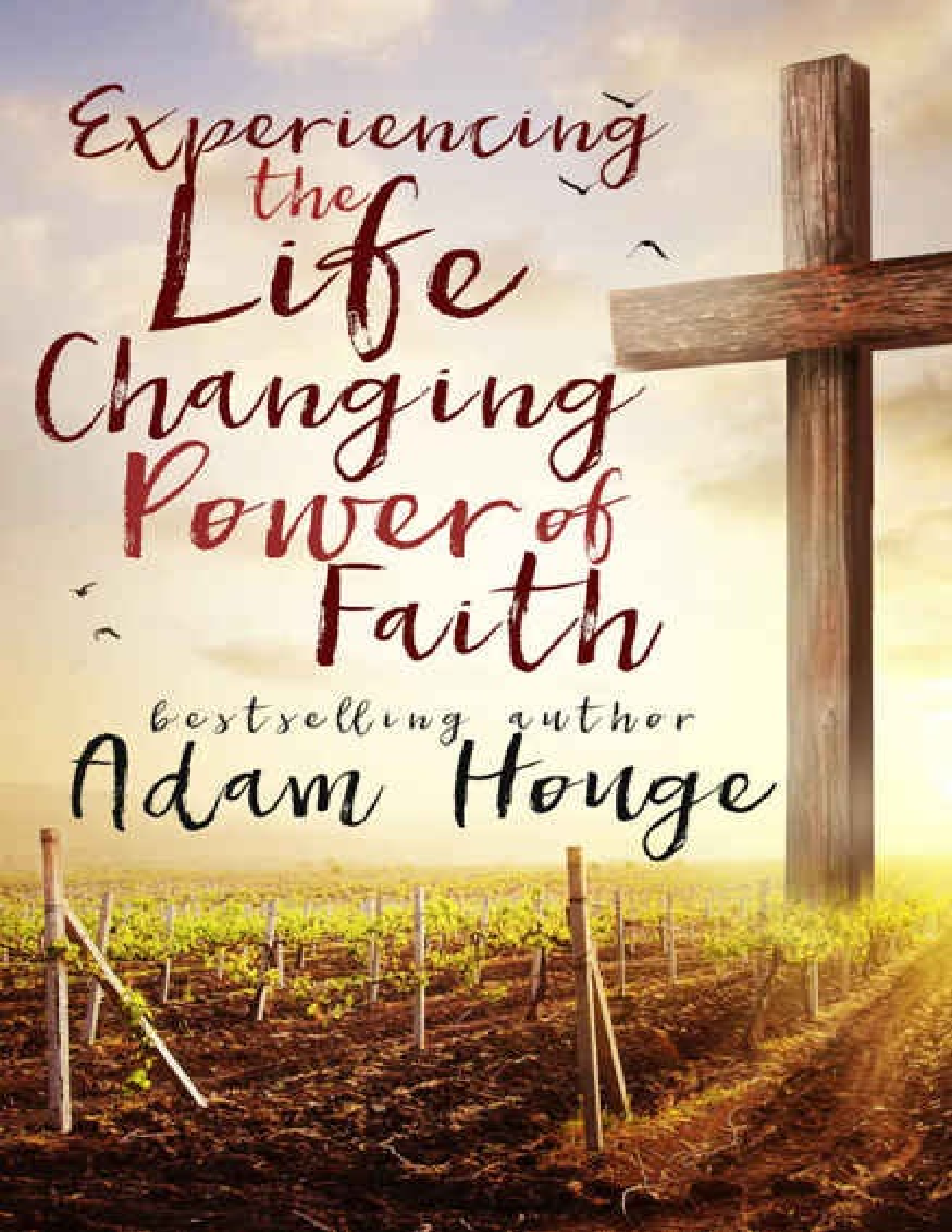

Experiencing
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bestselling author
Adam Houge

Experiencing the Life-Changing Power of Faith™

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Open Yourself to Believe That God Can Do All Things

We all know God can do all things, but when faced with difficult situations, we don't all believe it like we should. I knew a man whose roof started on fire during a Bible study. He lived out in the country, where it would take at least thirty to forty-five minutes for the fire department to arrive. By the time they would arrive, his house would burn down.

So he tried to climb to the top of his two-story home, but couldn't do it. He looked for a way through the attic but there was none. "If only I can get a bucket up there or my hose I could put the fire out!" he said.

Despite all his efforts, there was nothing he could do. It was in God's hands, though he refused to accept it.

"Why don't we pray for rain?" I asked him.

"Why would God do that?" he mocked.

"Why wouldn't God do that? Even if you call the fire department right now you'll lose your home. But if God answers before they arrive, you'd keep your home."

He mocked my response and ran inside to grab the phone. So I prayed for him and immediately it started raining. He didn't even have time to dial 911 before the fire was out.

"See that," I said to him. "God answers our prayers if you'll have faith."

He looked up at the house while a group stood around. Then someone from within the group said, "I saw it in the forecast."

Then they all groaned, mocked me, and walked away. Now, firstly I'd like to say that I'm not special. God answers everyone's prayers. And if you open yourself up to pray in a big way, He *will* answer you. I know that He answered my prayer that day to increase my friend's faith. So it had nothing to do with me and my prayer, but with the work God was doing in the hearts of the people around me. But the group had so little faith they mocked it!

It wasn't forecast that at the moment "amen" was said, it would rain—but it did. The weatherman suggested the possibility of rain. So because the possibility was there, it wasn't the answer of God to have rain when my friend needed it most? Does a situation truly have to be hopeless for it to be a work of God?

No wonder why few people see the works of God in their lives. Not because He isn't working, but because they blind themselves to His hand moving around them. If God wants you to see Him, and if you blind yourself to God unless you're at rock bottom, might God allow you to go through some difficult experiences to open your eyes? Might He allow you to hit rock bottom to see Him and increase your faith? A lack of faith can certainly create a multitude of problems for anyone.

Maybe God in His foreknowledge prepared the weather to save this man's house. Then, as the weather changed in preparation of my friend's hour of need, the weatherman saw it. Just because you can discern that future doesn't mean God isn't working through the circumstances of your life.

Like the weatherman, you can see the fruits of God's hand in your life and discern the future through them. You can't say with certainty, but you can guess fairly accurately what God might do. Remember that Jesus likened the fruits of the time to the face of the sky. The Pharisees knew how to tell the weather, but they couldn't tell the signs of the Messiah.

What might your fruits look like? If God has laid it in your heart to go on a mission trip, and after praying to go on one, your boss comes to you and mentions that you have a lot of vacation time and should use it—and then the church says, "Hey, we're having a mission trip. Who wants to come?"— what are the fruits saying? I know I could guess your future in such a situation, and I'm no prophet.

God's hand does prepare things before it's time, moving all the planets in place until they align. As you watch the planets align, you can get a rough idea of what He will call you to do.

When they are aligned, you'll be able to look back and see how you could have known the will of God through fruit before it happened. Use this knowledge to grow in discernment. But in all things pray that He would confirm His will before you make any decisions to do anything.

Pray always and in everything. Believe He can do anything and open your heart up to faith. If you want to experience God in a big way, then prepare yourself to pray big prayers of faith.

If you want to see more of God in your life, all you have to do is open your eyes to His works around you. Pray for open eyes and choose to have faith. Don't say, "Why would God do that for me?" or "God doesn't work that way."

Let Him decide that. Have an open mind to believe God can do anything. Then let your prayers reflect your new-found faith as you pray to see His hand working more clearly in your life. Pray for miracles—and don’t wait until you need a breakthrough to pray for one!

Open Yourself to Pray Bigger Prayers of Faith

Don’t give power to doubt. “God won’t do that!” some say. It’s what my friend with the burning roof said: “God doesn’t work like that.” How do you know what God will and won’t do? Are you God, to decide that for Him? If you don’t have enough faith to ***ask*** for a miracle, then a miracle will never happen for you.

If you don’t feel worthy of it, then stop thinking like that. None of us are worthy of God’s kindness. But if He is willing to give His own Son’s life to save you, I’m pretty sure He cherishes your prayers. Don’t only pray for the small things. Say, “God if you’re willing at all, please help me with this big thing. I don’t know if you’re willing, but if you are, I believe without a doubt.”

If you want to see how big God is, then you need to pray big prayers: “Lord, please, if you’re willing, send the rain I so desperately need,” rather than “God, please make the fire department come faster. And may the damage to my roof be minimal, by a miracle.”

Oh, and by the way, my friend had no damage to his roof either. Which no one prayed for. God just knew what he needed and gave it to him anyway.

Let God decide what He will give you. Then, when He answers, be content with His reply. Maybe He will say “no” to the big prayer. So what if He does? At least you asked.

Hasn’t Jesus said, “Ask and you will receive”” Beloved, trust in God, but believe nothing until His word comes to you. For faith must come by the word of God. So if you ask for a miracle, have faith that He can, but be prepared to hear otherwise from God. “You expect this miracle but I have prepared another way out for you, just wait with patience for My hand to work.”

And what if He says “yes”? If you never asked, you never would have received.

Believing, “God will do this miracle for me” with all your heart won’t change whether that miracle will happen for you or not. It’s funny sometimes how we make faith to be about ourselves: “If I just had more faith, it would have happened!” Sometimes we just need to accept that not everything we pray for is God’s will. Having faith He will do something, when He hasn’t said He would, isn’t faith at all. Nor does it change whether He will do it or not. For we read,

“…faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17)

If God hasn’t spoken it, and His word hasn’t come, then why are you believing

it? Abraham was righteous for believing in what God said—not in something he hoped for, but in the direct word of God. Let us all do likewise, remembering that fervent and persistent prayer do pay off.

Remember also what Jesus taught us:

“Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: “There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’ And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.’ ” Then the Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”” (Luke 18:1–8)

If the unjust judge answered her pleas for help, won’t the God of Justice answer you? Maybe the justice you need is a little money for rent. Maybe it’s food, or maybe you’ve been praying for a baby. Justice doesn’t always have to be about the law. Every trial is unfair. And that unfairness needs the justice of God to cover it.

Earlier in Luke, Jesus also exhorted us to pray fervently and continuously. As we read,

“And He said to them, ‘Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, “Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him”; and he will answer from within and say, “Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you”? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. ‘So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!’” (Luke 11:5–13)

This He said to encourage you to have pernicious prayers. Be persistent and never give up. If God says “no” and that “no” means “no,” then His word is final. But sometimes He will give you what you pray for if your heart is earnest. As it is also written,

“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.” (James 5:17–18)

What exactly did Elijah pray, and how did it look?

“Then Elijah said to Ahab, ‘Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain.’ So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees, and said to his servant, ‘Go up now, look toward the sea.’ So he went up and looked, and said, ‘There is nothing.’ And seven times he said, ‘Go again.’ Then it came to pass the seventh time, that he said, ‘There is a cloud, as small as a man’s hand, rising out of the sea!’ So he said, ‘Go up, say to Ahab, “Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.”’” (1 Kings 18:41–44)

Elijah put his head between his knees and bore down in passionate prayer. This was a less than dignified thing to do, but you don’t need to fold your hands and make it look pretty. Just share your heart. If your heart is burdened, then release it onto God’s shoulder.

Notice also that the rain didn’t return until Elijah bowed down and prayed seven times. What if he gave up and only prayed six? Be fervent in your prayers!

I have heard a lot of people say, “God doesn’t change His mind.”

No, he doesn’t, but He will change your destiny if you pray. What I mean to say is that He will relent and deliver. But if you don’t pray, He will allow your circumstances to happen. God told Hezekiah that it was time for him to die. Hezekiah prayed and asked God to remember Him. Then the Lord healed him and gave him life. Afterward, He made a miracle wherein the sundial went backward.

As it is written,

“In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live.”’ Then he turned his face toward the wall,

and prayed to the LORD, saying, ‘Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in Your sight.’ And Hezekiah wept bitterly. And it happened, before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ‘Return and tell Hezekiah the leader of My people, “Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: ‘I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. And I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake, and for the sake of My servant David.’”’ Then Isaiah said, ‘Take a lump of figs.’ So they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered. And Hezekiah said to Isaiah, ‘What is the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the LORD the third day?’ Then Isaiah said, ‘This is the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing which He has spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees or go backward ten degrees?’ And Hezekiah answered, ‘It is an easy thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees; no, but let the shadow go backward ten degrees.’ So Isaiah the prophet cried out to the LORD, and He brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down on the sundial of Ahaz.” (2 Kings 20:1–11)

God didn’t lie. Assuredly he would have died if he hadn’t prayed.

Also, God told Ahab he would be cursed for his crime against Naboth. Then Ahab fell to his knees in sackcloth. And you know what God did? He relented, declaring that the curse would happen to his son. As it is written,

“So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning. And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ‘See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house.’” (1 Kings 21:27–29)

If God would answer Ahab’s prayer—*Ahab, of all people!*—why wouldn’t He answer yours?

God even changed Israel’s destiny through the prayer of Moses. As it is written,

“‘Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation.’ Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: ‘LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great

power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, “He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth”? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, “I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.”’ So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.” (Exodus 32:10–14)

God was going to have wrath, but because Moses prayed, He relented. What would have happened if Moses didn’t pray? What would happen if you stop praying? What would happen if you start praying bigger, with more faith?

Even David knew God changes the outcome when we pray, for which reason he begged for the life of his child, whom God had said He would kill. As it is written,

“Then Nathan departed to his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah’s wife bore to David, and it became ill. David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. So the elders of his house arose and went to him, to raise him up from the ground. But he would not, nor did he eat food with them. Then on the seventh day it came to pass that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead. For they said, ‘Indeed, while the child was alive, we spoke to him, and he would not heed our voice. How can we tell him that the child is dead? He may do some harm!’ When David saw that his servants were whispering, David perceived that the child was dead. Therefore David said to his servants, ‘Is the child dead?’ And they said, ‘He is dead.’ So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house; and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate. Then his servants said to him, ‘What is this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food.’ And he said, ‘While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, “Who can tell whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?” But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.’” (2 Samuel 12:15–23)

If Elijah hadn’t prayed for rain, would it have rained? If Moses hadn’t prayed that God would relent, would He have? Some may say, “Well, God knew these righteous men would pray and gave them a nudge in the right direction.” But

then how do you explain the unrighteous Ahab? We are all given free will. Ahab prayed and God relented the curse on Ahab, giving it to his unrighteous son instead.

If you had never given your life to Christ, where would you be going? To heaven or to hell? Why has your fate changed? Why has God relented and made you His friend? Because you repented and prayed for forgiveness. Prayer is powerful, and when God answers it, the result of prayer is eternal life.

Beloved, I can never express it enough: Pray! God will move the immovable, commit to the impossible, and bless you in ways you could never imagine if only you'd pour out your heart and ask through faith.

Search for the Vision God Is Giving You for Your Life

You need to be intentional about drawing near to God. Some may say, “I do! I spend thirty minutes a day in a devotion before going to work.”

Beloved, Jesus Christ was not crucified to have thirty minutes of your day. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, belong to Him. Give Him what He deserves by continual affection through ongoing prayer and worship.

Pray in between phone calls. Worship inwardly at your desk. Keep your eyes on His presence, that you may walk in the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit only happens when you pay attention to the Spirit, hear Him, and obey. It’s easy to be distracted by work or by taking care of children or the house, but rather than ignoring God’s presence while you focus on the task at hand, pay attention to His presence and let Him work through you.

If you can’t do both, then something is wrong. Maybe you need a break to recharge.

You can’t receive His vision or plans for your life by accident. God answers those who pray. He speaks to those who open a conversation with Him. He is humble and gentle in spirit, willing to allow us to approach Him and enter His throne room. Although He may hop off His throne and come get our attention from time to time, this isn’t how our relationship with Him should exist. We should be willing to reach back to Him constantly, as He is always reaching for us. If you want to hear Him, you need to turn your ear His way.

He has a plan for your life, and if you don’t live according to it, you’ll never experience the fullness of the blessings He desires to give to you.

So constantly ask Him for direction. From the moment you wake up, pray, “God, what would you have me do today? Is there anyone you want me to serve? Open my eyes to see Your will and guiding hand.”

Distinguish Between Your Vision and God's, Then Believe God

It's easy to confuse what you want with what God wants. We've all done it at some point. This is why we must lay everything down in prayer. Don't prepare to move your life, your work, your business, or anything else God has given you into a new area unless He has confirmed that it is His will for you. He has a vision for your life and where you should be sewn into the body of Christ.

How can you distinguish? Merely by prayer and waiting for His answer. Sometimes when we see the fruit moving and the planets line up, we preempt God, assuming we know His will. We pray about it and then dive headfirst into what we think His will is. But we should take the time to wait for an answer first.

Test yourself in this. If you have made a recent move in your family, workplace, or business, ask yourself if God has made that move or if you've seen the fruit and jumped into it. If there has been a major move, has God confirmed His will to you before you made the leap? Or did you just step forward because it made the most sense? If God has not directly told you to take that step, then maybe you should consider praying and repenting.

Confirm His will. Know His plan each step of the way before you make any move in life. Give God the authority to decide what steps you should take, even in the little day-to-day tasks.

If you're being led by God in everything and He is working through you, aren't you one hundred percent justified in your works? Can you say with all confidence that He's worked through you one hundred percent in the things you've been doing lately? If you don't know for certain, by declaring "He has!" and having faith in it, you may be setting yourself up for disappointment. We are not called to have faith in some grey area when it comes to works. His word will be clear, and our obedience should be sincere.

Put God’s Vision in Front of You

Remember daily what He has said. Let this reminder inspire your faith to believe God in a big way so that what He has promised to do He will accomplish.

Write down any plans He has revealed to you, no matter how vague. If you’ve had it confirmed by God, then these things will come to pass. Set them in front of you, on your desk, and let them remind you daily of what God intends for you. When He reveals a new detail, add it to your list.

“But Adam—you’re wrong! God hasn’t done what He told me He would. I wrote it on the list and waited a year and it still hasn’t happened!”

Two things could be the matter:

1) God’s perfect timing hasn’t come yet.
2) You were mistaken and God didn’t actually say those things.

Because whatever God says will happen *will* happen. His word does not return to Him void.

Keep a Prayer Journal

If you think God is calling you to something in life, write it down. Then pull out a journal and start praying circles around that situation. Everything the Lord lays in your heart while praying, pray. Then write down your prayers.

Go back to the journal months in the future, or a year in the future, and see how He has blessed you. Likely there will be prayers you've forgotten about that He answered.

What a wonderful opportunity to worship Him in gratitude; and seeing His answers to forgotten prayers increases your faith.

Why Let Downs Happen

If you do not distinguish between your heart and what God has said, you will have a lot of let-downs—because God will not accomplish your desires, just His. But if you conform your heart to His, then you'll start seeing more of your desires taking place. Why? Because God is placing His desires and visions for your future in your heart and He cannot deny Himself. But if you are self-willed or self-seeking, you will not be blessed by Him. You can still receive what you desire, but it just means you have blessed yourself and God has not blessed you.

I have known many millionaires who have had wild visions for their companies and drove their finances forward through faith in themselves. Then they turned around and said, "God has blessed me." More than obviously, their own heart has blessed them and they have served their own heart as a god. So their "god" has blessed them, but the Lord whom we serve has not. What shall be the end of them when they are judged? What has Paul said?

"Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:12–16)

If you want to please God, then diligently seek His word and will for your life. And diligently seek the truth of His word—both what is written and what He speaks to you. Your heart may deceive you, and Satan will prod it on so that you may think you have heard from God when you have only experienced a vision of your own desires. This is why it is written,

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6–7)

Let God show you His will. Confirm everything through prayer. Become a prayer warrior and surround your life and those around you with prayers that never cease to flow. For it is written,

"Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving

preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, *continuing steadfastly in prayer*…" (Romans 12:10–12)

And also,

"…pray without ceasing," (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Furthermore, it is written,

"Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." (James 5:16)

Why would it say this? Because prayer makes a difference. Immerse yourself in continual prayer. Have you ever done this? Commit yourself to it now and for the rest of your life, to be more in tune with the Spirit of God through prayer.

There are too many troubles in this world, and we lack God's vision for our lives. Sell yourself to the Lord's will. Dive headfirst into it and He will bless you. You may need to go through the valley before you can experience the blessing, but just remember this: if you have followed God, He will guide you to peace.

All you have to do is make sure that you are lined up with His will and everything will work out in the end.

God’s Visions and Plans Don’t Happen Overnight

It’s human nature to desire instant results. Our society is so fast-paced that people get impatient with a microwave.

Maybe you’ve been pressured at work to produce, produce, produce. Everyone’s experienced this somewhere or at sometime of their lives. Better quality! Better customer service! Faster results! Your employer cries. But that’s because he knows he only has twenty-four hours in a day. If he can squeeze another dollar per minute out of you, he can make a killing. All while killing you with stress in the process.

But it’s the pressure of living in a fast-paced society where everyone demands more. Whenever someone raises the bar, it becomes the new standard. Consider that before places like McDonald’s, no one got their food fast. Nowadays people get mad at the McDonald’s employees for taking five minutes instead of one.

The problem is, with all this pressure on our shoulders, it can force us to be impatient people—impatient with our children, impatient with our spouse, impatient with our friends and coworkers, and worst of all, impatient with God.

“Why haven’t you saved me yet like You said?” or “Why haven’t You given me what you promised?”

Satan loves to fill our heads with the doubt that impatience brings. But give God the time to position you for a blessing. First He must work on your heart and then, when He decides that you’re ready for it, He will give it to you.

Think of it like feeding a child. “You need to eat your peas before you get your dessert!” the parent will say.

This is what God is saying to you: “You need to understand that values and lesson these trials bring before you’re ready to experience the blessings I have prepared for you.”

If you understand that the trials you experience are merely teaching grounds and not obstacles to overcome, they won’t seem so hard. Many teach that trials are obstacles to overcome and grow through, but why do I say it a little differently? Because your battles are unnecessary. Go with the flow and learn from the experiences God gives you.

Beloved, your battle is over. The war was won at the cross. So let God fight for you, and learn the proper steps through which He desires to take you—so that

He may also fight *through* you. Paul said,

“To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.” (Colossians 1:29)

Let God overcome the obstacle for you and through you. Yes, you will have steps to take. Yes, you will have to scale this mountain. Yes, you will have a mile to walk on this water. But just remember that if you are walking on water, it is Christ doing it through you by faith. So keep your eyes on His words. Remember them and encourage yourself through them, for whatever He says will come to pass. If He said that you will be fine and He will show you the way out of the valley, then do more than believe: take the steps of faith to which He is calling you. Because true faith is doing something you do because you believe, not sitting on the sidelines while waiting for a future.

But if God tells you to sit and wait, then you are sitting in faith. If He says to rise to your feet or move ahead and fight the good fight to end your trials, then do it. Because whatever God tells you to do will produce fruit, for His words do not return to Him void.

All you have to do is recognize when God is speaking, discern exactly what He is saying, meditate on that, and obey it.

Please God, Not People

People will have a vision for your life. They will explain to you how to achieve your goals and get out of trials. Everyone has an answer for everything, but God's word is all that matters. Learn to please God, not people. Jesus didn't take the time to make his own mother and brothers happy.

He refused to conform to their mold:

"And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."" (Matthew 12:49–50)

They have to conform to God's mold, not yours or mine. And you have to conform to God's mold, not mine or theirs. Do what God is calling you to do. All you have to do is verify that the Lord has given you the vision you have. If the Lord has, and He says it will come to pass, then it will.

But this doesn't mean to listen to no one but yourself. God gave you brothers in the Lord and pastors for wise council. They may be able to interpret what the Lord is telling you to do a little better than you can, through experiences you may not have. So be willing to recognize the Holy Spirit through your brethren. When God speaks to you through them, obey that word. Why? Because it isn't your brother speaking, but the Lord. And if you disrespect it or your brother, then you disrespect the Lord who spoke through the man, not the man himself.

Thus, if God has called you to something, people around you can give you clarity. But if they rub against what you know God has said, then obey the Lord and don't seek to please men. It is human nature to desire to make others happy, but the Lord requires us to focus on pleasing Him.

So how can we please Him? Walking firstly in His Spirit and also in His love. The first fruit of the Spirit is love, so if we are not reflecting love, we are not walking in Him.

Therefore, it isn't about making others happy or unhappy but about being a family and body in Christ. If your earthly family is not saved, then why are you seeking advice or direction from them? God knows better than they, and you've been enlightened to the truth through the Holy Spirit whereas they haven't. The mind of Christ, which you have, is greater than the world's. Moreover, the Lord has said,

“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” (James 4:4)

“Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’” (2 Corinthians 6:17)

Have you been leading your family to Christ? Or are you just befriending them and pleasing them? God is not pleased by man-pleasing, and you’re endangering their souls. Beloved, have godly concern for their souls and reflect true love. If you don’t preach the gospel to them, they cannot be saved. For it is written,

“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:14)

Be among them but not of them. When you die, you’ll be somewhere else than they will be. Your family in Christ will be your true family, and your earthly family will not. So be diligent to lead them to Christ—because if you aren’t, then what are you doing?

You need to keep fellowship with those who press you forward in Christ, not with the world that drags you back to honor the gods it serves.

So watch whom and what you surround yourself with and make sure it’s the Lord’s will for you. You’re in your unsaved family for a reason, but if they utterly reject Christ and never will receive Him, then pray about what the Lord would have you do—whether to leave them behind or not as you continue your pilgrimage.

Furthermore, if you surround yourself with idle things, you’ll form idols. Too much entertainment and distraction will make you lose focus on the Lord. You’ll keep the vision and the faith but lose the faithfulness in the little steps. How can you follow God through the little steps of the day if you can’t hear Him?

One might ask, “Why would God punish me if I can’t hear Him?”

But God might ask, “Why don’t you take it to heart to listen better?”

It’s like trying to build a house without nails. You can pound the boards of wood as much as you want with a hammer, but without something to hold them together, they’ll fall apart.

And as it is written,

“Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.” (Psalm 127:1)

God builds the house through His words. His words are the nails, and your actions are the hammer. If you don’t obey His words one little nail at a time, the whole structure will fall apart. This is why Jesus said,

“He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.” (Luke 16:10)

So be found faithful in the little things. Be faithful to seek His voice, growing intimately closer to Him, and to obey. Then you will see through time the fruit of your labor, which is the fruit of God in your life.

If You Want to Hear God More Clearly, You Must Abide and Walk in the Spirit

Whenever God speaks, our natural response must always be with faith. The more you hear God the more opportunity you'll get for faith. The more opportunity you have for faith the more you'll grow in it.

The more you grow in faith and the more clearly you hear God, the more it will propel you forward into the life God has planned for you.

So now the question remains, "How can we hear God more clearly?"

I'd begin with your Bible. The closer you are to your Bible, the closer you'll be to understanding God's heart. While it's good to read it don't merely read, but study it diligently.

Every time the pages come alive, this is the Holy Spirit talking. Become familiar with His voice. Write down everything He says. Not your own thoughts or words, but only what He is telling you. This will train you to hear God rather than your own heart, making His voice easier to discern.

Also we get clarity by abiding. Or that is to say by focusing and meditation on the Spirit's presence. We focus through continuous on going prayer, and worship.

True worship isn't singing about God, but rather signing to His face. Sing praise like you're talking to Him and you'll feel God more powerfully. Why? Because He is an intimate God, and when your worship is intimately cultivating a relationship with Him, He will be nearer. Enough people sing about "the God in the sky" whom they don't know. "God is good—He is wonderful. Thank Him that He is out there somewhere and watching" is the basic idea of how some churches worship.

But it is better to say intimately to His face and presence:

"Jesus, You are good to me. You are wonderful. Thank You that You are next to me, holding me, watching me, and caring for my needs."

As I've said many times in other books: you'll feel God more powerfully by singing, "Holy are you, Lord. You are holy!" versus "Holy is the Lord. He is holy."

You can't increase any relationship in heaven and earth without communication.

Communicate your affection directly to His face and sing about how you feel about Him. Change the words of the worship songs if you have to and you'll experience Him in a deeper and more intimate way.

Would you rather have someone say, "The person reading this book right now is an inspiration to me," or would you rather have someone say to your face, "You inspire me"?

God would like you to do the same. He made your heart, after all. He made you to have the feeling He has so that you can connect with Him, and He with you.

So worship from your heart and focus on His presence. Put on the attitude of gratitude and thank Him no matter what may be going on in your life. If you've found something to thank Him for, then you've found what He may be doing in your life—and something in which to have faith.

Pray constantly, whether you're washing the dishes, taking phone calls, fixing a machine, driving to the store, or taking care of the kids. Learn to pray always, and keep your line of communication open with God at all times. This allows Him the space He desires to speak to you when you need to hear Him. Sometimes you need to hear Him and don't even know it because everything seems fine in life. But if you're carrying a distracted mind, through idle thoughts or overly focusing on the work at hand you'll drown out His voice all together.

Lastly, we walk in the Spirit when abide in Him, do the things He wants us to do, hear Him speak, and obey. Beloved, have you been walking in the Spirit lately? Do you know for certain? Did you know *exactly* what it means to walk in the Spirit before this book? If not take it to heart to grow your understanding of what it means to walk in the Spirit. If you aren't walking in the Spirit then you are walking according to the desires of the flesh, even though you may not know it.

"I do walk in the Spirit!" a person may say. "I study my Bible and try to apply what I read later."

That's good! But is the Holy Spirit teaching you His word? Are you hearing His voice constantly throughout the day? He's always speaking to you, but are you always listening? Take it to heart to do so because He is the one who explains to us how to apply our Bibles. If we can't hear Him, then we likely are not applying our Bibles in the correct manner He desires.

Stress Makes You Forget God's Faithfulness

Our mind has a funny way of dumping memories when faced with stress. The worst part of all is that it makes us forget how faithful God is. If you're going through something stressful or through a trial, by focusing on the negativities you'll forget all that God is doing in your life. This will lead to doubt, and doubt always leads to disaster.

Keep calm and keep God's peace in your heart by resting in Him continually. That way you can remember His faithfulness and what He is calling you to do.

Jesus said,

"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?" (Matthew 6:25)

And as it is also written,

"Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret—it only causes harm." (Psalm 37:8)

Notice how God's word points out the negative emotions? Don't dwell on them or it gives the enemy an opportunity to harm you. To harm your marriage, friendships, children, your walk and integrity in Christ, and even your health.

How has wrath helped your relationships lately? Has fretting and fear blessed you? Is anger a listed fruit of the Spirit? There isn't anything wrong with being righteously angry. There is a time and a place for it. But there is something wrong with continually dwelling upon our anger and the thoughts that stir up wrath. How is God in any of these things? Let's walk in love so that we can portray the integrity of Christ.

And why do we worry? Does it help us at all, or does it cause harm? One out of every four Americans dies before the age of sixty due to stress-related illnesses. Stress can lead to strokes, heart attacks, premature aging, wrinkles, and grey hair.

No wonder Jesus tells you to stop worrying! Trust God and meditate on both His presence and His faithfulness. Don't let Satan afflict you with worrying thoughts, but keep your mind steadfastly fixated on the Holy Spirit. If He is saying everything will be fine, then believe Him. The only time you should be concerned is if He is saying it won't be fine. He will say this to alert you to the

need to do a work that will deliver you from the bad thing you're worried about: "If you don't apply for a job at xyz company, you will lose financially, because it's My will for you to work there and you are about to lose the opportunity."

One thing that can assist your faith is to reflect back on everything He has said to you about your current season of life. Then make a list of those things. Pray for more information. Then trust everything He says. Reflect on His words. Take them to heart.

If anything you are planning to do doesn't line up with what He has told you, then you should reconsider your current path in life. Lay it down and pray for direction. Let Him truly guide you in everything and each step.

Keep His words bound to your heart and keep your peace through faith. It's okay to relax when trials abound. Practice relaxing in Christ as you focus on His presence. This will strengthen your faith. Especially when you see that everything works out in the end. God will speak when it's time and you'll obey, won't you? So what is there to fear?

I've spent much of my life worrying. I've been through more hardships than most. Sickness, heart problems (my heart has actually stopped), true medical anxiety, life-stopping panic attacks, homelessness, starvation (I weighed 100 pounds and was all ribs, as a man), loss of loved ones, the near loss of two of my children, and the list goes on and on. I've been through many hardships, and the Lord has delivered me out of them all.

I have found that if I rest in His words, trusting them implicitly, it does end well after all. Whether I trust or worry, it ends well because God is faithful. So maybe we should spend more of our time at peace, trusting Jesus. Because He loves us and His love never fails.

So remember His faithfulness and let His peace set your heart free to praise Him. Learn to worship no matter what. Not only because He deserves it, but because it increases your faith, and releases your heart to have His joy. Remember also that His joy gives you strength. Strength to do more than endure, but also to conquer. Strength to do more than conquer, but also to inspire others to fall in love with the Lord.

Set Up Monuments to God's Faithfulness

I've personally gone through some really difficult hardships. There was a time in my life when I struggled financially and, as a result, lost everything. I had to live in my car with my wife and baby, scared to death every day that I was going to lose my child because I couldn't provide a roof over his head. I had a job, but because it was cold all the homeless shelters were full. Through the process of time, God used some really ugly circumstances—worse than we were experiencing—to save my family from the cold. We almost lost each other and our children, but the Lord held us together. Then one day at the homeless shelter, we decided to dedicate a day to God, remembering how He had saved us.

Every year we celebrate it, taking some time to reflect on all that the Lord has done, is doing, and will do. Then we chose to proceed forward the next year in faith. Because if God has been faithful before, He will be faithful again.

Also, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun,

"And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying: 'Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from every tribe, and command them, saying, "Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm. You shall carry them over with you and leave them in the lodging place where you lodge tonight."' Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; and Joshua said to them: 'Cross over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, "What do these stones mean to you?" Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever.'" (Joshua 4:1–7)

Joshua set up memorial stones for their children and children's children because the Lord commanded it. This isn't necessarily a commandment for us—so I'm not saying to do this as a commandment. But it is helpful for yourself and your family to set up memorials to God in your heart and head to thank Him and preach His faithfulness.

How would this monument look to you? Maybe it's a physical object from that trying circumstance. I still have the stick I used to poke the fires I'd make in the park grills to cook our food over. Every time I walk into my barn, I see it sitting there. I am reminded of my humility, and then when I look up at my barn, I'm reminded of God's faithfulness—not only of how He saved me, but of how He blessed me much later in life.

Every time I see that stick, I worship God, thanking Him for everything He has done. And because those were some of the hardest moments I have ever experienced in my life, when I remember them, whatever trials I may be going through pale in comparison. Suddenly faith becomes easy if I've been struggling.

Your monument might be a day you set apart. Or maybe it's just holding onto the memory itself. Whatever you choose to do, leave something in your life to remind yourself of how God has saved you.

Put a sticky note on your desk and take some time to reflect. But if it is at all possible, I found that it helps to have a physical object that you can tie to your previous circumstances. It seems more alive and powerful when you can handle it with your hands. Remember that if He has been faithful before, He will be faithful again. This will help stir you up to explosive faith when you need it most.

When my children see my stick I cherish, they're compelled to ask, "Why do you have that?" and this gives me an opportunity to glorify God and build my children's faith.

Choose to Be Happy with Today

It is written,

“Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” (Hebrews 13:5)

Covetousness can be most easily defined as desiring more than what God is willing to give you. This leads you to lust for things which are not yours, taking your focus off the heart of Christ and onto your own heart. Thus you will be led by desire, and not the Spirit of God. And all sin begins with desire. As it is written,

“Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” (James 1:15)

So yes, we must be without covetousness. And yes, we must be content. But being content doesn’t just mean to tolerate the fact that you don’t have what you want in life. It means to display gratitude with a cheerful heart for all God has given you. Be thankful and carry the joy of the Lord in your heart. If you can’t be happy until you move up in life, you’ll never be happy. I’m not saying you won’t move up, but when you do move up, your desire for more blessings will increase and you’ll never be satisfied. The flesh is never satisfied with increase, even as a fire is never satisfied with wood. Remember that when the bar is raised, it becomes the new standard. If luxury is your new standard, you’ll still demand more.

Stop having standards for God, let Him out of the box, and be happy with what He gives you.

Is it wrong to desire? No. You need something to lay down in prayer. But just remember that not every good desire is right, either. If you want to feed orphans, but God has called you to something else in His kingdom, then you will do wrong. Not that it is wrong to feed orphans—obviously, it is good to do so. But refusing to do the will He has laid out for you is sin, for which reason Paul expressed a desire to “be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith…” (Philippians 3:9).

Do not seek your own righteousness. True righteousness is obedience to the Holy Spirit’s voice. Discern His voice and make certain you are lined up with it.

As it is written,

“To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.” (Colossians 1:29)

Follow the work God has laid out for you and strive to please Him in doing so. God desires an obedient servant, not one who goes around trying to apply His words how they assume is best. Make certain you understand the Lord, and then obey Him through faith accordingly.

Understanding Why Bad Things Happen Helps Stimulate Faith.

Bad things can be due to missteps, or they can be due to growth. All you have to do is determine which is happening in your circumstance. Be humble and willing to hear that you're wrong. Let God correct your situation. If you've made a mistake, then simply admitting as much and doing God's will things will turn around for the better. If you realize your situation is for growth, then take growth seriously while not taking the trial personally. Keep reminding yourself that after you have learned the lessons, God will carry you out of the valley and set you up on the mountain. In the meantime, learn to be grateful. When you can find something to be grateful for, then you've found what God is doing in your life and why.

Now one might argue, "I don't think God let my daughter die so I can grow or because I did something wrong."

Such a person is right. If you've lost a loved one, this hasn't happened to stimulate change in you. However, you should use such a circumstance to draw closer to the Lord. You need His comfort, and He can use it to shape your heart. Although there is nothing good about losing someone you love, God is powerful enough to make good happen in the midst of your pain. Let Him.

Negativity and Fear Are Satan's Tools

Have faith and don't let anything convince you that God is wrong. Our understanding of God's word can be wrong, but the Lord is never wrong. When our understanding lines up with God's truth, what do we have to fear?

Choosing to be positive doesn't mean choosing to be happy with the bad things that happen in life. It just means that you won't let yourself be discouraged by them. Keep the faith; keep walking in Christ. Let His presence be a comfort to you. The more you hurt, the more time you should spend in the secret place, soaking your floor in the tears of your prayers. For God will bottle those tears and remember them. He will answer your prayers, and the more prayers you have, the more you'll see His hand moving and working in your life. So take the time to connect with God. Then, after the trials have left and blessings have come, keep meeting with God in the secret place.

Don't let the nearness you've learned through trials turn into numbness through blessings. If you seek God more in pain than in pleasure, which might He give you more of?

God knows it's best for you to draw near because your eternal life and your relationship with Him hang in the balance. But He doesn't like to see you suffer. So when we have the mindset of seeking God only when it hurts, we are causing ourselves to suffer. Seek the Lord more fervently always because with all He has done to love you, He deserves such devotion from you.

Some teach that if you have a positive mind, nothing will be impossible for you: "I can do all things through Christ! I will pass this high school exam. I will do awesome!"

This they say, only to be astonished when they get a bad grade. You can preach positivity all you want, but if you don't study for the exam, you'll fail. The same goes for walking in the Lord. If you don't study His word, you'll never understand His heart or the things He is calling you to do.

You can't begin to understand the faith without a strong understanding of your Bible. And you can't begin to apply the faith without the ability to hear the Holy Spirit. He teaches you how to apply the lessons, bringing the Scriptures you memorized to mind when you need them most.

Have you ever encountered a circumstance that brought a scripture to memory, but you couldn't quote it? This could be the Holy Spirit bringing it to mind,

while reminding you of the importance of memorizing His word.

How ineffective is it to say, “I think the Bible says (insert poorly quoted rough idea of what scripture says here)”—only to have the other person ask, “Where does the Bible say *that*?”

Then the quoting theologian stands like a deer in the headlights.

Although a truth was spoken, the impact was nullified because God’s word was not memorized. By not memorizing His word, we give others the impression that His word is not important. Led God’s word mean much to you. Write it on your heart for later practice, that you may be an inspiration.

There Are No Plateaus in Christ—Never Stop Growing

God is always teaching you, so you should always keep learning. Never stop seeking, but always draw nearer. Doesn’t the Lord deserve this?

Open your Bible and spend as much time studying it as you possibly can. Don’t just read, but rather absorb the meaning through diligent study. Let the Holy Spirit teach you from the pages. Anytime the Scriptures come alive and apply to your current situation, this is the Spirit speaking to you. Take His words to heart, memorize the scriptures He speaks to you, and apply them daily.

Don’t let your work, your having children, or anything else distract you from Him. You can do all these things through Christ while still drawing close to the One who has always loved you most.

Embrace Adversity—It Stimulates Faith and Creativity

Without an obstacle to overcome, how will you grow? Sometimes God gives you hardship to awaken you to new possibilities. As it was for Elijah at the brook,

"So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook. And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. Then the word of the LORD came to him…" (1 Kings 17:5–8)

His river dried up first, before he was given a new direction. Why might God do this to you? Not to harm you, but to prepare your heart to cling no longer to the current circumstances and to move you forward.

If your river is drying up, then the Lord may be leading you to a new source of providence. Imagine your life as a sail boat. If the winds that blow upon your sails change, then maybe the direction God wants you going is now a new one. This is not always the case. Sometimes the unfavorable winds come through disobedience. Like a loving Father, He disciplines us. For this reason it is always best to pray and ask the Lord if you have been lined up with His will. Either way, whether you've sinned or He has a new direction, He will make you aware of what you must do.

He has goals for us, and once we have achieved them, He steps us up for our new purpose in life. That purpose may be new to you, but is part of the plan He has always held for you.

So let adversity open your eyes to possibility. Don't shut them in fear of what else may strike, but open them to His faithfulness. Open them to the many possibilities that surround you, that way you would have an open mind to do the will of God. If you've lost your job, open your mind to any direction He may take you. If you're accustomed to doing call centers, and that's what you're comfortable with, it will likely be the first thing you look for. But what if God doesn't want you going in that direction? I guarantee you that by pursuing it you'll end up with heartbreak from a string of failures. Maybe your new direction is to work a factory job, or be a secretary, or even own a business.

How can you know God's will if you act on fear while remaining in your comfort zone? When bad things happen, don't try to figure out what to do and

push for the way out. Instead, kneel down and pray. Then, when God answers, you'll find your way. Sometimes you'll find that your assumptions were right and God is telling you to move in the direction you thought you should. But don't let the enemy use the fact that you were right to convince you that it is no longer necessary to pray for direction, as if you'll always know the right path. Besides, no prayer is a wasted prayer. God cherishes them all.

Learn to Thank God in All Things

Look for something to thank God for in adversity and you'll find something in which to have faith. No matter the circumstance, carry the attitude of gratitude. If He tells you to wait in your storm a little while longer, thank Him and rest with peace. It's hardest when He says to wait. But if you do so, your heart will be tempered with His strength.

Thank Him also for the opportunity for blind faith. If God is showing you a way out, take a moment to thank Him before He saves you and say, "God, thank You for this opportunity for blind faith. It's really hard for me right now, but I believe that just as You have told me, I will be saved from my circumstances."

Then meditate in faith on His promise to deliver you.

Become the Image of Christ in All You Do—Be the Outward Reflection of Him

Love like no tomorrow. Everyone knows to do this, but not everyone applies it as they should. Have you ever encountered a situation in which you were hurting and needed comfort, and then shared your situation with a friend at church who didn't respond kindly to it? Perhaps the person patted your back and replied, "Hey, brother, I'm sorry that's going on in your life. I'll be in prayer for you." Then the person walked away and forget even to pray. Or because the person feels bad for forgetting all the time, he or she may grab your shoulder and pray on the spot, then walk away without asking God what to do personally for you.

Don't be that other person. Be the one who searches for solutions to others' problems. Bring your ideas to God: "Lord, how can I bless this person? Don't let them pass by me without a chance to show them Your love."

Don't be a window through which others can see the blessings of God. Rather, be a door through which they can enter and experience His blessings. And as it is written,

"And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful." (Titus 3:14)

I have seen many churches who are good with outreaches and teach their congregants to reach out individually to the people around them who need Christ. So they show love to the unsaved and bless them fervently. But the one issue that seems to trend among many if not most churches is the need for an "in-reach." They reach out to the broken who are outside the church but don't take the time to reach in to the members within their church who are hurting or in need.

Beloved, God calls you to help the saints above all. As it is written,

"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, *especially to those who are of the household of faith*." (Galatians 6:9–10)

How have you been loving on the church lately? And not just on your friends and the people you know, but how have you been making the stranger feel loved and welcome?

Pray for open eyes to see the needs of others and have an open hand and willing

heart to give them whatever they need. Maybe it’s an open ear. Maybe it’s comforting words. Or maybe they need rent money, even if it’s more than you’re used to coughing up for others. Wouldn’t perfect love be proven by its works? Love them perfectly, as Christ would love them. If Jesus were here, would He not get the homeless brother an apartment, the starving brother food, and the broken sister an open ear and comforting pair of arms? Don’t just ask yourself what Jesus would do. Have an open heart to ask Jesus what He is calling you to do.

I have heard some people say, “I don’t hear God telling me to help.” But sometimes we can’t hear God because the help others need isn’t something we feel comfortable doing or giving, so we shut our ears.

Wouldn’t it be right and good to save the suffering in the church? Don’t let them pass by you without experiencing a blessing. And don’t merely brush the need, but cover it as Jesus would do. As it is written,

“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.” (James 4:17)

Don’t Question Underlying Feelings That Something Could Be Wrong

Even when all is right, if something feels spiritually wrong, go inquire of the Lord. Maybe something is on the horizon and, rather than giving you a trial to change direction, He is just reaching out to your heart. But if you don’t listen, you might suffer a trial. He has to get ahold of you somehow.

Almost two decades ago, when I was a teenager, I experienced one of these moments that changed my life.

I was a Christian who had recently dedicated himself to the Lord. I went to church; I had a relationship with God; I sought Him daily and felt Him in the sermons. But something felt a little wrong, like I needed something more with Him. I didn’t know what it was, but I felt like there was something there and I was supposed to have something more. So I prayed and asked God to speak to me through the pastor at church.

A couple of Sundays later, God answered that prayer. The pastor had a woman come on stage and share her testimony. She shared how she had a newness when she received His Spirit and how it made her feel alive for the first time. She could feel God with her, and everything around her was alive and had a newness. Then the pastor took over and explained what I needed to do to receive the same. I knew immediately that this was what God had laid in my heart.

I thought I was saved, and I had done everything I was supposed to do. But the quiet inclination that God had laid in my heart expressed that something was missing. It told me that the puzzle was finished except for one piece.

Years later, I experienced numerous miracles that most people wouldn’t believe. I would pray and watch God work in mighty ways.

Yet I’m not anything special compared to anyone else. We’re all the same and are all loved in God’s eyes. I simply learned to pray big and not limit God. I stopped putting His abilities or what I thought He would tell me in a box, and I let Him out to be who He is and do whatever He does.

During that time of my life, God laid it on my heart to go on a mission trip. I couldn’t because my job was in the way. I grieved and prayed that God would open the door. Suddenly, I lost my job and was able to go.

When I was there, I had to sleep on a church floor, in a room with a young man named Brandon. We had met there for the first time and quickly became friends.

One night when we were supposed to be sleeping, we laid in our sleeping bags and whispered to each other about things God was doing on the trip. This led me to talk about the miracles I had seen, and in the middle of our conversation Brandon erupted,

“Wow! I wish I had that kind of nearness to God.”

“You can,” I said. “God favors no one. All you have to do is ask Him for it.”

“But I have asked for miracles and don’t see any.”

I scratched my head, trying to lay my finger on what could be the matter. “Have you ever asked for His Holy Spirit?” I asked.

“No,” he said, “but I know I have Him. I said the sinner’s prayer as a child with my mom. I was born in a Christian home.”

“Okay … but saying a prayer doesn’t mean you have received Him. It depends on your heart at the time. Why don’t you ask for Him now? You want God and to be nearer to Him, right?”

“Yes,” he said, “but I have Him already.”

“Well, if you want to be nearer to Him, ask anyway.”

Brandon turned over within his sleeping bag and prayed out loud to receive the Holy Spirit. Instantly, a smile swept across his face as tears streamed helplessly from his eyes.

“I feel like I’m on fire,” he wept. “I feel God’s love burning inside of me. And I feel like I took my first breath of air, like I never breathed once before this.”

He continued his tears of joy and then, after a few moments, he wiped them away. “Why did that happen to me?” he asked. “Am I weird for saying I never felt like I breathed before? Is that weird?”

“No,” I explained. “You never received the Holy Spirit before this. That’s what it’s like to have Him rush inside you.”

“I thought I had received Him.”

“Well, it doesn’t make a difference now whether you did or didn’t, because now you have received Him, and before this moment you weren’t even saved.”

His eyes widened.

“The Bible tells us,” I continued, “that if anyone doesn’t have the Spirit of Christ, he doesn’t belong to God.”

Our conversation continued, and after that day everything changed for him. He saw God’s hand working, and that feeling of a new life never left him. He understood God’s voice and experienced those intimate miracles in his own life.

This is what John the Baptist meant when he said Jesus would baptize us in Spirit and fire. As it is written,

“Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” (Romans 8:9)

Have you received the Holy Spirit? Do you know this for certain? If not, would you like to? Put this book down immediately and pray for Him. Recommit your life to Christ right here right now, repenting of all sin. Rededicate yourself to Christ and ask for His Holy Spirit.

For those of you who have received the Spirit, don’t deny His voice. Search for it and listen carefully to Him. He teaches you everything, and if you’re not attuned to Him, you’re not learning what you should for your walk. Why? Because no one can walk in Christ without walking in the Spirit. And as it is written,

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” (Romans 8:14)

And the Scriptures also exhort us,

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:25)

Now, a few of you may wonder why I felt it necessary to say these things, but I include them to explain to Christians the need to receive the Spirit. It’s for the same reason a pastor preaches the need to accept Christ at church. Quite frankly, Brandon—like many others to whom I have preached—was among the church and had accepted Christ as Savior, but like Apollos had never received the Spirit and needed further education. Such believers accept that Jesus is Lord but haven’t received Jesus as their personal Lord and savior.

And there are many who wander likewise among the church, thinking they are saved and living like Christians, but not having the Spirit. Keep your eyes open for such people in your own church and be moved with compassion to share with them what they don’t have.

A few times I have received emails from my readers explaining that they tried everything in my books to hear God but still couldn't. After further inquiry, I realized the need to explain that sometimes you can't hear the Spirit because you haven't received the Spirit. And if you want to live an empowered, Spirit-filled life, you first need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Ultimately, when God speaks to you about anything, you must listen. Those underlying feelings of something being wrong, or of a piece missing, are likely from God. Don't deny them or write them off. Go investigate them thoroughly in prayer. If God directly answers and says nothing is wrong, then believe Him. If someone around you speaks for God and says nothing is wrong, however, don't be convinced until God speaks for Himself.

I continue with this subject because the Lord reaches to you before trials arise in order to prepare you.

Every time a financial trial is about to strike, God tells me months in advance to conserve my money and save every dime. I have no reason to believe a financial trial is on the horizon, but I know without fail that when He lays this on my heart, something is coming. It's the underlying feeling that something is wrong when nothing seems wrong at all.

And when I feel it, I pinch my pennies. A few months later a tragedy strikes, or some other uncontrollable circumstance hits and takes my income away. I live off of savings and coast through the trial mostly unaffected. Then God saves me before my money runs out.

If you don't listen, you will suffer the consequences. There were times I didn't understand. But looking back now, I know God was warning me, and I shrugged it off because everything seemed fine.

Don't wait for trials to happen before you follow God's turn. He will likely be taking a turn in your walk long before anything bad ever happens. He likes to prepare you for difficult times to help you through them, while giving you the free will to trust Him or not.

This is the opposite of a trial. We are supposed to learn to trust God, have peace, and listen to Him when a storm is raging around us. But even when everything is peaceful, if we get a stirring in our heart that something bad is coming, we should obey His voice, have peace, and trust Him.

I’d Love to Hear from You!

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About the Author

Adam is a preacher, teacher and #1 internationally bestselling author of over 100 books on the Christian faith. He is a devoted husband and father of four boys. Through his travels, he’s seen the need for a new awakening and a new revival: a revival of the heart. Come join Adam on this journey of redemption and experience God like never before!

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