceive people and situations? Do you hate your job and know there is more in life for you, but you don't know what it is? How about those generational curses that seem to plague every one in your family, or those secret sins that you can't seem to shake? Do you struggle with how God sees you as a person? Then read on.

This is where you would expect me to list a litany of scriptures and biblical stories that affirm this belief. Sorry to disappoint you but you won't find a plenitude of scriptural references or any exhaustive theological commentary within the pages of this book. Surely you

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will find properly placed scriptural references to support the points being made but you will not be preached to or judged. The purpose of this book is to appeal to you where you are as someone who either feels they've got it all or someone who feels emotionally and spiritually bankrupt. This book will appeal to you even if you're somewhere in the middle. You may be the spouse who has a mutual stake in a wonderful union with a loving partner raising a beautiful family and leading a fulfilling life. Maybe you're a single parent of one or multiple children, who at times finds life a little more challenging going the route of parenthood alone, while still managing to maintain peace and balance.

Perhaps you're an adult who is still contemplating how to begin turning the page that begins the next chapter in your life after learning from the experience of life and the advice of others. Maybe you are dealing with a variety of issues such as hurts from the past, depression, anxiety and other debilitating issues that life has thrown you.

It could be that you have inherited these items from your mother or father called generational curses. Many of us feel stuck in a rut on the job and feel that there is so much more within us to give, but we don't know how. Whether you fit into one of these categories or not

even close. Expect this book to provide actionable suggestions to help you to turn your life around. The assignments and work book that are included will enhance your ability to not only talk to the Lord, but to be able to hear directly from the Holy Spirit for yourself and for the benefit of the lives you touch.

If praying aloud to the Lord has always been a challenge to you, I have included actual prayers in this book for virtually all aspects of life for you to learn and use regularly. These prayers are for your children and teens as well as your marriage. You will learn life giving and healing affirmations to use that will enhance all phases of your life. These prayers can help fortify your marriage when you know you should stay but all circumstances tell you to leave. Sometimes we need to hear from God concerning when it is the right time to simply call it quits and leave while you still have your life, your mind and your self respect. Beloved, there is so much pain, misunderstanding and broken hearts in this world, it is a miracle by God's own grace that murder and suicide are not the number one cause of

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death everywhere. You will read stories and scenarios where prayer has played an integral role to the positive outcome of lives and destiny.

Use these prayers to empower your faith, moments before that very important meeting or phone call. Use these prayers to motivate you on your commute to a place you dread going but rely on to survive. These prayers will bond you inextricably to your faith even when all of life and your sensory perceptions tell you to give in and give up. Don't let Satan abort your call in Christ to greatness.

It's not time to give up but a time to declare victory over indifference, complacency and defeat. It's time for you to stop living beneath your privilege and meet God's expectations for your life.

***SUNSETS ARE A GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN THROUGH ITS WINDOW SHADES.*** When you slow your life down enough to appreciate this marvelous spectacle that boasts of God's power and majesty that is offered to us every day, you can almost discipline yourself enough to look for Him in every situation

## CHAPTER ONE

# ***HOW TO CONNECT WITH GOD***

### ***Knowing who God is***

**W**hen you look into the eyes of a child and behold their innocence,

purity, unconditional trust and love, you begin to scratch the surface of what it is to look into the heart of God. Prayer is simply a door that links time to infinity or the finite to the infinite. God is a spirit who dwells in eternity and the only way to tap into His realm is through prayer. This act of prayer is a form of intimacy. To really experience intimacy with God, you must first commit your soul and existence to Him. The church body calls this, being saved. If you are not saved, please do not take offense to my statements. Please read on, I'll explain. Otherwise, this book may not prove your mind, body and soul with the fulfillment that you may anticipate. Being saved or having salvation is the key to having intimacy with God, His son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The first thing to understand is that God the Father, God the Son and the Holy Spirit are one entity (John 10:30). This is why you will find their names used interchangeably. It's like science and the three manifestations of water. Ice would be God, who broke Himself down to water (Jesus) to flow among man and to be seen and understood by man. When the water evaporated, it became vapor (the Holy Spirit) so that it can be breathed in and live within man. God the Father is who created the entire universe (Gen 1:1). In the Old Testament,

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He is called a theophony. In the New Testament, He is referred to as a Christophony. I'm sure you have heard the story of Adam and Eve (Gen 2:7-35) and how God was displeased with their choice of disobedience (Gen 3). This became the first sin for which the penalty was separation from God since God cannot fellowship with sin. From then until the appearance of Jesus in the New Testament, God's desire was to reconcile man back onto Him in that original state of innocence and fellowship. Back then, the only way to be reconciled with God was to provide a sin offering. To be reconciled with man, God would have to provide a sin offering large enough to cover all of mankind (John 3:16-18). So He did just that. Since God is an omni-sapient, He can also be omni-present and so He manifested Himself in flesh and became Jesus, who sacrificed Himself. God is a God of order. It took approximately 30 years for His son to experience things that a young man would have experienced in order to be relevant. The bible references a period at about the age of 12 during Jesus' childhood, but the next 18 years are silent in the bible about Jesus' development. The bible and theologians call this period the silent years. It is assumed that His wisdom and knowledge grew exponentially as expressed in (Luke: 41-52). At approximately 30 years of age, Jesus is introduced as a man to the Jews by His cousin John the Baptist. You can read a thorough depiction of Jesus' life from that time up until His crucifixion in the gospel of Luke. The ultimate purpose for salvation is not in Jesus' birth, of but rather in His death and resurrection. God's definitive

purpose for wrapping Himself in flesh was to reconcile with his creation. At the cross, when one of the thieves on either side of Jesus said prepare a place for me where you go, Jesus responded, “This day you shall be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:39-43). This was the first time that Jesus acknowledged that someone had accepted Him as their Savior and that they would be with Him in glory. Read more for yourself in the book of Luke. Jesus desires that man simply accept and believe in Him, as the thief did on the cross. Could it be that it was easier for that man to accept Jesus since he was in the same position and saw the world from the same vantage point? Or was it simply easier because he had nothing else to lose? Either way,

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he did it without much debate. This is what Jesus wants of us, our unconditional devotion.

God wants you to choose His son to be your personal Lord and Savior and to accept His Holy Spirit into your heart as your keeper and comforter. He not only wants you to accept Him today, He desires much like a father, He desires that you choose to follow His principles and His direction for the rest of your life. Does that sound simple enough? The hard part is deciding to forsake all your excuses and reasoning for why it has taken you so long to get through this step and to remain faithful and consistent. The church has not always done a stellar job of illustrating the Lord’s case by spewing the same judgmental and loveless rants that got Jesus crucified in the first place. Many of our nation’s churches have a bad habit of forgetting the love that is integral for discipleship. Unless you show an individual how much you care, they will never care how much you know. If you have ever been on the receiving end of this, I am sorry for any hurt this has caused you.

This is a book on purpose through prayer and devotion. To first understand who you are, you must more importantly understand whose you are. I will repeat this several times throughout this book. God the Father is not only the architect and the creator of the entire universe and beyond, but He also has the unique characteristic of being omni-sapient. God can be in all places at all times. That distinction does not belong to Satan or anything he creates. In fact, Gods chief angel of praise was called Lucifer before he was kicked out of heaven with his followers when he tried to match wits with God. That’s when he became Satan, who has never been able to mount up to have nearly the strength and abilities of God.

In fact, Satan will be finally put to eternal imprisonment and damnation by GOD on judgment day (Rev. 20:7–10). This is one scenario that you already know how it ultimately plays out. The only variable in this equation is you. Will you reign with Christ in paradise beyond your most vivid thoughts and imaginations forever, or will you be chained under a sea of hell fire, torment and eternal

damnation that is infinitely beyond the scope of any Hollywood screen play? This scenario is real. There will be no director to yell “Cut” when you start to feel discomfort. The action only begins at

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that point and will last for eternity. Your worst day on earth will become your best memory in hell.

Here’s the good part. You don’t have to even worry about if that is going to be you fate or not. We can cancel any appointments that Satan has made for you concerning hell once and for all by reading this prayer, internalizing it and saying it with conviction. You can say this prayer as many times as you desire to assure your natural man of what your spiritual man already knows.

Are you ready?

***“Father God, in the name of Jesus, I thank you for being God and preserving my life for this opportunity to acknowledge you as the only wise and true God of creation. I believe that you sent your only son Jesus Christ to suffer and die on the cross as your lamb of sacrifice for my sins so that I may have a chance to accept Him as my Lord and Savior, and have the right to eternal life with you in heaven. Father, I ask that you please forgive me for all my sins of the past and present. Father, please wash me in the blood of Jesus and remove my sins and my desire to sin against you. Father, please forgive me for the words and deeds that I have spoken and committed against you and the body of Christ. Lord Jesus, please come into my heart and fill me with your precious Holy Spirit to guide, heal and protect me. Father, please take away my taste and desire for sin. Please replace these sinful desires with a desire to please you and to pursue good Godly character and integrity. Father, please take away these urges I have to selfishly appease my flesh and replace these urges for a hunger and thirst after your righteousness. Please give me the faith and courage to tell others about your love for them and your grace and mercy. By my profession of faith, Father, I declare that I am saved by your grace. Thank you Father, thank you Father, In Jesus name. Amen.***

If you said this prayer with belief and conviction, then you truly are saved and we can continue with the same understanding and

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you can receive the depth of empowerment, fulfillment and intimacy God intended to share with you.

God doesn’t desire that you to perish but rather that you come to Him on your own accord without any agenda or malice. Once He

has you in His care, you too will be comforted in knowing all pain will be healed and all confusion and wrong will be clarified and set right.

### ***The key to finding purpose***

When a chef takes the time to plan out a menu, he takes great care to be mindful of his budget. Chefs also need to know the amount of food that needs to be prepared and if there are any dietary restrictions of those who will be enjoying his or her meal. After all the ingredients are gathered and the meal is prepared and completed, the meal is served. If time allows, the chef may take a walk through the crowd to see how patrons are enjoying the meal and to field any questions or comments. As he or she feasts on the accolades and compliments, they never hear, “The salt was cooked to perfection” or “Chef, the black pepper was so tender and juicy”.

The purpose of those seasonings merely serve as ingredients that help pull the whole presentation together. Without the other seasonings, vegetables, meats, marinate, the flame and careful attention of the chef, there can be no presentation. If done properly, the salt and other condiments enhance the flavor of the meats, not overpower the entire dish. When we pursue purpose, we must understand that purpose is rooted in words like intent, objective and goal. Within the many meanings of the word purpose, you will find the word propose, which means planning, presentation and preparation. This means that the purpose of something is planned carefully before execution. If your purpose has just been realized, you must understand that planning has already gone into the your blueprints. A great deal has been put into where you fit in God’s overall presentation. In the illustration with the chef, the salt cannot leap off the plate and say, “Hey there, how did you enjoy my contribution to the dish”?

Likewise, the flame that cooked the dish cannot ask you to comment on the brilliance of its colors and its impressive heat.

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Therefore, your purpose is simply where you fit into God’s overall plan for HIS presentation. The first step in the recognition of your purpose is that ***“This has nothing to do with you but everything to do with what God gets from what you go through”***. In fact, like the salt, you may have to sacrifice more than you will gain in your day-to-day walk in purpose. When you are truly walking in purpose, you stop seeing life as what I can get out of it, but rather how can I contribute to it. Purpose is never about you, how well you can be seen or how much credit you can get for your contribution.

To be candid, if you are walking your purpose path properly, you will only be complimented on occasion. Frequent accolades could mean that the meal tasted too much like you as the key ingredient.

***Purpose is not a destination reached, but a series of opportunities***

*along life's journey that present themselves for us to be in position physically, mentally and spiritually, to fulfill a need that destiny has placed before us that will serve our fellow man and glorify God.*

### **HOW BIG IS OUR GOD?**

Sometimes we need to put the enormity of our God into a perspective we can interpret in order to truly appreciate His supremacy over all creation: "He measures the universe with the span of his hand" (Isaiah 40:12). The span of the average hand is approximately nine inches. If you hold up your hand to symbolize the number five, the span is from the tip of the pinky finger across your palm to the tip of the thumb. This scripture illustrates the universe being able to fit within this space of God's hand. To better grasp this image, let's explore some dimensions of the universe put to scale.

1. We learn from astronomers that the Milky Way, the disc-shaped galaxy to which our sun belongs, is a family of more than 100 billion stars. These scientists say there may be as many as 100 Billion other galaxies in the universe. They believe that the billions of these galaxies' billion stars may have hundreds of

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millions of planets like our earth. God's creation from a onesentence command!

2. Anything may be reproduced on scale model except the universe. The impossibility of making such a model accurately is shown by the fact that, if the earth were represented by a ball only one inch in diameter, the nearest star, Alpha Centauri, would have to be placed nearly 51,000 miles away.

3. The sun is so large that, if it were hollow, it could contain more than one million worlds the size of our earth. There are stars in space so large that they could easily hold 500 million suns the size of ours. There are about 100 billion stars in the average galaxy. And there are at least 100 billion galaxies in the known universe.

4. But how many are 100 billion? If we were to count 250 a minute—day and night—it would take us about 1,000 years to count to 100 billion. Multiply this by 100 billion, the probable number of galaxies, and perhaps we have a better understanding of Christ's words: "All power is given unto me."

5. Imagine that the thickness of this page which you are reading is the distance from earth to sun (93 million miles). The distance to the nearest star (4½ light years) would be a 71-foot high shelf of paper. And the diameter of our own galaxy (100,000 light years) is a 310-mile stack of paper, while the edge of the known universe is a pile of paper one-third of the way to the sun (31 million miles).

This helps one contrast the finite with the infinite. One's faith is easily bolstered when we realize that all of our resources, troubles and trials pale in comparison to the source. Bear these comparisons in mind as you worship and pray. This immense and sovereign God, sacrificed His son for a life so small in comparison to His, yet so significant. It boggles the mind to think that this awesome entity wants fellowship and intimacy with us. But it's true, He does,

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"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me". (Rev 3:20)

### ***Don't be afraid of truth***

"You're fat and your mother dresses you funny",. Everybody bursts into laughter and the fat, strangely attired child goes running home to mommy. Ever heard this before? How about, "Yo momma is so fat, when she goes to the beach the Coast Guard goes on alert to rescue beached whales". Here's a cute one, "Yo momma is so short, she can sit on a dime and dangle her legs". In African-American culture it is referred to as the "Dozens", "Dirty Dozens" or "Ranking". This is a competition generally among males where they would quickly recite these witty, untrue insults against each other's family members until the other has run out of responses. The "Yo momma" jokes are usually the crowd favorite. This later evolved into the hip hop culture where rappers would battle each other using the same witty recitations but applying the digging insults to the opposition's rapping style. By the end of each competition, there is generally a winner and a loser. In most cases, all parties walk away with some laughs and new responses for the next challenge.

Rarely are there any real words exchanged to genuinely harm the other's pride or family. However, in life, there is always someone who searches out our weaknesses to use against us in a public display of infantile behavior. For some of us, these efforts are futile, while with others, these words can prove to be very hurtful. The bible says, "You will know the truth and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32). Although Jesus was referring to the fact that knowing the truth about Him will make us free from the bondage of sin, one can easily make the correlation that knowing the truth about your

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life and your circumstances will make you free from fearing them. Those of us who are sensitive about our appearance find great pain when the subject comes up for criticism or when we are the brunt of careless jokes. But understanding that being overweight is seen by everyone as an issue one should embrace until it is able to be remedied by diet and exercise or medical intervention, can make all

the difference.

The same goes for those of us who have features that are not looked upon as aesthetically pleasing to those around us. We should simply embrace that as a reality that we must bear. You see, when you take an inward journey into yourself, you will not only find the wreckage, but you will also find the buried treasure. If you are overweight, you should also discover that you are more wonderful to be around than a skinny and moody individual who is so starch and protein deprived that their brain can't sort their emotions. Although that is said in jest, you should embrace your strengths and weaknesses equally so neither takes complete control of your existence.

This is called balance. You should glean energy from your strengths and allow your weaknesses to keep you grounded; otherwise, you will be unstable and irrelevant. No one should ever be able to knock you off balance by throwing a negative fact about you in your face. I can be brutally honest at times when necessary and as gentle as a lamb as well. I can also take brutal honesty about my ways. Always be able to handle what you dish out and always be prepared to hold yourself accountable to what you expect from others.

Growing up, I never felt that I was as cool or good looking as the friends that I hung out with and they used to remind me of that every now and then when we played the Dozens. I quickly developed a quick wit and sharp tongue, and eventually won most ranking sessions. I had great confidence because the girlfriends of most of my friends trusted me as their best friend and I always had the upper hand because I had the personality everyone wanted to be around. I always knew that my people skills were my gift even though I had low self esteem overall. Whatever is a sensitive area is in your life, embrace it like your name and become well acquainted with it so that it no longer causes you anxiety. Some people grew up very poor and are ashamed of it and when any issue concerning economics

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comes up, they become sensitive and defensive. This is nothing to be ashamed of. You should see this as another factor that completes the dimensions of your character, not a thorn in your side.

The fact that my mother and father were never married used to bother me tremendously, so I used to tell my friends that my mom and dad were divorced when I was very young. One day, one of my friends jokingly called me a bastard and I quickly retorted by saying, "How did you know that my dad and mom were never married"?

That stole her thunder, but cured me of that sensitivity. Comedians learn to laugh at their own pain and find healing through making others laugh in the process. Try to look at your malady, upbringing, appearance or whatever it is that you are sensitive about in a holistic manner. Don't see it as what you are summed up as, look at it as one of the things you are known for. If you are comfortable about

it, then the world around you will too. I had an English teacher in grade school that had a deformed hand and students who were not in his class would see him and look away in embarrassment and ask students in his class if he was strange or mean. I happened to be one of his students and would say that he is one of the coolest teachers I've ever had. You see this teacher we'll call Mr. Martin, came in on the first day of class and introduced himself and told us all about his background. Then he said, "Oh, by the way, you will notice that my hand only has four fingers and although it is deformed, you will see that I can write with it as well as shake your hand. Don't be afraid of it or me, we don't bite. However, be nice to this hand because it is the hand I write with when I grade test results and report cards". We all laughed and that was the end of the stares and prejudice.

At times I tend to be a bit particular about the fact that I tend to be germaphobic. But if someone takes a jab at me about it, I simply laugh it off because I know it is true. I also tend to be very verbal and obsessive about good communication and in fact I even poke fun at myself so others know not to take me too seriously when I banter on. If you embrace the truth about yourself, it will never take you unaware or lead you astray. My mantra is that truth will never lie to you and will always be consistent with you. He will never be late; he will always clean up after himself and will never talk behind my back. Truth is my best friend because he is always there to remind

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me of who I am despite what others say about me. Ladies, feel free to reverse truth's gender. The better you embrace truth, the more you will appear to be authentic in your presentation. If you appear transparent, then it is easier for someone to see the Jesus within. Proverbs 3:3 says, "Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart, And so find favor and high esteem, In the sight of God and man.

### ***Don't be afraid of silence***

We've all gotten used to an instantaneous society where we get what we want quicker and more conveniently. We can order online or by automated phone services. Most automated services get the job done without us having ever to speak to a live person. It's all about getting the job done faster. Many times when I get to a cashier, there isn't even a hello and eye contact, unless I initiate it. I muse at the shock I give some cashiers when I say hello and refer to them by the name on their name tag. Remember what life was like before microwaves? We actually had to wait for something to warm for 20 or 30 minutes in a toaster oven or a conventional oven. I don't even remember what we did with the time while we were waiting. Nowadays, if my dual core high powered laptop takes longer than 10 seconds to open a program or application I'm ready to lose it. We have rapidly become a society of immediate gratification

and impatience. It's the old adage our parents used to tell us about society being bent on quantity over quality. Our churches are even marketing shorter sermons and church services so we can get in and out and get on with our day. I am amazed to see churches that have early Sunday morning services so we can "get it out of the way". So how do we get God to maneuver His schedule and synchronize His eternal clock to our wrist watch or PDA? The fact is that we can't and He won't. God is not the least bit moved or impressed with what we do for a living, how much money and real estate we own, what we drive or even how many letters we've accumulated behind our last name. God is more moved by the hungry homeless man who sacrifices a hand out to another homeless man who has less than he. God is moved by worship, faith, the selfless expression of love and

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forgiveness. All of these take time to cultivate. God does not move or reveal Himself in confusion. The primary reason law enforcement issues speeding tickets is to get our attention to a problem that we have with speeding and our potential to wreck our lives and the lives of others. God has a way of getting our attention to slow down as well. We call these tickets trials and storms. They also tend to give us patience.

The silence in our lives is the spaces between the noise that allow us to hear from God without interruption. These are the times that you really get the opportunity to flex your intimacy with God. Quietness with God is when you receive your instructions for battle. Being alone with God illuminates your path. Have you ever been in a room full of people and felt as though if you instantly disappeared no one would even notice? Are there times that you feel this while with your loved ones or co-workers? Well this is why prayer and silence with God is critical. During this silent time with God, you are authorizing the creator of the universe to empower your spirit with His power to discern the heart of those around you so you would not be easily misled. Silence with God empowers you with the ability to overcome sickness and depression. Silence with God empowers you to have faith through financial hardship. Here's the best part, silence with God completes you, so you are no longer in need of anyone to fill your emptiness with hours of empty and meaningless conversations with people who really don't care about you or your purpose.

Some of us fear silence more than ridicule, because during silence there is no stimuli or distraction from the outside, just the true honest image of ourselves and the world we have created. In many cases, this form of judgment is either uncomfortably unfamiliar or too harsh and cold. This is because in most cases, we have never been taught to take the time to honestly get to know ourselves as we are and as other people see us. We only want to know ourselves as

how we think we portray our role in life. Here is a pivotal moment in our quest of not only having intimacy within ourselves, but intimacy with God. This is where the building despite its beautiful facade says to the architect that I may need to be gutted and remade according to the original blueprints because I have more form than function.

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When you want to hear from God on a certain issue, you must be silent without a time frame or agenda. You cannot determine on Wednesday morning at 10:30 a.m. that you will be silent and expect God to fully disclose all His wisdom to you on this topic by the end of your lunch hour. We can't have a deadline because that deadline might be intertwined with an agenda on what answer we are expecting from Him. God may require a few things from us first. We need to be prepared with the fact that God wants our spirit clear of the anxiety at hand and wants to see us fully submitted to Him. God knows why we are coming to Him. If He jumped as quickly as we asked, then He would be diminished to the father who is used by his spoiled little child who comes to Him with affection only when they want something.

During this broken time, we need to be cognizant of God's omniscience. God is all powerful and answers to no one but Himself. Our circumstances and the bad choices we made to get into these circumstances are of no significance to Him. He is the God who heals the sick and raises the dead. He is the God who can stop time. He is the God who also did not deliver the children of Israel to the Promised Land until an entire generation of those who disobeyed Him, died. God knows the day we will see Him face to face.

His thoughts and ways are above our ways. With that said and understood, God will move when our spirit is settled and in full agreement with His power. When we are complete in this conflict within ourselves, not only will the circumstances seem smaller, He will also speak to our heart concerning matters.

Much like the homeless man, this is when you've got God's attention. As I've looked back over my life and assessed the damages I've created, I realize I could have avoided most, if not all of the chaos if I only took the time to be silent before making a harsh decision.

During my 20's I was married, had a demanding ministry as a broadcaster, had a career as a talk show producer, all while I completed my undergrad and graduate degrees full time. I certainly didn't take nearly the amount of time needed to be silent. This lack of silence fueled the fleshly influences in my life causing me to make bad decisions. I can probably fill volumes of books with what those mistakes were. One of those mistakes was divorcing my first wife

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and giving up my broadcast ministry to hundreds of thousand of

people every week, the two most important things to me. Upon the opening of my eyes every day, I do not allow myself to make one move out of bed without giving the Lord at least 15 minutes of total silence just to hear His heart. My times for worship are during my morning and evening shower. I also make it a habit to fall on my face at least once a day in worship and again after our daily family devotion and bedtime prayers. Prayer, praise and worship are also woven into every activity I do during the day. For instance, as I sit and write at my computer, while I'm driving, working out at the gym or even playing ball with my kids, I am constantly saying, "Thank you Jesus or I bless your name Lord". For some, this ritual may be considered to be a luxury or a bit excessive, but my goal is greatness in God by any means necessary.

I did not have a lot of the nurturing mommy and daddy time as a child, so I made a lot of decisions without wise and sage parental counsel as a foundation. My contention is not to repeat the same mistakes over and over again. Success in silence is accomplished this way.

### ***ASSIGNMENT***

1 Clear your spirit of all malice, agendas and selfish desires by repenting.

2 Go to God in prayer and have the patience to be silent until He speaks purpose to your circumstance. Waiting for God to speak is a must.

3 Understand that sometimes the answer is so obvious that we cause our own delays by compounding our mental issues into God's clear and decisive plan. At other times, He may take longer because He wants us to just slow down. Our God has numbered the hairs on our head, so it stands to reason that He cares about us and our well being.

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4. When you receive confirmation in your spirit that your answer is from God, ask Him for the spirit of obedience that it will take to do what He says. A good clue that your answer is from God is that Satan will never ask you to do the godly thing or something that denies your flesh of its gratification.

5. You will need the courage to execute God's plan for your circumstance simply because His answer may not be what you expected or what you truly want to do.

6. Ask God to give you the faith that says you know that His answer for your circumstance is going to work out for your good and that it will ultimately prove to be the best answer for your purpose.

7. Make sure to give God His due thanksgiving and praise for what He has done faithfully in your life.

### ***Don't be afraid of change or struggle***

For nine months or 40 weeks, a fetus floats innocently and safely in the amniotic fluid of its mother's womb. After nature evolves her body into a viable baby with functioning lungs, she must now begin to transition to her next level of development. The ultimate success of this next shift in her development can only occur in most cases when there is great stress and trauma to her life. In fact, every aspect of her existence will be challenged as she enters the birth canal. Her skull, shoulders, rib cage and lungs are squeezed to half their size to accommodate this small entry way to her new universe. At this point, she must succumb to even more trauma of being cold, touched by hands for the very first time, filling her lungs with air and then having to scream in a room filled with bright lights. If that is not the text book definition of change and struggle, then we all need to start all over again.

The interesting thing about this necessary change is that if the baby does not make this transition into the outside world through the birth canal or cesarean section, she will go into distress and cause

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great risk or even death to her and her mother. Once a baby reaches full-term, the mother's body or its present surroundings begin to reject the baby. It simply has outgrown its surrounding and it is time to leave. Much like a vine-ripened fruit or vegetable, once its time of development has been reached, it is either picked or drops to the ground. All truths are parallel, meaning that what happens in the spiritual realm also happens in the natural realm.

When you reach a place spiritually and God has decided that it is time for you to move on, you will start to feel uncomfortable with where you are. You will start to see signs in your every day interactions; things that seemed to flow just won't seem the same anymore.

In the case of the newborn, all hell starts to break loose. Unless you have graduated from the class of not fearing silence, you won't see it coming. God will make you uncomfortable with where you are (complacency) to get you to where you need to be (destiny).

A dear friend of mine by the name of Bishop Noel Jones once taught me that you must be willing to let go of the past in order to firmly grasp the future. If your heart is constantly filled with the fear of letting go of the familiar and that which you control, then how will you be able to receive the new blessings that the Lord has in store for you? Imagine both of your hands were filled with groceries and the Lord had a \$100,000 in twenty-dollar bills to give you. How much of that money would you be able to grasp if you did not want to let go of the groceries?

Let's take a moment to examine the situation. It's quite easy to choose to let go of two arms full of groceries for a \$100K of cash because one can easily see that the cash has more value than the

groceries. Or does it? A bag of groceries often contains bread, juice, milk, hygienic supplies and perhaps something to cook. However, an emotional bag of groceries often includes items that through years of practice have become intertwined in our character. This makes them more difficult to readily give up even if we know it is best to let go of them. Some of these items may be bitterness, resentment, hurt, fear, rage, anger and the lack of forgiveness. Unforgiveness is probably the most harmful parcel in this bag of emotional groceries. As my friend Dr. Dick Tibbits wrote in his book, *Forgive to Live*, the lack of forgiveness is the constant mental replay of the initial hurt

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over and over. This further empowers the person who caused your hurt. In most cases, this person is not the least bit affected by your restricted ability to live, love and laugh. You may be able to take courage in the fact that the offending person may not even be aware that the act they committed has caused you the pain you are feeling. The most ironic fact about our lack of forgiveness is that the very reason for Jesus dying on the cross is the forgiveness of our sins. The situation is clear. Jesus wants to give you a gift of greater value than that you are holding. Letting go is critical if not crucial to your growth in Christ and your quest for purpose. As you can see, there is a true struggle in being “free from to being free for”. Your perspective here should be that change is simply movement into my next phase of development. Sometimes struggle is necessary to formulate the character that is needed to thrive within that next phase.

### ***Don't be afraid of failure***

Henry Ford said, “Failure is the opportunity to begin again more intelligently”. One of my favorite writers, Napoleon Hill says, “The strongest oak tree of the forest is not the one that is protected from the storm and hidden from the sun. It's the one that stands in the open where it is compelled to struggle for its existence against the winds and rains and the scorching sun”. Another great quote is one brought to prominence by author Bill Allin, who wrote, “The road to success leads through failure”.

Many of us are intimidated by the fact God would actually use us for any task, let alone an awesome task like the one we are sensing deep in our existence. Think of Moses who spent the first 40 years of his life thinking he was somebody, the next 40 years realizing he was nobody and his last 40 years realizing what God can do with a nobody. Imagine if Moses feared Pharaoh more than God when God told him what to tell Pharaoh. Who then, would God have used to free the Jews if Moses ran off to the desert in fear of failure? What would life be like in this country for persons of color if Dr. Martin

Luther King, Jr. suddenly developed a fear of failure and fled to Europe with his family?

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What will the future hold for your life and the lives you touch if you took your life this instant because the stress of life was too much to handle? This is what we do each time we fail to heed the directional signs the Holy Spirit sends us to step out on faith. We actually kill our chances of growing toward purpose and abort all the possibilities of touching the lives the Lord has lined up in our path for residual blessings. ***“Life is not destiny’s finale or the finals in the Olympics, surely life must be lived carefully and with sound judgment to avoid tragedy, but the fear of failure should not be its driving force”***. Getting over the fear of failure is not a process. You can either wrap your mind around the concept or not. These are some of the reasons we use for not being able to do so:

1. Taking our selves too seriously.
2. Being too concerned of what others think of us.
3. Seeing failure as a wall and not a path.
4. Seeing life as a competition between us and them.
5. Failure means that I will have to start over again.

You philosophers can probably come up with about at least 20 others. The fact is, overcoming failure is a survival technique like teaching a toddler to swim. There is no judgment on technique as long as the child can save themselves. In my estimation, most of us get very uptight about failure for many reasons, but they all pale in comparison from the reward one receives when you finally get it right for yourself.

### ***Don’t be afraid of your mortality***

I know death is a morbid thought that many would rather not discuss under any circumstances. It reeks of finality and hopelessness. It has no recollection, no knowledge, no vantage point nor does it have any feeling. From the time that we understand what it is as a child, it has already brought much pain and anguish to those we love. Death has quickly become our mortal enemy. The bible refers to death as separation from God, but it also says that to be absent from the flesh is to be present with God (2 Cor 5:6-8). Our apprehension

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with death is simply because we cannot have a discussion with it as we can with someone in a hospital bed. It shows neither bias nor prejudice. It is neither logical nor irrational.

It just doesn’t make sense and it always plays strictly by its own rules. Death’s biggest mystery is that those who visit death become permanent residents and never send any post cards, pictures or any

videos. We have concerns that death is only a passage way that leads to two distinctly different destinations, heaven and hell. Unlike UTube and Google, we cannot do a quick search on either location and find interviews and sound bites. One key way to become more knowledgeable about death is to read what death was intended for in the book of Revelations. The other way to become more comfortable with death is to get intimately acquainted with God, who is the only competent authority on the subject.

Spending time with God while you work, love, laugh, cry, yell, scream and live will give you a better understanding of His mysteries and His heart. In fact, spending time with God will reveal things to you that are not in the bible. Death is a definitive passage way for your spirit to travel back to eternity where it was created. Our body was created in time and our souls were created by God in eternity. We tend to fear the ways in which this passage way is approached. Some transition through death after saying good-bye to their loved ones by their side as they peacefully fall asleep; others transition painfully and violently without warning or closure with loved ones. Many of us have dreaded memories of loved ones dying of an illness that slowly denies them of life's basic dignity. Either way we look at it, this is a subject we would rather skip. God taught me that purpose is directly tied to its completion. Simply put, there is an aspect of death you must embrace before you reach your knowledge of purpose. This mindset is a process and a journey in and of itself. When I came to the knowledge of this necessary passage to our eternity, I started thinking of it almost everyday. Before you pass judgment on me as some ideologue on death, please take a moment to follow what I am saying.

Shortly before the birth of my first son, Satan started to tell me that I would never live to see his birth. This was my second marriage and I never shared this thought with my wife, out of fear; I did not

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want to confess this thought. On Thursday, May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1998 at 12:46 p.m., my son, Christian David, was born. I fell to my knees with tears of joy and gratitude for his birth and life. He was born by Csection and he did not open his eyes for several hours. When he did open his eyes while in my arms in the nursery, I cried a second time with gratitude that God allowed me to live and see my son face to face. Knowing the lie that Satan told me, I was even more grateful for my life at his birth. Getting to finally meet this child who had prayed so much for was such a blessing.

Ever since then, like most parents, my life had new meaning. I literally lived each day as though it were my last. By that I mean I never took any time with him or my wife for granted. I worked hard and served the Lord in any way I could. Shortly before the birth of my second son, Aaron, the enemy told me the same thing again. He

said I will kill you in your sleep before the birth of your second son and they both will forget your memory before they grow up. On December, 14<sup>th</sup>, 2000 at 8:26 a.m., my son, Aaron Alexander, was born and I was there to hold him and thank God for both of us being there. Both pregnancies were high risk for my wife and threatened both her and our sons' lives. I then started to weep not only for my gratitude for life but for the sorrow I felt for all the parents who did not have this opportunity to see the birth of their child. This was the case of my mother's father and many soldiers who fight courageously on distant shores to ensure the freedoms we take for granted everyday.

God showed himself to be mighty and faithful. There has not been one day since that I have not thought of my mortality. I spend each day loving and preparing my sons for the day that I make that transition to eternity. I teach them good communication skills and to add to life, not just take away. I illustrate examples of how not to be judgmental and selfish, but rather to be empathetic and to share. I make sure they understand that I am their father and not their peer so they respect my words and admonishment without question when necessary, yet they are still able to utter phrases like "We wish you were our age so we could play with you all the time 'cause you're so much fun". That always chokes me up when I hear it. I see the return for the hard work when they both see me hard at work outside

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or sitting for hours at the computer and come to me with a tall cold glass of water to refresh myself. This tells me that they will make the time to observe how to serve their God and how to nurture and serve their future wives, their family and mankind. I am truly honored and consider it a privilege to father Christian and Aaron Cort. As I write these words, my prayer is that you are able to feel and illustrate the same sentiment about your children as well.

You're probably thinking that I'm overindulgent in my children and what does that have to do with helping me cope with my mortality? The fact is I'm a better person for it because I am healing my own wounds from my childhood. I am sewing good seed back into life by creating character in my sons that God can use without having to take precious time to break them down and start over again. These young men will enter adulthood with God's grace ready to serve and lead. ***They have become my most profound teachers because the Lord has my undivided attention through them.***

God tends to deal with us in story and mirrored form. During His ministry on earth, He spoke in parables (stories) and allowed time to mirror our lives as the meaning in those stories unfurled. We see children as a clean canvas for us to create what we want them to be, the story. But they are also cameras with microphones that capture the true honesty of what we are into their spirit and they will play the

tape back at the most profound times. These playbacks tell the truth of what we are and what we've created, which either will bring us outward embarrassment and inner shame or pride and confidence. Now that I am more mature and centered firmly in my knowledge of the Lord, I understand that He used these thoughts of mortality to tightly knit my mind and His spirit into the tapestry He calls my purpose. When you think that your days are numbered you tend to waste less time and use your days with more thought, planning, silence and purpose. As you get closer to realizing and flourishing in what that purpose is, you would have spent so much time with God in instruction, that death and dying does not cause you the anxiety it previously did. You have now become intimate with the people, activities and fears that have kept you off balance during your entire existence. You will find the selfishness that you once had about missing out on life after death and how your family and

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friends will live on are exchanged with "Look at what a wonderful life God and I have lived during this time He's given me here. I have taken on so many challenges with Him by my side, I can now take on anything".

Your mortality challenge may be with a sick parent or with sickness yourself. It may be with a job, a friend or even the person who torments your life most. God is well capable of using that scenario to acquaint you with your mortality clock which may just end up being a long life filled with purpose.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### ***HOW TO ADJUST YOUR PERSPECTIVE***

**A** woman who enjoys a lifestyle of running and biking was diagnosed with acute rheumatoid arthritis. She is told by her doctor that the activities she once enjoyed so rigorously will now come with a price; great pain and medications with uncomfortable side-effects. She is almost inconsolably devastated. Within the same medical complex two floors up and down the hallway, a young man who is recovering from a tragic motorcycling accident is meeting with his doctor. His doctor tells him that he will never walk again. The young man pauses as if to evaluate his situation. The doctor braces for his patient's reaction. Tears start to stream out of the young man's eyes. The doctor raises his brow in disbelief when the patient unexpectedly says, "I am just happy to be alive".

The lesson here is that life is much like a camera, you should keep your perspective in focus in order to see an accurate picture. The woman sees the picture as never being the same again, while the young man is just happy to be able to see.

There is a quote that reads, “Change your perspective and you change your reality”. One’s ability to understand this speaks to their ability to believe in a higher calling. It is then when one can retreat within, to summon the inner peace that emanates from an eternal being that is all knowing and reconciles everything. Without this faith in God it is almost impossible to see beyond any circumstance.

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I am not just speaking of the biblical definition of faith that says to just know and believe it as so. But I am speaking of ones ability to be faced with a situation like the young man in the story above and be able to adjust your viewpoint thus your reaction.

There is another familiar quote that I taught my children that says, “Watch your thoughts for they become your words, watch your words for they become your actions, watch your actions for they become your habits, watch your habits for they become your character, watch your character for it becomes your destiny”. Although of unknown origin, we can safely conclude two things and they are; the author wrote this from a spiritual base and that this thought and its successful completion emanates from perspective.

For an example, if you suffer from rage and an uncontrollable temper and your life is not led by prayer and the leading of the Lord, fate may place you in a critical situation. Your anger and rage may be matched with someone just like you who also cannot control their rage. The difference is they may be armed with a gun and the destiny for both of you may change forever. You can change your perspective and decide not to let matters get out of hand and maybe live your life to its fruition. God has a specific plan for each of us, but that plan is subject to our choices and the perspective we adapt in order to make those choices successfully.

The Lord will summon life to send us red signals to indicate that we are going in the wrong direction. But who is to say how many warning signals are on the path that leads to our destruction? Satan’s number one objective is to kill us before we complete God’s plan for our lives. Too many of us take that gamble that there is one more red signal before Satan is allowed to snatch the breath of life from our existence.

Across creation we see and hear the natural disasters our world is plagued with. In the news, we see the expressions of hopelessness and defeat in the faces of the victims. Then we hear the voices say, “Everything we own we lost but at least we still have each other”. This affirmation immediately begins the healing process within

their reality. You and I may walk by someone in a shopping mall on crutches painstakingly trying to keep up the pace with their family and think to ourselves, “Gosh that looks painful, I wonder what

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happened to them”. That same individual in the crutches may be thinking as they see your gaze of pity, “You should see what my car looked like”.

You see, as a true survivor he or she is not thinking about how they look to us. They are just concerned with getting better physically and mentally everyday. Perspective is what you see through the viewfinder of life. It can change very slowly or as drastically as the last paragraphs you’ve just read. But the reality that you take away is yours and yours alone. Your perspective is much like a muscle and you should exercise and stretch it regularly so that it won’t cramp or tear when you need it most.

***Forced Perspective***

In my opinion the entertainment company called the Walt Disney Company under the vision of its founder has mastered the art of deception and the term forced perspective. This entity has dazzled generations into paying an almost obscene markup for ice cream cones, bottled water and other food products simply by putting the fantasy of its name behind its reasoning. Our western culture loves to be bedazzled by anything so this company has cashed in on this notion and manipulated the world to feel the same. When you look closely it’s not the bricks and mortar that make the magic, it’s the conditioning of the people that sell the vision. Here’s an example of forced perspective at its best. If you have ever taken an executive tour of the Magic Kingdom you can stand at the entry point of Main Street U.S.A. and look toward Cinderella Castle and get taken by the splendor of it all. The engineers or Imagineers as Disney calls them have designed a cunning method of visual deception. As you look toward Cinderella castle it appears further than it actually is. The store fronts lining the streets all have windows that are standard size on the first floor but the second floors are half the size. As you move further down the street the second story windows are smaller and the trees are closer to the curb and further from the buildings. This makes the castle appear further than it actually is. Now when you are in front of the castle and face the train station the same design works in reverse. Walt Disney knew that at the end

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of the day patrons would be tired and would need a sign of relief from the long day they’ve had. So Disney thought it clever that forced

perspective would then work in reverse by making the train station at the beginning of the park seem closer. Life and the enemy work the same forced perspective on us almost every day. We see certain circumstances and take them at face value and allow them to affect the way we process our thoughts and the way we react and behave. It starts out in our childhood with the bully on the block or at school and evolves to adolescence with the roles and we all perform to be more self accepting and more acceptable in the eyes of others. In any case someone is always pushing something on us to buy into. Later it becomes the marketing call and the ever convincing infomercial that plays on our weaknesses or impulsive tendencies with carefully researched phrases like “FREE”, “THE ONLY ONE”, “FOUR EASY PAYMENTS OF \$99.99”, “LIFE TIME GUARANTEE” and “IF YOU ACT NOW”. Little do we know we are still paying the same \$399.00 and that it really isn’t as quiet or as pretty. When you make that purchase we realize we bought the “BAIT AND SWITCH”. Life’s infomercial is always pushing us a bag of goods that we are expected to buy.

### ***Content vs. Context***

“Hey Dave”, says Kevin. “It’s been ages since I’ve seen you man, How have you been”. “Doing great”, says Dave, “How’s your family been”. “Fantastic, man, thanks for asking”, replied Kevin. “Man, you’ve lost a ton of weight, you’re like half of what you used to be”, exclaimed Kevin. “What are you trying to say Kevin?” “Hey no offense intended Dave; I just can’t get over how much weight you’ve lost”. Dave politely smiles and abruptly ends the conversation by saying “I’ll see you around Kevin” and walks off. Kevin looks off and cocks his head to one side as if he were searching for a hidden camera in the bushes. He then murmurs to himself, “What in the world was that all about”?

For some people, Kevin was just shot between the eyes for being kind. For others, Kevin was insensitive and condescending. Which ever school of thought you subscribe to, there is going to be a misunderstanding. This is a classic case of what many therapists call context vs. content. In the Dave and Kevin scenario, Kevin may have truly meant no harm in his observation about Dave’s weight loss. Due to the familiarity of their friendship and Kevin’s personality, Kevin used the words “lost a ton of weight” and “half of what you used to be”. Dave’s past weight issues are apparently still a sensitive issue with him and he immediately took personal offense to the comments.

The content of what Kevin said was direct and honest. The context of what Kevin said was intended to be complimentary. A very simple misunderstanding that escalated probably beyond what it should. How many times have you been misunderstood and

judged harshly for actions or words that you never thought could be misconstrued? Now for the sake of honesty, how many times have you been guilty of being too sensitive in the same regard? For the sake of full disclosure, I too have been guilty of being too blunt with friends and family. Although the comment was well intended, it did fall short of its mark. Basically, I bombed.

On the other hand, I'm not very thin skinned and tend to brush awkward comments off, once I know no harm was intended. We can do ourselves and the lives around us a great turn by starting to listen

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more carefully to how something is said rather than just what is said. The same applies to receiving criticism. Take assessment of the packaging and the circumstances of the person giving the criticism. Ask yourself, is the person offering a critique? Or are they giving you destructive criticism? Sometimes a person's circumstances may greatly weigh on how they speak to you or express themselves. Great pain in one's life makes them say hurtful things. Envy may also be a reason for someone to have a distorted view of your life. If this conversation is taking place on the telephone, take the individual's personality into consideration as well as what is happening in their immediate environment.

During a phone conversation you are not able to see their eyes to gauge their spirit nor are you able to see their facial expression and body language. These factors make it quite easy to mis-interpret what is being said.

If this is a face to face conversation trust your gut and your instinct along with how well you think you know the person. You can try just being honest and to the point, by simply saying, "There are a number of ways I can interpret what you said. I would like to accept the kindest interpretation, but is that how you honestly want me to receive your comments?" In doing so, you accomplish three things:

### ***Significance vs. Relevance***

This is either a play on words or the monumental difference your life has been waiting for. What do you think? Significance and relevance share some of the same words as part of their definition depending on what dictionary or lexicon you use. The word they do not share is application. This word is reserved for relevance.

In chapter one I shared some astounding statistics about the size of the universe relative to God. These measurements and statistics are very significant but not really relevant to every day life on earth. For instance the fact that if you were to hollow out the sun that you can fit 1 million planets the size of our earth within it is a very significant fact, but not very relevant. Unless if we need to fly a

super advanced alloy manufactured space ship to the sun that can withstand the temperature at the core of the sun as we gut it out; then tie a rope around 1 million planet earths and stuff them in the center of the sun like a hard boiled egg. Far fetched, correct? I agree. How about the significance of the fact that God holds all 100 million known galaxies within the span of his hand? Now that's very significant also, but this unlike our previous illustration is also relevant because it demonstrates the power and enormity of the God we serve, worship and rely on. This makes Him more credible than a God we may memorialize on a pendant and hang around our necks. Jesus came to earth as the Son of God to sacrifice Himself in order to redeem man unto Him. By dying on the cross and descending into hell and setting free all the captives was significant. Raising Himself from the dead and appearing to His disciples and His mother then ascending to sit at the right hand of His father while living among us in spirit form, is relevant. God holds the key to always being significant and relevant at the same time. According to estimates by Dr. David A. Ross, an oceanographer and a scientist emeritus at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts and his textbook "Introduction to Oceanography", approximately 97% of the earth's water is salt water, which is basically non-consumable by humans. This statistic basically says that drinkable water on this planet only amounts to about a glass of water in comparison to a bath tub full of water. That is a significant and relevant fact. Finding

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a way to desalinate 500 million gallons of that sea water on demand and pipeline it to countries that need it most is both significant and even more relevant. Get the point?

Now let's examine a more colossal creation of God, you. We have the intellectual ability to build a space station and track satellites and robots half a galaxy away. We also have the ability to make each other cry and laugh in the same spoken sentence. So it is with great issue that we achieve significance and relevance in our lives and the world around us in exponential proportions. We need to look back over our lives and ask our selves what is our ratio of significant accomplishments compared to our relevant accomplishments.

Did we get our nursing and teaching degrees because we wanted to ensure a stable vocation and consistent paycheck? Or did we achieve these degrees because we wanted to help people and change the world one student at a time? If you chose the latter then you are extremely relevant. If you chose the prior you are very significant. If you chose the latter, your relevance may be even more functional to God.

We have a term in American culture that says "At the end of the day", which essentially means; in the final analysis. At the end of the day all God cares about is what have we done with the work of

His Son Jesus? Will we be able to answer by saying that we have helped glorify Christ in giving, loving and forgiving unconditionally in our personal and professional lives? Or will we tell Him that we bought and sold houses, made a fortune in the stock market and paid off our grandchildren's college tuition before our children were even born? Please don't misunderstand me. I am not anti-capitalism at all. I believe in using the favor and fortune that God has allotted to us. I also believe that to whom much is given much is required. There are families in the United States that have still not recovered fully from hurricane Katrina who need jobs and shelter other than a community shelter.

Abroad in another part of God's vineyard, we have people in our world family who are dying because the only drinking water they can access is polluted with life threatening bacteria and we can't even finish drinking the water we were given in the business meeting we just left. Most American families throw away more food from our

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dinner plates than some children in Asia, Africa and Haiti get a chance to eat in a month. Remember when generations of parents use to tell us to eat all the food on our plates because there are starving children in the world? What ever happened to that generation? I'll tell you. The authority and significance of that generation was marginalized by the new relevance of today's iPod and Google generation. Yes, this generation helped to put the first African American in the White House but have they learned enough from the wisdom of their forefathers and the synergy that comes from the diversity on all fronts to ensure sustainability for the generations to follow? Only time will tell. We as a nation need to see beyond our skin, household and even our geographical borders.

We need to find our relevance to people other than ourselves.

People like the person struggling to pay for their groceries at the check out counter and the family you know who can't afford the \$10 to send their child on the school trip. How about the person who just got into a car accident and didn't have any collision insurance? How about taking them to the grocery store with you so they can buy their groceries? Better yet how about paying for their groceries if you can afford it? There is so much relevance one can demonstrate with their significance. A doctor can stay open one additional hour a week to see patients for free who are under insured or have no insurance at all. A school teacher can volunteer 30 minutes a week or one-hour a month to tutor students for free who cannot afford a tutor. They can do this through a neighboring church. A nurse can volunteer to answer phone calls for one hour a week at a local church or shelter as a neighborhood "Ask a Nurse campaign".

If you are a Christian, then you should understand that as world citizens that we are all under an open heaven that does not know

geographical or cultural boundaries. We see the need for our relevance all around us but we lack the spiritual sensitivity, faith and courage to act on it. A common example of this are the people we see almost every day while getting our cup of coffee, lunch or groceries. How often do we stop and think what we can do for this person that will make their day and inspire them to pass it on. Maybe you never see them smile or maybe they wear the same painted on smile for everyone because their job requires it, but you can sense they

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could use a good laugh. How about just saying something like, “I appreciate seeing you every morning, have a blessed day”. It may make them smile or it may seemingly mean nothing at all, but you have just traversed the threshold between significance as a customer to relevance as a person. The next time you see them, their smile to you may just be a little wider. The amazing thing is you may bless you, the person, the Lord and the person standing behind you who may decide to use that same line on someone when they get to work. Now you would have helped in making them relevant as well.

Once I went grocery shopping to pick up about four items. As I walked up and down the aisles I noticed a woman who was obviously on her way home from work with her three kids. I always look at people shoes for some reason and I noticed that her shoes and the shoe of her kids were quite worn. Her children’s clothes were a bit worn and faded. She methodically took various items from the shelf and placed them in her cart while tabulating the cost on her calculator. Instantly I felt a quickening all through my body and I instantly knew what I should do. I timed our arrival to the register and got there just behind her. She saw that I only had four items and told me to go ahead of her on the line. For some reason I knew that she was going to say that.

As the cashier rung up the person in front of me I occasionally glanced back at the lady and smiled at her three children. I also noticed that her kids were extremely disciplined not to ask for items like toys and candy at the check out line. Maybe they were not interested or maybe they knew better than to ask, because the answer would normally be no. They were extremely well behaved and as sweet as can be. As a former struggling single dad for three years I know how to add up groceries quite efficiently in short order. So I knew exactly to the dollar how much her grocery bill would have been. That sends my wife crazy, which is why we often grocery shop separately. When the cashier finished ringing me up I opted for the cash back feature at the terminal. I discreetly gave her the cash as I saw the mother stare off into the distance and motioned with my eyes that I wanted to pay for this lady’s groceries. I walked out the store and found a place where I could sneak a peek to see the ladies reaction. What happened next still brings tears to my eyes as I play

it back in my head. The cashier totaled her receipt as the lady took out her cash. Then the cashier started speaking to her and pointed where I was standing just a few moments ago. The woman had a look of disbelief. It appeared that the children were startled by her reaction; she then grabbed all three of them and started to shake and cry. She quickly composed herself and shook the cashier's hand and pushed her cart out of the line so she could wipe her tears and further compose herself. I quickly left and walked to my car so that she would not see me.

The purpose for sharing this story was not to make myself appear so wonderful but to illustrate how much God loves each and everyone of us. You see, no one knows why that woman was staring off in space at the register or the fact that she didn't even notice me following her in the supermarket. That same level of pre-occupation could have gotten her into a terrible accident on her way home.

God used my obedience to quickly send her a love note that He is always with her as He safeguarded her trip home. I am sure that lady held her kids just a little tighter and smiled with them just a lighter brighter that evening. My Jesus tells me that she also will have a better perspective toward her work week and her life.

We all need to give and receive just a little kindness to help take the edge off of life. Life tends to wear us down slowly. We may not notice it right away but over time just like how a lack of sleep shows on our face, a lack of kindness shows on our heart. My relevance to that young mother increased my significance to me.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### ***GIVE OF YOURSELF***

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**I** heard a story of a boy who needed to donate his bone marrow to his younger brother in order to give him a fighting chance at kicking his leukemia. He was the only donor match that the family could find in the time needed, otherwise the sick child would die. The procedure is painful for the donor but not life threatening. The hospital staff did all they could to make the donor brother comfortable with the process. He was still nervous and worried that the bone marrow procedure may not work and that his brother would die. Just before the procedure was to begin to harvest his bone marrow, the doctor commended the donor child on his courage and love for

his brother. The child smiled guardedly as they began. He asked the doctor in an innocent and tender voice, "Is this the part where I die?" The donor brother thought that in order to donate your bone marrow that you must die in the process.

In the innocence and purity of youth, came this child's willingness to sacrifice his own life for his brother. The wells of my eyes still tear up when I think of this story. How about you? When was the last time your act of love and altruism made you stop and take a deep breath in awe of God's hand at work in your life? Surely God does not mean for us to literally risk or sacrifice our life daily, but He does expect us to give what is asked of us from someone who is more in need than we are. Have you ever been in a situation where you see someone struggling with packages and a child while

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attempting to open their car? Maybe you were too far away to get to them in time or perhaps you felt uncomfortable. But this discomfort was more like a word that you're trying to get out but you can't find it. You almost wish that someone would just slap you on the back of your neck to get it out. In the case with this overburdened person, maybe you wish that someone would just give you a stern push in their direction to rescue you both; them from the need of assistance and you from the need to assist.

How about the release you feel in the spirit when you are able to get to them before they open the door and drop everything? Isn't it an incredibly liberating feeling? Well my friend, that feeling you encounter is the connection you feel with God's heart when you help someone and you fulfill your purpose for that moment. You see, that is what you were supposed to do at that point in the entire universe. Now imagine getting that euphoric feeling several times a day, okay I've gone overboard, how about at least three times a week?

Here is a typical sound bite from one of those celebrity headline news shows: Part I, Reporter: "Well beloved Hollywood A list celebrity Young Cutie is diagnosed with cancer and is expected to undergo radical chemo therapy. When asked to respond to the millions of well wishers in their fan base, they said, 'I know you are all praying for me and I know I can beat this'.

Part II, "Good news out of Hollywood tonight. It's been four months since Actress; Young Cutie has been in treatment for her recently diagnosed cancer. Her publicist says that all medical reports indicate that the cancer is completely gone and she should be able to return to work on the movie set for her upcoming film "Starlight, Star bright", set to be released next summer. When asked how does it feel to be cancer free, her publicist quotes Young Cutie as saying "I'm going to devote my entire summer to teaching cancer awareness to all my fans across the country".

Does this sound familiar to you? In fact it probably sounds like

at least a dozen celebrity profiles we've heard over the years. Most of us start to feel the every day pain and struggle of a certain demographic of people, only after their illness or way of life strikes us first hand, or it hits us close to home. This is not to say that many of our beloved celebrities and other public notables don't silently

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support the numerous charities abroad. But imagine how impactful that notion would be if we all in some way, took the time to consistently support a cause with either our time, financial substance or at least our prayers.

With that being said, I know contributing something to anything other than our bills is a hard notion in an economy where people have to decide whether to fill a prescription or put gas in their tank to get to work. But we can certainly take the time to find a charity that suits our personality or belief system to donate two hours every month by way of our talents, or even sweep and vacuum the floors. A good way to start would be to contact that charity and tell them what you can spare by way of money, talent or time and see if they can use what you've got. Believe it or not if you were able to pull together 10 people who could donate \$5 each a month on a consistent basis and multiply that by three other people who also got 10 friends to do the same; that could actually help pay a utility bill or gas bill for a local kitchen to feed the hungry.

It doesn't take much to collectively make a lot happen. Rest assured if you are not blessed to have a lot of dollars, I'm sure you can make up for it with the mind you have and the friends you are blessed with. Now if you do have the money but not a lot of time, there is a lot that \$100 a month can do collectively, to help make this great nation of caring and compassionate people, even greater. You too can use your influence and call four friends who are as financially comfortable as you and create the same donation network.

At the end of the day you may be able to control \$1,500 a month as available cash to be a tremendous blessing to a ministry or community outreach initiative. This in turn may feed, educate or shelter someone as they transition through a very painful period in their life.

There are many financial models known the world over that mirror this scenario. Some are designed as money pyramid systems for personal financial gain and others are designed to empower entire communities. Yours doesn't have to be as elaborate, just enough to be a blessing and fill a need somewhere.

Think of the wonderful release in your spirit you will feel when that charity or childcare organization tells you about the letter they received from a single parent trying to do the right thing. Perhaps

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your contribution made it possible for them to have a place to leave

their children, so they could go out and secure that second job that helped them purchase their first home. It doesn't take much to collectively make a lot happen. Through your consistent gift you are helping someone else arrive at the realization of their purpose. This in turn opens more channels for you and your loved ones to get blessed. In terms of selecting a charity that suits your beliefs and personality, there are many ways of beginning the search. The most efficient and convenient way is to begin with the internet. You can start off by just doing a Google search and type in some key phrases. One great resource is the United Way as well as the United Way International. If you like more of a grass roots approach to altruism then you can try many of the web sites for ethnically focused charities such as Hispanic, African-American, Native American, Asian American and so on.

If you were a successful business leader who is now retired, I strongly suggest getting involved with SCORE, the Service Corps of Retired Executives. This worldwide organization is the superlative link between corporate America and the small business owner.

If you desire to work with an ecumenical organization, you can start with doing a Google search on church organizations or the National Council of Churches. Again, here you can search specifically for organizations that cater to specific faiths and cultural orientation.

If you are not that familiar with using Google and the rating system of search engines such as Google, Yahoo, etc., it is very simple. The web sites that appear very prominently at the top of the search engine page have most likely paid for that position much like a commercial. Besides those, you will find that the names may continue for several pages. You may find that they repeat after the first five pages or so. The order in which they appear is predicated on how many other listings they receive across the net. Consider web crawlers that serve these search engines as a popularity contest. As they crawl the web every few weeks to update listings they rank these sites according to the ones that appear in the most places across the web. I encourage you to check at least the first five pages or until you see the same names repeating. Take your time and try punching in different phrases and terminology associated with your  
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interest until something that suits you comes up. Then simply come up with what you want to give and in what apportionment, then contact them.

Bear in mind that if you don't see anything on the internet that suits your liking, then you can call your local Better Business Bureau or your local city or state government to get a listing of their nonprofit organizations. You can usually get these listings on line by logging onto your local dept of state.gov, i.e. (www.ny.gov). Giving to a charity does not only have to be as a result of a personal challenge

or tragedy. These organizations are there to deliver services to those who need them most and we should embrace that notion as a common thread for the common good.

### ***BECOME A MENTOR***

Now if you want to be a blessing to a young person, then consider mentoring a young child or young adult through the various programs supported through the YMCA, The United Way, Boys and Girls Club, National Urban League, the NAACP and so on. The individual who opened my eyes to the world of communications as an art form and the industry itself is a gentleman by the name of Bob Slade. Bob is the award winning News Director who is known as the architect of how radio news is delivered in a music intensive environment, which is the lion's share of the radio stations in this country. Bob has arguably met, influenced or interviewed virtually every major celebrity on this planet over the last 35 years. Among his countless awards is the George Foster Peabody Award which is the oldest and most prestigious award for the electronic media. I met Bob when I was 15 years old and he told me then, that I had what it takes to be a star.

At that age and the issues going on in my life, someone offering me such encouragement is truly like the Mahalia Jackson lyric, "A rainbow in the sky". One year later, I was writing news stories and co-producing talk shows. My shining moment was when the legendary Nelson Mandela was freed from prison and made a trip to New York City. Bob used me as one of his field reporters on the streets of Bedford Stuyvesant, New York. My role was to stand at a

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pay phone and chronicle Mr. Mandela's movements as he left Boys and Girls' High School on Fulton Street as his motorcade passed through the throngs of people. ***Bob showed me how to use words and details to paint the most creative picture for the mind of the listeners. He always told me to remember that when you turn on that microphone or get in front of that camera, that you are only talking to one person. His hard critique would sometimes leave welts on my ego, but his unyielding ability to recite facts and history about virtually every topic known to man, astounded me and quickly numbed the pain. Never in my life have I met a more gifted man than he.***

As a writer, actor, producer and motivational speaker, I have always based my performance on the premise of, "would Bob approve this?" At this point, I have confidence in myself, but this is the impression that one man has made on my life. His time and effort invested in me and the scores of other young hopefuls in broadcasting is represented by dozens of faces seen and heard on electronic media across this nation. To this day in New York City, Bob's weekly live radio talk show called "The Open Line" is responsible

for influencing and holding accountable our entire national leadership structure and the media that supports their platform. Never underestimate the power of your story and the significance of your affect on someone.

### ***Intercessory Prayer***

How refreshing it is to know that even when you give up or are unaware of an impending circumstance, that somebody has your back. Many of us have achieved our level of greatness purely or greatly due in part to the prayers of someone else. We have all heard the adage about having a praying grandmother or mother. Sometimes we make it through a trial or an attack from life and wonder, how did we get out of that one? God sometimes places people in your life who will have no other visible significance to you other than to pray for you. These are people who are not in this thing called life for what they get out of it or receive from other people. These exceptional people feel a burden for mankind to intercede through prayer and supplication. The makeup of an intercessory prayer person or warrior as they are called is to first be selfless. They possess a gift to sacrifice their needs on hand and totally give themselves over to prayer when they feel the spiritual unction to do so. A prayer warrior does just that, they take on the spiritual warfare necessary for your success and when necessary, your life. This is giving from a distance at its best.

A prayer warrior prays for those about to go under anesthesia before having surgery. They pray for not only a positive outcome, they pray for the surgeon, the personnel in the operating room and the families involved. A prayer warrior not only prays for the financial crisis on Wall Street and the banking industry, they also pray for the homeowners about to lose their home to foreclosure. A prayer warrior intercedes for the worker about to be laid off and the lives that will be affected by this loss of income. A prayer warrior prays for the leader of their country and asks God to give that leader wisdom and compassion, regardless of whether they agree with his or her politics or party affiliation. Prayer warriors pray for their leader on the job whether they like their leadership style or not. Prayer warriors are able to press beyond the circumstances in their personal lives and pray for the common good of all mankind. Prayer warriors pray for circumstance in far reaching places of our world that they may never see or hear of.

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These people know that the fate of the world literally rests on their shoulders. God will move on the behalf of prayer when the prayer is said with the complete conviction and belief, that God and only God will move on that action based on His word. God will not move on someone praying for President Smith to die because he cut

spending on the space program. Nor will God move on your behalf if you ask Him to bless you with the keys to a brand new Bentley to show off to your friends. Our God is a substantive God with preconditions and care to everything He does.

If you think that you have been an intercessory prayer warrior and want to use this gift in a more unified fashion, then consider formulating a similar network of intercessory prayer partners, like I suggested concerning charitable giving. These individuals can be assigned various areas of life to pray and various times of day to pray. For instance depending on how many people you have, you can assign different days for different topics. Monday can be the day for our leaders in politics and corporate America. Tuesday can be for marriages and Wednesday can be for our children and our youth overall. Thursday can be for all nations and their poor, their sick and their hungry. Friday can be a day of total worship and praise to God for just being who He is and for what He has done.

These are just simple examples. There are some intercessory prayer circles that are created to benefit just one person and one topic. For instance, a pastor on a mission trip to a war torn foreign land; this prayer circle may be comprised of 24 people who take turns praying for one hour every day until his or her return. Other prayer circles may change according to the need and they meet weekly or agree on a spiritual cue from the Lord about what the need is and they move on it. To be an intercessory prayer partner, you must first have clean hands. Other words, your spirit must be free from clutter, secret sin and unresolved and unrepented issues. Like a blocked artery in the body, God can not move through you if you have blockages of sin and disobedience obstructing your intimacy with Him.

Don't fool yourself into thinking that just because you want to see AIDS abolished because it threatens the life of your lover or loved one, that God will place the serum at your feet because you asked. God will not be mocked.

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Here are some quick tips for intercessory prayer warriors:

1. It may be a great service to your church to link up with their prayer ministry and hone this gift through corporate prayer.
2. Speak with the leader of this prayer group and ask their counsel on the best way to support such a ministry, or begin a specific ministry that just prays for certain areas
3. If your church doesn't have an intercessory prayer ministry, maybe it is your purpose to start one. In the event that they decline your offer, it doesn't mean that God has denied your gift. This area of ministry does not require headship from your pastor. This gift is simply mandated from God Himself.
4. The reference page of this book is replete with bible passages

and suggested readings that speak of prayer, its requirements and advantages.

5. Search the scriptures and research passages that speak on consecration and fasting. It may be advisable to meet with your pastor or respective church leader to get some guidance on moving forward in this crucial area of ministry. If there is no support here, then refer to the second part of number three and use the research guides offered on the references page of this book. Be cautious when using the internet to research items of a spiritual nature unless you can validate the source as being genuinely rooted in the bible. Many are led astray by false doctrines and those seeking a platform to mislead.

### ***What goes around...***

It is a universal principle regardless of which faith you subscribe to that says whatsoever a man soweth he reapeth. Simply put, what ever you do, good or bad, may not only come back to bless or plague you, it may also do the same to those you love. Generational blessings and generational curses are not just folklore, they are the real deal. We will cover that aspect more in detail in the chapter called Breaking Generational Curses.

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But you should know that the kind deeds that you do consistently out of the pureness of your heart, can also be the insurance premium on the policy of kindness that life shows toward your loved ones when you are not in the vicinity to safeguard them. The things I do that are a blessing to the people I come into contact with are the same things I would like to know that someone will one day do for my wife, my mother, siblings and especially my children.

Here's a good time to take note of the things you do for people on a regular basis. If you were miraculously placed in a distant land and your ability to return to your family was predicated on the kindness you share and the connections you make with the people, would your family ever see you again? For some, an exercise like this would come quite naturally. While with others, they would either resort to panic mode or do what they have to do to get by. Have you ever had someone do something kind for you, just because? Maybe it was letting you go before them on a long line or maybe someone let you merge into the flow of traffic instead of you having to wait until God knows when.

There are numerous studies by New York University, Duke University as well as Stanford University that speak to the fact that we as Americans are 28% percent less likely, over the past 20 years, than our European counterparts, to connect with each other. In England the pub is a major staple in their culture for socializing. In fact it is as much a part of their culture as movie rentals are in ours. The purpose behind the pub is to gather and talk and blow off some

steam and get to know your neighbor. In certain countries there is no purpose for the term “My personal space”, because they don’t fear the word or the concept of TOUCH. We as Americans have this 18” perimeter that we feel is a safe proximity to someone we are engaging in conversation who we do not know well. If someone leans over to us to say something and breaches that perimeter, then we feel violated.

In our country, stress is one of the top three killers among adults. The reasoning behind this is that stress is one of the key factors of heart disease. As Americans, we consume and over indulge in order to cope. All too often, that which we consume slowly kills us. We cover this area in greater detail in our chapter called *Maintaining The Power of Perspective*

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the Total Package. We don’t vent to each other about our problems and burdens, especially when we reach a certain economic status or level of academia. With life’s accouterments comes pride. The bible says pride comes before a fall and the Lord resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. If this sounds like you my friend, please understand that I am not beating up on you. I simply want you to live freely without weights and false boundaries otherwise you become just another E&M scenario discussed in Chapter One.

There are those of us who live life in excellence. They walk a circumspect life seemingly in all areas. They may have perfect credit and have never had a traffic citation. We all know these people. They either have been married to the same person for a long time or have exactly 2.3 children with the perfect home and career, or they are the most eligible bachelor or bachelorette looking for their perfect match. If this is the pinnacle of life for these individuals, I say, to God be the glory for what He has done in their life. They have either gotten there through hard work, fate or fright. I know a lot of folks with the picturesque life from the outside, but they all have cracks on the inside that the yearly paint and patch job cannot hide.

So you’re probably wondering, why I chose the word fright? The fright aspect of this scenario, I totally get, because getting connected with people brings a lot of disappointment, drama and pain. Quite frankly who needs it, right? Being afraid of getting hurt by people or being less than perfect, in any aspect of life, can be terrifying to some of us. Some of these picturesque life styles are some of the most fragile from the inside looking out. That brings me back to the legacy issue. If you don’t invest any of your time, talent or substance in any other part of humanity than yourself, then what is the proof that you were ever here? You will find that life has no reason to give back to you. Think of it this way, if life is a basic seed and you don’t contribute any time or attention to any living aspect of it, rather than the superficial, then all you will reap is the superficial. If you give it attention, nurturing and warmth, then you will yield these rewards

accordingly. You can easily liken this to the parable of the talents in the bible as told by Jesus in (Mathew 25:14-30)

This passage of scripture is so significant to purpose and giving of yourself that I decided to print it in its entirety.

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“For *the kingdom of heaven is* like a man traveling to a far country, *who* called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. <sup>15</sup>And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, <sup>m</sup>to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. <sup>16</sup>Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. <sup>17</sup>And likewise he who *had received* two gained two more also. <sup>18</sup>But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money. <sup>19</sup>After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

<sup>20</sup>“So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ <sup>21</sup>His lord said to him, ‘Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were <sup>n</sup>faithful over a few things, <sup>o</sup>I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into <sup>p</sup>the joy of your lord.’ <sup>22</sup>He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ <sup>23</sup>His lord said to him, <sup>q</sup>‘Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into <sup>r</sup>the joy of your lord.’

<sup>24</sup>“Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. <sup>25</sup>And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, *there* you have *what is* yours.’

<sup>26</sup>“But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You <sup>s</sup>wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. <sup>27</sup>So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. <sup>28</sup>So take the talent from him, and give *it* to him who has ten talents.

<sup>29</sup>‘For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. <sup>30</sup>And cast the unprofitable servant <sup>u</sup>into the outer darkness. <sup>v</sup>There will be weeping and <sup>w</sup>gnashing of teeth.’

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Jesus is simply telling us that we need to be good stewards of everything God gives us naturally and supernaturally, until His return when He claims all that is rightfully His.

Find a place between aloof and genuinely engaged that fits what

God placed you here for. Sometimes it can start as easily as returning phone calls and emails from those in your past that you started to cut off and alienate. There is nothing wrong with checking in with people every now and then, just to say “Hey”. In fact it’s perfectly okay for you to manage their expectations by prefacing the discussion with “I don’t have much time, but I just wanted to return the courtesy of your call by saying hello”. As the blood in your veins warms up after practicing this a few times to the dial tone or a blank computer screen, try actually doing it. Start off by saying, “Hey, I was thinking of you and realized I’ve never returned your last call. I actually don’t have a great reason other than I’m glad I’m talking to you now. So please don’t beat me up for not calling or writing sooner”. This normally takes the bite and the anvil and sickle out of their reach.

You may be relieved to hear that after a second or two of them gasping for air, that they are actually happy to hear from you too. If you focus your existence and the basis of your relationships on the premise of creating, contributing and healing; then your life will become a conduit for God to work contribution and healing in your own life. This, my friend will enlighten your perspective through the tough times and connect you with the heart of God.

### ***Think Bilingual***

We are one people living on one planet under an open heaven. The diverse world we live in observes, processes and reacts in many different ways and in many different languages. Even men and women communicate about the same issue differently. One of the most intriguing things I’ve always admired about multi-linguists is their ability to think in more than one language. My wife and I have so many friends who are multi-lingual that we decided to learn Spanish together, again. We both took classes in high school and I actually learned it quite well, but as the saying goes, if you don’t use it, you lose it, so we are learning it again. There are so many situations today in our ever increasing multi-cultural society that call for people who are multi-lingual.

Our nation’s library system is enriched with an almost limitless array of resources for learning about other cultures, their customs and their languages. These resources are free for the most part and are available in abundance. **Use** our library system to learn about world history, foods, art and music. **Learn** about why other people wear certain clothes and hair styles. Use knowledge as a sword to cut down the forest of ignorance that spreads like a thick fungus across our land.

We are one people under an open heaven. God has not created a segregated heaven as how man has created a segregated world. We will all find out whom God is and by what name He wants to be

called. But until then, should we not agree that He is a God of love and redemption? Use our library system and the internet to learn

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about world religions and how they worship God. I am not asking Christians to abandon their beliefs but at least understand the world around us. **Remember** people don't care about how much you know until they know how much you care. Showing someone that you care about them as a people shows your authenticity and relevance. There are countries and cultures that are totally unlike what we have enjoyed and grown accustomed to as Americans. We do a tragic disservice to our lives by only allowing the television through reality TV shows to display these cultures through filters of prejudice and opportunistic views. Even if we never have the money or resources to travel to these foreign lands, we owe it to ourselves to read and learn about a distant land. If you can't get to the library for any reason, use the internet and do a Google search and learn why the Virgin Islands are called the Virgin Islands. **Find** out why certain countries impose quotas on how many children a family can have. **Learn** why certain cultures deem it as unacceptable for a woman to shake a man's hand or look him in the eye. **Grow** to understand why certain cultures cover a woman's body from head to toe. Teach your children what their peers in Asia are learning in school. Help them understand that there is a boy or girl in another country who will one day be their friend, their spouse, their subordinate or their boss. **Begin** to understand the people who live and work around you by first learning about where they come from. Show your God that you are greater than your faults and your circumstances by embracing all His children through all your differences. **Become** God's personal Ambassador to every nationality you meet. Greet them by the proper pronunciation of their name and if you don't know, ask them and actually make an effort to say it until you say it right. If He hasn't already, the Lord may one day bless you with the resources to travel to another country and personally embrace this culture and its people.

### **MAX**

My neighbors, we'll call Mike and Anita have a daughter we'll call Maria. Anita is a classically trained pianist and teaches piano and keyboards out of her home. Mike works for one of the theme

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parks here in Central Florida and has for over 20 years. They are both the model of what you would think American culture to be, hard working and strong believers in ideals, their faith and their family. Mike and Anita decided to adopt a boy from Russia named Max. The process took about three years going back and forth to Russia with all the red tape, no pun intended. Mike and Anita stayed

the course even though it looked bleak at times. Finally, after about a month long trip to Russia, Max came to his new home in the United States just in time for his 14<sup>th</sup> birthday. It just so happens my son Aaron's birthday was being held on the first Saturday Max was home. I invited Max so he could be a part of all the fun. There must have been about 20 children ages 4 to 16.

Max is a gifted athlete, so he fit in perfectly with all the athletic games the kids enjoyed at the party from soccer to football and baseball. I even asked him to show off his gymnastic flips and handstands to everyone. Right after Aaron opened his birthday gifts', I presented Max with his very own gift of a fancy blue soccer ball. Mike told me he loves soccer and blue is his favorite color. We sang happy birthday to Max and he was blown away when he opened the gift bag. He almost started to cry. The remarkable thing is that Max does not speak any English and Mike and Anita only speak a few words in Russian. You would never know this by the way he played with everyone and how they all embraced him. This is one of those moments that blessed me more than it blessed anyone else. Max is now like another member of our family too. This opportunity to be relevant made Jesus even more relevant to me and I think to everyone else at the party as well. I commend Mike and Anita for reaching out beyond their comfort zone to extend their huge heart across the globe. If you do not have kids of your own or want more children, please consider adoption as an option. You will literally change your perspective and the destiny of a child forever. My wife and I have seriously discussed it and will begin the process shortly. Obviously, there are a myriad more ways one can choose from in order to give. You may be a hiring manager or senior level executive who has the autonomy to hire the under dog. Another way of giving of yourself would be offering the opportunity to someone who is much older or heavier than most applicants. Let's be honest, as base

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less and as superficial as it is, we all know of organizations that hire based on certain esoteric criteria. Maybe all their hires resemble Marilyn Monroe with blonde hair, blue eyes and flat tummies. There are organizations where you must be built like a music video vixen with olive skin and slightly ethnic features. For men it's no different, we too are discriminated against. Some places only want men with chiseled features, a six pack and ripped muscles.

In almost all these scenarios, we have all experienced new hires that truly got there on their looks. Please do not get insulted or misconstrue my point. I am not saying that hiring a senior or someone who is over weight should be viewed as a charity case. Many of these individuals are the most experienced and most qualified. Our culture has just become more steeped in the cover rather than the content. We should look for ways to deviate from this societal deficiency and

sew seeds back into cultural and social diversity.

Here's something we all can contribute; my mother always taught me the importance of keeping a clean house and being self sufficient as a man. During the time that it took to build The Healing Continuum.com and to write this book I was at home almost two years. Although I took on consultant jobs here and there, my wife was certainly the one bringing home the consistent paycheck. Although we knew this was the direction the Lord was taking us, I made it a point that my wife would always come home to a spotless and well maintained home, the bills would be paid, dinner was prepared and our landscaping was the envy of our neighbors. I made it a point to take care of everything that needed my attention immediately. In cases when these items could not be a priority, I made sure not to procrastinate and keep to my promises whenever made. I'm not listing these items to build myself up, but merely to illustrate that I recognized that I needed to pull my weight.

The actions are simple and very much in keeping within my expectation of my duties as a man and an equal contributor to my marriage. In return, this helps to support my wife's continuing and unwavering faith in me and God's vision for our family. It is truly important that you begin your cycle of giving by starting in your home.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# ***YOUR PERSPECTIVE THROUGH YOUR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS***

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*Why we should pray for our children regularly* **M**ost of professions and civil responsibilities in life require formal education or some sort of training, except parenthood. There is no instruction manual filled with troubleshooting instructions and there is no 800 number to call if any defects appear in the manufacturer's design. In an ideal world, our children stay innocent forever and never encounter sexual predators on the Internet, school or a sporting event. Our children also would never contract illnesses that unfairly cut their lives short and take them away from us. In a perfect world, our children never wander away from our care into harm's way. As a parent, we never want to see our child get bullied, teased or treated in any way that would cause them harm. As a parent or caregiver to a child, we secretly dread getting that phone

call from school or daycare saying that our child is sick or injured. Moreover, as parents and caregivers, we don't dwell on the fact that someone in our own family may be the cause to negligently or purposefully cause the harm or injury to our children. According to the National Institute on Mental Health, (<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>), studies have shown that a child's personality traits are essentially

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formed by the age of seven. We have to place a strong emphasis on nurturing within these critical years of our child's development. These years are decisive in determining the kind of people we are bringing into this world and the kingdom of God. Whether we want to admit it or not, our child will one day be someone's husband, wife or parent. The strong, loving and responsible person they become or the dreadful criminal they grow into, is greatly due to our attention to detail and spiritual sensitivity.

### ***Labeling the right jars***

Although our children's lives and souls ultimately belong to the Lord, how we raise them, what we teach them and what we expose them to, is our responsibility. This responsibility is ours until they are adults and are in a position to make their own decisions and prayerfully submit their lives to the service and care of the Lord. The best instructional manual for our kids on being successful in life, is giving them unfettered access to our experiences without judgment or condemnation. Children hate to feel that as parents, we look down on them for any mistakes they make. It is so unjust that when we come into life, we are not accompanied with a manual that we can consult on all the pitfalls of growing and learning in this life of ours. One of the greatest gifts we can give our children is taking the time to explain our lives and our childhood to them, while referencing the bible. Although as parents we don't want our children to repeat the mistakes of our past, we should still not keep the knowledge of those mistakes from them.

Our children deal with the same things that we did not share with our parents. The best way of inoculating your child against your bad mistakes is to give them a dose of some of your bad mistakes and why you made them. Don't subscribe to, "Do as I say not as I do". The fact is your child may already have it inscribed in their DNA to repeat the same situations due to the same bad decisions that you made. With your intervention, you can either abort these bad situations, or at least lessen the blow. Your child's best manual on life is your experience personally explained by you.

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I don't want either of my sons to have two failed marriages before the age of 40 as I did, nor do I want them to go through life trying to fix everyone's problems while searching for acceptance

and validation from false parental figures. So to curtail this, I sit them down regularly and validate their actions and belief systems. They know who they are and they know the roles that people should and should not play in their lives. Only experience can judge character, but with wise counsel they will be on the right path of placing correct labels on jars according to their ingredients. Simply put, we want our children to be able to judge the character of the company they keep, by the fruit that is displayed. With the Lord's help, my sons will understand what it is to be a Christian, an adolescent, a teen, a young adult, a man, a husband, a father and eventually a grandfather.

I was never taught these roles, so I stumbled through life placing the wrong answers with the wrong questions. I constantly got my jar and their labels confused. This awkward shuffle of ideals brought me much tears and great pain. On the outside, I appeared to have it all together, but on the inside, I was a scared kid sitting in the pilot's seat of a fighter jet. My world was fancy and moving fast. I didn't want to push the wrong buttons and be exposed, so I stayed in hiding behind my fake façade of confidence. I'm grateful that God gave me a lot of talent, which made it easier to hide. The whole world, except for me, seemed to have it together, or so I thought. But I later learned that we all held great performances to protect our individual, frail identities. As a parent reflecting now on these famous words, "If I knew then what I know now," I realize I am not always perfect about my strategies and tactics. I am very good at being man enough to tell my sons when I'm wrong and ask their forgiveness.

They are blessed with the grace and kindness to forgive me for those mistakes. The head trips that so many of our children endure become the character traits that haunt their silence and the lives of everyone they touch. Those head trips are created by the spaces we leave to TV, music and the Internet to handle. You will be amazed how much mileage and validation your relationship with your child will get from simple words like, "I'm sorry, will you forgive me?"

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"I don't know how to handle this but let's explore it together so we will both have an active stake in the answers we receive."

Perhaps some of us find it hard to say I'm sorry to our children because we actually think that we are better than our children. Take caution in this because they will soon think themselves better than you as well. Humility cannot be taught in a lecture series or a book. Humility is taught by assimilation through time and experience.

There was a time we thought the enemy was just waiting on our door steps to unleash an arsenal of attacks on our children, to enslave their minds and spirits for the rest of their lives. But the truth is, the enemy is already in the minds of our children by way of the things they see and hear during the day from other kids at school, the television,

radio and the Internet. These seeds take root and lay dormant for years before they start exposing themselves in various characteristics that may alarm us. By then, it's already too late and our kids are out of our households. Unfortunately, we cannot monitor their activities the way we would like to when they are under our roof. As an entrepreneur who works from home, I am blessed with the opportunity to be there for my kids for play dates and volunteer as a chaperone for school occasions such as trips and other events. In these scenarios, I am able to see my children interact with other children in a relaxed environment where they can be themselves. At times, when they are home from school and have friends over, I manage to remain within ear shot while I'm working and get an earful of behavior that is zany and wacky. Sometimes this behavior is typical of children and should be expected, at other times I hear and see behavior that is unacceptable in my household and I quickly step in and correct it. Sometimes my own children surprise and embarrass me. ***This goes to show that we are not always aware of how our children will behave when placed in certain circumstances.***

### ***Affirmations***

One day as my children finished their afternoon snack before beginning their homework, I was in the backyard giving Kenya, our two year old English Mastiff, her daily work out. My ten year old son, Christian, comes to the patio door and tells me someone is at

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the front door. From where I was standing, I could see the front door was wide open and someone was standing off to the side. I quickly admonished him about never opening the door to a stranger, ever. He has heard this lesson from me at least half a dozen times when we discuss home safety, not to mention the half dozen times he has heard it in cub scouts, from school, from the Police Department when they visit his school and from his teachers. Rest assured, he will not make that mistake again.

As a former latch key child growing up in Brooklyn, New York, security awareness in the home is a sermon my wife and three children hear from me regularly. This should illustrate how disappointed I was when Christian opened the door. To Christian's defense, I'm politically active in our community and he's observed me speaking with this person before on a few occasions and saw that she had a friendly face and felt comfortable opening the door. All was well, thank God. Here is one of the many times we thank God for protecting our children even when they are in our care. I later explained that Satan does not show up to trap or hurt us dressed with a red suit, a long tail, pitch fork and fangs dripping with blood. Here's my point, think of the times that Satan desires to set up snares for our children daily but fails. One innocent mistake could have had tragic consequences. Think of the amount of parents, mine included, that leave

their children at home or outside playing unsupervised for hours on end. Once again, we are not in control of the circumstances that our children face daily. Our only assurance is our constant prayer and affirmations to an all knowing and all powerful God for their protection.

I have prayerfully assembled some affirmations, which are essentially positive assertions. The bible speaks clearly about the power of life and death being in the tongue. These positive assertions are of vital importance to a parent or caregiver to say over and to your child as you brush or comb their hair. It is important that you speak these words of life into their spirit to help combat the filth that ravages their soul constantly. If you are not with your child as they leave for school, you can say these affirmations over their clothes as you do their laundry, review their homework or fix their meals. If you are not able to do any of the above, start immediately. If you

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don't make the time to spiritually cover your children, Satan has a capable task force who will. Whenever possible, let your child hear these words of healing and strength as a positive reinforcement. You decide which ones are age and situation appropriate.

***While brushing or combing their hair or tending to their personal hygiene***

***1. Father, keep him safe. Guide his thoughts, strengthen and grow his mind, buffer his eyes and ears from damaging thoughts and spiritual attacks. Let your hands of protection keep him safe as he walks through his day. Let all evil smell your blood all about him and keep clear of everything and everyone he comes into contact with, In Jesus name.***

***Amen***

***2. Lord, keep a hedge around her as she walks through the many areas and circumstances that I cannot govern with my love. Keep her mind focused on your presence. Let her mind be at ease in knowing that nothing can confront her without your permission. Guard her heart and her mind against the mental attacks of the enemy regardless of the form he may manifest. Remind her of the love in her home. In Jesus name. Amen***

***3. Lord, as he leaves my care, remind us both that we are always in your care. Ease any burdens or worries concerning the day that he may have. Open up his mind to remember and think freely. Let the answers flow easily and bring great peace and relief. In Jesus name.***

***While tending to their laundry or picking up personal items from the floor.***

***1. Lord, everything that touches them belongs to you. Lord, let this even be an extension of your love, guidance and***

***protection. Let your presence and protection be all around***

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***them. Let them feel your presence and instruction as they would if I were personally holding their hand. In Jesus name, Amen***

***2. Father, let them even smell a familiar presence that they will know as being you. Teach them to rely on you in your certain and personal way. Let the teachings of responsibility take root in their soul so that it will benefit you to your glory. In Jesus name. Amen***

***3. Father, keep after them as you have me. Keep after them with discipline and determination. Let them strive for excellence in everything they do. In Jesus name. Amen***

### ***Affirmations and prayers for teens***

If you have a teen, you probably think they are more dysfunctional than you ever were. Teens today are so much more sophisticated than the teens of previous generations because they have access to so much more information than their parents had as teenagers. The average teen can access tutorials on the net that range from oral sex to constructing a pipe bomb. If your child is really gifted in chemistry, they can even produce home made hallucinogens and other drugs for recreational purposes.

Our teens are also under demonic attacks of unprecedented proportions. If we as adults and parents don't safeguard their exposure, we run the risk of losing them spiritually and emotionally forever. Think of what went on in the minds and the spirits of the boys who committed the heinous crimes on those innocent students and their families on the school campuses in Columbine High School in 1999 and Virginia Tech in 2007. To most of us those news stories are just that, but to the families, they were personal tragedies that are still recent. Now imagine what the families of the gunmen must feel knowing that they somehow failed to understand the demonic attack their children were under. We don't have the luxury and the time to fold our arms and shake our head in judgment or shame. Satan is playing for points and his time is running out. There are grieving

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parents today who thought they had time on their side and were faced with the cold reality of having to bury their child.

Satan doesn't just want your child isolated and indifferent toward you and what you represent. He wants your child dead and out of the way. As a bonus, he would greatly appreciate stealing your love for God and your faith that He is still a healer and a redeemer.

I deal with parents on a continuum who come to me for counseling who don't know where to turn and what to do next. The next level of contention becomes apathy and eventually bitterness toward

life and to God. This is similar to how good marriages go sour. Both partners turn their backs to each other and fold their arms in a deadlock. The difference here is that you didn't bring your spouse into the world.

Your relationship with your teenager is or should be a spiritual one, which is why in so many cases, teens and parents become adversarial. Remember our discussion on ***Forced Perspective*** and teach it to your child. Let them know that everything that appears before them is not real and should not be taken as such. Satan will never present the truth in total, he can only present a part of the truth and the rest is a complete lie. Teach them how to have a ***Controlled Perspective*** through daily prayer. Right now as I write this, the church I am greatly involved in is having our mid-week student ministry night. On average there are approximately 450 teens from our city, who in many cases don't even attend our church. They are gathered to sing, dance, praise and worship the spirit of the Most High God. When the Word goes forth, the altar is filled with sobbing young people who are redeemed from some chains that they shouldn't even be carrying. Many then decide to join our church because they are hearing for the first time in their life about who and what they are. The stories I hear from these teens and their parents would bring tears to your eyes. ***If your teen is not involved in a youth ministry, find one. With the Internet as a resource, we have no excuse for not finding one. God forbid, if your doctor told you that you need to find a specialist for the deadly disease of which you were diagnosed, I bet you would blow up your computer keyboard and go blind while trying to read every word written on your disease. The***

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***same is true for your child. They are under an attack but the symptoms have yet to show.***

One of the gifts the Lord has blessed me with is the altar call and the ministry of deliverance. While ministering at an altar call in New York City, I met a young lady who approached me as I was praying for parishioners. She came to me and whispered in my ear that when she leaves the service tonight, she will have no home to go and no where to sleep. She said the reason for this is that her mother insisted that she continually succumb to her step-father's sexual advances so that he will continue to provide her mother with drugs and pay the bills. The daughter was encouraged to come out to the service by a friend, and told her mother that last night was her last night of living in hell.

She told her mother that she believed that if she went to church that night that their lives would be changed forever. Her mother said, "If you walk out that door, then you may as well leave your keys and take your stuff." The girl did just that. She pointed to a duffle bag right where she was sitting. I looked into that child's eyes and

asked her for her age and she told me; instantly the wells of my eyes filled to overflowing as the sorrow of 10 nations gripped my heart. I quickly began to pray in tongues and believed God for a miracle as I held her weeping and shaking body in my arms. The prayer lines were getting longer and I knew I had to allow the Lord to finish a work in this young lady's heart and rectify this situation with at least some place for her to spend the night.

The Lord told me to look up and to the right and I noticed a woman who I knew to be a plain clothed police detective. I motioned for her to come over and I whispered the situation in her ear and asked her to take the girl to the side and help her out. It was at least two-hours later before all on the prayer lines were prayed for. I gave the benediction and started back to the pastor's study to change my clothes and leave. I heard my name being called, and there was the sweet little face of the young lady whose story drove me to tears.

The detective came over with her and told me they found her a safe house for the night which serves battered women and children. The young lady told me she knew that if she came that God would fix it

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for her. I hugged her and the detective once again and encouraged them both and said good bye.

I went back to the pastor's office and fell to the floor in tears and worship. I had no clue what to do for this girl except that I would have to call the police and risk her safety. Neither she nor I had a clue how this evening would end. We just knew that the Lord would fix it.

***How many times have we gone to the Lord with that attitude and no plan B, knowing that God would fix it? The answer to that question is, not enough. If those of us with troubled relationships with our teens would simply go to our teens humbly saying, "I don't want to lose you or have you lose your love and respect for me. Let's agree to go to God together and see what He says about all of this". Let your teen know that this is may not take place in the time frame of a song on their I Pod or the time it takes to text someone. This will be a process.*** I am a strong supporter of therapy and resources for parents and teens. The American Psychological Association's Web Site, [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org), has an immense archive of research and articles on virtually every topic that would benefit you and your teen.

Try exploring the Web Site together and have them select the articles that they want to read up on and take note of what your teen selects. Be sure to read those articles in addition to the ones you select for yourself. A good idea is to read your articles and report back to each other within a day or two to share thoughts. If you find that your time is free to explore this material at that point, then you should seize the moment.

I also have some affirmations and prayers that you can say to and for your teen.

***Say these prayers over their motor vehicles, I PODS, laptops, PC's, cell phones, etc.***

***1. Lord, I thank you for the safe travels and protection for my child through dangerous streets and the situations that may distract them. Father, keep them safe and covered under your blood. Cause no harm or danger to come to***

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***them. Keep them focused and disciplined as they drive to their every destination. In Jesus name. Amen***

***2. Lord, I claim this device for your glory. Lord let the hands and the souls that touch this be convicted every time this device is used contrary to your will. Father, create opportunities for my child to see and hear your Word in the music and the Web Sites they download. Father, confound the enemy at every juncture he attempts to compel evil and sinful actions. Father, I ask that you give my child confirmation or conviction according to your will in everything they do. In Jesus name. Amen.***

Words are the most powerful tools in the universe. This is how God brought everything as we know it into creation. He spoke the words "LET THERE BE" and there was. Most of us constantly speak condemnation into our lives by the words we speak and the words we speak to our children. We should stop sealing their fate by condemning them. Stop yelling affirmations like "You are so irresponsible", "You are so careless", "You are so much like your father or mother" or "Wait 'til you have kids of your own". These phrases burrow themselves into your child's spirit and their destiny as seed of blight and failure. You once thought that your child was a gift from God, so what happened? Did they fail you or did you just not understand how to raise someone who is either just like you, or unlike you. Either way, the onus is on us to teach and to correct our child.

You can speak death, illness and misfortune to your child as easily as you can say your name. As a parent, it is vital that we use our tongue to speak love, healing, restoration, forgiveness and the favor of God into the lives of these children. It's never too late to start. Forget the hurtful things you've said. ***Go to your child and simply say, "I've been wrong all of those times when I said those hurtful things to you. The fact is, I don't want to die knowing that I've failed you by not loving you unconditionally. I especially don't want any harm to come to you because of anything I said or did in anger. I'm sorry, and if you would forgive me, I will promise to***

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*turn my attitude around and love with my words as well as with my heart*". You can start today, my friend. Don't risk the chance that you will be one of those parents spending the rest of their lives regretting the actions you can change now.

### ***Our daughters***

The research is astounding that points to the fact that our daughters' abilities to successfully navigate their professional and personal relationships in life are predicated on how strong of a role their father had in their life. The nurturing and strength of a father's love is directly tied to his daughter's security within herself and her ability to relate to men. **Through her father's example, that young girl sees the difference between the kind of strength in a man that nurtures, protects and shows vulnerability, from the strength that enslaves, abuses and manipulates.** That young girl will become a young lady who carefully walks the line of femininity, bravado and poise in a world that does not always care to notice the difference. It takes a certain man to illustrate to his young girl when

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it's okay to cry and scream like the little girl she once was. That same man needs to also exemplify to his daughter when it's necessary for her to be the surrogate male image, if she is ever forced to become one of the 13.6 million single parents who are placed in the position to raise young men by themselves. According to U.S. Census Bureau, in August 2007, single parents are responsible for raising 21.2 children and 26% of children under the age of 21. There is an Irish saying that says, "A daughter may outgrow your lap, but she will never outgrow your heart". Fathers, there is a need for us to ignite our dedication as never before to embrace the critical role we play in the lives of our daughters. With rising trends relative to single parent households in our country, our young girls stand a greater need to be equipped and supplemented in more ways than our mothers have ever been. Sit your girls down and explain the games that are played in the single world. Let her know that the devil can have chiseled features and pearly white teeth. Teach her the Golden Rule and how to be honest and respectful while having the confidence to speak her mind. Think of how different this world would be if we truly followed this basic principle.

Let your daughter know that in the words of Duke Ellington, "Life is no crystal staircase", but it does not mean that she should ever stop climbing as though she is the heiress to the throne of her heavenly Father and Lord, Jesus the Christ.

**Show your daughter to read the Word daily so that her spirit will be cultivated by the Holy Spirit and that she is never to put any man before her walk with God!**

## **NOTHING IS SACRED**

For a period of three years I was a single dad, with a tendency to over-compensate. I enrolled my two sons in a private Christian school in hopes that they would be surrounded with the same level of spirituality and discipline during the day that they got from home. I quickly got a wake up call that Christian and private, did not always mean quality. I started to notice that they were coming home with a lot of slang words and dance moves that I know they were not getting from the television at home. Private school was already a

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significant burden financially, so my expectations were high. I spoke to the teacher and eventually the head mistress, but to no avail. I was quickly educated to the fact that just because someone can afford private school, doesn't mean that they are the caliber of person with which you would want your child to associate.

I quickly removed them from this school and placed them in a more prestigious, more expensive Christian school and got my bell rung in a major way. My younger son started to ask me the meaning of certain words that I would not dare repeat on the pages of this book. That was the last straw. I waited until the end of the school year to remove them both and move entirely out of the zip code.

During this time, I went before the Lord as I often did for guidance and asked Him how to handle this situation. His answer to me was swift and strong. Due to the circumstances of my own upbringing, He told me He fashioned me to be a bold and courageous individual who had no fear of man or his circumstances and that I should raise my sons to be the same way. I sat my sons down one weeknight after homework and dinner and had a serious conversation with both of them concerning inappropriate actions and language.

I then commenced to share with them an animated instructional on the inappropriate language and actions of people to stay away from. I then took a deep breath and gave them every single curse word I have ever known or heard from A to Z and even threw in some extra ones for good measure. The shock value alone was enough to knock them off their feet. When I concluded my talk and asked them for their feedback, they looked at each other and then looked at me and burst out laughing hysterically. After a few seconds, I started to laugh myself. To think the very language that would make me blush if I saw it in a movie, I was purposefully spewing into the minds of my children. After the laughter lifted, my older son Christian said, "Daddy, I've already heard some of them and I knew they were inappropriate...but I've never heard \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ before." I explained those were considered "OL Skool cuss words" and this generation may not be up on these yet". They laughed again. The purpose of this exercise was to illustrate to my sons that I am in touch with their world and that there is nothing they cannot tell me

about their lives and experiences. This technique may be a bit too  
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candid for some, but Satan has a way of putting things front row and center to our children. I have found that if a child knows that you can be genuine and are willing to show your humanity, then they are more likely to trust you in their dark moments. The joke was on me as I quickly realized that they had been exposed to these words long before I thought they should be.

### ***DIVORCED AND SINGLE PARENTS***

When I think of the goodness of Jesus and all that he has done for me, my soul cries out Hallelujah, thank you Lord for saving me. These are the words that brought me through the circumstances that opened the door for fear, anger, bitterness and loneliness to creep into my mind while I was a single father. As single parents there really is no time to stop and look at the awesome and demanding task that faces us everyday. Think of it this way, single parents are responsible for:

1. Doing what it takes to keep the family sheltered, clothed and fed
2. Helping with homework assignments and studying for tests
3. Planning birthday parties
4. Having tough discussions and punishing accordingly
5. Taking days off from work to take care of them when sick
6. Taking care of bathing and personal hygiene
7. Kissing and bandaging boo boos
8. Cheering them up and motivating them to take on their world
9. Explaining and answering the questions that reflect their expanding universe
- 10 Explaining the relationship between you and their other parent

There are about another hundred items that you could think up if you had the time to put your mind to it. Often times, we don't make the time to think of the criteria in the job description, especially if there is no one around to give us that pat on the back. As a result,

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some of us may dabble a bit in the pity party scene. For others, the term may be called a reality check. Certainly there are times that there is no other option but divorce. During these times it is critical to try to cushion your children from the shock waves that both you and your spouse will naturally generate.

Many children suffer more from the damage caused during the divorce, than the cause of the divorce itself. Although you are going through the emotional fight of your life, please try to remember that children are truly video recorders and although you may recover

from the words and actions of your spouse, remember that your child is encountering these words and actions from both of you almost simultaneously. Their young hearts and minds do not have the elasticity to bounce back the way we do eventually. These caustic words and actions cut deeper into their existence than it does with us, so the healing process may take longer and require more therapy, love and tenderness. Don't assume that what you see on the outside is a true assessment of what is going on below the surface of your child's heart and mind.

Spend time with your child in a neutral place like a park, their favorite restaurant or just sitting on the couch. Tell your child how sorry you are about all that is happening and that you will try to make things as normal as can be. Give them time to respond and act out, but most importantly pray with them and let them hear you pray in your quiet time. This will help them know that you too are relying on the God that you ask them to rely on. Don't destroy the memory of the other parent for them. If the other parent is truly a bad influence, let time and prayer remove that scar slowly. I strongly suggest taking your child to a therapist, if it is at all financially feasible. If they are below the age of six or five, I suggest seeking a therapist who employs play therapy. For more information, log onto to the American Psychological Association's Web Site, [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org) to locate a therapist in your zip code.

I have personally taken my oldest son to a clinical psychologist after his mother and I divorced and it brought me great peace of mind to know that he was processing the separation quite well. Although he voiced frustration about going back and forth, he soon realized that it was kind of cool to have two homes and two

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bedrooms. Children don't understand the word divorce, they just understand that something very ugly and uncomfortable is hurting and tearing their family apart. Please, please, please do not use your child's innocent ears and mind as a mega phone to voice and vent your frustrations and anger toward their other parent. Take the high road and be mature about this. In spite of your emotions, your primary responsibility is to the well being of your child, not to come out of this on top. You may win the battle but ultimately lose the war for your child's mental and emotional well being. If you must vent, do so responsibly to another adult away from your child or children. If there is no other adult you trust, then place your thoughts on paper and maintain a journal that you keep well hidden. Read it from time to time and chart your healing and development. You may very well find this to be quite therapeutic. Always remember the Lord is a friend that sticks closer than any brother. Beloved, I promise you that if you start talking to the Lord with a contrite heart, He will comfort you with the acknowledgement of His presence.

It's the same way as lying in bed with someone and your backs are turned to each other and you start to speak. Unless they acknowledge you every once in a while with an "Hmmm" or "Yea", you will never be quite sure they are listening or if they have nodded off to sleep. The Lord lets us know He is there just by listening. Our God is so powerful that you know He's there by just the peace that His listening generates. Try to find some quiet time by yourself and talk to the Holy Spirit the same way you would talk to me on the phone and tell Him how you feel and why. Then tell Him that you need Him to give you a fresh perspective on your circumstances so that you may be able to see and think more clearly. Then, take it to another level by asking Him what I do everyday. Ask the Lord to remove your multiple choice options and just steer you in the way you should go. This will cut down on your time and stress.

Now certainly God wants us to show our growth and development by the choices we make, but He also delights in giving us clear direction on His will. Proverbs 3:5 says, "Trust in the Lord with thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding, but in all thy ways acknowledge him and he will direct your path". God has all the answers and direction for your life and He thoroughly desires

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that we ask Him for direction because He delights in multiplying our successes and dividing our failures and sorrow.

While I was a single dad, I found myself yelling at my sons for doing things that normal boys do at their age. Although I remained loving, I became impatient and short at times. As I was carrying on and acting like a lunatic, the Lord would show me the terror in their eyes and reminded me of the terror I felt when my mother behaved the same way. At times, this vision would instantly arrest my behavior and at other times it would hit me later that night or while I was at work. I realized later that my behavior was my anger at myself for putting us all in this position. I found myself going into their bedrooms on the rare occasions that they didn't sleep with me and alternate climbing into their bunk beds and snuggling up with them. My annoying kisses and hugs would eventually wake them long enough for me to tell them that I was sorry and I loved them. The times when this guilt stricken feeling would hit during the day, I would leave work early and pick them up a surprise dinner or toy as a way of saying sorry for being a knuckle head. I explained to them that these meltdowns were not a reflection on them but a character flaw that Daddy had to learn to grow out of. They learned that Daddy makes mistakes just like they do. Just like they don't stop loving me, I too, will never stop loving them.

When my mother and my father finally split up, I would hear my mother shred and assassinate my father's character to me and to her friends. I resented this because although I didn't know my father

well, I still wanted the opportunity at the age of seven to get to know him. I felt this way because he was mine and the only person I could call Daddy. Many of us were never taught the proper way to break up, let alone how to separate from the other parent of our children. Much like our food and other items that are no longer of use to us, we throw them out. This is what we do to people, we throw them out by trashing their memory and everything that was shared, discovered and made, such as our children. What we must embrace is that GOD allows us exposure to things and people to add dimension and character to our life experience repertoire. These trials are to be used to draw us closer to GOD if we diligently seek Him as His Word instructs us (Psalms 121:1-8). Seeking God through our trials, gives

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us the wisdom and ability to make sound choices, thus our children will also benefit from our time and intimacy with GOD.

Our children need to know that they are not the cause of the separation. As adults we need to understand that they are not sophisticated enough to sort, process and communicate their feelings. Play therapy utilizes methods of therapy that allows the child to role play using similar scenarios in their lives that are relatable to their level of intellect and emotional development. Life has enough challenges and pitfalls that make our precious children grow up too fast, so we should do our share to protect their innocence.

If you are an absentee parent, with all due respect, you need to fix this issue. I promised in the first chapter in this book that I would never purposely take an offensive or judgmental tone with you, and I'm not now. Here's why you need to become a part of your child's life: In case you have forgotten how it feels to be a child, it's not easy feeling a certain way when you don't even know how to express yourself or why you are feeling that way. Parents are the backbone of the posture we take in life. Without strong parenting, a child is presented to almost every situation from a position of weakness. They are not sure how to process what they are experiencing or how to react. They then become unsure and lose even more confidence if the outcome is a negative one.

Regardless if you are encountering "Baby Momma Drama", or "Baby Daddy Drama", your child deserves better than your excuses. If you have made mistakes in the past that have caused you to get to this position, then you need to repent to God and your ex-spouse and ask them for a chance to be a part of your child's life. Your child didn't make those mistakes for you and they should not be penalized for your errors. If you are the parent who is in control of the visitation and you know deep down in your soul that your child needs the other parent and the other parent wants to help, then you should also do the godly thing and stop punishing them. What if God were to call you out and expose you for every mistake you make? This is a

sobering thought when you realize that in God's eyes we are merely steps ahead, if at all, of those we judge and treat with scorn.

While on this topic, let me share a huge piece of insight the Holy Spirit gave me when my sons were born. He said to pray for their

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friends, classmates, teachers, instructors, first sweet heart crushes, future girlfriends and wives. I repeat myself for good reason. The enemy repeats his lies, so we should also repeat God's truths. By praying for the lives that will touch your child's, you are purchasing the best insurance policy against the pain and bad experiences you have undergone. You are asking God to shield that person against the harm that they may inflict on your child as a result. You are asking God to keep and nurture that person the same way He would keep your child. Imagine this, your prayer on that person's behalf may be the only prayer that person ever receives in their lifetime. When your child experiences that teacher, friend or lover, they will be spared all the baggage and harm that the enemy wants them to face. Your prayers may even cause circumstances to change so that your child may not even encounter that individual. But if they do, you will know that you sent the Holy Spirit ahead to their path to make it smoother.

Don't keep your child under lock and key and prisoner to your fears that they may end up screwed over and abused the way you possibly were. Release them to God's unchanging and eternal hand of guidance and protection. Otherwise, you run the risk of short circuiting their emotional and social development, the two key ingredients to being able to serve God as an adult. He can safeguard your child better than you ever can. Take it from me, I know firsthand. I love my boys more than life itself, but out of a lack of emotional control, my words may have caused damage that my heart couldn't prevent. The Lord has protected their innocent souls and ears and caused healing before I was ever aware of the possibility of pain. These precious lives didn't ask to come here amidst our bad choices and failed relationships. Children are on loan to us from the Lord until they are old enough to serve Him on their own as adults. Let's try not to give Him back any damaged goods.

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### ***GET INVOLVED WITH YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE***

You send a clear signal to your child's teacher when you show an interest in your child's day-to-day school activities. Surely work and the daily obligations that keep your family afloat keep you busy. But if you spend 30 minutes with your child every evening without interruption that amounts to 2 ½ hours of supervised guidance and support that they would not get otherwise. If you can give an hour,

it would be better. During these 30 minutes, review their class work, tests and sign the necessary correspondence with their teacher. It is even advisable to send notes to their teacher(s) informing them of this time commitment to your child daily. Ask the teacher to suggest the areas in which your child may need extra attention. Don't assume you will know just based on what your child tells you. Most teachers generally enjoy their work in helping our children grow, learn and develop. They obviously don't do it for a big paycheck, although I personally feel teachers should get the same pay as a primary care physician, but that's another story. Your child's teacher and you can form a partnership and a strategy toward achieving and maintaining a consistent level of higher achievement for your child. If your child is struggling academically, you can ask your teacher for some extra credit assignments your child can do to help bolster their grades.

This partnership can entail goal setting and rewards, as well as enforcement and consequences for actions and a lack of commitment. If your child's teacher has not already done so, ask them to send home or email the weekly curriculum for your child. Ask them to inform you as to what level of achievement your child should be. This will help you benchmark your child's development against his or her peers. While you review your child's class and homework, test your child and hold them accountable. Inform your child of this new alliance and assure them that this is not to penalize them but to help them achieve. They will have more confidence in your words when they see that it can also work in their favor relative to rewards. I did this with my sons, Christian and Aaron. If either one of them became too chatty or did not complete their class assignments on

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time, I gave the teacher permission to assign additional homework as the consequence. When they did as told, they received more time doing the activities they enjoyed most.

At home I would enforce or reward these actions as well by permitting them to have more time on the computer visiting safe sites or playing their favorite video game systems. As a consequence, these activities would be taken away. There are also Web Sites you can visit such as Edhelper.com, where you can join for a nominal fee for the year and have access to the same curriculum that many schools use. You will be able to print off work sheets in all the subjects your children have in school, according to grade and difficulty level. In terms of the occasional teacher who may not display the most fair and caring expression toward your child, you should see a notable change once they see that you are an involved parent. These types of teachers tend to give more attention and are more lenient once they feel your child is not a nuisance or a lost cause. If at all possible try to attend at least one school trip during the

school year, even if it means taking a day off. You send a clarion signal of strength and support to your child, the school faculty and any perspective bad influences that your child may be combating. Certainly make sure you attend the parent teacher conferences. Even if your child's teacher says it is not necessary, plan to attend at least one during the year. Plan surprise spot checks of your child's belongings such as I Pods, computer files and Web page history, book bag, notebooks and drawers. Here, the objective is not to try to catch your child in any act against national security, but to help safeguard your child against activities and habits that can develop into major problems and behaviors later on. It is always better to catch a habit or behavior before it becomes problematic or becomes their character.

Spend time reading with your child. If you commit 30 minutes a day of you reading to your child, or allowing your child to read to you, that will equate to approximately 150 hours of reading time during the school year. If your child is a teen or adolescent, the two of you can spend this time playing checkers or exercising together. Even having candid discussions with your teen on issues of relationships, sexuality, race and their future will stimulate them to open up

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and trust you more. That same 150 hours is a bankable investment in your child's academic outcome and personal welfare when you think of all the things you can discover about your child's world. According to research from the National Education Association (NEA), family participation in education was twice as predictive of students' academic success as family socioeconomic status. Some of the more intensive programs had effects that were 10 times greater than other factors. More research from the NEA says that when schools encourage children to practice reading at home with parents, the children make significant gains in reading achievement compared to those who only practice at school.

The APA Web Site is replete with information, studies and resources on dealing with today's child and teens. Let's face it, today's kids are exposed to a whole lot more graphically and sooner in life than we were. The Internet and modern multi-media technology brings a whole universe of STUFF to their front door that we had to search hard for when we were their age.

Let's not continue to use 18<sup>th</sup> century remedies to combat 21<sup>st</sup> century ills. Our kids need to see a consistent method of care and attention. Believe it or not, therapists say that children actually need to have parameters set for them continuously in order for them to feel that they are loved and cared for. Children of parents who don't pay them attention run into more difficulty with authority and guidelines later on down the road.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# ***YOUR PERSPECTIVE THROUGH MARRAIGE***



*The foundation* **W**hen one hears the phrase, “Praying for your spouse,” it almost connotes the idea that you are praying for someone other than yourself. However, in the eyes of the Lord, you and your husband or wife are one. In fact, the Lord says, “*So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh*”. (Ephesians 5:28-30).

As you see, the Lord has a profound respect for the marriage union, so much so, He likens the marriage of a man and woman to His marriage to the church body. For many of us, this is a concept that is difficult to grasp. But consider that God sees His triunity as one body and consequently views husband and wife as one.

In the Garden of Eden, God wanted fellowship with man and created Adam after He established the heavens and the earth. He appointed Adam to name the earthly creations and then gave Adam a wife because He felt man should not be alone. Adam could very easily have told God that he just wanted it to be him and God here in *The Power of Perspective*

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paradise, but he welcomed Eve into his life and had charge over her. He then blamed Eve for the fact that she gave into Satan. But notice in the scripture (Gen 3:6-7) that Adam was right there with her when she ate of the fruit and brought sin onto man. Adam could have taken that charge that God gave him over the woman and told her to stop this immediately and they could have walked away. But He didn't. God saw the sin as one act against all humanity and punished all the generations to come.

God did not punish just Eve for the infraction; He punished Adam as well because they were one flesh in His eyes. Two people made a critical mistake that changed the fate of civilization for the next 6,000 years. This is the same way our decisions as married couples impact lives we may never be aware of.

From the time we are children, we are taught to be territorial by putting labels on items that belong to us so that they won't be confused with some other child's. As we grow up, the same

teaching intensifies as we understand the importance of protecting our personal information from identity theft. Unless you've grown up with a large nuclear family with siblings, it becomes difficult to understand the premise of being a part of someone else. With half the marriages in the U.S. ending in divorce today, it is no wonder that perhaps we as a nation still don't understand this concept. Many of us marry for different reasons. Fortunately and unfortunately, the requirements to get a gun or adopt certain species of animals are more stringent than the criteria for getting married. If all the crazy people who get married for crazy reasons could claim a gun along with getting rice thrown at them, we would be a society with a funeral home next to every supermarket. Marriage is a covenant that God established for man and woman regardless of what popular culture tells us. Of course, friendship is a bond that we all need, but there is something to say about a bond that God created in the Garden of Eden. This is a bond that we can share in the good times and bad times. This is also a bond that God intended for us to maintain during times of health and times of sickness.

For many in these economic times, marriage is a bond that can stretch, cover and feed to make ends meet. Marriage is a bond that

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God intended to last until the life of one departs from this existence to another and the two is now one, left behind.

### ***Where am I?***

Our culture is filled with more options than we know what to do with. Just click on the options button on any of the new and exciting technological gadgets we have today, such as cell phones, TVs and gaming systems. Hit the Options icon and a whole array of universal opportunities are opened to you; you can click and click and click to the point where you forget where you are. At the bottom of your menu is another option that takes you back home or you can always "X out". The ability to start over allows you to quickly exit if you end up somewhere you had no business being in the first place, had it not been for your curiosity or stubbornness. We sometimes keep clicking although we know we have no clue what we are doing and even when we have completely botched everything up; when we can no longer cover our failures, we quickly teleport back to another. This "X-Out" option allows us to innocently leave behind all the mess and confusion we have created. It's getting a bit hard to cite the lines of demarcation between metaphors and reality. Some of us use this same rationale when dealing with our responsibilities in our relationships.

Putting political party affiliations aside, we as a country need to tread very carefully about whose rights we protect and who we want raising our children. We cherish the inalienable rights this great land was built on, but we scoff at what our children watch on TV, music

videos, the Internet and the underground. Simply put, throughout history we have always used music as the social barometer for what is on the minds and hearts of people. Here's a question for you. Where have all the love songs gone? Are we at a loss for how much we can degrade the human body, the word love and the terms husband and wife? Today's music is telling us that we don't care about your abilities, your depth of character or scope of thinking. We just care about who you know, how good you look and how open minded you're willing to be. That's fine for a particular sect of modern culture because diversity of thought is truly what makes *The Power of Perspective*

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this country so great. But to say that this mantra defines a nation is frightful.

One of the greatest additions to the visual technology platform is the creation of Photoshop; the ability to augment an image in a virtually undetectable manner. We can now change our photo to remove dark circles from under our eyes, some blemishes and get a complete nip and tuck without the risks and painful recovery. Then we get to upload that picture to some of our online dating sites so that we can increase our chances of attracting another aesthetically pleasing candidate. A poignant question is whether we are willing to put the same time and effort into changing our inward blemishes and character make-up for the better, so we can keep the person we attract?

The answer for most will be a resounding, "NO, because that takes too much work and if they can't deal with the real me, there's more where they came from".

We say the same with marriage. "If they can't deal with me, then I'll move on. When I meet the next person, I'll simply embellish the story to make it seem as though the fault lies with my ex".

James Mtume, a prolific Grammy Award winning song writer and celebrated social and political commentator once told me that there are three sides to every story: Yours, Mine and the Truth.

If you really want to see God move in the social strata of your life, try to live your life as though your every action is being broadcast on Utube. You will live a more circumspect life. The great thing is, the Lord isn't U-tube. He isn't documenting our actions and thoughts to later bring shame and ridicule to our lives for the entire world to see. He simply wants us to be honest about who we are and who we are not. The fact is we can't fool God, but we can sure impress Him with how we handle what life throws us. That is when you will find yourself within the center of His will.

### ***Changing Roles***

Elaine Hatfield, PhD, a professor of Psychology at the University

of Hawaii has been studying love since the 1960's and she says, "Passionate love provides a high, like drugs, and you can't stay high forever". In 1981, Dr. Hatfield conducted a study of 953 dating couples, newlyweds and older women who had been married for an average of 33 years. Her research concluded that lasting love naturally evolves over time. Although passionate love is wonderful, it changes to a more sustaining companionate love. Both passionate love and the affection associated with commitment also naturally dwindle over time. Companionate sustains both lovers in the relationship as their shared interests grow. Dr. Hatfield and her colleagues who have passionately invested years into these studies have concluded that despite statistics and trends it takes two inter

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ested and committed parties to make a marriage work. Psychologist, Robert J. Sternberg, PhD, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Tufts University, has been studying love since the 1980's. He says, "Love doesn't have to decline, but in order for it to flourish, both partners must share the same love story".

Bear in mind that constant conflicts in your marriage may indicate that your roles could also be changing. Sometimes the biggest struggle for most spouses is for the remote control. I am not speaking of the device that controls your TV, but rather the remote control that you have over your spouse's emotions, stability and in some cases even their spirituality. Some conflicts are born out of ones lack of willingness to give up their power. A great example is the economic crunch our nation and even the world have encountered particularly during the last four months of 2008. Many two income households have been reduced to a one income household with even the threat of foreclosure and auto repossession. Some spouses who are accustomed to being the bread winner are now unemployed. This shift can be embarrassing for some and down right humiliating for others. These situations add more fuel to the towering statistics that 50% of all conflicts in marriage are about finances. Now the burden of finances becomes an additional weight upon the home.

Other shifts in roles occur when one spouse may have to change their work schedule. Another crucial shift in roles occurs with the birth of a child. Both spouses now adjust their affections and their time normally spent with each other. In either case for change, please remember that your spouse may see things differently than you, so their reaction and their reality may be different than yours. Take careful time to talk through your expectations and fears with love and respect for the other. Maintain your objectivity toward a common goal but never lose sight of the Golden Rule that dictates that you do unto others as you would have them do unto you. If your spouse lost their job, ensure them that their value to you is not predicated on their vocation but rather on who and what they are to

you. Let them know like my wife always tells me that you would love them even if you both owned a kite shack on a remote island in the Caribbean.

As adults we are not naïve enough to think that love is all you need.

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But when you are faced with the reality that we are in, where you can lose everything anyway, love for each other and faith in God is all a lot of families end up with. It then makes sense that you fortify that which you can take with you to rebuild, if you had to. Don't ever make the mistake of losing sight of what matters most to God. God is concerned with the covenant that is shared with the three of you, not a diversified portfolio or cash on hand. I have seen couples who have built real estate empires, just to lose it and each other when the market went south. The truth is they never really had each other. They didn't own their possessions, their possessions owned them. Read the story of Job and you will truly get a refreshing look of what riches and possessions truly are in the eyes of God. Job was a man who had a firm grasp on God and a loose grasp on what God blessed him with. So when he lost the loose grasp, the stronger grasp held on to him and his mind. God then replaced all he lost and doubled it.

When roles in a marriage change as a result of time spent with each other due to a child or schedule change, the same rules apply. When schedules change, be sure to set aside special time for you and your spouse that assures them they are still special and nothing has changed in your relationship. That is why it is important to secure and fortify the chord of your marriage before introducing the stringent demands of a child into your relationship. Children are a full time job. Even when they sleep, you both need to rest and regroup. During changes, if you find that the tension is increasing, just make sure that you pull back and remember that you are here to cheer each other on, not tear each other down. The ultimate goal of Satan is to attack and destroy the marriage and eventually all the lives in the entire family. Don't let circumstances fool you into thinking otherwise. Satan will use anyone including you to quickly bring chaos to a peaceful situation. Since he works in anonymity, you will ask yourself after the chaos and damage has settled, "What happened?" ***Stay in position for purpose by staying on your spiritual guard.***

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### ***Live What You Want Your Spouse to Be***

You've probably heard the quote, "It's not what you say; it's what you do".

No one knows you better than your spouse.

## CHAPTER SIX

# ***YOUR PERSPECTIVE IN THE WORKPLACE***



***Time and timing*** According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2008, the ratio of time we spend at work compared to quality time at home is a ratio of 2:1. This stands to reason that for every hour we spend at home we spend two at work. These statistics aren't bad if you love your work twice as much as you love your family and home life. Don't laugh because they're quite a few people who love being at work more than they love being at home. For starters, that statistic would be one out of every two people, considering the divorce rate. In this economy, it is probably easier and cheaper to divorce your spouse than it is to quit your job without another more stable one already lined up.

The Department of Labor Statistics found that the average person stays on a job about three to four years. However, we all know people who have been on the same job for 25, 30 and even 40 years. That's a long time devoting your talents, time and loyalty if you have no clue why God has placed you there. Yes, you can have a divine purpose for God placing you under the employment of a particular company or organization. That purpose can be you keeping chaos and mayhem from occurring in your particular division. For some, their purpose can be the reason for the financial

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success of a business. For others it can be for them to be in the right place in order for a divine shift to occur in the life of someone just passing through.

Confusing? It can be if you are not familiar with how God can use the life of a prayed up believer to influence the atmosphere of an entire company. There is a story of a young man we will call Gus who was well known in a New York clothing wholesale and retail store for witnessing the Word of God to patrons. The fashion industry can be quite demanding and competitive so he never spoke of his love for God in an obtrusive or disrespectful manner, yet he used his vibrant personality and knowledge of the Word to simply encourage customers and wholesale buyers to get through their day.

In contrast, the owner of this store was not well-liked in the local area. In fact, he was seen on several occasions speaking rudely to his employees. Despite the owner's behavior, buyers and customers alike still chose to shop at this outlet for the service, atmosphere and

the encouraging word they knew they would get from Gus. During one of the busiest seasons, Gus started informing patrons that he would soon be moving out of state to pursue a career in law enforcement. He wanted to make sure he had a chance to say goodbye to all of his regular customers. Under most circumstances in the fashion industry, Gus would have been escorted to the front door the moment he gave his notice, but since he was moving to a non-competitive industry, his boss let him stay to give his well wishes. On his last day, Gus' boss was in rare form and couldn't get his act together. He was misplacing files and forgetting phone calls on hold. It was then that Gus realized that his good cheer was actually appreciated by his boss. He noticed that his boss couldn't even look him in the eye. Upon finally walking out the door for the last time, Gus' boss gave him a rather large bonus check and thanked him for his years of hard work. Within six months, Gus' boss closed his doors and claimed he couldn't compete with the falling prices of his competitors. Gus' patrons and his former co-workers knew the real reason the store closed was because it lost 90% of its clientele due to Gus' absence. You see, the customers didn't see any reason to patronize Gus' boss because they no longer got a kind word or a smile. They took their business to other wholesalers that were closer and less

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expensive. It was as if the glory of God completely lifted from that establishment the moment Gus left.

### ***SO WHAT AM I?***

Here is where the rubber hits the road. Many of us have a burning drive within us that compels us to get out of bed every morning regardless of where we have to go or what we have to do. Knowing your purpose versus vocation is simply this: A medical doctor may be your vocation but being a healer is your purpose. A medical doctor may diagnose, treat, save a life or improve the quality of a person's life. But if the individual created an atmosphere for this illness and continues their destructive ways, then they will be back to the doctor again, only this time for another related ailment. However, if the doctor is a healer, they will engage the patient as a whole person and treat their mind-style as well as their lifestyle. This will then put the patient on a path to total healing and restoration.

Another wonderful vocation is that of a lawyer. You may either protect the integrity of a corporation's structure and overall wellbeing as a corporate attorney. You may be an immigration attorney who sees to it that world citizens are treated with dignity and respect or a criminal attorney who either defends or prosecutes those who have been accused of breaking the law. All aspects of this respectable profession are needed, but your purpose may be to fight for a cause, motivate a people to stand up for humanity or blaze a trail through

history toward destiny. These battles may never call for a law degree or a day in court.

My favorite heroes and heroines come in the personage of our teachers and educators. From pre-school to post-graduate studies, these men and women impart book smarts and wisdom into our lives. As we all know, there are those who do it for stability and a paycheck, and there are those whose purpose is to use this authority to chart destiny's course in the lives of impressionable minds. Some of these young lives have no mother or father figure that either care

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enough or know enough to stir the waters of our consciousness. But these careful hands hold, and in some cases, protect us from the predators who seek to abort our purpose.

You may be an administrative assistant, a security guard, a handyman, a nurse, or a sales rep on the phone or on the streets. Those titles or the academic accomplishments you receive are just social designations and vocations. What God has pre-wired you for before opportunity ignited that spark, is what you can call your purpose. Start to embroil your mind with these thoughts of grabbing individuals by their hearts and intertwining their lives with yours. Know that we are more alike than we are different. Assure yourself that you are not just a warm body taking up space on that chair or in that car on your way to sell or deliver something you don't even believe in. Certainly, we must work to live, but we need to also understand that our vocation is not why we exist. You are simply where you are as a transition to where God wants you to be. Use this time to read the Word more so your soul will be fortified to keep you strong during the doubtful times.

Meditate on the affections of your heart that is from Christ within. Talk to the Lord and start practicing the answers for your job interview questions if it is a promotion that will get you closer to being in a better position to bless others. If you are unemployed and feel less than and put upon, take this time to practice for your interview as well. Start talking aloud to the Holy Spirit by saying, "Thank you for crafting me with the same mind that hung the stars and the same words that uttered Let There Be".

Start hearing yourself speak compliments into your own life such as, "I am such a good person and anyone who has me in their life or under their employ truly has struck gold". Go on to say, "Just look at me, I am an incredible asset to the kingdom of God, I am fearfully and wonderfully made". Increase your worth by inserting coins of wisdom into your soul by your own tongue. Stop taking the world's view of your life as the Gospel and start re-negotiating your contract in this world that was bought by Jesus with His life and signed in His blood. Start reading about how God spoke purpose into David's life in the book of Samuel and how He used the least of

man to rule over man.

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### ***Be honest with yourself***

If you find yourself at a crossroads and don't know why you are doing what you do other than earning a paycheck, know that you are not alone. Finding your purpose in a job or career situation is directly tied to knowing your purpose for being here in general. In these tough economic times, many of us do not have the luxury of working in jobs that suit our personalities or our skill sets, let alone what we may have studied in college. The Bureau of Labor Statistics had no data to support my next question at the writing of this book, but you can conduct your own survey. The question to ask your friends, family and co-workers is how many of them are actually working in the field in which they earned their degree? You will be surprised that fewer people than you think are living their professional dreams at the leadership or compensation level they desire.

Again, there is no known data to support this, but you will probably find that fewer and fewer Americans are satisfied with their jobs than 15 years ago. Many of us were either told or pressured into our careers by parents, academic and professional counselors or just thought it would be a lucrative field to pursue.

At the end of the day, literally, these folks are in the same boat as you; How many are willing to admit this is another story. We all chase the dollar and the proverbial carrot being dangled by some sadist who woefully lacks self-love and a basic regard for the human species. We all want the same things such as job security, self-respect and a reasonable amount of satisfaction. This is the same, whether you are a high school drop out or if you have an alphabet soup of initials after your last name.

There are no statistics to support how many Americans call in sick due to depression and anxiety. The reason for this is depression and anxiety are mental illnesses that over 65 million Americans suffer with regularly, according to the National Institute on Mental Health (NIMH.gov). The fact that these are mental illnesses is the reason that people do not site these issues as the reason for calling in sick. They are afraid of the stigma that goes along with being considered mentally ill. No one wants to be called "CRAZY". The fact is that if you woke up this morning with your stomach in knots

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and your heart rate racing because today is the day that you must face your boss for your performance review or your one-on-one meeting where you always get abused, does not make you crazy. The fact that you cannot handle the varying personalities and cut-throat behavior in your office today because of the bitter divorce and child custody battle you are encountering also does not make

you mentally unstable. Grieving the loss of a family member, your dearest friend or pet that leaves you in tears almost every hour also does not constitute the need for medication. These are some of the realities and stigmas we all hear associated with them. We still need to be honest with ourselves even though we are not honest with the boss or Human Resources staff when we are experiencing these life changes or when we enter a job interview.

We have the power within to be our best cheer leader or our worst enemy. There are days I wake up feeling on top of the world and there are days that I wish I could just go back to sleep for a very long time. I would wake up between naps and literally cry myself back to sleep simply because I didn't have the courage to get out of bed. Most therapists would attribute these feelings to a multi-layered affect called single episode or recurrent major depressive disorder which is not properly dealing with issues in life as they come along. As we continue to internalize and compile them, they are stored in our subconscious to be retrieved either when we sleep or when we are in a weakened mental state such as the grieving process, depression, etc. In the case of sleeping, the subconscious takes over and tries to purge itself by replaying these items which you are now forced to deal with all at once when you awaken. Unable to deal with all these layers at one time, the mind goes into panic mode or regresses into a subdued state to help to extinguish or diminish the pain. The amount of façade you put up during the day determines your ability to cope with this reality.

Here's a better picture. It is like starting a car's battery in cold weather, which naturally drains a battery of its cold-cranking power referred to as cranking amps. If the battery not only has to start the engine but also power up your car's GPS, DVD entertainment system, high-output sound system and possibly your satellite dish, then you will put a tremendous strain on your battery. That is if it

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is able to start your car at all. This is why with all these toys, bells and whistles, it is recommended that you ensure your cold starts by purchasing a battery with the highest cranking amps available.

Likewise, your sleep and depression are like the cold weather.

If your mind has to power up your façade that includes resentment, insecurity, jealousy, rage, anger, unwillingness to forgive, old hurts, fear, hypocrisy and lies, then the chances of it being able to motivate you to get out of bed are slim to none. We often don't realize how many personalities we put forth as coping mechanisms for what we have become or how to protect ourselves in the every day environment.

If we could take a 30,000 foot view of our life from a satellite, we would be amazed at what we allow ourselves to become. Since it took a long time for us to become this way, we must be cautious to know that undoing this web of deception cannot be done overnight.

**Assignment**

1. Undo the things you negatively do in place of positive things such as smile and graciously say thank you instead of a false or condescending blurb of humility when we receive a compliment.

**Interview yourself**

One thing many folks find that they love about the interview process is the opportunity they get to wipe the slate clean and to project on a clean slate what they are. There are no bratty kid brothers and sisters or pesky moms to tell our prospective employers that we leave our socks and dirty laundry all over the place. No one is sitting in the interview, over your shoulder, to tell these people that you may have some chronic issues with migraines that cause you to call in sick or that you are moody and extremely competitive. In a job interview, you can portray yourself as superman or wonder woman. How much spin you put on that check you need to cash one day, is entirely up to you.

The conversations we have with ourselves on the commute home or during quiet moments as we tend to personal affairs are a bit more candid and not as colorful. In Shakespeare’s Hamlet, the father, Polonius sends his son Laertes off to his travels with some sage advice versed in an adage that says, “To thine own self be true”. Wise counsel from a loving parent.

Hopefully we have all learned that if you can’t be true to yourself, there is little or no satisfaction in being anything at all. As you read this book and you contemplate where does your purpose in life reside, consider this: ***Purpose is not a destination reached, but a series of opportunities along life’s journey that present themselves for us to be in position physically, mentally and spiritually to fulfill a need that destiny has placed before us that will serve our fellow man and glorify God.***

**Assignment**

If God told you in the same voice that He spoke to Moses on the mountain, to ask yourself these questions in total honesty and careful reflection, what would your answers be?

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1. If everything you know and love were to be threatened and taken from you as quickly as you could read this sentence unless you changed your ways what are seven critical areas you would fix immediately?

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2. What work ethics have you been told that you should change?

### ***Organizational Development vs. Spiritual Envelopment***

There is a multi-billion dollar business in companies hiring consultants in the short- and long-term timeframe to either tweak and streamline certain aspects of their business operations or render complete overhauls from the top down.

During this process your welfare and security are at best a nominal concern. Don't misunderstand me, there is great value to the roles these consultants play, but their objective is to use their study of statistics, market research, performance development analysis and when possible, cross-functional solution systems. No where in here do you hear your name, your need for job stability and the fact that you may be one paycheck or one month away from financial chaos. Certainly, there are times during these restructuring endeavors that the foundational principles of an organization are maintained. At times, those who passionately represent them are sometimes preserved as well. In more cases than not, the latter clause does not exist. Over the last 30 years, you can literally hear the screams and tears of frustration from displaced workers who did not survive the corporate slaughter that took place on those Friday afternoons or those weekday mornings that they returned from vacation. Other than the fact that your family owns the business, what assurances do you have that you are not next?

One can easily answer by saying that:

### ***Nurture the entrepreneur within***

I spent all of my adult life in pursuit of the dollar and I found myself on my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday asking myself the milestone questions.

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What am I doing with my life? Am I where I should be and what happened to the nest egg? Sound familiar? In my 20s it was all about acquiring the degrees to ensure the earning potential and climbing the ladder to success. I was blessed with the abilities of a writer, talk show producer, talk show host, reporter, voice over talent, concert promoter, producer, actor, corporate leader, community activist, political consultant, counselor and minister. Notice I placed minister last.

After the birth of my two sons, I thought that maybe I needed to get a corporate job with steady pay, great benefits and a 401K. I landed great jobs in healthcare and entertainment. Both industries brought satisfaction but no fulfillment. I realized that I could not work in a protected setting with anyone whose entire exposure to

diverse people and diverse thinking can be eclipsed by one year of my professional life. Sound arrogant? Wait, it gets better. How about working for people who hire you because they like your packaging and what you can potentially bring but get intimidated when you meet and blow their expectations out the water. Now they want you fired or try to sabotage so you won't be a threat to their steady pay check, great benefits and 401K. Oh, and don't forget their stock options. How's that for arrogant and bitter.

No wait, it gets even better. I found myself not only nailing my job description, but also asking my boss how may I incorporate other talents to compliment and bolster my current job description. Seldom was this well received by my leaders and when asked for counseling on how best I can position myself to be successfully managed, I received the same air of indifference. Surely by now I felt that the problem was with me and I need to once again reevaluate my trek in life.

Interestingly enough, during one point in my last corporate role, a V.P. pulled me aside and told me that my smarts and initiative would never be appreciated by this company or most companies in corporate America for that matter. That comment completely blew my mind.

You mean to tell me that wanting to make someone even more successful by selling them my soul was not in the cards for me after all these years of building this wealth of knowledge and expertise? I

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kept on repeating this in my spirit all the way home and for several days after that. My tenure with this company ended with quite a bit of animus and bitterness toward the sad excuse I had for a leader who in my estimation did not have the critical thinking skills of a German Shepherd. I was tired of the corporate scheme where incompetence was promoted to prominence as a reward for cunningly avoiding detection and disciplinary action.

These leaders are like scientific experiments gone badly like the love bug infestation in Florida. I'm sure you are either well acquainted with or personally know of these corporate blunders who continue to spread like a plague through the corporate culture in the U.S. These characters play the system's use of intimidation and cronyism. Some actually have earned graduate and post-graduate degrees. The point I'm making is that they would quickly lose their bowel control if asked to make a decision on whether to start a budget meeting 15 minutes later in order to express sympathy to a grieving subordinate, while reaching to mute their BlackBerry. They know who they are and they will scratch your eyes out and set you up for failure and eventual termination to keep from being found out

### ***The Refining Process***

God has a way in making you uncomfortable with where you are to get you where you need to be. Basically, if you look back through the bible and throughout world history as well, the greatest leaders were birthed into their purpose or forced into position to achieve greatness due to a desperate need. Consider Jesus Christ, King David, the Apostle Paul, Julius Caesar, Hannibal, General George S. Patton, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Theresa, and Mao Zedong to name a few. No matter what spiritual or cultural

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orientation, every great leader was forced to achieve this distinction out of necessity. Destiny grabbed their life and would not let go until they succumb to purpose. For some, this grasp may have felt like a burden to solve a social, spiritual, humanitarian or international conflict. For others, their life may have depended on it. In either case, they were no longer comfortable with their position and had to seize the faith and courage to make a change and make history. Your circumstances may or may not be as dramatic. As explained in Chapter Two, it may simply be the time to transition your life from being significant to becoming more relevant.

This force to change may appear as that uncomfortable feeling in a work environment that you once thrived in. There may have been a corporate shake up that has pried you from your comfort zone. As a leader, perhaps you are now given less resources to produce even more results than last year. This may cause you to feel over worked yet still under appreciated. Maybe the lunch, water cooler and coffee clutches no longer favor your company or you have just lost interest in the same tone in conversations about the same things every day. Perhaps you have been brought under intense scrutiny for absolutely no reason. Or maybe you are now being scrutinized for breaking away from the pack. This quote from Oliver Wendell Holmes says it best, "Man's mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions." You can never go back to your narrow way of thinking once God summons life to flash you an epiphany. My friend, don't take this new unfamiliar or uncomfortable feeling in your workplace lightly.

I don't mean to spook you, but this may be your birth canal experience where you are now once again the fetus being maneuvered into position to now enter the birth canal to begin the birthing process into a whole new world

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

# ***MAINTAINING THE TOTAL PACKAGE***

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**D**o you know that your body is the temple (the very sanctuary) of the Holy Spirit Who lives within you? This Holy Spirit is a gift from God. You are not your own. You were bought with a price, paid for, made His own. So then, honor God and bring glory to Him in your body. (I Cor 6:18-19) Amplified bible.

Precise words with clear expectations from our father. Have you ever had a parent or another authority figure look you in the eye and slowly and clearly tell you what they do and do not want you to do? Did you respect their authority and the consequences enough to do as you were told? In my case I thoroughly feared my mother more than God, because in the innocence and naiveté of my youth, God never pulled out a belt on anyone. As a mature Christian, I now know better.

We've already discussed that purpose is not a destination reached but a series of opportunities along life's journey that present themselves for us to be in position physically, mentally and spiritually to fulfill a need that destiny has placed before us that will serve our fellow man and glorify God. In chapter seven we will delve into how the strong hold of generational curses keep us out of position relative to our spiritual and mental abilities. In this chapter we will pair that awareness with some knowledge on how to be empowered to take back our mind and our body from the snares of life.

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When was the last time you read the first chapter of the book of Genesis? This illustrates God's precision and purpose that He placed in the development of His creations. He made it clear when He separated the heavens from the earth as well as the land from the oceans and the day from the night. In every thing that God created there is a purpose and a season. Medicine and science have yet to replicate the myriad of wonders that take place in a simple blood cell.

It should come as no surprise that most physicians say that the average person takes better care of their possessions such as dress attire, their house, pets and automobiles than they do of their physical and mental health. These things are absolute in their demands and simply won't operate or look right if the proper attention is not given to them. For instance if we don't tend to that leaky roof or inquire about the signals our car sends us for not maintaining it properly, we end up wet and walking. Either way we end up in an expensive waltz with a roofer or a mechanic sooner or later.

On the other hand we tend to ignore the signals our bodies and mind send us for neglecting proper care. We can go longer without a

check up than we can with a leaking oil pan or a leaky roof. Our western cultural philosophy on mental and physical health care is primarily that of reaction and treatment rather than prevention and wellness. Unfortunately this mindset is driven by our insurance companies. In an economic crunch, doctors tend to treat what they will be reimbursed for. Not to cast a disparaging light on the medical field, but they have to eat too. Our Asian and European counterparts live longer, weigh less, suffer from fewer mental health issues and are not as lonely. This is due to a lifestyle of wellness and prevention.

This is why I started [www.thehealingcontinuum.com](http://www.thehealingcontinuum.com) or THC.

This is a free web initiative that was primarily launched to help raise health literacy for all women and the lives they touch. Before my fellow men get offended; I chose to reach out to women because they in most cases are the primary health care decision makers in the home and everywhere else for that matter. So it stands to reason that if we can engage the woman she will reach the masses. THC is comprised of several physicians of various disciplines who write

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their own articles on issues and trends that present to them on a daily basis in the examination room as well as pre and post operatively.

I have borrowed some of the original articles and information that THC provides and reprinted them in this section so you easily can be brought up to speed on health's relevance to your purpose.

The issues addressed will be primary care FAQ's, women's health FAQ's, cancer awareness, mental health, issues such as depression, anxiety anger, relationships, forgiveness and a host of resources that are available for the entire health of your family. I pray that most if not all the information in this chapter is known to you already.

In the case that it is not, please take the time to familiarize yourself with this easy to read section. I promise that it will be an easy read that will provide good information that you will want to refer to again and again.

## **HAPTER EIGHT**

# ***BREAKING GENERATIONAL CURSES***

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UNDERSTANDING GENERATIONAL CURSES **B**ecause we are essentially spiritual beings, we all are born with a curse upon our lives that was incurred from God and given

to the father and mother of mankind. Adam and Eve bequeathed this curse to all generations of mankind (Gen 3:16-19). So we are actually born with the purpose of having to overcome some sort of generational oppression. Because of man's penchant for sin and infraction against, we as a race of people have amassed a myriad of curses to compliment what Adam and Eve passed down to us. Since God's realm of existence has become so far out of reach due to the sin in the Garden of Eden, in order to maintain intimacy with man and peace on earth he set forth nine dispensations to serve as a medium between he and man for the regulation of human affairs. A complete list and scriptural references for these dispensations can be found on the references page of this book.

Every initiative toward creation begins with a thought. In the Bible when GOD created the universe he thought the notion and then spoke the word. But what many seem to overlook is there has to be a thinker before there is the thought. Here lies the ultimate issue that has plagued man since his existence. Where did GOD come from and what motivated him to start creation and allow sin to enter.

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Actually God doesn't create sin, but He has always granted man to have free will. Man's choice has more often been sin. Since God is The Spirit and dwells outside of time within eternity it establishes the fact that He has no beginning and has no end. We cannot affix a linear designation to God's origin. The sovereign fact is God always was and will always be. Moses wrote in (Psalms 90:2), "Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You *are* God." In (Isaiah 55:8-9) God says, "For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, Nor *are* your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts." In essence God is not an entity that Madison Avenue can package and sell for us to better understand Him. This mind set and undue familiarity that comes with trying to match wits with God is exactly what has been the source of man's curse and his downfall.

A curse in the purest sense of the word is when God places a plague or punishment upon man for sins committed or when one man speaks an ill-intentioned thought or word upon someone, their family or possessions. A curse begins in the heart of the one who speaks it. It is a vile hatred for the existence of the subject of the curse. A generational curse is when this curse has manifested into a cyclical action or re-action that brings about the defeat or demise of a people over generations.

The bible has over 100 hundred strong references to the word curse and to GOD bringing down a curse upon a people. Although we now live under the dispensation of grace GOD still will allow

a curse to linger upon a family for generations. Although similar, a generational curse differs from the curse of living in sin. A generational curse is relegated to the result of a lifestyle or an act. This is due to the fact that the sinful lifestyles of parents are often passed down to their children (Exodus 34:6-7). The curse of living in sin is eternal damnation in the Lake of Fire for not accepting Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and your name not being found in the Lambs Book of Life (Rev 20:13-15).

The first generational curse occurred in the Garden of Eden when Eve disobeyed God and ate of the Tree of Knowledge of

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Good and Evil. The curse spoken by God upon not only Eve but all of mankind was brought forth as result of an act which would become the lifestyle of all mankind (Gen 3:16-18). That is why it is not unjust for God to punish sin to the third or fourth generation (Lev 26:39-42) This particular curse that condemns man to eternal death and damnation in the lake of fire can only be removed by personally repenting of your sins and sinful nature and accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and savior. As you recall we experienced the sinners prayer together in chapter one. Once you do this you are now in covenant with God and are now subject to the benefits of His protection. But the job doesn't end there. Just as the birth of a baby coming into the world from the safety of its mother's womb doesn't signify the end, it's a new beginning. As a new creation in Christ, you are considered a babe and must now begin to live, even if you are in your senior years.

Breaking generation curses is a two pronged initiative. One must make spiritual and mental changes in their life in order to be successful. In this chapter we will deal with the most common forms of generational curses as they manifest spiritually, through our thought lives, culturally, familiarly, as secret sins and mentally. We will cover the generational curses that deal with anger and bitterness, sexual promiscuity, inability to commit to relationships emotionally, counter productive parenting, addictions of all kinds and blatant racism of the past to the racial micro aggressions of today.

Regardless of what issue has you chained by the ankle to the past or won't let you move forward from the now; you can finally break free for your life no matter how many times you've tried. At times it may feel as though the shackles have long since cut into your blistered skin due to the fact that you have physically grown so much since you realized you were shackled. The funny thing about spiritual and emotional shackles is that in some ways they will grow with you to accommodate the more creative ways in which you disguise this secret illness within. These chains will allow you to adjust your withered limb to limp only at home or on certain days. In fact some shackles are known to allow you to not even show any scarring and

bleeding on the outside but purely let you bleed, scab over and bleed again and again distinctly on the inside.

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What a wonderful thing GOD did for us by allowing us to keep our thoughts, feelings and urges out of plain sight of those we love, dislike and admire. For if they could only get the slightest whiff of the blood curdling stench that we know to be our true aroma, they would run for their lives and take all that you love and care for with them.

At our very core once the innocence of our youth has lifted like the morning fog over a pine tree forest, our eyes and our minds are awoken to the sinful pleasures and sinful thoughts of self indignation, protection and retaliation. The same way Adam and Eve's eyes were open in the Garden of Eden when they ate of the fruit that summoned sin into God's creation. How many times have you committed murder or at the very least the character assignation in your mind and heart toward the person who betrayed you? How many times have you been lied to, used, emotionally raped, sodomized or usurped for your talents in corporate America and emotionally left for dead along side the emotional road on the journey to healthy adulthood? Here's the classic, how about when your spouse, parent or pastor perpetrated these acts against you. This testimony may not apply to many, but in today's western culture it applies to a significant number.

According to the National Institute on Mental Health as of spring of 2008, over 70 million Americans suffer from some sort of mental health issue. It can be from a minor case of anxiety from waiting to meet with your boss concerning your annual merit review or the anger and pain of divorce to the deep cold death grip of depression, suicidal thoughts and acts of self mutilation. Your ability to bounce back from these issues is the tipping point of what is seasonal or a way of life that you inherited from your fore fathers or mothers.

At the very moment that I am writing these words June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008 at 10:10 PM, I am witnessing history in the making. Senator Barack Obama of Illinois has just announced that he has claimed the democratic nomination for the presidency of the United States. In many regards this is a generational curse being broken right before our eyes and ears. For the first time in our country's history an African American man actually has the opportunity to lead the nation that once enslaved millions of his ancestors. The annals of world history

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must record that for the first time a man of African descent could become the most powerful man in the world.

How incredible would it be after reading this book to be empowered with the knowledge and the ability to be able to mark

the end of the generational curses in your life as clearly as this one was marked for our nation and the world? It is now Wednesday, November 5, 2008 and I am adding my final edits to this book. Last night, Tuesday, November 4<sup>th</sup> at 11:00, Senator Barack Obama has just been elected our nations first African American President. On January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009, he will be inaugurated on the same stairs of the nation's capitol building that took 70 years for slaves to build during the darkest time in African American history. On the night of January 20, 2009, President Barack Obama, his wife and children will sleep in the private living quarters of the White House. They will take to bed with them the hopes and dreams of a nation and an awaiting new world.

This night for Obama seems to have come quickly and for some effortlessly, but God formed this man for this post at this time. This times was planned long before we ever heard of Barack Obama. This triumph is just one leg upon a long journey that must be traveled in lock step by us all. Take for example an artist such as a sculptor. They spend weeks, months and even years perfecting the form and refining the detail such as the lines and edges of their work. The masses don't get a chance to see the finished work until that great moment when he or she pulls the covering off the rendering and reveals their masterpiece. ***The reveal may take seconds but the work took a process.*** Your journey to your masterful reveal will require an introspective journey into self and the past. During this journey into your past there may be some rough neighborhoods, rough roads and bad weather. In fact halfway through this book you may have determined that you're not up for the challenge quite yet. But take courage in the fact that you are not going it alone. millions have traveled this course before and have made it through.

By the conclusion of this book we will know each other intimately although never having met. We hopefully have developed a trust that will support this affirmation that I speak to you. ***I speak into your life that you too, will be able to reveal your finished work***

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***on your life after the completion of your inward journey toward healing, forgiveness and purpose. I decree God's blessing of favor, peace, joy and the spirit of giving upon you, your seed and the lives you touch.***

Those words that I just spoke into your life were an affirmation. I pronounced abundant living upon your life and the bible teaches us in (Proverbs 18:21) that life and death are in the power of the tongue. My desire is that you exceed your plan for your life and meet the mark that God has in place for you in spite of whatever struggle you may have had in the past. The Bible specifically tells us that God does not hold children accountable for the sins of their parents (Deuteronomy 24:16) but the only way that GOD will forgive the

sin nature of any man and allow his ball and chain to hell to be broken is by salvation (Rom 6:22, Rom 8:2).

There is a trend in the church today to try and blame every sin and problem on some sort of generational curse. This is not Biblical. The cure for generational curses is salvation through Jesus Christ. When we become Christians, we are new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17). How can a child of God still be under God's curse (Romans 8:1)? The cure, then, for a generational curse is faith in Christ and a life consecrated to Him (Romans 12:1-2).

I promised at the beginning of the book that I would not bombard you with scripture nor will I preach at you in judgment. I will keep that promise. These aforementioned scriptures are just a testament to the fact that I am not making this stuff up. If you love God you cannot put your thoughts or value systems above His. If God says He loves something you must do the same. If God says He hates an act then you must do the same. In these last and perilous times we can no longer afford to tempt and mock God by taking His spoken word out of context and politicizing what He is resolute about.

There are days that I pretty much feel like someone is playing a cruel joke on me. I feel like I wish I could befriend that five year old boy who emigrated from a warm and friendly place, I would tell him that there would be days that he would feel as though he was all alone in the world. I would encourage him as he grew older that life will be filled with new obligations and complications that are not always fair and that people are not always honest. There is still

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that little child in all of us that we wish had been better prepared for life as we know it

For those of us who feel like that unsuspecting child, ***I've come to realize that these are the days that GOD truly wants to remind you that the more you are beat down into the ground the less likely you are to back down for what you believe in.*** God wants you to see just how much you really and truly need him and only him to get you where you are going. ***Consider it a setup that you have had to fight for your self and cry to yourself to justify yourself. Once you recognize him to be your redeemer, you are less likely to turn your back on him in the good times.***

God has the only accurate score card and He is the only righteous score keeper of all the good and evil that concerns us. The sooner you come to the understanding that there is only one truth and one interpretation of that truth the more stable your life will become. Jesus always chose the simple to address the complex. Why do you think that Jesus uses a shepherd and dumb sheep as a metaphor to describe His relationship to us? Sheep listen faithfully to their master or shepherd. They don't reason or intellectualize with His commands, they simply follow. Let me remind you that unless

the value of something is determined, its abuse is inevitable. When we operate out of our value to God we are simply abusing our lives, hence the feeling of abuse and depression.

That is what God requires of us. He desires that we follow His intent for us without condition. How foolish are we to challenge the creator of the universe with our feeble attempts to reason with His unyielding wisdom. These challenges are the actions that got Lucifer to be thrown from heaven and Adam and Eve to bring about the fall of man. Our nature is to always take God's innocent and simple and complicate it with our dirty hands. How many times in the course of a year and throughout our personal relationships have we taken a beautiful thing and ruined it with our insatiable suspicions and greed?

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### HOW GENERATIONAL CURSES MANIFEST IN YOUR LIFE

It normally begins when you start thinking things that you don't know of their origin.

So you've always noticed that your mother would always speak poorly of people and as soon as they call on the phone she would be as sweet as can be to them. Maybe you'll notice that she always thought people were out to get her. How about the fact that your dad would never admit he was wrong or say I'm sorry. Have you ever noticed that whenever things are going great that someone in your family has to create drama and bring it all to an end? These are just some examples of how this cycle takes root in our lives.

Have you ever seen something along your travels in a day like seeing a bird or bee fly from flower to flower while you were waiting for a bus? How about driving to work in your morning commute and you pull up alongside a car and the child sitting in the back seat smiles and waves at you and later on in that same drive you see a group of buzzards circling over a field. Here's a common image, how about the image of the person in front of you paying for their morning coffee and as the cashier receives the coins they fall before he puts them in the coin tray.

All very simple right? Now what do you say to your self when you wake up with the strangest feeling when you recall the dream you had last night about the mole on the cheek of the child's face that smiled at you yesterday on your drive into work. Here it is that you perhaps forgot about that child by the second traffic light. Or maybe you had a dream about the coffee shop you visit every morning but this dream seemed to focus on the fragrance of the woman on line in front of you. The peculiar thing is you didn't even notice her strong perfume until your dream brought it to prominence. Now you remember smelling the fragrance on your clothing while riding the elevator up to your office.

The human psyche is perhaps the most complicated part of the

human makeup. When you plant a seed its roots must grow down into the dirt so that it can first establish its feeding system. It must first assimilate with its surroundings. If the water source is plentiful then it will not need to go as deep. But if the water source is

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further away from the surface then it must burrow its roots deeper to sustain itself for growth and development. Now when you see the buds coming up from the ground it is just a simple manifestation of what is already well established beneath the surface

***Our References Page is replete with scriptures and special instructions on Fasting, Intercessory Prayer, Faith and all practical applications in your quest for spiritual growth.***