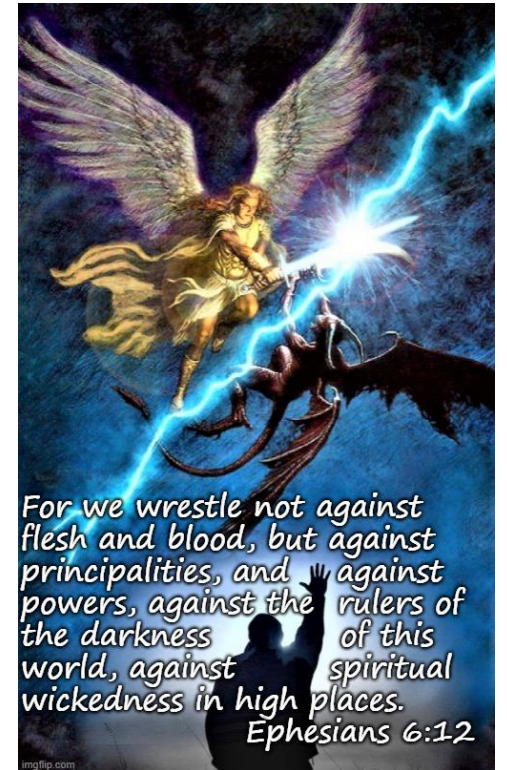


Winning the spiritual contest



The bible makes it clear that we are all in a very real spiritual contest which greatly intensifies once a person becomes a believer

- I will begin with two Scriptures that emphasise the importance of winning the spiritual contest and remaining strong in our own personal walk with the Lord



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.” (1 Corinthians 16:13-14)

The Apostle Paul also 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)



- **The simple fact is that we are always in a very real continual spiritual contest as believers, where the Devil will try and prevent us from living wholeheartedly for the Lord**

I will now quickly look at four Scriptures that clearly reveal the very real spiritual contest that we are all in:

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)



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)



The Apostle Paul wrote, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” **(Ephesians 6:10-13)**

AND



The Apostle Paul also wrote,

“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” (2 Timothy 3:12)



- **The simple fact is that the more we want to break open our lives for the Cause of Christ, so often the greater the spiritual opposition we will experience in life**

The simple fact is that we are all involved in a very real spiritual contest in which:

**1)The Devil is fighting for the souls of unbelievers (This is why sharing our faith with unbelievers is so important)
AND**



2)Where the Devil will try and distract and discourage believers from following God's plan for their lives

So today I want to just share some basic disciplines that can help us to remain strong in our faith in the lawless and ungodly times that we are now living in

1) Making our love for Christ the greatest priority in our life



Jesus Himself said,

“And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.” **(Mark 12:30)**

- As I was seeking the Lord about today's message, I really sensed the Lord emphasising the importance of encouraging everyone today, to make cultivating a daily devotional life with Him your greatest priority in life
- That cultivating this daily walk with the Lord is the key to remaining strong in our faith, and
- That it is the daily walk with the Lord, as Jentzen Franklin preached, that is the key to God's plan for our life unfolding over time



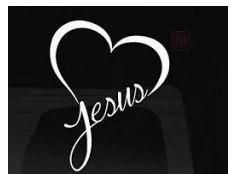
King David wrote,

“O GOD, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for you; My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall praise You.” (Psalm 63:1-3)



Jesus also said, “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” **(Luke 14:26-27)**

- **Here Jesus was emphasising the importance of making our relationship with Him and our love for Him such a far greater priority than any other human relationship**
- **He is the only one that we can depend upon to be always faithful and loyal to us and there for us in time of need**



- Only Jesus can love us perfectly and fill that empty void in us that can only be filled by God
- When Christ is truly our first love, we then have the ability to also love others unconditionally
- It is only when we maintain an abiding and intimate relationship with the Lord that our lives bear much fruit as we grow in Christlike character



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)**



King David wrote,

“Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” (Psalm 37:4)



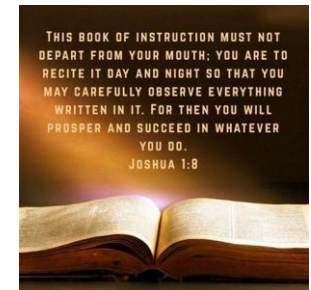
- It is our ongoing love for Christ that will help us to continually remain strong in our faith, even during the trials and storms of life that we will all go through at times
- **When we love the Lord with all our heart we will become better rather than bitter when we go through trials in life, or are betrayed by friends and loved ones**

2) Building our life on the foundation of the Word of God by being both hearers and doers of God's word

The Apostle Paul wrote,

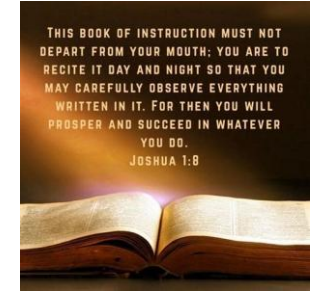
“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

(Romans 12:2)



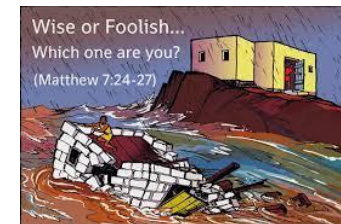
- It is so important that we do not allow the ways of the world to shape the way that we live our lives

- The bible is full of wisdom for how to do life well
- God's ways are far higher than our ways
- Building our lives on the wisdom and promises in God's word is a great key to having stability in our life and walk with the Lord
- Especially given the lawless and ungodly times that we are now living in, it is crucial that we are always both hearers and doers of God's word



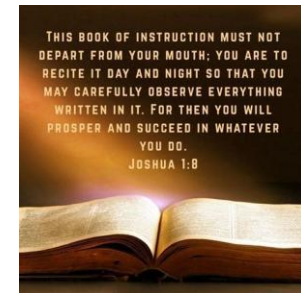
Jesus Himself said, “Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the **rock**; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

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)**



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)



3) The absolute importance of always being quick to forgive those who hurt us

- We will all have many opportunities to forgive others
- The simple fact is that we live in an imperfect world full of imperfect people



Forgive
ONE ANOTHER
JUST AS
God
FORGAVE YOU
EPHESIANS 4:32

Jesus Himself said in relation to the times that we are now living in,

“And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.” (Matthew 24:10-11)



“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)

- This is why Jesus emphasised the importance of continually forgiving those who hurt us. This is such a great key to finishing our Christian walk well



Jesus said,

“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.” **(Mark 11:25-26)**

4) Living a lifestyle of simple obedience and being always quick to repent of any known sin in our life. This is a great key to maintaining a soft conscience



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)

- Having a lifestyle of simple obedience is a great key to always remaining in God’s perfect will for our life and to seeing His ongoing favour and blessing upon our lives**

In the book of Isaiah we read,

“If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land.” (Isaiah 1:19)



- Being quick to repent of any known sin and wrong attitudes in our life helps us to maintain a soft heart towards God

The Apostle John wrote, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)



- Having a soft and repentant heart is a great key to maintaining intimacy in our walk with the Lord and to hearing God’s voice clearly so that we make right choices in life that are in line with God’s unfolding will and plan for our life

5) Having a lifestyle of prayer where we involve God in all of our plans and decisions. This is a great key to making right decisions in life



- Life is full of important choices
- We have a very real adversary, the Devil, who will continually try and complicate our lives
- Prayer helps us to gain God's perspective when making choices in life. His ways are higher than our ways

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.” (James 1:5)

- **Spirit empowered faith filled prayers also help to bring about the breakthroughs that we need in life**

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for the saints-” (Ephesians 6:18)



Jesus Himself also 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)



6) Allowing the Holy Spirit to guide and direct our steps in life

- We need to allow the peace of God to be our umpire at all times and in ALL that we do

Jesus Himself said, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” **(John 14:27)**



- **We must never be pressured to make decisions that we have no peace about**

Jesus Himself said, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”
(John 14:26)



“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)**

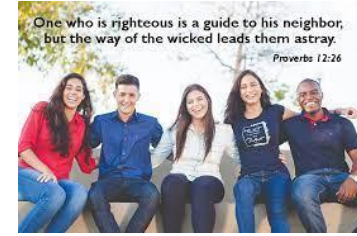
- **Continually allowing the Holy Spirit to direct our steps in life helps us to make right choices in life that are in line with God’s will for our life**

7) Continually having the right people in our inner circle of friends who will encourage us to live for the Kingdom Cause

- It is so important that we continually have the right people in our inner circle of friends



- Friends who will encourage us to live wholeheartedly for the Lord
- The simple fact is that our future is greatly defined by the friends and people that we associate with in life



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God...” (2 Corinthians 6:14-16)

The Apostle Paul also wrote, “Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits.” (1 Corinthians 15:33)

In the book of Proverbs we also read,

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

“He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed.” (Proverbs 13:20)



8) Being continually clothed in the full armour of God

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;” **(Ephesians 6:13-17)**



- To put on the full armor of God is to **apply all of the Gospel to all of our life and to be clothed with Christ**



- The whole armor is the expression of our full trust in God and what He has done for us through Jesus Christ. Our victory in spiritual warfare was secured at the cross of Christ and through the blood that He shed for us there

I will now briefly look at each item of the armour of God:

The Belt of Truth: Is buckled around the waist to represent integrity, honesty, and standing firm in God's truth against deception.



The Breastplate of Righteousness: Protects the heart and vital organs, symbolizing the moral purity and righteousness provided through Christ. Christ imparts his righteousness to our hearts which helps us to deflect the blows of Satan when he makes accusations against us.

Shoes of the Gospel of Peace: Represents stability and readiness, stemming from the peace that believers have with God. The Apostle Paul refers to evangelism, the gospel of peace as the item believers walk on as they move from day to day sharing their faith in Christ with others



Shield of Faith: Used to extinguish the "flaming arrows of the evil one," representing unwavering trust in God's promises during trials. A believer's faith is the shield needed to guard and preserve their spiritual lives

Helmet of Salvation: Protects the mind, signifying the assurance of eternal life and deliverance through Jesus. As Christians we have been justified and made right with God simply based on our faith in Christ alone



Sword of the Spirit: The only offensive weapon listed, defined as the spoken Word of God, used to counter temptation and spiritual attacks. When Jesus was tempted by the Devil, He simply quoted the word. It is written.

9) Being always quick to take all wrong and negative thoughts captive before they take us captive and replacing them with Christ centred thoughts

- It is crucial that we win the battle for the mind
- We must simply choose to trust God at all times and to live our lives continually based on God's promises in His Word



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)



As believers we can build our lives on the Promises of God in His word

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)



- **Fear, doubt and unbelief** should not be part of our life as Christians because God promises to meet our every need in life when we put Him first AND because not even a sparrow can fall to the ground apart from the will of our Father in Heaven

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)**



Jesus also said, “Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.” **(Matthew 10:29-31)**



- **Winning the battle for the mind is crucial to walking in victory as a believer**
- The Devil will continually bombard our minds with wrong thoughts, especially when we want to serve the Lord

- We must simply always be quick to take all wrong and negative thoughts captive before they take us captive AND to REPLACE them with Christ centred thoughts based upon what God says about our life and future in His word



WINNING
THE
BATTLE OF
THE MIND

ABOVE
INSPIRATION

**10)The importance of being planted in a healthy Bible based church. We cannot do the Christian walk alone.
We can learn much from other mature 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)

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. To declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.” (Psalm 92:13-15)



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

11)The importance of being continually filled with and empowered by the Holy Spirit in our Christian walk

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,” (Ephesians 5:18)



The Apostle Paul depended upon the Holy Spirit during his ministry here on earth



The Apostle Paul also 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)

- Jesus Himself depended upon the Holy Spirit during 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)**



Being continually filled with the Holy Spirit is a great key to living a victorious and overcoming Christian life and is a great key to consistently walking in the Spirit



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 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 3:14-19)**

The Apostle Paul also 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)**



“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” **(Galatians 5:16)**

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” **(Galatians 5:22-23)**

- So being continually filled with the Holy Spirit is a great key to living a victorious and overcoming Christian life
- Being continually filled with all the fullness of God helps us to be both bold in our witness to others and to live a life which reflects the fruit of the Spirit
- The simple fact is that how we live our life has the greatest impact on others



- **SO, IN CONCLUSION:**

- It is in living out these 11 Christian disciplines in our own walk with the Lord that we can remain strong in our faith in the ungodly and lawless times that we are now living in as we see the imminent rapture of all true believers
- God has so much planned for every believer's life
- So, my encouragement to everyone today is to fully embrace all that God has planned for your life in the days to come by winning the spiritual contest



I will finish with the words of the Apostle Paul,

“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)

- Just believe that your life can make a great impact in this world for eternity in the days to come**

