

NOT SQUANDERING OUR POTENTIAL IN CHRIST

In the book of Jeremiah we read,

“Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?”
(Jeremiah 32:26-27)

“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.”
(Jeremiah 33:3)

God has so much planned for every believer's life



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)



- Though God has so much planned for our lives as believers, many Christians struggle to walk in victory and never fully embrace their life's potential in Christ.
- As Christians we have been saved for a purpose and to bear much fruit in our life

Jesus Himself said,

“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 that we would live a life of fruitfulness and purpose and that our lives would make a great difference in this world for eternity.

In the book of Proverbs we read,

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who wins souls is wise.” **(Proverbs 11:30)**

King David was a man after God's own heart
(Acts 13:22) who knew the importance of
proclaiming the message of salvation



King David wrote in Psalm 40

"I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart;

I have declared Your faithfulness
and Your salvation;



I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth

From the great assembly." **(Psalm 40:10)**

- Every believer has the potential to make a great difference in this world for eternity
- But as believers we are in a very real and constant spiritual war where the enemy of our soul will try and minimize what we do for God and destroy His best plan for our life.

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)**



So what firstly can stop us from embracing our full potential in life;

1) Our fears

- To fulfil God's best plan for our life we will need to overcome our fears
- Fear can paralyse us and stop us from stepping out into the new things that God has planned for our life
- Fear of man, fear of failure, fear of lack can all sabotage our God given future and stop us from realising our full potential in life



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” (2 Timothy 1:7)



- We must learn to face and overcome our fears by trusting in God’s faithfulness at all times.
- The closer we are in our relationship with the Lord the more fear will disappear from our life

2) Past regrets (Constantly living in the past)

- We must simply refuse to live with regrets
- Constantly dwelling on our past failures and injustices will sabotage our future
- Dwelling on the past will never change what has happened
- We can only learn from our mistakes and then **MOVE ON** to fully embrace God's plan for our life



This is why 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)



3) Wrong Associations and not being PLANTED in a local church fellowship

In the book of Proverbs we read,

“The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray.” **(Proverbs 12:26)**



The friendships that we keep will greatly influence our life, either for the good or for the bad.

Ungodly friendships will undermine our character and draw us away from God's best for our life

- Without the **CONSTANT** encouragement of other Christians we will invariably drift away from God's best plan for our life and dwindle in our passion for the things of God.



This is why the writer of the book of Hebrews wrote, “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)

4) Having no clear God given vision for our life

- Without a clear God given vision for our life we will be more inclined to live undisciplined lives as Christians. The Devil's sole purpose is to sabotage our walk with the Lord and to prevent our lives from bearing fruit
- Without a clear vision and focus for our Christian walk we will invariably squander weeks and months and even years of our life and miss God's best for our life. We have one gift of life here on earth to make a difference in this world for eternity



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)**



5) Not trusting God with our future - Being continually moved by our temporary circumstances and anxious about many things

- When we do not fully trust God with our future we are more likely to make poor choices that are motivated by fear that take us away from God's best plan for our life
- Sometimes we can experience the greatest trials and challenges in our life WHEN WE ARE IN THE CENTRE OF GOD'S WILL FOR OUR LIFE
- **We must refuse to be reactive when faced with problems and challenges but continually seek to just do what Jesus tells us to do. TO TRUST HIM**



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)



6) The many distractions that we experience in the world



- Without having a clear commitment to wholeheartedly pursuing the things of God, we will invariably be drawn away from God's best plan for our life by the many distractions and temptations in this world
- We are now living in the lawless times that Jesus spoke about where the love of many will grow cold (**Matthew 24:12-13**)

Jesus said in His explanation of the Parable of the Sower,

“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.”

(Mark 4:18-19)



In the book of James we read,

“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.” **(James 1:12-16)**



- The bible makes it clear that many believers allow the things of this world to stop them from fully embracing their life's potential in Christ



Jesus Himself made this very clear when He said in relation to the times that we are now living in,

“And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold, But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” (Matthew 24:12-13)

We have three CONSTANT hindrances that can prevent us from growing in our faith and realising our full potential in Christ

1. The spirit of this world

The spirit of the world refers to the world system – to all its values, mind-sets, philosophies and priorities that are contrary to the ways of God. The spirit of the world would say that to be successful in life involves turning away from the path of godliness and deemphasizing the importance of developing our relationship with God. But Jesus made it clear that a life without God or the things of God is meaningless. (*Mark 8:36*)



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” **(1 John 2:15-17)**



2) The flesh



The flesh is also an enemy when it comes to Christians experiencing growth in their walk with the Lord. The flesh refers to our carnal inbred tendencies as a result of the fall of mankind, to continually seek our own desires in life. As Christians we are called to war against the flesh by choosing to continually submit to the unction and urging of the Holy Spirit. As believers we experience an ongoing battle between the flesh and the Spirit in which our flesh urges indulgence, whilst the Holy Spirit constrains us to righteousness. Victory comes when we have learned to consistently walk in the Spirit.

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”
(Galatians 5:16-17)



3) The Devil

The Devil's ultimate agenda is not only to discourage and hurt us, but to destroy our lives and to prevent us from making a difference in our world for eternity. The Devil causes havoc in our lives when he gets us to bow to circumstances and pressures and when he tempts us with evil in order to get us to yield to him and to make poor choices in life. If he can achieve this agenda he will prevent us from experiencing the fullness of life that God has planned for every believer's life.



Jesus Himself said,

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy...” (John 10:10)

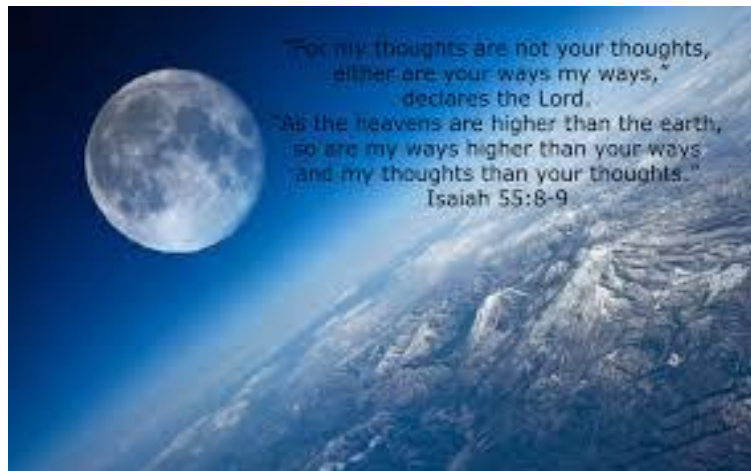


- The bible makes it clear that many are called but few are chosen - Very few people are prepared to make the sacrifices that are necessary to enter into the fullness of what God has planned for their life
- Yet the highest form of life comes from living wholeheartedly for Jesus and in fulfilling His plan and purpose for our life



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)



- Just as the enemy fights for every soul so too he fights to stop believers from fulfilling their God given destiny and for living for the Kingdom Cause – His whole purpose is to stop people from hearing the gospel and coming to Christ



- **Every believer has the potential to make a great difference in this world for eternity no matter what mistakes they have made in the past.**
- God is the God of the second and third and fourth chances. God is able to restore our lives.

King David 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)



*...Forget not all his benefits.
Psalm 103:2*

- All God needs is our availability and willingness to *let Him lead*



- In reality true meaning and purpose in life can only ever come from loving the Lord and in pursuing God's unique plan for our life

Jesus Himself said,

“... I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)

So how can we begin to enter into the wonderful future that God has planned for our life so that we do not squander our potential in Christ in the days to come.

1) We need to continually maintain our first love for Jesus. That we never lose our passion to worship the Lord – The more intimate we are in our walk with the Lord the more we will have God's heart to reach out to the lost in our cities and to live for Him



- **Everything in our walk with the Lord flows out of having intimacy with Him**
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)**

When we lose our first love for Jesus we also invariably lose our joy and peace and our Christian walk just becomes one of a religious routine

When we continually maintain our first love for Jesus we will always;



- Have God's heart and great love for people
- Have a desire to glorify God with our lives
- Have a commitment to pursuing God's plan for our life so that we realise our full potential in Christ
- Be prepared to make sacrifices to help others to come to Christ
- Be generous in the use of our time and resources for the work of the Kingdom, and
- We will continually live with eternity in mind. That we are in this world but not of it

2) We must once and for all let go of our past disappointments and failures and leave them at the foot of the cross

- We must refuse to live with regrets
- We must simply FORGIVE ourselves and those who have hurt us and let go of our past disappointments and hurts and commit our future into God's hands



In the book of Isaiah we read,

“Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” (Isaiah 43:18-19)

3) We must learn to trust God one day at a time. We must simply be committed to allowing the Lord to direct our every step in life. God knows what is best for us and His ways are higher than ours



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)

King David wrote,

“Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. **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 37:3-5)**



4) We need to be people of prayer who continually seek God's wisdom and guidance in life.



- Life is full of choices and challenges.
- We continually need God's help and wisdom to do life well



**The Apostle Paul wrote,
“pray without ceasing,” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)**

In the book of James we read,

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” (James 1:5-8)

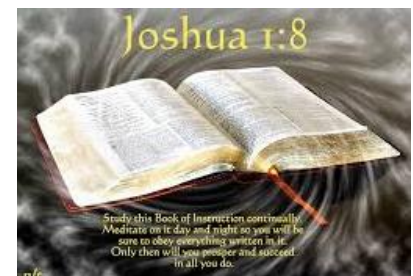


God is always willing and able to help us in life and to give us wisdom to make right choices. We need to just ask God for His help in prayer

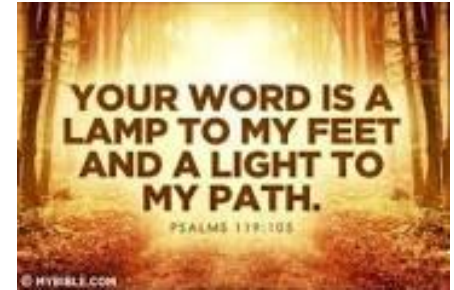
5) We need to continually meditate on and feed on the Word of God to keep our faith built up and to receive guidance and direction for our life. We need to build our life on the *wisdom* and *promises* contained in the Word of God

The LORD said to Joshua,

“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)



**In the book of Psalms we read,
“Your word is a lamp to my feet and
a light to my path.” (Psalm 119:105)**



**“Direct my steps by Your word,
And let no iniquity have dominion
over me.” (Psalm 119:133)**



**Life is full of choices. As we spend time in His
Word, God will give us clarity and direction
through His Word to help us to make right choices
so that we can realise our full potential in Christ**

- Being continually hearers and doers of the Word will help us to remain strong during the trials of life

Jesus Himself 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.” **(Matthew 7:24-25)**

6) We need to be continually guided by the Holy Spirit in life. This is a great key to staying in the will of God for our life.

- The Holy Spirit will continually give us guidance and direction to help us to follow God's unfolding plan for our life

Jesus Himself said,

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” (John 16:13)

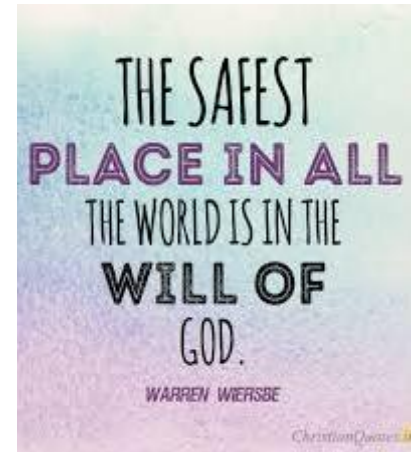


- Continually knowing the will of God for our life in all circumstances is crucial if we are to fulfil God's best plan for our life



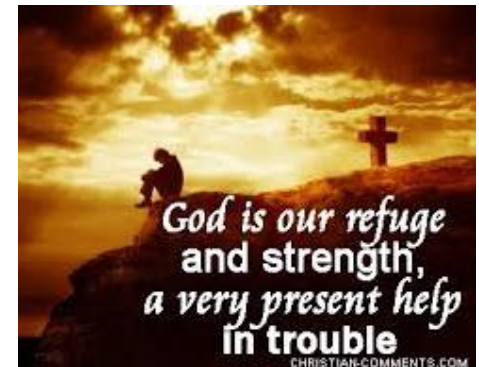
- Being in the will of God for our life is where we experience God's favour, protection, provision and peace and true fulfilment in life

The Apostle Paul wrote,
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)**



7) We need to depend on God's strength and enabling power in all that we do for Him in life.

- God does not look at our ability, ALL He needs is our availability. God will ALWAYS anoint and empower us to do what He call us to do in life
- To fulfil all that God has planned for our life will require us to learn to depend on His enabling power and strength to do what He calls us to do



The Apostle Peter wrote,

“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” **(1 Peter 4:11)**



When we learn to depend on God's enabling power to do things, we will be willing to step out to do all that God calls us to do in life

Walking
in *God's*
Strength
and Not
My Own

- God will always give us the strength to complete all that He calls us to do in life
- In fact the less strength that we have, the more we see the power of God operating in our life
- The key is to learn to just do what Jesus tells us to do, irrespective of how we feel
- It was in following Jesus' instructions to let down his fishing nets again after a night of fishing with no success, that Peter though tired, in responding to these instructions witnessed a miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5:1-9)



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

“Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

(2 Corinthians 12:7-9)



- God will always empower us to perform those things that He calls us to do in life.
- It is as we respond in faith to do what God calls us to do, that we see the miracles and open doors and that we experience His strength and enabling power to complete the tasks that He assigns to us in life
- We must learn to simply just do what Jesus tells us to do



8) We need to be **PLANTED** in a local church fellowship.

- Our God given destiny will be outworked in connection with other believers. God has designed it that we all need one another in the Body of Christ.
- Being connected to the life of a healthy local church fellowship is a great key to bearing much fruit in our life and to fulfilling God's plan for our life



The Psalmist wrote,

“Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing.” (Psalm 92:13-14)



- Being part of a loving church family also helps us to receive encouragement and support from other believers and helps us to be accountable to others.
- Being accountable to other mature believers is a great key to remaining strong in our faith and in staying in the will of God for our life.



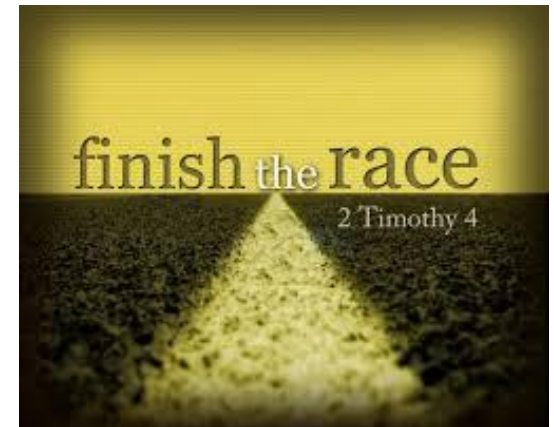
In the book of Proverbs we read,

“Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.” (Proverbs 11:14)



AND

9) We need to be continually committed to finishing what God has called us to do in life - We must simply choose to never give up on what God has called us to do in life and have the courage to overcome all of the obstacles and trials that come our way in life so that we fulfil our full potential in Christ

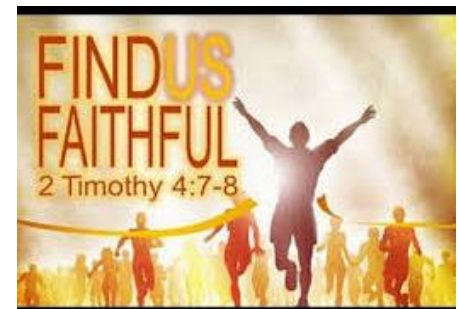


Jesus Himself said,

“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.” (John 4:34)

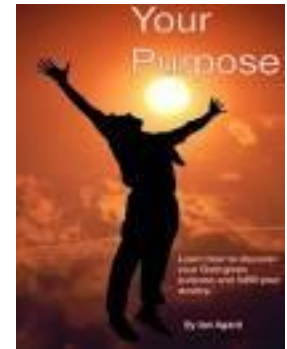
**Towards the end of his time here on earth
the Apostle Paul wrote,**

**“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the
race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid
up for me the crown of righteousness, which
the Lord, the righteous Judge will give to me on
that Day, and not to me only but also to all who
have loved His appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:7-8)**



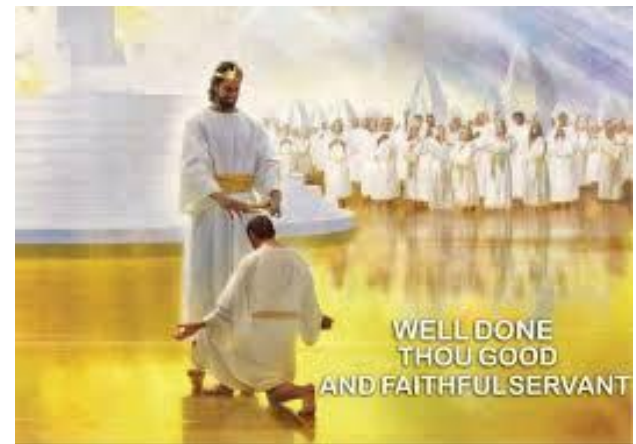
So in conclusion:

- May I encourage you to not squander your potential in Christ
- We have one life to make a difference in this world for eternity
- One life to store up treasures in heaven
- Yesterday I saw a sticker on the car of a young man which really confirmed the significance of sharing this message today. The sticker read, “One life to live, One Chance”



I will finish with the words of Jesus,

**“For the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.”
(Matthew 16:27)**



Today you may be a person who has never yet opened your heart to Jesus Christ. Today you can do this and begin to enter into God's best plan for your life by saying the following prayer;

“Dear Father God, today I choose to turn from my sins to live for You. I believe that Your Son Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for all of my sins and that He arose from the dead three days later. 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. Fill me with the Holy Spirit I pray, Amen.”

