

GIVING OUR BEST FOR THE LORD IN 2014 (Fully using our God given gifts and talents)

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”
(1 Corinthians 15:58)

- **We have a whole year of opportunity ahead of us in 2014 to make an impact on the lives of many people for eternity.**
- **We are now living in times that are getting increasingly more difficult and uncertain.**
- **The message of the gospel is good news to all who hear it – Jesus Christ saves, heals and sets people free to enter into eternal life and a future of purpose and meaning**
- **With the door open in this country to share our faith, NOW is the time to make the most of every God given opportunity to help people come to Christ**
- **There is a big difference between our career and calling**
- **Our career is what we do for work and to make money**
- **Our calling is what we do for God (His plan for our life) as we partner with Him to see His Kingdom expanded here on earth**
- **For most people their work place and school is their mission field in which their lives can make a great difference. The local church also gives believers the opportunity to use their gifts**
- **For many years when I first came to Christ I worked in the career of sales which gave me many opportunities to flow in my ministry calling of evangelism**
- **The role of the five fold ministry is to help edify and equip the saints for the work of ministry. To help people to come to wholeness in their walk with the Lord and to be effective in their ministry calling**

- **The Apostle Paul wrote,**
 “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the **EQUIPPING** of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.” (Ephesians 4:11-13)
 “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself IN LOVE.” (Ephesians 4:16)
- **Having fellowship with other believers in a local fellowship also helps us to stay focussed on serving the Lord with our gifts and talents. Receiving encouragement from other believers is so important if we are to live fruitful lives as Believers**
- **In the book of Hebrews we read,**
 “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:23-25)
- **God has a unique calling for every believer’s life, “Good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)**
- **The Apostle Paul wrote,**
 “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: If prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. (Romans 12:6-8)
- **If we continually remain committed to following God’s plan for our life and to fully using our God given gifts in 2014, our lives will bear much fruit**
- **Jesus Himself chose us so that we can bear fruit in our lives. Jesus said to His disciples,**
 “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.” (John 15:16)

- God's heart is to see us truly blessed in life and living a life full of great purpose and meaning so that we in turn can be a blessing to those around us
- As we allow Jesus to be truly Lord of all of our life, He will open up many doors of opportunity this year to impact the lives of others for eternity
- Today I want to share 8 keys that will help you to bear much eternal fruit in your life this year – **TO HELP YOU TO MAKE THE MOST OF 2014 FOR THE LORD**

1) THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING OUR FOCUS CONTINUALLY ON THE ETERNAL THINGS

- As Christians we are in a continual spiritual warfare that intensifies even more when we look to actively serve the Lord with our gifts
- In many ways the Christian walk is like rowing upstream against the current of this world
- **The Apostle Paul wrote,**
 “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” **(2 Timothy 3:1-5)**
- **The Apostle Peter wrote,**
 “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” **(1 Peter 5:8-9)**

- **Jesus Himself emphasised the importance of not allowing the cares of this world and other things to consume our thought life, but that we should be more focused on the eternal things.**
- **Jesus said,**

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21)
- **WHAT WE FOCUS ON WILL INVARIABLY DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT OUR LIFE BEARS MUCH OR LITTLE FRUIT IN 2014**
- **We must purposely on a daily basis be committed to doing what God has called us to do in life**
- **God’s plan for our life unfolds one step at a time. In the book of Psalms we read,**

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD and He delights in his way.” (Psalm 37:23)
- **As we are continually faithful in the little things, God then begins to open up bigger and greater doors of opportunity for us to glorify Him**
- **Without this daily discipline we can so easily be caught up with the things of this world that we miss the best that God has planned for our life so that our lives bear little or no eternal fruit**
- **Jesus made this clear in His explanation of the Parable of the Sower. Jesus said,**

“Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.” (Mark 4:14-20)

- TRUE JOY AND MEANING IN LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN CAN ONLY EVER COME FROM LIVING IN AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD AND IN LIVING OUR LIVES FOR THE KINGDOM CAUSE WITH ETERNITY IN MIND
- This does not mean that we will be exempt from trials, but when we are flowing in God's plan for our life we see life's trials in a different perspective as we experience the great purpose and meaning that comes from living for the Lord
- Jesus Himself said,
 "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

2) BEING COMMITTED TO LETTING THE PAST GO SO THAT WE CAN FULLY EMBRACE ALL THAT GOD HAS PLANNED FOR OUR LIFE IN 2014

- We must not allow our past hurts and disappointments and even past successes to stop us from MOVING FORWARD THIS YEAR INTO ALL THAT GOD HAS PLANNED FOR OUR LIFE AND CHURCH
- Unhealed emotional scars and past failures and rejections have the potential to hold us back from fully living for the Lord
- We must purposely choose to let our past go and allow Jesus to be Lord of our scars from the past so that He can heal our scars so that they can become beautiful. This is a key to moving on into all that God has planned for our life in 2014
- The Apostle Paul wrote, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, *forgetting* those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:12-14)

- **OPENING OUR HEARTS TO GOD'S LOVE AND HEALING TOUCH AND CHOOSING TO FORGIVE THOSE WHO HAVE HURT US HELPS US TO MOVE ON IN LIFE TO EMBRACE ALL THAT GOD HAS PLANNED FOR OUR FUTURE**

- **I would like to now read out a daily devotion that I received that made reference to a famous author**

Author Stormie Omartian grew up with a mother who told her she was worthless. She locked Stormie in a closet because she couldn't 'stand to see her daughter 's face'! Stormie writes: 'I was raised by a mentally ill mother...and...her behaviour left me with guilt, hopelessness, helplessness and deep emotional pain. By the time I was a young woman I was still locked in - only the boundaries were emotional not physical - a deep, ever-present pain which expressed itself through self-destruction and paralysing fear. Years later [with help from a Christian counsellor] I learned that unforgiveness as deeply rooted as mine...must be unravelled one layer at a time. One day I felt led to pray, Lord, give me a heart like Yours for my mother. Immediately I had a vision of her as a beautiful, fun-loving, gifted woman with no resemblance to the person I knew... I was seeing her the way God made her to be, not the way she'd become. What an amazing revelation! In an instant I put together the pieces of her past - her mother's tragic death...the suicide of her beloved uncle and foster father, feelings of abandonment, guilt, bitterness and unforgiveness...Touching the heart of God brought such forgiveness that when she died...I had no bad feelings. In fact, the more I forgave her the more God brought to mind good memories... People are often the way they are because of how life shaped them, and only God knows their history. To enjoy everything God has for you, pray a prayer of release and let go of the past.' Only then can you move on.

3) HAVING A CLEAR GOD GIVEN VISION AND FOCUS FOR OUR LIFE (KNOWING THE WILL OF GOD FOR OUR LIFE AND WHAT HE HAS CALLED US TO DO THIS YEAR)

- **It is so important that we have a God given focus for this year – That we know what God is calling us to do this year for Him – God has a unique plan for every believer's life**

- **The Apostle Paul wrote,**

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)

- It is as we flow in what God has called us to do, that we experience the life and life more abundantly that Jesus spoke of
- It is God Who graces us and empowers us to do all that He calls us to do in life – We just need to be available.
- When we operate outside of God’s will and calling for our life, things are always more tedious and challenging
- Being in the centre of God’s will is like driving a car which has perfect wheel alignment
- Using our gifts for the Lord is a key to being energised in our walk with the Lord and experiencing on a consistent basis the joy of the Lord
- **AS WE OPERATE IN OUR GIFTS AND CALLING OUR LIVES BEAR MUCH FRUIT AS THE LORD EMPOWERS US TO DO GREAT TASKS FOR HIM AND OPENS UP DOORS THAT NO MAN CAN CLOSE**
- **Knowing and following God’s will for our life is a great key to redeeming the time and making the most of every God given opportunity – A KEY TO MAKING OUR LIFE COUNT IN 2014**
- **The Apostle Paul wrote,**
 “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” (Ephesians 5:15-17)
- **MAKING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD OUR PRIORITY** is a key to remaining in the centre of God’s will for our life and bearing much fruit
- **In the book of Proverbs we read,**
 “Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.” (Psalm 37:4-5)

- **Jesus Himself said,**
 “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” **(John 15:4-5)**
- **IT IS SO IMPORTANT THAT WE HAVE A CLEAR GOD GIVEN FOCUS AND VISION FOR OUR LIFE IN 2014 – That we seek the Lord to know His plan for our life this year – A YEAR OF GREAT OPPORTUNITY – Every single believer has an important role to play in God’s Kingdom plan and in helping to see people reconciled to God.**
- **JOURNALING AND WRITING DOWN WHAT GOD HAS PLANNED FOR OUR LIFE HELPS US TO STAY FOCUSED IN OUR WALK WITH THE LORD – A key to our lives bearing much fruit**
- **The LORD said to the Prophet Habakkuk**
 “Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it.” **(Habakkuk 2:2a)**
- **WITHOUT A CLEAR GOD GIVEN VISION FOR OUR LIFE IT IS SO EASY TO DRIFT AWAY FROM GOD’S PLAN FOR OUR LIFE AS ALL THE WORLDLY INFLUENCES AROUND US ARE USED BY THE DEVIL TO TRY AND SIDETRACK US FROM FOLLOWING GOD’S PLAN FOR OUR LIFE**
- **The Devil knows that if a believer lives wholeheartedly for the Lord he will do irreparable damage to the kingdom of darkness**
- **For this reason the Devil will continually try and distract us and discourage us from fully following God’s best plan for our life**
- **IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS WE READ,**
 “Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law.” **(Proverbs 29:18)**

- Having a clear vision and focus for 2014 will help to make our life count this year and to bear MUCH fruit
- Having a clear understanding of God's will for our life and what He has called us to do this year will result in our life bearing much eternal fruit in 2014
- As we faithfully commit to what God has called us to do in 2014, as the year progresses and unfolds, God will invariably expand the vision that He has for our life as we remain close to Him in an intimate and abiding relationship

4) CONTINUALLY LIVING OUR LIFE BASED ON WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT OUR LIFE IN HIS WORD (That we do not live our lives based on what others have spoken over our life or do not become overwhelmed by our circumstances. We must continually live our life based on who we are in Christ and what God is able to do for us as we continually commit our cares and needs to Him in prayer)

- Building our lives on the Word of God gives us great stability in our life – It is imperative that we are both hearers and doers of the Word
- The Bible is full of promises for all believers. The Apostle Paul wrote
“For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.” (2 Corinthians 1:20)
- **MANY PEOPLE LIVE FAR BENEATH THEIR GOD GIVEN POTENTIAL BECAUSE OF WHAT OTHERS HAVE SPOKEN OVER THEIR LIFE IN THE PAST**
- Many people also live far below their God given potential because they continually allow their circumstances to take their focus of the Lord and to discourage them from fully following God's plan for their life.

- **Others have made wrong choices contrary to the wisdom contained in the Word of God and brought great pain and suffering upon themselves and others – Though we cannot change our past we can learn from our past mistakes and make a commitment to building our life on the sure foundation of God’s Word in the future.**

Jesus said,

“Therefore, **whoever** hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the **rock**; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

But **everyone** who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.” (**Matthew 7:24-27**)

- **CONTINUALLY RENEWING OUR MIND WITH THE TRUTH AND PROMISES CONTAINED IN GOD’S WORD HELPS TO BUILD UP OUR FAITH AND TO EMPOWER US TO LIVE A LIFE OF FRUITFULNESS**

- **The Apostle Paul wrote,**

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (**Romans 12:2**)

- **The LORD said to Joshua before he was about to lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land,**

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” (**Joshua 1:8**)

- **The Bible is full of encouragement for us as believers. Jesus said,** “If you abide in My word you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (**John 8:31-32**)

- **The Apostle Paul wrote,** “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” (**Romans 10:17**)

- **MEDITATING ON THE WORD OF GOD ON A CONTINUAL BASIS HELPS US TO OVERCOME OUR FEARS AND TO GROW STRONG IN OUR FAITH AND HELPS US TO FULLY APPROPRIATE ALL THAT GOD HAS PLANNED FOR OUR LIFE**

- I WILL NOW JUST QUICKLY SHARE FIVE BIBLICAL TRUTHS THAT WILL HELP YOU THIS YEAR TO WALK IN VICTORY – THE BIBLE IS GOD’S LOVE LETTER TO US TO HELP US TO LEAD FRUITFUL LIVES

i) GOD PROMISES TO MEET OUR EVERY NEED IN LIFE WHEN WE LIVE FOR HIM. Jesus Himself said,

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ Or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Matthew 6:31-33)

ii) THAT GOD BOTH HEARS AND ANSWERS ALL OF OUR PRAYERS THAT ARE IN LINE WITH HIS WILL FOR OUR LIFE Jesus Himself said,

“Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.”

“Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.” (Mark 11:22-24)

The Apostle John wrote,

“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. (1 John 5:14-15)

iii) THAT NOTHING CAN EVER SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD WHEN WE COME TO CHRIST AND GIVE HIM OUR LIFE

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
(Romans 8:38-39)

iv) THAT NO SITUATION IS EVER IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD AND THAT WE ALL HAVE A HOPE AND A FUTURE WHEN WE COME TO CHRIST

The word of the Lord came to the Prophet Jeremiah whilst he was in prison, “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.”
(Jeremiah 33:3)

KING DAVID, WHO WAS A MAN AFTER GOD’S OWN HEART, WROTE,

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, And **forget not all His benefits;** Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, **who redeems your life from destruction,** Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” **(Psalm 103:2-5)**

In the book of Jeremiah we read,

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”
(Jeremiah 29:11)

v) THAT GOD WILL SPEAK TO US THROUGH HIS WORD TO GIVE US CLEAR DIRECTION TO MAKE RIGHT CHOICES IN LIFE

In the book of Psalms we read,

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”
(Psalm 119:105)

- **THIS YEAR WE NEED TO SIMPLY CHOOSE TO BUILD OUR LIFE ON THE WISDOM AND PROMISES CONTAINED IN GOD'S WORD, SO THAT WE WILL LIVE A VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE BASED ON WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST AND WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT OUR LIFE AND FUTURE**
- **In doing this our life will make a great impact in this world for eternity in 2014**
- **AS WE CONTINUALLY MEDITATE ON GOD'S WORD THIS YEAR, WE WILL CONSISTENTLY MAKE RIGHT CHOICES IN LIFE THAT ARE IN LINE WITH GOD'S WILL FOR OUR LIFE AND OUR LIVES WILL BEAR MUCH ETERNAL FRUIT**
 "... For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." (Joshua 1:8)

5) THAT WE SIMPLY TRUST THE LORD IN EVERY AREA OF OUR LIFE AND CONTINUALLY JUST KEEP DOING WHAT JESUS TELLS US TO DO

- **God knows what is best for us in every area of our life**
- **ALLOWING JESUS TO BE LORD OF EVERY AREA OF OUR LIFE UNCOMPLICATES OUR LIFE**
- **God's ways are far higher than our ways. In the book of Isaiah we read,**
 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."
 (Isaiah 55:8-9)
- **The Apostle Paul wrote,**
 "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us." (Ephesians 3:20)
- **THIS YEAR WE MUST SIMPLY BE COMMITTED ONE DAY AT A TIME TO JUST DOING WHAT JESUS TELLS US TO DO – That we do not allow our circumstances and the influences in this world to draw us away from what God has planned for our life this year.**

- **God’s plan for our life will invariably involve taking steps of faith this year – stepping into new things, being forced at times to overcome our fears**
- **Without faith it is impossible to please God but He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (God’s heart is to bless us and to see us doing well in life) In the book of Hebrews we read,**
 - “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” **(Hebrews 11:6)**
 - “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” **(Hebrews 11:1)**
- **For the God who created everything, helping us to overcome our challenges in life is VERY SIMPLE**
- **Because God loves us so much He does not want us to be continually fretting about the everyday things of life**

The Apostle Paul wrote,

 - “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)**
- **GOD HAS MUCH IN STORE FOR EVERY BELIEVER’S LIFE.**
- **WE MUST HOWEVER BE PREPARED TO ALLOW THE LORD TO DIRECT OUR STEPS IN LIFE**
- **FOR WITH GOD NOTHING WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE**
- **As we commit to simply trusting and obeying the Lord this year, in just doing what Jesus tells us to do, our lives will bear much fruit this year**
- **GOD PROMISES TO BLESS THOSE WHO PUT THEIR TRUST IN HIM**

- **In the book of Jeremiah we read,**
 “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, And whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.” **(Jeremiah 17:7-8)**
- **As we continually put our trust in the LORD this year and allow Him to be Lord of every area of our life, He will direct our paths in life this year AND OUR LIVES WILL BEAR MUCH FRUIT**
- **In the book of Proverbs we read,** “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.” **(Proverbs 3:5-6)**

6) THAT WE ARE CONTINUALLY PERSEVERING IN OUR PRAYER LIFE

- **Being persistent in our prayer life is a key to seeing all that God has planned for our life this year coming to pass - we need to pray into being our God given destiny**
- **Prayer acknowledges our absolute dependence on God in all that we do**
- **Involving God in all that we do in life is a key to seeing all that God has planned for our life coming to pass in 2014**
- **This is why the Apostle Paul wrote,**
 “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” **(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)**
- **In this passage of Scripture we see three very important keys to living an overcoming life – The importance of rejoicing in all things, a key to maintaining an ongoing good attitude in life – Continually involving God in all that we do (praying without ceasing) – and continually having an attitude of gratitude (being always thankful for all that God gives us)**
- **In this passage of Scripture we see the Apostle Paul emphasising the importance of being persistent in our prayer life and continually involving the Lord in all that we do in life**

- **The bible makes it clear that we must through many tribulations enter the Kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” (2 Timothy 3:12)**
- **As we are in continual spiritual warfare as Christians, we must also be continually persistent in our prayer life. When we look at the book of Daniel we see that when Daniel prayed for his brethren and for spiritual understanding, although his prayers were immediately heard, there was much spiritual opposition before he finally received the answer 21 days later.**
- **In verses 12 to 14 of chapter 10 of the book of Daniel we read what the heavenly messenger said to Daniel.**

“Then he said to me, “Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.” “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.” “Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come.” (Daniel 10:12-14)
- **We must simply persevere in our prayers until we see the breakthroughs that we need in our life to fulfil all that God has planned for our life in 2014 – A year of opportunity**
- **WE MUST REFUSE TO CONTINUALLY SPEAK ABOUT THE PROBLEMS IN OUR LIFE BUT COMMIT OUR CARES TO THE LORD AND SEEK HIS HELP TO CHANGE OUR CIRCUMSTANCES (That we continually seek God’s help this year to remove any hindrances that would try and prevent us from following God’s plan for our life this year and stop our lives from bearing much fruit)**
- **We must continually not speak about the mountains in our life, but speak to them to be removed in the Name of Jesus**
- **Jesus Himself emphasised the importance of speaking to our mountains. We see this in the gospel of Matthew.**

“So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.” (Matthew 17:20)

- **There is also great power in our prayers when we pray in agreement with others. Jesus Himself said,**
 “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.” (Matthew 18:19)
- **In Luke chapter 18 we see the importance of being continually persistent in our prayer life and the absolute assurance that God is both willing and able to answer our prayers, so that we need never lose heart and become discouraged in our walk with the Lord**
 “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)

7) THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING CONTINUALLY FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

- **All that we do for the Lord needs to be done in His strength. We need to depend on the power of the Holy Spirit to do all that God has planned for our life in 2014**
- **Even Jesus Himself depended on the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfil His ministry here on earth**
- **In the book of Acts we read,**
 “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.” (Acts 10:38)
- **The Apostle Paul wrote,**
 “I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:3-5)

- As we continually give out and minister to others it is so important that we are also continually filled with the Holy Spirit ourselves
- The Baptism in and overflowing fullness of the Holy Spirit empowers us to effectively witness to others.
- In the book of Acts we read the words of Jesus Christ just prior to Him ascending back to heaven, when He shared about the baptism in the Holy Spirit experience that the disciples would receive on the day of Pentecost
 “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

The Apostle Paul emphasised the importance of being continually being filled with all the fullness of God. In the book of Ephesians he wrote, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:17-19) “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,” (Ephesians 5:18)

- Spending time in the presence of God on a consistent basis and being continually filled with the Holy Spirit, is a key to our lives bearing much fruit this year and to empowering us to be effective in ministering and witnessing to others in the power of the Holy Spirit

8) THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO MAKE SACRIFICES THIS YEAR AND ARE COMMITTED TO WHOLE HEARTEDLY FOLLOWING GOD’S PLAN FOR OUR LIFE

- We must simply be available to be used by the Lord this year
- We must simply choose to be chosen
- To embrace all that God has planned for our life will involve laying down our life for God and for others and making sacrifices at times

- **If we do not DAILY make a choice to live for the Lord and to lay down our life totally for the cause of Christ, the Devil will INVARIABLY APPEAL TO OUR OWN SELF INTERESTS AND DRAW US AWAY FROM THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAS PLANNED FOR OUR LIFE**
- **Strife, disunity and confusion always manifest itself when people become envious or self seeking in life. Where there is unity God commands a blessing. In the book of James we read, “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.” (James 3:13-16)**
- **As Christians it is so important that we continually choose to lay down our own self interests and to daily make a choice to live for and to encourage others to succeed in life.**
- **As Christians we should be distinctively different to those in the world who do not know Christ. The way we live our life and how we minister to others should always reflect Christ’s servant heart. As we do this God’s plan for our own life will invariably continue to unfold as we prove faithful in the little things. THIS IS WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT THAT WE DAILY TAKE UP OUR CROSS AND FOLLOW JESUS. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” (Philippians 2:3)**
- **Jesus was our example of what it was to make sacrifices for others. Jesus Himself said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet is shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:25-28)**

- **The Apostle Paul wrote**, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond servant, and coming in the likeness of men. **And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.** Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,” **(Philippians 2:5-10)**
- **IT IS ONLY WHEN WE CHOOSE TO LAY DOWN OUR LIVES WHOLE HEARTELY FOR THE LORD THAT WE WILL BE PREPARED TO MAKE SACRIFICES FOR OTHERS AT TIMES WHEN IT IS INCONVENIENT FOR US TO DO SO – Often before a promotion from God He will test our hearts to see if we are willing to make sacrifices for others**
- **So often I have found that the times that God has called me to make sacrifices in life have just preceded the times when God has opened up new and bigger doors of opportunity in my life**
- **Being prepared to make sacrifices is a key to our lives bearing much fruit this year**
- **Jesus Himself described what was involved in becoming a disciple of His. Jesus said**, “Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost.” **(Luke 9:23-25)**
- **The Apostle Paul had a great love for Jesus Christ, which resulted in him living whole heartedly for Jesus Christ and achieving much for God’s Kingdom. The Apostle Paul wrote**,
 “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.” **(Philippians 3:7-8)** “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.” **(Philippians 3:10)**
- **The Apostle Paul was totally abandoned to the cause of Christ and wrote around one third of the New Testament, evangelised much of the then known world and planted many churches. The Apostle Paul was a lover of God and had a passion to help others come to Christ.**

- **The Apostle Paul wrote,**
 “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (**Galatians 2:20**)
- **IT IS ONLY AS WE GIVE OUR LIFE AWAY FOR THE CAUSE OF CHRIST THAT OUR LIVES WILL BEAR MUCH FRUIT FOR ETERNITY. Jesus Himself said,** “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honour.” (**John 12:24-26**)
- **The Simple fact is we must choose to lay down our life FULLY for the cause of Christ on a daily basis if we are to fully embrace all that God has planned for our life this year – A YEAR OF GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO SEE OUR COMMUNITY TRANSFORMED BY THE LOVE OF GOD**
- **We must simply be prepared to respond to the call of God upon our lives and to live wholeheartedly for Him, wherever God has placed us**
- **IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH WE READ,**
 “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying:
 “Whom shall I send,
 And who will go for Us?”
 Then I said, ‘Here am I! Send me.’”
 (**Isaiah 6:8**)
- **Like the Prophet Isaiah we too need to respond with an overwhelming yes to following God’s plan for our life this year by saying, here I am, use me**
- **BY DOING THIS OUR LIVES WILL MAKE A GREAT IMPACT IN THIS WORLD FOR ETERNITY IN 2014**

Dear Father God today I commit this year and my life into Your hands. I believe that Your Son Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for all of my sins and that three days later He conquered the grave and arose from the dead triumphantly so that I may have eternal life and a life full of purpose. Today I choose to turn from my sins and to live for You and to accept Christ's offer of eternal life. Today I invite Jesus Christ to come into my heart and life to be my Lord and Saviour and best friend from this day on. Jesus baptise me in the Holy Spirit so that I may be empowered to fully live for You. Jesus, please be Lord of every area of my life from this day on. Amen