Where Hope Abounds

Moving Forward with Grace And Practical Tips



Avy Hattingh

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Merciful Father, I dedicate this booklet to all those who are searching for hope. May they find comfort in You as You pour Your healing love upon them in the fullness of Your grace.

May Your perfect peace restore every aspect of their lives to help them live with renewed joy as they seek You first.

May they look to You as their author and finisher of all they do,

In Jesus name I pray, Amen



God is still writing your story...



“You Are God’s Beloved”



Dear friend, on the day you were born, your birth was registered in heaven. There was an acclamation of cheer as you entered the world and took your first breath. You were celebrated in the divine realm and on earth simultaneously. “Welcome my child”.

While you may have a resemblance to your parents, you are created in God’s image. He knows you by your name and calls you “Mine”. What an honour. You are valued and cherished.

Acknowledge that you are a son or a daughter of a King and an adored member of the family of God. He is your Father. Isn’t this fantastic news to perceive? It should be. Your seat is reserved at His table.

When you have a clear and deep understanding of your lineage, you will discover that your existence is not by any means a mistake. You are precious, bought for a price through the blood of Jesus. God has a plan for you even if you are unsure of what it is. He will guide you incrementally.

You are woven in to Gods spectacular tapestry that is on display in heaven and where He has used only the finest threads of gold. “This is my child” He says glowing proudly pointing at you. From the first step you took and the first word you spoke and up until this very second, it is all recorded in His journal He keeps dedicated to you. “I love who you are becoming”.

Straighten your crown, know who you are in faith and march to the beat of a heavenly drum with your head held high.

You are God's favourite kid!

Being in the family of God does not mean the absence of problems and only smooth sailing where every day is fabulous and drama free. What a lovely thought though! Life is a bit more complex than this unfortunately.

You have to work and contribute in some way while you live here on this planet you call home. You will experience conflict, loss of loved ones and other hardships. But, with God in your presence, this signifies you have infinite hope to endure life storms. Incidentally, the person at the helm of your "life" boat is Jesus. You are the oarsman. Yes, that's right, you get an important job.

Jesus navigates, you row.

He will chart your course and ensure a safe trip through the bumpy waves that may wash over you leaving you drenched in anxiety and feeling fearful. Don't give up because Jesus will dry you with His towel of comfort and peace leaving you blissfully replenished, renewed and ready to rise with valour. He is also your anchor.

Jesus holds you together when you are having a melt down and hanging on perilously. He sustains you when you can no longer carry the weight that is oppressing you. Look up and see that the hand that clings to you is mighty and it is strong. "I will never let you go".

Let's broach the topic of family briefly. I am sure you will have observed that amongst your relatives there are episodes of strife, discord and squabbles mixed in and amongst the happy times. This is quite usual in every household. (More on this subject later).

The family of God is composed differently. There is no judgment or condemnation on anyone. You may be gently reprimanded but your faults and weaknesses will never be exposed, pointed out or highlighted. You will instead be moulded and polished into becoming the best you can be. God is never disappointed in you. "I am not".

Our world is teeming with mayhem. It is filled with perils and problems that can be vexing, wearying and discouraging. It has been this way since the very beginning when Adam and Eve failed to obey God's instructions in the Garden of Eden.

In fact, we too have a rebellious nature and prefer to do things our own way, regardless of the consequences. And because of our unpredictable behaviour, we are likely to fall short of grace somewhere.

No one is immune to what is negatively happening everywhere. There are going to be troubles, of that you can be certain. Jesus tells us "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" John 16:33 (KJV). It is your response to what triggers you disparagingly that determines the outcome.

Our fight is not against flesh and blood, it is against principalities (Ephesians 6:12). Satan knows the time is coming where he will be thrown into the abyss for all eternity. He does not want to go there alone and will do what he can to deceive people into joining his fate and if not resisted and managed, you could be pulled in to a vortex that is inescapable. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" James 4:7 (KJV).

You walk in radiance. “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path” Psalm 119:105 (NIV). Every step you take is lit up for you. God is love. He is light. He is all you will ever need. “I am”.

Life is unpredictable and circumstances fluctuate. Constantly survey your surroundings and become conscious of changes that are happening around you. There are always clues. Remain focused.

Dress to impress!

The first thing you should do every morning is to don the whole armour of God looking dapper and confident. Start your day dressed for success and courage to face battles with victory. Let your war cry be “Greater is He that is in you, than He that is in the world” 1 John 4:4 (KJV).

When you are togged up in your perfectly made-to-fit attire found in Ephesians 6 that has been manufactured in heavens sewing room just for you, you will glow as a warrior in the army of God shining for the world to see.

This armour is strong, sturdy and perpetually in season. Always trendy. Designed to last. It is engineered by God and can withstand any combat.

What does this ensemble consist of?

*Helmet of salvation

*The breastplate of righteousness

*The belt of truth

*Shield of faith

*Sword of the spirit

*Shoes of peace

There may be occasions when you tie the laces of your footwear of peace and you do a song and dance as you spread news of good cheer. And then there could be times when you need to wear army boots because you appear to be traipsing through a mine field of complications that are threatening your tranquillity. One wrong move and you sense that your wellbeing is compromised. "Tread softly" you mumble under your breath.

Be assured, in your struggles you are protected. And that is the whole point of the armour.

All the while God says "Come to me".

Perhaps you need a secret place, somewhere that is serene and calm. No drama. No chaos. Can you relate to that?

Oh the bliss to imagine a setting that is immaculate and enjoyable and where the only words you hear is: "Be still and know that I am God" Psalm 46:10 (KJV). Does it exist? It does. God has created a place of refuge just for you and where the entrance is free and open around the clock.

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" Proverbs 18:10 (KJV) - you may run to Him as often as you need to. That is the very purpose of this location - for you to feel at ease and secure. You do not need pin codes or facial recognition to gain entry. There is no gate. You are known and welcomed - "It's a pleasure to see you".

In this place of unimaginable serenity there is love and safety. And when you look around, you will be astounded by the jaw-dropping exquisite beauty. "How long has this been here?" you may ask in awe. It has always existed. "How long will it last?" For all eternity.

When you approach God's throne with respect, gratitude and submissive repentance you will receive more than you could ever ask for. You will have unlimited access to divine intervention along with sound advice and incredible wisdom. It is your entitlement. There is no other restful spot such as this one anywhere on this planet. It is descriptive of being out of this world and heavenly! You are a citizen.

How do you get to this promising place of quietude? Strive to walk by faith and not by sight because there are invisible signs everywhere pointing you in the right direction - "Go this way".

Open your spiritual eyes and your soul will lead you. When you turn away from everything worldly that is vying for your attention, your eyesight will sharpen: "How come I never saw that before?" Your window has opened.

Whenever you approach God with your shoulders slumped and your heart burdened, you will encounter a heavenly hug from a devoted Father who graciously says "I've got you". Isn't that beautiful?

Giving up is easy – staying faithful is difficult.

Life's challenges come in all shapes, dimensions and in many different formats. It is not a one-size-fits-all configuration. God in all His wisdom knows about the issues you face. He watches over you as He monitors every detail of your life. You are never far from His thoughts.

But what happens when you just do not have any more fight in you to continue and you have all but given up impoverished and depleted? Perhaps you have come down to your last coin in your finances, or you have a relationship that is falling apart. Maybe addictions are

plaguing your life and robbing you of sanity, or your employment is compromised. It is in times such as these that hope appears to be slight and the light of joy is slowly diminishing. Ebbing away to just a tiny flicker waiting to be reignited.

It is easy to utter these words: "In God I trust". However, it is not a simple undertaking to follow through with when you are being crushed by crippling pressure and time is of the essence to save you from a fate you are on a collision course with.

And yet He is the only One who is trustworthy and reliable.

Capitalising on useful information is a starting point on your road to personal development in all aspects of your being. You may have to do research for tools that are applicable to your needs so you can gain control of a situation. And this involves being active in sourcing data and connecting with qualified candidates who can guide you and not judge you.

Consider what resources you have at your disposal to kick things off positively. One doesn't need to look too far these days to procure info; it is already at everyone's fingertips by way of electronic devices.

Smartphone's can be used to provide extensive online material and render advice along with helpful contact details of who to get in touch with in the area you reside.

Suppose you are not in possession of a phone? If that is the case, you will most likely know someone who does own one and will happily give you access to theirs. Perhaps there is an organisation in your vicinity that can assist you. Ask you local church to provide leads.

Is there anything else you have in your reserve to aid you to get from where you are to where you need to be? Replacing action steps with excuses will never yield any results of that you can be sure. Taking a path of least resistance is never a wise decision. Neither is waiting for someone else to sort things out for you.

God does provide but He also expects you to put in the time and effort. Have confidence and believe that while you are working on a solution, you are being guided with divine wisdom, knowledge and understanding through prayer. Nothing comes easy but it's not to say that there is never anything to look forward to. There always is. Our God cares beyond all measure. "I really do".

He is all about you.

Are you all about Him? Your Heavenly Father is not impressed by your titles or awards and accolades, what you own or where you live. He wants you – the real you to show up for Him. Come as you are. That is the only requirement. He will change you from the inside and refurbish what needs upgrading.

Just like a complete inner spring clean! Out with the old – in with the new. This is called a paradigm shift. But this new is a one of a kind. It is bespoke.

God's light shines brightly over you like a luminous brilliance as He delights in who you are. Your future is in His hands. He knows the day you entered this world. And He knows the day you will exit it – as well as everything in between those two dates. Is your name in the Book of Life?

He is working behind the scenes continuously just for you. Give God thanks and praise even when the answer is

delayed. Heaven is never quiet. It is easy to overlook the small blessings when you're at a crossroads.

Run to Him delighted in both your peaks and valleys and give Him the pleasure in seeing how grateful you are. There are valuable lessons in all the highs and lows you have to contend with because this is where experience is gained.

Set your sails in the direction you should go. Be attentive for key takeaways for self improvement. If you look for growth and meaning you will discover it, for what you seek, you shall find.

Always stay curious, never be afraid to ask questions and consistently hunt for solutions. You will be surprised and amazed at how wonderfully and fearfully you are made.

I have compiled this uplifting booklet comprising of beautiful biblical verses as well as some practical advice just for you. In the Bible there is a verse for every possible event that you will come across through your years. But you need to read it daily. It is a precious book.

Each page is filled with words of hope and encouragement, love and gladness, peace and comfort and endless wisdom but most importantly; eternal life. Charles Spurgeon said "A Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't". Become the "Isn't" as a beloved Bible owner.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" John 3:16 (KJV). We are not really deserving of this sacrifice but He sees in us what we do not detect. And that is what He is going to use. Are you ready to be in the service of God?

I pray you will be encouraged and inspired to find joy and restoration for your soul as you reach out to God and totally surrender to Him no matter what you are undergoing.

Even if you feel He is silent in your times of adversity you should remain in constant fellowship with Him because help is in transit.

Yes, God is able and willing.

Allow Him to be fully immersed in every part of your life and let Him have His way so you can go forward with confidence. God's Word is to be trusted – that is where you place your faith. In Him. With Him.

My dear friend, have you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Saviour? If not, please consider doing so. He is waiting for you to invite Him into your heart and give you the gift of eternity.

"Behold I stand at the door and knock; If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him and will sup with him, and he with me" Revelation 3:20 (KJV).

When that knock comes, will you open?"



THE SERENITY PRAYER

God grant me the serenity to
accept the things
I cannot change,
The courage to change the things
I can,
And, the wisdom to know the
difference
Reinhold Niebuhr



ONE:

QUESTION THE CHALLENGES



During difficult times and without being aware of it, you might, due to desperate circumstances, retreat from those around you, including God.

Do you occasionally feel a lack of connection and that God is distant and silent in your prayers? Are you longing to be found but you have hidden yourself away so deeply that you have left no footprints leading to you? If so, this may imply that God is occupied with other priorities and too busy to look you up. Not so. "I am here for you".

Could it be that you are in default and too tied up with distractions to call in and say "Thank you Father, I know that was You".

God certainly does keep watch over you and we are told this: "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" Proverbs 15:3 (KJV). Here's an important point: not only does God hear your prayers, He understands your unspoken words. Especially those hard-to-express words that you can never voice loudly when you are in pain and sorrow. Those are sent by special delivery. From your heart to His hand. "I have them".

Isn't it awesome that you have a personal courier service that reaches from earth to heaven in a split second! Completely free of charge. No delays.

If you think that is exceptional then how about this: God collects your tears as well and He bottles them (Psalm 56:8). Why would He do this? Because He loves you that

much! He keeps you close to His heart. “I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears; behold, I will heal thee” 2 Kings 20:5 (KJV). He says “Will”. Not “Maybe” or “If I feel like it”. You are a priority to Him. And yet, the terrain is harsh. The wilderness is frightening and the way ahead is intimidating and vague. You feel alone. Lost. Invisible. Every step you take is painful.

Close your eyes. Imagine your Father is standing before you with His arms open wide longing to embrace you as you grow weary. “One more step” He says “And another. You are almost here.” And then, in a split second, you are enveloped into His love. “I’ve got you”.

Those dispirited tears you express are very precious to Him. Each one that falls down your cheek in deep sorrow is captured. He clasps them ever so gently. God’s love is the tissue that wipes away all anguish every moment of every day. The spiritual, physical and emotional are all connected. *One and the same*.

Memorise the above bible verse for continued confirmation of God’s closeness to you as a reminder that you are always in His proximity.

It is however, imperative that you build a rapport with Him. While it is easy to simply cast your cares upon Him and expect a rapid response in an emergency because you have Him on speed dial, what are you doing in securing an eternal bond in your good times?

Where have you placed Him in your life – in the waiting room until you need Him now and again? What is your position?

How about on your knees in prayer.

Restore your faith journey and find the grace that only your Creator can provide as you walk into your destiny.

How do you acquire faith? "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" Romans 10:17 (KJV). The more you spend time with God the more your faith will increase because you will get to know Him on a much more personal level.

Ponder for a moment on some causes as to why you may have reached the point of despondency:

*Have you been going to extremes without taking a much needed respite? Slow down.

*Is it in your gentle repose to be a people pleaser giving more of yourself than you should? Take control.

*Are you being exploited because you have difficulty in saying no? Speak up.

*Do you overspend and waste money on irrelevant items and suffer from buyer's remorse afterwards? *(With financial issues there are two rules to remember: Increase your income or decrease your expenses)*.

*Is your time taken up on non important things like scrolling social media for hours slowly causing anxiety? It is known to do this. Manage your online activity.

Take a look at all the factors that make up your lifestyle, including finances, relationships, career, environment and health. The answer to your setback may lie within any of these areas and require an adjustment as well as discipline for beneficial outcomes.

Identify what the most dominant issue is controlling your thoughts negatively and see if it is backed up with evidence to validate it. Perhaps you catastrophize every

event before it even happens and your default is fatalistic. You can alter your default.

Apply switched thinking where you redirect your attention and break unwanted thought patterns that you may have cultivated and gradually conditioned yourself into. If, for example, you repeatedly affirm "I am not good at anything", this can hold you back from releasing your true potential through doubt.

Reframe your statement to "I will try many different things and see where my talent lies."

Lord Alfred Tennyson said this "It is better to have tried and failed than to live life wondering what would've happened if I had tried". We all have wishes that we long to become a reality.

Before you place your request at the feet of your Father, ask yourself if it is an actuality that can be realized. "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart" Psalm 37:4 (KJV).

But what are your desires? And do they align with your values?

This might also be the opportunity for you to get out a notebook and start working on your plans. What areas in your life can you transform to boost your morale?

Be realistic about what it is you want to do and write that down. Set a date by when you would like to reach your objective and implement milestones to keep yourself on track.

Stay focused and controlled and be accountable to someone who can encourage you firmly. Keep revisiting

your goals and see if what you first had in mind remains unchanged.

You may decide to modify or tweak them as you explore other ideas. There is nothing wrong with this. It means that you are engaging earnestly and are confident enough to up your game.

When is a good time to get started on your action steps? How about "right now". Today.

TWO:

STEPPING BACK TO STEP FORWARD



When you self-reflect with an honest, sincere approach and keep an open mind to comprehend plights that befuddle and trip you up, you will discover a lot about yourself. Perhaps incrementally you have covered layer upon layer of:

Abuse.

A negative self-image.

Unresolved issues.

Grief.

Every sheet added on top of the previous one eventually has the potential to suffocate and depress you further. Applying a band aid over a painful experience is a temporary solution. Getting to the crux of the matter may require a much more in depth analysis and exploration.

Maybe this is the time to unearth some of what is impeding you.

We often build restricting walls around ourselves like a fortified fortress without realising it, but this prevents progress.

Initiate working through unfinished business with guided help. There is exceeding joy in freeing yourself from the invisible, emotional and stifling chains that keep you prisoner**.** You are intended to be free – not in bondage and enslaved to your past.

Self sabotage is a stumbling block.

Rather than fabricating excuses to defer pressing issues, as many people do when their back is against a wall in problem solving - face them head on. Hoping a scenario will simply resolve on its own, or vanish if you ignore addressing the matter, will ultimately prolong your uncertainty.

When you are in a quagmire, give yourself permission to take time out.

It is a good idea to constantly reassess your current state of affairs before you are swamped so that you are aware of areas that appear to be struggling. This denotes you will be looking at issues proactively and able to reconfigure significantly easier.

There is reward with effort.

Aspire to become an active partaker and brainstorm ideas. Sometimes things may not be as unfavourable or unbearable as they first appeared to be once you decide to tackle them.

Take a step back to:

*Ruminate.

*Rest.

*Recalibrate.

*Reset.

God is in the business of resurrection and you are in His line of vision for growth and excellence. Maybe you are feeling disheartened that the plans you constructed long ago haven't quite merged as you hoped they would, but have instead, fallen apart. And so you have discarded them through discouragement.

Present them to God and let Him decide whether or not they should be laid to rest or if He wants to breathe new life into your dormant schemes.

Your desires may not meet the requirement of what He has in mind for you. Conversely, you might just be surprised and excited by what He selects for you to resume.

In your quiet time, try gaining an understanding of what patience and resilience means for you and how it can serve you well in other circumstances. When a decision is made in haste it may not have the preferred outcome you hope for.

***A point to ponder on*:**

Many people in their later years have so many regrets because they kept putting things off till "tomorrow". They spend a great deal of time now thinking "If only I had".

Do everything in your power to live your life unapologetically so that when you look back you will say "I am at peace".

THREE:

FINDING A MENTOR



Perhaps there are days when you feel that your strength and stamina have waned. Or you are feeling overwhelmed because you received news that you dreaded to hear. In an instant life as you knew it was altered forever.

Perchance you are unemployed or your living arrangements are in jeopardy. Could it be you have crippling pain or are a caregiver to a loved one with a terminal disease? Whatever it is, coping with tribulations in whatever form can sap your energy and bring you to the point of exhaustion.

Burnout occurs from unmanaged stress and can hinder you from carrying out your day to day activities productively. Be aware of warning signs.

Jesus said in Matthew 11:30 (NIV) "My yoke is easy and my burden is light", meaning you can find relief in Him. Mark 6:31 (KJV) has a beautiful verse "Come ye apart by yourselves into a desert place, and rest awhile". "Really? Am I allowed to do this?" Yes, you are. How does rest look for you?

Sometimes you can seek around for support only to find that you are on your own whilst spikes of anxiety disable you. Remember these words: "But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength" 2 Timothy 4:17 (NIV). With the Lord alongside you, you will have a pillar of might to lean on. Strong and sturdy.

Let Him know that you are not managing. He longs to hear from you and that you are simply floundering from fatigue. While He is fully aware of your predicament, He wants you to speak to Him and pour your heart out. "I will get you through this".

It is easier said than done though to just hand over your worries. Do you find that to be true? You will be surprised to know that God delivers more than just a glimmer of hope in dire times.

He works in the unseen, today, tomorrow and forever.

Ask Him to place a mentor in your path to be your voice of reason. Consider these mentorships: Jethro and Moses, Eli and Samuel, Naomi and Ruth. There are some things you cannot accomplish on your own. Admit it.

In this selfish world, there are still many people who are kind, caring and obliging. Find your mentor. Or become a mentor to someone who you can guide, support and uplift through your own experiences. Could you do that?

Read the verses of Psalms. While God is the ultimate author of the Bible, this book has many uplifting verses written by King David (amongst other essayists). He too knew firsthand the perils of tragedy, sorrow, uncertainty and desperation.

But he also recognised that he was chosen for a divine purpose. David was a shepherd boy destined to be a King and lovingly described in 1 Samuel 13:14 as "A man after His own heart". The Lord saw David's values aligned to His.

You dear reader is also a man or woman who is in the heart of God.

In the book of Psalms you will find a great source of encouragement with the beautiful words expressed from someone who had been through all that you are enduring.

You may remember David for famously vanquishing Goliath with a sling and just one stone. He conquered his giant. So can you because you have a Father who fights for you also.

There is heavenly guidance through all your trials and ordeals as you bring your whole life to God in faith. He says in Psalm 91:4 that He will cover you with His feathers. There is a tremendous amount of comfort available for you. More than you will ever realise.

It certainly does take nerves of steel to weather a fragile or tense process as it runs its course. We are not equipped to brave storms alone entirely.

What you battle to let go of, He is willing to receive. Your issues will melt into solutions when you say to Him "I am yours".

Read the bible from Genesis to Revelation. You will be changed in so many ways and when problems do come your way, you will have divine insight of what to do.

Alexander Maclaren says "True peace comes not from the absence of trouble but from the presence of God".

You are told in Isaiah 65:24 (KJV) "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear".

Did you see this? "*Before* you call". God is holding your prayer in His hand in preparation and anticipation of your call. And *while* you are speaking, His attention is on every word you utter. The sound of your voice is music to His ears. "It is".

How do you conduct yourself before the One who is in a loving conversation with you?

FOUR:

A HEART OF COURAGE



Fear has a crafty way of showing up to escalate anxiety and panic, especially when you are desperately trying to find solutions. Have you noticed this? Feelings cannot be trusted. They will come and go. They ebb and flow. Moods constantly change from one emotion to another.

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" 2 Timothy 1:7 (KJV).

It is always best not to make a brash decision when you are downcast. Rather let a gloomy sentiment pass until you are thinking more clearly and rational and then when you get to the point of decision, you will be poised and proactive as opposed to remorseful and contrite.

A great verse to recall for times when you need to be courageous is this one: "I can do all this through Him who gives me strength" Philippians 4:13 (NIV).

Breathe in courage – exhale doubt and fear.

In times of dire need when life seems to unravel, pride says: "No thanks, I don't need your help, I can manage". But a humble and grateful heart says "Thank you for asking. I am not coping". Which of those two scenarios are you?

Accept help graciously when it is offered. And lend a hand when it is called for. We all need assistance and reassurance now and again. It is ok to say I am not ok. It really is. There is no shame in admitting that you are vulnerable.

Take heart dear friend and consider that there is wisdom in calling on someone you know and trust who will walk alongside you as you traverse obstacles. Psychologists, Counsellors, Practitioners and Pastors as well as many reliable people in your circle are all part of God's grace for you. They may have advice you hadn't thought of.

These days many groups exist who will give you support during a crisis. Make enquiries and follow reliable leads you are given.

He will because it is His Will.

Answers from God emerge in various ways and via a myriad of means. And that includes through honest, helpful people.

In John 14:16 Jesus said He will ask His Father to send a Helper who will guide and teach us. A great Counsellor. A Comforter. The Holy Spirit. The fruits and the gifts that He

has to offer are freely available for you to nourish your soul.

Invite the Holy Spirit to live within your being and be blessed with His precious gentleness. Dr John R. W Stott said "The Christian should resemble a fruit tree, not a Christmas tree!" What is your tree bearing and what example are you displaying for others to follow or want to pick from your branches?

When it comes to self improvement, the Holy Spirit's character is vital to complete who you are. Daily ask for the fruits and gifts. Employ them in to your life in every aspect.

Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you and you will constantly feel that you are in the presence of the Almighty.

What are the fruits and gifts? Take a look at the illustration below. They are listed for you.

The Fruits:

Love
Joy
Peace
Patience
Kindness
Goodness
Faithfulness
Gentleness
Self control



The Gifts:

Wisdom
Understanding
Counsel
Fortitude
Knowledge
Piety
Fear of God

Perhaps you can practice a different fruit and gift each week. You will start to feel a renewed and fresh outlook almost immediately.

This is the thing about God's love for His children; He ensures that they are well rounded and fulfilled.

"You are complete".

FIVE:

SURRENDER ALL



As you continue to wait upon God and stand firmly on His word, occasionally you may not get what you requested. But because you are Gods child - and His favourite one, He knows what your requirements are ahead of time.

Ask yourself: Is it a want or a need I have? There is a big difference between the two.

How long do you have to wait for a response to your prayer? *For as long as it takes.* God's schedule is very different from ours and because He is perfect and thorough, you should apply forbearance in the interim.

You may have to taste the fruit of "Patience" here! It is nutritious and it is healthy.

God utilises a great deal of thought when honing details for you. These things take time. His time. Not yours.

However, while you are waiting upon the Lord, ruminate deeply on the notion that you are being refined to

perfection during this epoch. You are on the Potter's wheel. Learn to yield all.

In the age of internet access we are connected to everyone. Everywhere. Non. Stop. This is because people are invariably available a mere screen tap away.

We, in our human capacity, are inclined to position God into the same category as we would do with friends "Hurry up and answer!" That attitude will not work in the divine.

Think about it this way, when you communicate via online platforms to others, there are instances when you have had to wait for feedback from the receiver not knowing when or if you will get a reply.

Perhaps you feel let down when you are ignored and your messages remain unread. That is a "people" thing and it is what they do.

God is not behind a screen.

We may be created in His image but unlike us in how we treat each other, He is respectful. He is kind. He is compassionate. Do you see those characteristics in yourself and everyone else?

God has you etched in His memory and He has not abandoned you "I will never leave you nor forsake you" Joshua 1:5 (NIV). Whatever you take to the Lord in prayer, is always attended to. You may get a thumbs up "Yes" or a thumbs down "No".

He will get back to you. Not one moment too late. God is always precise. He is punctual. Learn to be composed and you will be rewarded.

As hard as it may be for you, someday you will have to surrender your plans and dreams - as well as all your failures to God. Each and every one of them.

Most often we hang on to problems and only half heartedly pass on what is in our small hand to place into His much bigger one. “I want all of ‘you’”.

It is not about defeat. It is about trust and regards your genuine love for Him and not what you can extract from Him by faking your motives.

He loves you unreservedly. He sees your heart. Does He not deserve the same in return? I would say so.

Some prayers can go unanswered for a lifetime. When you get to heaven, it will be made known to you why some of your requests are still sitting in the inbox. All will be fully explained.

Think back to a time when you prayed for something but never got it. Are you grateful today that your prayer was silent because what you sought would have been of no use to you? Imagine what is being cleared from your path that you are not aware of even today.

Right now. This minute.

In your constant state of “I want” you have no idea how you are being spared from many other mishaps and heartaches. This is why being grateful in *all* circumstances is so important.

All the days of your life.

SIX:

CLOSER THAN YOU REALISE



How do you know if you can call on God at any hour? Because He says "I am with you, I will watch over you wherever you go" Genesis 28:15 (NIV).

If we grasp how infinite our planet is – or even how immeasurable the entire universe is, it is simply mind blowing to know and comprehend the expanse and that you are being monitored by the One who designed it all.

You are in God's lens constantly. "I see you".

He has an up close view of you. His compositions are flawless and breathtaking. Have you noticed the beautiful glow at sunrise as it makes its appearance to greet the day?

You receive this gift every morning. It is addressed to you personally gilded in gold and signed with love.

It is special. It is yours.

Did you discern the sunset with colours that are so spectacular they cannot be created by even the most talented artist?

Have you looked up at the sky on a clear night and tried to count the stars dancing around the moon? Read this: "He determines the number of stars and calls them each by name" Psalm 147:4 (NIV). This is simply unintelligible to human thinking!

At the end of every day, your response should be "You thought of me today. Thank you". Those two words are

seldom heard anymore and neither are these: “Please” and “Sorry”. Be sure to use them as often as possible. Everybody wants to feel appreciated. Don’t you also? Of course you do.

Expressing gratitude to God is something that you should be doing consistently “Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His love endures forever” Psalm 107:1 (NIV). Forever is a very long time!

There are telescopes built that can browse galaxies many light years away from earth but God sees you clearer than anything that will ever be constructed by man. He doesn’t need a fancy gadget to view you from afar.

He has given us the sun which is about 150 million kilometres away. It has endless energy to shine upon our planet from that great distance. And it has done so for centuries. Without the rain and sun, there would be no life here. The Son of God is our eternal light. And He reigns.

If you scrutinize your surroundings at the fauna and flora in nature, you will see the hand of God in everything. All the whispers and secrets of the earth are just waiting to be explored.

There are some strange looking animals of which some are quite hilarious proving God has an acute sense of humour. Do you gaze at the clouds and point out shapes that resemble something else?

Dive in to the ocean for a moment and immerse yourself in a hidden sanctuary that magically opens beneath the waves. The marine life and its aquatic species are simply exquisite. Consider the extraordinary size of whales and yet they glide through the water with ease and grace.

Are you a bird watcher? There are many different kinds flying (or walking) dressed in the most glamorous and oftentimes outrageous plumage. Did you know that every sparrow that falls to the ground is known about by God? That's right, Matthew 10:29 tells us so.

Even the productive tiny ants and peculiar bugs that crawl around have a purpose. They, like you, are all Gods masterpieces. There is not one thing that isn't from Him. We are given all these magnificent creations to enjoy.

What have you observed that has jolted your curiosity?

"How did He do that?"

By the mere fact that there is so much diversity, we know that God wants us to have the best of all He has to offer. We should never be bored with what we have been provided with.

Venture into nature. You will be transformed.

And how about this, there are over 8 billion people populating the planet and you are known intimately. You are told "But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered" Luke 12:7 (KJV).

It is truly beyond our limited understanding to perceive that God recognises each of us individually amongst the countless masses. And He follows our every step – yours included. That is just how it is with our Sovereign Father. "There goes my child".

There are countless blessings right from the very spot you are standing on.

*The air you breathe.

*The sounds you hear.

*The wind upon your face.

*The food you taste.

*The fragrances you smell.

*The shapes you see.

And yet there is still so much more. “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” 1 Corinthians 2:9. (KJV). Do you love Him?

Make the call. He is waiting to talk to you. You just need a prayer – not a phone. “Nothing else”.

SEVEN:

BE YOURSELF



Life is progressing and evolving rapidly as this world continuously reinvents itself. We have to constantly upgrade our technological capabilities, devices - and our thoughts and ideas just to stay up to date.

Yes, we live in a fast paced society frantically following the trail of breadcrumbs through a wilderness of confusion. Trying to maintain sanity searching for a healthy balance is not easy!

Do you feel that way? Are you caught up in the frenzied madness and becoming exhausted mentally as you endeavour to comply?

We are told in Romans 12:2 (KJV) “Be not conformed to this world”. There is a reason for this. Remain true to you. Your values. Your goals. Oscar Wilde famously said: “Be yourself; everyone else is already taken”.

You are designed to stick out rather than fit in. Everything you will need has been planted in you.

Because mostly everyone uses the internet for social outreach, you might be frequently notified of regular updates from those you interact with.

Take heed that many of those who portray to be prospering because they only show their best photos, may not in all likelihood be revealing the truth about what is actually going on in their offline life.

This can lead you into temptation of negative self evaluation where you may feel depressed and demoralised because your life doesn’t appear as impressive.

There is merit in the saying “Not all is as it seems”.

If you are not cautious when equating your personal progression to others, you could spiral into a downward loop.

Comparison is the thief of progress and will rob you of cultivating your unparalleled talents. Self discovery means spending time to quietly introspect to identify your incomparable uniqueness.

Inwardly craving to be like someone else could lead you to bypass your own specialities. You have so much to offer this world.

Just because someone has been to university or college, has degrees and certificates and you may not have, this

should have no personal bearing on your capabilities. None whatsoever.

SELF REFLECT:

*Where do I see myself going forward?

*What do I want more or less of?

*What are my skills?

*Where are they able to be used?

*How can I improve on them?

Endeavour to cultivate your own distinctive path. You may just stumble upon an idea that no one else is contemplating. The world needs more variety.

Think about this, our lives have been transformed by some ingenious idea that was founded by someone who desired to try a diverse method.

Take for instance the humble light bulb invented by Thomas Edison who stated: "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." Thank goodness he kept trying otherwise we could still be in the dark!

Do you have an idea that can possibly bring about change? Work on it and see how far you can run with it.

Mingle with those who can see the potential in you and willingly want to help you advance. No jealousy. No self gain. A "true blue" friend. If there is anyone else doing what you have an interest in, ask them for advice. And in return, share your knowledge.

Put your pride, fears and ego aside and liaise, connect, network. Learn what you can from as many different avenues as possible. This is how you gain experience.

Consider also that you could be sufficient in your own authenticity and all you need are some pointers, encouragement and reassurance.

Reinvent yourself and be inspired by stories of not just success, but of those individuals who climbed the ladder of greatness against all odds.

Albert Einstein said "I am thankful to all those who said 'no' to me. It's because of them I did it myself".

When making decisions it is always a good idea to use wisdom before jumping to a conclusion. And more so if it is going to be a life changing commitment. Acting on a whim or thinking recklessly may have dire consequences long term.

Spend time in prayer and cover all your options in its entirety without being hasty or rushed. This is pivotal for a positive conclusion that will bring you peace.

When it comes to optimizing a result, bear this in mind, "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you" James 1:5 (NIV).

Wisdom is the most treasured asset you can possibly acquire. Request it daily. It is an eternal gift to receive. A wise person knows what to do and through discernment will ensure that all will be done to the best of their ability.

Some oversights are difficult to reverse. When you are being pressurised to come to a resolution, regrets may occur. Take your time and think things through. If it means you have to delay for a short while on a decision, then so be it. Better safe than sorry.

EIGHT:

MAP OUT YOUR PATH



If you happen to deem it laborious and vexing to reach your chosen goal because your vision is obscured by indecision and fatigue, then perhaps you should reconfigure your strategy and review your plan with integrity.

Consider however, there may also be occasions when you are influenced by the remarks from opinionated people who will cause you to question your choices and lead you in the opposite direction of where you want to go.

Refuse to be driven by the standards of someone who might not, in all likelihood, have their own life resolved.

There will always be sceptics in this world. Those people who are pessimistic by nature. It's best to circumvent being drawn into their way of thinking. Many of them can be your undoing.

Bear in mind though, constructive criticism can be helpful sometimes so avoid completely dispelling all viewpoints from others. Use common sense when engaging in dialogue and once again, research all matter you are presented with. You might just unearth a gem!

Oftentimes your inner voice or "hunch" may well be credible. Listen to yourself.

Or, perhaps you lack confidence and have an aversion to defeat and opt to "play it safe". This can happen but

always be cognizant that there is zero growth in a comfort zone.

Doubt is a barrier that will prevent you from forging ahead if you give it your consent. There are of course times when you need to question the motive behind feeling disinclined.

Even the most successful people experience dubiety now and again.

If disempowering thoughts control every essence of your life in the negative, then you need to tackle them realistically. Emotions are God given. But sometimes they can run amok if not managed and controlled.

Perhaps you are a procrastinator and you find it difficult to either start or maintain your goal. If that is the case, then bring someone on board who will motivate you.

How many unfinished projects do you have?

*The book you said you want to write

*The rooms you were going to de-clutter

*The phone call you keep putting off

*The person you promised to visit

*The musical instrument you desired to learn

The above are just examples. Compile your own "to do list" and work through each item ticking off "done" as you complete your task. You will be surprised at your progress.

Consider what Winston Churchill said "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts".

Following the crowd and emulating what they do, could leave you feeling dissatisfied and unfulfilled. What is

trendy today becomes old news tomorrow. Build your own empire and then successfully guide others to prosper.

Lead by excellent example.

A point to ponder: Humans (yes, that's us) are in perpetual motion. We are constantly in a developmental stage. Provided you are moving forward proactively, that in itself is marvellous and outstanding. Good for you. Keep going!

We read these sage words "In all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight" Proverbs 3:6 (NIV). You walk, He directs your paths. But you need to know where you are walking to.

As a side note: The book of Proverbs is filled with comprehensive insight covering every topic you will ever encounter. There are 31 chapters – one for every day of the month. Memorise pertinent verses to recite for when you are facing adversity.

When Alice from "Alice Through The Looking Glass" (CS Lewis) asked the Cheshire cat which way she ought to go, the cat responded "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to". Alice replied "I don't much care where". The cat said "Then it doesn't matter which way you go".

Plot your path wisely otherwise you may not reach your destination effectively and it could take you a lot longer than you planned. Review your map regularly as you traverse.

Place God in the driving seat while you become the active passenger who shares with Him where you would like to go in life. He may take you in a slightly different

direction and this is just fine. Collaborate with Him; show Him your chart going forwards. And if He should erase any of your coordinates, let Him do so.

Remember He penned your life from beginning to end. You will be in unison with Him in the space where you have invited Him into.

Is He on your VIP list? He should be.

NINE:
IN THE QUIET SPACE



Over thinking may lead to disruptive focus. When your mind is in a state of calm, this is an indication that you are silent in words and thoughts. And when God speaks, you will hear.

But where is He to be found? 1 Kings 19:11-12 tells us that He is not in the wind, nor in the earthquake. He is instead in a gentle whisper.

As mentioned earlier, we live in a very noisy and distracted world. It could be insinuated that in all probability this technological revolution is causing our attention span to shorten and become haphazard. Have you observed this in yourself with a lack of focus or experiencing brain fog? How about isolation?

Loneliness is a very real concern, especially for the elderly or those who are living in care homes.

The busier we get, the less we are conscious of. Being caught up in matters that are nonsensical, means those in

our midst are often ignored. Smartphones have the ability to cause relationship problems.

There is chaos all around us. It is unlikely to get any better.

Many people are searching for serenity. It is not located in any particular place on all the corners of the earth because of the ongoing turmoil we are subjected to.

By sowing inner seeds of accord, there can over time be an abundant harvest of bliss and benevolence to bring about positive change for you and in you.

It is important that you schedule time to be alone with God. With Him is where you find the peace that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7). It is the most sincere connection you will ever experience.

So often we hear "pray for peace" but what does it look like? If we are praying for the absence of conflict in this world we will only see that when Jesus comes back to make all things right. Is it a personal composure you seek or relational?

The word "peace" has a different interpretation for each person. What does it mean for you?

Define what it is you want.

It is absolutely possible to reach a harmonious equilibrium and that is what everyone should be pursuing with tenacity.

Being silent in prayerful meditation is when you will feel a loving breath from above. A gentle caress. A joy fulfilled. It is just beautiful. It is living water for a parched soul. You will be reenergized in the most profound way when you tap into divine resources.

Make it a habit to switch off from all activity periodically to attain a neutral mood. Immerse yourself in God's mercy and say "I am tired". "I am yours". Utterly. Completely.

Practicing mindfulness and remaining in the present moment should be a priority. By doing so, this activates stability and calms an internal storm before it becomes an uncontrollable spiral of disorder where you cannot find the exit. This action has great benefits.

The side effects are poise and repose.

Spending every day with God is paramount. He loves to be included in your life and in everything that you do. But for this to happen you need to let Him know that you long to be a part of Him and the closer you draw to Him, the closer He gets to you. "Come near to God and He will come near to you" James 4:8 (NIV).

Offer each day to Him at the outset. Allow Him to direct your path to the plans He has and deems best for you. If we are to be honest, He does know us better than we do!

TEN:

HOLDING IT TOGETHER



God never walks away from you when your life turns upside down. Instead He will turn you the right side up!

We are told "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble" Psalm 46:1. (NIV). When everything is fine and dandy and going your way, you may

have less of a need for divine intervention. But when matters deteriorate, it is then that your mind becomes charged with uncertainty and you require a lifeline.

Provocations are all around us, there is no escaping them. Some tests will give you growth; others will push you to the limit where you need to reassess your endurance.

Cultivate your faith as deeply as you possibly can so you are spiritually prepared for any eventuality. Heed Watchman Nee's wise words: "The Christian experience from start to finish, is one of faith".

Oftentimes issues creep in so gradually that we barely notice them until it's too late. Be on top of problems before they intensify. Dealing with the "elephant in the room" means you ought to address your most obvious concerns first rather than avoid them.

How can you do this?

Identify and break your topics down into smaller points, come up with a strategy for solutions and implement what needs to be done. If you are able, collaborate with someone who has experience in formulating action plans in the areas that need attending.

It is best to work through a problem, not around it. You can make a comeback from a setback.

There are some valuable skills you can acquire when adhering to your agenda for resolving issues.

These include:

*Prioritising

*Increase in productivity

*Stress management

*Time and budget control

*Problem solving

*Effective communication

*Differentiation between asset and liability

Standing before a mountain of complications scratching your head wondering how to climb over it, is an indication that you need to begin chipping at the mound to set yourself free of overwhelm. It can be done. But you need to put it in motion.

In times of distress you can run to your Father as a child in need. Release your heartache and concerns to Him. Tell Him you are experiencing difficulties and that you have no strength for conflict. God will come to your aid. He just does. "I do".

He also says "And call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honour me" Psalm 50:15 (NIV).

Read the "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11. You will be filled with a deep sense of wonder by the stories of the great men and women who were faithful regardless of their circumstances.

Their trust in God was steadfast and consistent. We have it easy today with everything at our fingertips in comparison to biblical times.

The men and women back then laboured extensively in the most hostile conditions braving insurmountable obstacles. There were no stores on street corners to pick up groceries on the way home nor a local courier to drop off shopping bought online.

They would have been delighted to have a drive-thru to fetch a quick snack at any time of the day. Imagine if they could have swopped a donkey for a taxi via an app for transport? Or had the luxury of a smartphone to do all this!

Just think how astounded and mesmerised they would be at what the future became. What would they make of AI!

You are born into a time where everything is so much simpler (but also potentially disruptive). You are spoilt beyond recognition and because it's become the norm, you can easily overlook the marvel in it all.

This is the sad reality of failing to see the blessings that we continue to receive – even though we do not deserve them.

Maintenance in your daily prayer and your relationship with God means that when you are overwhelmed, you are in a better frame of mind because you have Him in your midst. "I am never far away".

You can always find refuge in God's grace. Walk with Him and talk to Him just as you would do with a friend who loves you unconditionally.

Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father and He advocates for you. He intercedes for you. He prays for you.

Imagine hearing this from Him: "That's the one I was telling you about" and He points at you.

Heaven is abuzz with news about Gods kids!



ELEVEN:

FAMILY TIES



On days when notions of foreboding beliefs of being abandoned and loneliness begin to envelope you, you are told "I will not leave you as orphans I will come to you" John 14:18 (NIV). There are many people who grew up without parents or family and the sense of being an outcast is a sad reality for them. I mentioned family in the beginning of the booklet but I just want to reiterate on it slightly further.

There are those who are estranged from their loved ones for various reasons. If you are in this place in your own household, rest assured that with God as your Father, you are known and called "Family" - and not only that; He has given you a limitless circle of people who you can call brothers and sisters. You are not lost in a wilderness in solitary confinement and exclusion. You have a well established ancestry.

However – and this is an important point to remember - earthly families are a gift from God. He created this kinship to carry out His will. With a caring family we have a sense of belonging, identity and in our later years, hopefully support.

But, values are fast changing. In these days and times of conflict, it is a widespread story where families have dissolved and severed their ties.

It is sad to see that the enemy satan, who is the father of all lies, can win this round because he does not want

people to love each other and he knows this is where it hurts most. In blood ties. His plan is to dismantle the chain that links relatives as one unity. Most often it is with spectacular success. And instead of healing there is hatred.

Forgiving a family member for a wrong doing, altercation, dispute or otherwise is really hard to do. We feel they should be honourable, loyal and faithful. And if that is the case, why then should we absolve them for injustices done toward us?

Unlike friends who are pardoned a lot easier and quicker, it is not so with family.

When arguments and fighting persist, this is what most often happens; everyone withdraws and silent treatment is used as the weapon of choice. That is not peace - that is anger brewing.

There is always a reason why a relationship is terminated or there is exiting. It is quite often not an overnight decision to remove oneself from family. Usually there has been a lot of thought, pain and agony of history repeating itself that may lead to the estrangement and walking away.

Perhaps there is substance abuse involved or domestic violence (which is on the increase), financial constraints, religious or sexual preferences or unemployment as examples. There is a cause to the effect. There are times when boundaries have been breached and marital affairs are taking place, thus distrust seeps in.

Some further causes can include personality clashes, boundary violations, disagreements about parenting, money disputes and even control for dominance. The list is endless.

Whatever the reasons, deficiency in effective coping tools in dealing with these issues can, without a doubt, give rise to a complete relationship breakdown. The repercussions can spark a long term ripple effect. This is a growing concern globally.

How do you feel when you perceive that you are being rejected by others? Keep this in mind; not everyone we meet is going to like us or get along with us. And vice versa. Families are no different. Recognise that we are all very dissimilar.

People are becoming a lot more aggressive than ever before and hostility can very quickly escalate to a feud where relationships are destroyed forever. And it doesn't take much for someone to reach a tipping point where the impact of their actions is dire.

If you are working through conflict challenges, it is understandable that there could be occasions when you detect being shunned through no fault of your own. It would be great if we could all gravitate towards each other in loving friendships, but that's not reality.

This does not necessarily mean that you are an invaluable person or worthless. Jesus too was ostracised but He continued on His quest to fulfil His destiny for us to have salvation.

On the other hand however, question if you might be contributing significantly in this relationship fallout. Often we refuse to acknowledge our own wrong doings and blame others. In Matthew 7:5 we are told to remove the plank from our own eye first.

Can you see this as an opportunity to make personal favourable changes that will boost your confidence in

building rapport with others and where your voice is heard? It comes down to respect from all parties involved.

Keep this verse in mind "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God!" 1 John 3:1 (NIV). If you are loved divinely then that is really what counts most.

So while God accepts you with all your flaws there is always room for self improvement and He expects you to evolve positively.

You are responsible for what you verbalise. Heed Andy Rooney's wise advice: "Always keep your words soft and sweet, just in case you have to eat them".

Whatever your resolve is for a way forward in your family affairs, should you opt to have a meeting, be open minded to listen to what each person has to say. Come to a decision sooner rather than too late. Having a professional advisor mediate ensures both sides are heard.

TWELVE:

ABOUNDING GRACE



Let's continue with relational matters. We can be quite complex creatures with our diverse natures. Learning to get along with one another is a feat in itself!

We are in constant contact with other people on a daily basis in one way or another and we build rapport sometimes unknowingly. This means that we create a space where friendships are formed with trust.

This is accomplished by effective communication such as being an active listener, using positive body language, showing empathy and being respectful.

A common problem today is that people talk over each other in a conversation. Be in the present moment, focused and show interest in what the other person is saying. Respond when it is your turn. Good manners are becoming a thing of the past.

Socrates said this: "Before you speak, let your words pass through 3 gates: Is it true; Is it necessary. Is it kind?"

With the onset of social media, it has over time evolved substantially. It can be addictive and has been linked to mental health issues. Nowadays it also functions as a platform to vent. Have you used it for that purpose? This is never a great idea because your message may be misconstrued and lost in translation.

Many people utilize social media as a surveillance camera rather than a tool of friendship where no filters are used. The positive is blocked out and emphasis is placed only on the negatives.

Properly managed, being connected has enormous advantages where you can excel tremendously. Enjoy both the online and offline world with balance.

It doesn't take much to offend someone or their feelings when you are conferring. People are quite touchy these days and if you neglect to use wisdom and choose your

words with great care, problems arise, conflict ensues and dialogue is broken down. Have you been in this situation?

Perhaps you have a shy nature and struggle to voice your opinion and you are often shouted down and so you prefer to stay quiet. This may be construed as a weakness by others and could lead to you being bullied. Work on your strengths and let it be known that you will not tolerate disrespect.

Negative words stick like glue and cause a plethora of complications that may give way to long term damage. Aggression can very swiftly escalate with mounting tension.

It is unrealistic to assume that you will never meet a person who is not navigating their way through a tumultuous time. Encouragement is a soothing balm.

Always think before you speak because "Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones" Proverbs 16:24 (NIV). Your words can either heal or hurt. Perhaps you struggle to express yourself and you are misunderstood which in turn can then create controversy.

Be remembered for your reassuring spirit and make a positive impact on those around you. In essence, just be gracious. This certainly does not mean you should be walked on like a welcome mat. Stand up for yourself when you need to and pick your battles cautiously.

Some fights are just not worth the effort – or your sanity. Kenny Rogers sings "Know when to walk away and know when to run."

Choose wisely!

There is truth in the saying “Treat others as you yourself would like to be treated”. This world needs more pleasantries and less strife wouldn’t you say?

When you feel ashamed because you have done something that makes you feel unworthy, approach God for His grace and mercy. He is all forgiving to those who repent "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" Hebrews 8:12 (KJV).

If addictions plague you, I urge you to seek guidance from those who specialise in these matters to assist you in making better choices. Everyone deserves a second chance. You can always make a fresh start. But you have to admit you need help.

When someone tries to expose you for some wrong in your past, remind yourself - and them "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" Romans 3:23 (KJV).

There is no one on this planet I can assure you, that has an impeccably clean slate. God is the judge of all the earth, not your family or friends. Learn from your mistakes, apologise if you need to, make adjustments and move on proactively.

People are quick to highlight the shortcomings of others. Set boundaries and block opinions that remind you of your former conduct. You are heading forwards, not backwards. You are not defined by your past.

But most importantly, God beckons you to Him for forgiveness. If He has chosen to “remember no more” what you have done, then others - including you should do so as well.

It is a wonderful feeling releasing what feels like a millstone around your neck because of a bygone misconduct. “I am free from this moment on”. Isn’t that a nice notion to hold dear to your heart?

We often hear of people stockpiling essentials for times when it might become lean years. I encourage you to fill your inner sanctum in much the same way but instead of amassing perishable goods, stock up on prayer.

Become a hoarder if you must. You can never have enough of them and you can never run out of them! And there is no expiry date.

“Pray without ceasing” 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (KJV).

THIRTEEN:

THE HEAVENLY STOREROOM



We are told that where our treasures are – there our heart is also (Matthew 6:21). From today begin accumulating your treasures in heaven where they cannot decay. We aren’t speaking of our earthly goods such as monetary or material possessions. These remain here when we die and are generally passed on or disposed of.

What are the treasures? We may not know exactly but Jesus is definitely one of them. Then we have our gifts and talents that we use for God’s glory and not for ourselves alone. We serve sacrificially. And in this way we store riches above.

Good works won't get you into heaven – only by receiving Jesus as your Lord and Saviour will this happen. However, everything we do while we are here is taken notice of in heaven and we will be honoured. We are given eternal crowns. "Well done thou good and faithful servant" Matthew 25:23 (KJV).

Earth is not our permanent home – we are pilgrims passing through on our way to heaven where we belong. "Forever".

We serve in the body of Christ on earth and He is our treasure beyond all measure. Being compassionate to the less fortunate, caring for widows and orphans and being charitable towards others are also some of the ways we deposit treasures.

Can you find time to become involved in the community? There are many places that are appealing for volunteers in various charity organisations.

When you help others, you will discover a lot about yourself I can assure you! You will also realise just how desperate the needs are. It is so rewarding giving back with humility and meekness.

Sometimes you may wonder what your purpose is "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" Ephesians 2:10 (KJV).

Do you know what an "instrument" is? This is something that is used for precision work. God has called you to be His instrument on earth. What a wonderful way to find your objective.

God doesn't have to give you anything but He chooses to do so because He is love and He loves you. He enjoys giving you a stamp of approval even if you do not merit it.

Do you concede recognition to Him for all He has showered upon you daily? You are indeed indebted to Him because you are saved through grace.

Not one of us has earned a place in heaven on our own accord, but when Jesus died on the cross He made it possible for every person to have access to God. "I did that for you".

Whatever you are doing right now, stop and have a look around you and take notice of the whole spectrum.

Behold the reverence of God.

He has given you life and that is reason enough to be in awe. It is up to you how you will live it.

Cultivate gratitude in the simplest of things such as a plate of food, a pillow to rest your head on or the shirt you wear. Millions of people do not have these luxuries.

Grow your gratitude list daily. If you do this for just a week, you will be astounded at what you have been given. How many of those gifts did you take for granted? Were you able to use them all and if not, were you generous enough to share with others?

Your heavenly storeroom has no limit to the amount of space you can utilise. Just keep on stocking up in whatever wonderful way you can.

You will be shown what treasures you have accumulated when you get to heaven. "Come see".

FOURTEEN:

WE ARE HEAVEN BOUND



Our time on earth is fleeting. The body that is used to transport our soul around is slowly aging every day a little more and will show signs of this process with each passing birthday. None of us is immune to sickness or disease. We live in a fallen world and that means we are exposed to many different ailments and hardships.

Whether we are blessed to live to our golden years or not, we will at some stage pass on from this world in to the next. It is indeed a sorrowful and harrowing subject to contemplate. No one likes to think of death because it feels so final. The end. Nothing more. This is not the case.

Facing our mortality is what we all have to deal with at some point. In Ecclesiastes 3 (NIV) King Solomon tells us this "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die".

If you have lost someone whom you loved dearly and you are now learning to live in their absence, you will know how difficult this time is and how life has changed for you going forward. If you are working through the grief stages and not managing, please engage with a bereavement counsellor. You don't need to struggle on your own.

Leaving a legacy is what many desire to do. Something that says "I was here" and so assets are bequeathed to

others. There are those who might not have relatives and they may choose to leave their possessions to a worthy cause instead. It is a personal decision as to what you decide to do with your belongings.

It is seldom found (although it does happen), that a person departs this earth with no trace of themselves as a reminder of the contribution or impact they have made whilst here. Are you making a difference as you traverse through this life? Will others want to walk in the footprint you have engraved? And will it lead them to heaven?

There are many different ways to pass on the torch of hope that excludes trivial assets. Let it be that when people see you, they see Jesus. Tell them the good news.

Know without a shadow of a doubt where you will be going upon your exiting this temporary accommodation you have here on earth to reside in your permanent one. Heaven is and has always been your eternal home. "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" John 14:2 (KJV). "Welcome home".

God has always intended for us to be with Him forever but the only way we can do this is by receiving Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.

We rejoice by knowing that to be absent from the body, is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Decide today to be a part of Gods bigger plan He has always wanted you to have. You cannot afford to delay on this decision. Jesus died on the cross for you so that one day you will be with Him. And that is how much you are loved. *"It is finished"*.

PRAYER OF SALVATION



"Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and in need of Your forgiveness. I believe in my heart that You died on the cross for my sins. You rose again to give me eternal life. I invite You to come into my heart from this very moment, today. I choose to trust You and receive You as my Lord and my Saviour. Now and forever. Amen"



"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" John 14:6 (KJV)



Avy Hattingh is a certified personal development coach and has a diploma in counselling. She is also a member of "The Shepherds Calling" along with Fred Matthew, Thomas Samuel and Linda Stevens. The team volunteers their time, skills and services by being active in the community.

They hold workshops on various notable issues that need addressing to bring about change and uplift and empower communities. This includes visitations and counselling in different care facilities where the vulnerable reside. They spend time doing crafts, giving talks and being supportive to encourage and engage in a positive manner.

There are also across the border projects in neighbouring countries to help assist with spreading Gods Word to build relationships and hope.

Our motto is: *"Together we do make a difference!"*

