

**The Reason I Give Him Praise**  
In the Midst of Madness  
Written by George Moore Jr.

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# **The Reason I Give Him Praise**

## **In the Midst of Madness**

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# INTRODUCTION

If you need to overcome the madness that surrounds you, this book is for you. Real people are facing some very real challenges. Many find themselves incarcerated within their current circumstances and in need of a breakthrough. This is a cold world for the masses. The opinions of social media and news broadcasters weigh heavily on the souls of men. But you and I are about to shift our attention from admiring the problem to exalting the problem solver. There is a reason to give God praise in the midst of madness.

**“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”**

– 1 John 4:4, KJV<sup>1</sup>

Whether you belong to God or not you will face people, places, or things that are designed to make you anti-God. Jesus gives us the example of two houses that face powerful floodwaters. In this case, the only house left standing is the one that is built upon something great: “the rock”.<sup>2</sup> In every chapter of this book you will receive the revelation of God’s Word to build your inner foundation against the external difficulties that we all face on a daily basis.

So fasten your seatbelt and get ready to encounter “in-your-face” testimony from some men and women who you would have least expected to have stood against extreme waves of opposition. This book develops with each chapter giving you golden nuggets and details of what it takes to be free on the inside while facing adversity on the outside. The

journey climaxes with a model Prayer of Salvation and a 31-Day Praise Devotional. My only request is that you open up the door of your heart to receive the Spirit of God and then share that same Spirit with others.

Enjoy and give God all the praise!  
– George Moore Jr.

# Chapter 1

## **KNOCKING AT YOUR DOOR**

OK, let's lay some basic foundation for this house.

God's original purpose for us does not change just because we change. And that's exactly why we should never underestimate the plan of God for someone else's life even if that person may not be fully operating in it right now. In fact, we should never underestimate the plan of God for our own lives. The Word of God still knocks on doors that have been closed and/or that remain halfway open.

Calvin Broadus is an old-school gangster rap icon that most of us know as "Snoop Dogg (Lion)"; however most people are probably unaware that he once sang and played the piano in Golgotha Trinity Baptist Church and that his mother is currently an ordained Evangelist.<sup>1</sup> It would probably also be a newsflash to some if they heard that singer/actor Justin Timberlake was raised in a Baptist church and that his father was a choir director.<sup>2</sup> And I'm quite sure that it would surprise many of you to find out that the famous Oprah Winfrey was taught to read the Bible before the age of three and that she was nicknamed "The Preacher" due to how she recited Bible passages from memory.<sup>3</sup> Although we don't see any of these individuals walking around in clergy attire, it is still obvious that God has been knocking on the door of their hearts in some way, shape, or form.

That is not to say that God's plan for them has changed just because you can't see it or because they may have a different interpretation of the Bible than you do. It is human nature to change but there are some identifying biblical

markers that should not be removed. The good news is that God doesn't change just because we miss the mark. I believe that less people would give up on themselves and others if they could only realize that God never disowns His own children.

God Himself is quoted as saying, **“For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed”** (Malachi 3:6, KJV).<sup>4</sup> Many of us have escaped sudden death or destruction simply because God has promised not to change toward some of the most unstable people in the world. The fact that He continues to knock on the door of many hearts even when they may have temporarily turned away from Him is praiseworthy. That of course is not an excuse for us to continue rejecting Him—there are obvious consequences for that. But it is a portrait of God's love for many who have gone wayward and is also a compelling reason to come back home.

I can remember my grandmother taking me to church faithfully when I was younger, but when my mother and I moved hundreds of miles away from Grandma, I changed. It wasn't so much that we moved to California, even though my environment did weigh on me heavily; instead, it was the absence of Grandma's powerful voice and rigid training that caused me to explore a forbidden world. The things that I was exposed to apart from God began to change my expression for God. Unfortunately, my youthful relationship with my Heavenly Father got twisted into something that looked totally opposite from what a Heavenly Father and son connection should be.

To make it plain: if children stop hearing properly during the developmental stages of their life, their ability to communicate is usually perverted or twisted.<sup>5</sup> And just like a child who has been falsely diagnosed with ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), many have been written off as

rejects simply because they have an odd or perverted way of expressing their understanding of God. Whenever somebody talks about being a gangster, pimping women, and going to heaven in the same conversation, something inside has been twisted. Moreover, these are the kinds of people who are often discarded and left to themselves due to other people's perception of just how perverted they may be. But sometimes all "these people" need is a little clarity. In fact, that's what we all need.

I thank God that He doesn't immediately write people off due to their misunderstanding of what He requires. Yes, there are people who will eternally be lost but that's not God's desire. He's not willing that any of us should perish; instead, He is waiting for us to change our minds.<sup>6</sup> "Leave no man behind" is not just a phrase coined by military personnel—it is also the mind of Christ. God Himself has chosen never to change His mind about any of us whom He has chosen before the foundations of this world. Our responsibility then becomes not to allow anything or anybody to change our minds about Him.

You're probably familiar with the scripture that tells us that God knows the thoughts that He thinks toward His people and that they are thoughts of **"peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end"** (Jeremiah 29:11b, KJV).<sup>7</sup> But that's not just another cute passage to quote; instead, this scripture represents a line of separation. God has always had an expectation of peace or wholeness (oneness with God) for His people and that expectation does not change due to natural boundaries or limitations. But people who live a life full of limitations or one that is less than what God expects for them are people who have chosen to reject what God thinks about them. Limited thinking is what actually pierces the heart of God.

Imagine someone so enraged with jealousy that he would do almost anything to have his partner back with them—that's the heart of your Heavenly Father.<sup>8</sup> In fact, one of the definitions of peace in the passage mentioned earlier means: *to be in Covenant relationship with God*, which is similar to a contract. So everything that surrounds you may tell you that you're separated from Him but God's original plan and purpose for your life holds just as strong as it was for the children of Israel in the book of Jeremiah unless *you* purposely terminate the contract. For example: **“From that time many of HIS DISCIPLES went back, and walked no more with him”** (John 6:66, KJV [emphasis added]).<sup>9</sup> These particular followers chose to separate themselves from Jesus and not vice versa. The picture that we have of people who fall away from God is a picture of people who choose to do so continually and apathetically.

Nevertheless, God chooses to be in covenant or at peace with His children regardless of their tendency to go astray because ultimately His true children's desire is to come back home. That's why He doesn't go back on His word when some of us childishly fall off the wagon. And that also proves the point that it's more beneficial for us to pay attention to what God earnestly declares in His Word as opposed to how we feel about our own failures or the world's opinion about our shortcomings. People tend to give up on other people when they don't meet their preconceived expectations. Not only that, some people have a strong tendency to give up on themselves. Moreover, that's why we have to address these issues on the most basic level.

Just picture what our lives would be like if we paid attention to all the condemning things that society has to say about us in contrast to God's divine thoughts for us.

Are you familiar with the statistics about couples who have been divorced? Do you know what the facts are about

people who have failed to graduate from high school? Are you aware of what society says about you if have broken the law in any capacity? Well, if you have been less than perfect in this world, let me reluctantly inform you of what society thinks about you in a few words. You, in their estimation, are a failure.

For all of you who have been incarcerated, statistics tell us that upon release from prison a person is more than likely to go back to prison within the following three years.<sup>10</sup> Maybe such people should just stay in jail. If you have been divorced, statistics say that it is highly unlikely that you will ever experience the union of marriage again if you don't do it within the first three to four years after your divorce.<sup>11</sup> Looks like somebody better hurry up and get back in the game or he will never get married again. Moreover, it is documented that if you do not graduate from high school, you will more than likely experience unemployment, poverty, jail, and/or poor health before you leave this earth.<sup>12</sup> That hardly sounds like rehabilitation to me. However, I am a firm believer that statistics can say what they want while our faith in God's Word is the only thing that will triumph over the facts. We have to put more faith in what God put in us than what surrounds us.

Unfortunately, we happen to live in a society that is inundated with facts instead of faith in God. Therefore, to avoid praising the facts more than our God who is greater than the facts, we have to rekindle our faith.

There's really only one way to rekindle our faith in God. Jesus said, "**Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him . . .**" (Revelation 3:20a, KJV).<sup>13</sup> The door that Jesus is speaking of is our hearts. When the heart is seen as a door, we then understand that it can also be closed. We have to open our hearts so that God can take permanent residency. But the

most amazing part about this passage to me is that Jesus is standing at the door and knocking continuously. This also paints the picture of someone who really wants to get inside of you and won't leave you alone until you let him in. The world that we live in seems to think that isolation will make you better when you do wrong. God obviously has a different perspective of rehabilitation than our society.

When we renew our minds by studying the Word of God we are letting Jesus in. Interestingly enough, Jesus says that we have to hear His voice before He speaks of the door opening. Studying and meditating on the teachings of Jesus helps us open up our hearts to God. In the same way, studying and meditating on what “the world” has to say or what society thinks about us will ultimately desensitize us to what God says. Therefore we have to “sup” or dine with Jesus on a regular basis so that we don't ultimately become God deficient in our understanding.

Some doors open both ways. In other words, when we truly recognize that Jesus is after us, we should have so much thankfulness and praise in our hearts that we go after Him with just as much intensity as He uses to come after us. I don't know anybody in his right mind that would ever be happy with a one-sided relationship. No relationship can survive without reciprocity. In other words, it is impossible or very hard to find somebody that you rarely look for—even if that person has always been looking for you.

Now that the groundwork has been laid for us to understand just how much He loves us, let's flip the switch so that we might understand our part in all this. Some people believe that God is this “mushy gushy” divine marshmallow in the sky who loves us unconditionally. But there are conditions to His love. At some point, we are required to love Him back.

Earlier, we talked about Snoop Dogg, Justin Timberlake, and Oprah Winfrey and how God has a plan for all of us regardless of whether we accept that plan or not. Nevertheless, I need to reiterate that He still requires our cooperation. Let's dig into how Jesus desires to live in the most unlikely people while at the same time expecting them to live in Him with that same amount of drive.



## Chapter 2

# HOME SECURITY

**“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”**

– John 10:10, KJV<sup>1</sup>

Most people don't like to talk about “the thief” but in order to protect what you have, you must be aware that there is somebody out there who wants to take what belongs to you. Your enemy will always use insecurity to break into your security system. His number one job is to get you to believe that the life that God wants to give you is less than abundant. He starts by persuading you to consider what people say about you so that you ultimately discredit what God has put in you. There is a “God-shaped void” inside all of us, but we can't fill that void with the opinions of other people.

Zacchaeus was considered a traitor by his own people.<sup>2</sup> He was a Jew employed by Rome to collect taxes from the Jews, and that fact didn't sit well with the Jews. To make matters worse, he profited greatly off the backs of his own people, which would probably have disqualified him from winning the popularity contest in that region. He was an outcast similar to the average thug. It is possible to be a part of a society or system that does not esteem you based on what you've done in the past or even what you may be doing right now.

Zacchaeus was that guy; he was the ultimate reject. But it helps to know that Jesus has a strong affinity toward rejected people.

God has a reputation for qualifying the disqualified. **“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called”** (1 Corinthians 1:26, KJV).<sup>3</sup> In other words, God is accustomed to calling or choosing people that most others would disregard. According to the Bible, if you consider yourself to be truly “called” by God, you were at some point in this life an unlikely candidate—just like Zacchaeus. However, the difference may be that Zacchaeus went after Jesus with vigor regardless of what society thought about his religious shortcomings. He didn’t know everything about Jesus, but he still wanted to secure or lock down a relationship with Him in the face of opposition and in spite of his own personal handicaps.

**“And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature”** (Luke 19:3, KJV).<sup>4</sup> Zacchaeus was a short person or “little of stature” and could not see Jesus because of the people who were surrounding him. How many of us sometimes struggle to get a correct view of Jesus due to our environment? Better yet, how many people use their environment or “the press” as an excuse to leave Jesus alone?

The press is defined in this passage as a crowd or a multitude of common folk gathered together without order.<sup>5</sup> It’s ironic to me that Zacchaeus had to struggle with disorderly conduct (peer pressure) before he could get to the only one that could bring order into his life. At this point, it should also be obvious from the scripture that we eventually have to (if we haven’t already) do as Zacchaeus did. We all have to overcome negative and contrary surroundings (whether physical and/or spiritual handicaps) so that we can get to the destiny that God has for us.

**“And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way”** (Luke 19:4, KJV).<sup>6</sup> Brother Zacchaeus was no joke because he saw the direction that Jesus was headed in and decided to do something different to get a better view. This teaches us that if we truly want to have an encounter with Jesus all we have to do is go after Him on “another level,” which is usually uncommon to those who have become comfortable with an easy approach.

Why should we be common? Common people only get common results. Let’s use Ray Allen as an example. He is currently the NBA’s (National Basketball Association) all-time leader both in three-point field goals made and attempted in a regular season, as well as the NBA’s all-time three-point champion.<sup>7</sup> Some people attribute his success of shooting three-point shots to luck. Others assume that God just gave him this skill. Well, I can definitely tell you that it’s not luck, and I do believe that God should be credited for at least giving Allen the best tools to work with. But Ray Allen has been documented as having been committed to pre-game practice for years.<sup>8</sup> He shoots the same shot over and over again while many of his teammates are still back at the hotel. Thank God we don’t have to work like that to achieve great accomplishments for God, but we cannot deny that above average effort will get you above average results. God’s grace to accomplish His will is free but average Bible study, average prayer time, and average application will indeed limit you to being an “average Christian.”

The average person may be satisfied with the presence of God on Sunday alone, but if we really want to see Jesus on another level we have to seek Him beyond one or two church services a week. We should all have a “pre-game practice.” For example, simply spending quiet time with Jesus in the privacy of our own homes will definitely take us to another

level in our relationship with God before we encounter the challenges that we're all prone to face on a daily basis.

Zacchaeus ran and climbed to get a better view, because he couldn't see enough of Jesus from where he was at. Most importantly, he knew where Jesus was headed. If we study the Bible, it is possible to at least know the direction that the presence of God is headed in so that we can ultimately meet Him there. Devotion gives us a better view of the right path to take. No one knows all the specific details of what God wants him to do day by day, but we do know that God wants us to fellowship with Him on a daily basis.

That brings us back to the life of Zacchaeus, because he desperately desired fellowship with Jesus. However, he refused to stay in a place of desperation; instead, he went further away from it in his quest to get closer to Jesus.

**“And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house”** (Luke 19:5, KJV).<sup>9</sup> Check this revelation out: *It is rare to find somebody in the Bible who does something so extraordinary that it makes Jesus look up!* Zacchaeus had to climb far above his environment or the things that surrounded him to a place where only Jesus could see him. Yes, there were other people standing around Jesus, but Zacchaeus was the only one that climbed up to get His attention. And because of that, Zacchaeus was the only one that Jesus called by name.

Note: When Jesus calls you by name it is important that you move. Again, Jesus said, “. . . **make haste, and come down.**” We can never really do anything that deserves God's full attention, but when He gives us that attention we can't simply keep hanging out in the trees; we have to do something.

It would be useless to ask somebody for a ride to church and then just sit in the parking lot once you get there. In that same sense, it would be in vain for us to desire the Spirit and power of God but to never do anything that He created us to do. The way in which Zacchaeus desperately got Jesus' attention was awesome and that teaches us how to really go after God. But once Jesus saw Zacchaeus, He immediately asked him to come down from the sycamore tree so that he could fulfill his purpose.

Jesus called him out with these powerful words: **“Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house”** (Luke 19.5b, KJV).<sup>10</sup> The entire purpose for Zacchaeus going after Jesus and Jesus calling Zacchaeus by name was for Jesus to abide in Zacchaeus's house. The word “house” can also be seen as your body or soul—the place where God desires to dwell. **“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”** (1 Corinthians 6:19, KJV).<sup>11</sup> Your body is the “sanctuary” of God if you have received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Moreover, when that is the case, then God purposes to abide or to remain in your sanctuary. He wants to live in us just like Jesus desired to dwell in Zacchaeus's house. Truthfully, the chief concern of our entire Christian experience should move beyond how desperate we are for Him. Our most important concern should be whether or not we have safeguarded Jesus within the house that we call “our heart.” We have to learn how to hold on to what we have.

In the past, I have lived in houses that were broken into and I can tell you that there's nothing worse than somebody coming into your home and taking what you possess. It's a terrible feeling, but that's exactly how you should feel about the Word of God in your heart. **“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was**

**sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side” (Matthew 13:19, KJV).**<sup>12</sup>

We can clearly see that “understanding” is the home security system that keeps the enemy from taking what belongs to us. The word **understandeth** in this passage means “to join together” or “to become one with.”<sup>13</sup> Remember, we studied the passage where Jeremiah proclaimed that God’s thoughts for His children are thoughts of peace (making us one with God). Oneness with God is our divine purpose on earth. “Understanding” is another word for “oneness” or “intimacy.” However, people are becoming more distant from God every day simply because they go to church to hear and read scriptures that they have yet to understand or that they have yet to personally become one with through devotion and prayer. You can never reproduce something that you don’t intimately relate to.

For example, you may know someone’s husband or wife and know some facts about the person, but you will never understand the individual as intimately as the spouse. The covenant of marriage gives a couple the privilege of knowing each other in ways that other people should not have access to. Catch this revelation: **“He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel”** (Psalm 103:7, KJV).<sup>14</sup> God only reveals Himself intimately to people who continue to stay in a covenant relationship with Him. These are people who are connected to God for more than just “His acts” or what He can do for them in their time of desperation. Zacchaeus wanted to know and understand Jesus on a higher level than those who were just hanging out. That is what got him closer to God. Then he moved beyond simply getting closer to Jesus to having a “heartfelt” relationship with Him.

**“And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully”** (Luke 19:6, KJV).<sup>15</sup> The enemy’s number one desire is to take away the joy of spending time with the Lord.

Zacchaeus “**received him joyfully,**” which speaks to the manner in which he fellowshiped with Jesus. This should make us question our devotional mannerisms or “how” we read, study, and spend time in prayer. If it is a burden to do it, then we probably won’t do it a lot. Here’s a golden nugget: *Whatever we do the most of is what we love the most.* There have been times in my own faith walk where I found that I was devoted more to television than I was to God. And that’s a dangerous place to be, because you won’t be inclined to value a relationship that you’re not willing to secure.

King David said these words that sum up “home security” in a most definite way: “**Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.**” (Psalm 119:11, KJV).<sup>16</sup> When you hide something it’s usually because you’re protecting it from something or somebody else. The king knew that if he didn’t protect the Word of God in his heart, something was going to take what he possessed. That something is sin or rebellion against God. King David had become so intimate with God’s voice that he didn’t want anything to get in the way of, or to hinder, that level of fellowship.

On that note, George Barna has done an interesting study on how much time most Americans really spend on beefing up their “home security.” Check this out: “*When presented with a number of potential frustrations when it comes to reading the Bible, 40% of adults who read the Bible at least once a week say they never seem to have enough time to read it. Along Bible readers other frustrations that were assessed included: finding the language difficult to relate to (10%), not understanding the background or history of the Bible (7%), never finding the stories or verse they are looking for (4%) and not feeling too excited about reading it (3%).*”<sup>17</sup> People tend to place little value on things that they don’t understand.

When the good news initially came concerning Jesus, the Christ, there were conflicting responses based on the value system of those who had heard what was being said. **“And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart”** (Luke 2:18–19, KJV).<sup>18</sup> Mary kept (secured) and carefully considered what was being said about Jesus while everybody else wondered or marveled at what was being said about Him. We live in a generation that has no problem being in awe of what God does while at the same time the “security system” of the average believer remains extremely low when it comes to safeguarding His Word in our hearts.

You will never protect something that you’re subconsciously apprehensive of, so we need faith to replace any hidden fears of getting closer to God. History clearly paints a picture of apprehension or fear stepping in whenever something or somebody is not properly understood. There are hundreds of misinterpretations of what it means to be a Christian, and that is because the vast majority of “believers” don’t actually meditate on, or secure, in their hearts the same Bible that they claim to believe in. Only faith can eradicate fear or misunderstanding.

Basically, if we want to hold on to the words of Jesus like Brother Zacchaeus, Mary, and some of the other aforementioned individuals, we have to cleanse our hearts and minds of whatever may be hindering our faith. Why put a security system in a house full of fear? We have to do some “spring cleaning” so that Jesus can truly make His home in the place where we dwell.

## Chapter 3

# SPRING CLEANING

It has been recorded that a man named William Wilberforce was “tiny in stature,” but his deeply held personal belief in Jesus Christ gave him the power to rise above his surroundings in order to become the abolisher of Britain’s great slave trade in 1833.<sup>1</sup>

William may have had a physical “handicap” in the eyes of his contemporaries, but that didn’t stop him from pursuing what he felt was his divine call to a Godly life. As far back as 1787, he wrote in his own diary, “*God Almighty has set before me two great objectives, the suppression of the Slave Trade and the reformation of manners.*”<sup>2</sup> I believe that history records his extraordinary achievements, because William Wilberforce had no apprehension about seeking the face of God; he saturated his heart with the Word of God. Let’s just take a few moments to examine the process of “spring cleaning” that Wilberforce used daily to overcome the fear and adversity that surrounded him.

Brother Wilberforce had to endure 46 years of grueling opposition before the bill for the abolishment of slavery was read for a second time in the House of Commons. It finally passed three days before his death on July 26, 1833. J. Douglas Holladay declares, “*Wilberforce arguably led the most effective stand against evil and injustice in all history.*” He was seen as a traitor—a white man working to free black people—but he had the heart of God to keep him from giving up in the face of his distractors.

He experienced some very dark times and didn't get to see the end of what he fought for, but God's Word purified his soul, especially when thoughts of suicide and giving up rose. Imagine what great things we could accomplish in the face of adversity and hardship if we could only apprehend the heart and mind of Christ. Indeed, nothing would be impossible, but we would most definitely have to stop ourselves from being fearful on a daily basis if we want to be victors instead of victims in the face of adverse surroundings.

“Spring cleaning” is defined as *“the thorough cleaning of a house or room, traditionally carried out at the end of the winter.”*<sup>3</sup> Notice that people generally do this when the season of spring comes around. The word spring denotes leaping over something. Around this time, people “spring” their clocks forward. Catch the revelation: *When we come out of the cold winter of sin we can definitely expect GOD to “spring” us forward into a new season of blessing. But maintaining this new season requires continual cleansing!*

It was the Apostle James who said, **“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded”** (James 4:8, KJV).<sup>4</sup> When we get the craving to come nigh or closer to God, we have only completed half of the process. Every day of our lives we need to purify or cleanse our hearts so that our hands (our deeds or what we do) will ultimately be clean and acceptable before God. It would be difficult to continue enjoying the benefits of someone's home without abiding by the person's rules. Here's an easy way for me to describe that process.

If you were to visit me and I let you into my home, there would be a level of conduct that I would customarily expect from you. It would actually be shocking to me if you just walked in, bypassed any fellowship with me, and began to utilize every room in my residence, leaving filth behind you

everywhere that you went. In fact, it would probably be dishonorable in any country or custom for anyone to engross himself with the benefits of someone's home without having any real relationship with the owner. In the same way that you can probably envision that being an uncomfortable scenario for me, imagine how God feels when we try to utilize the benefits of His Kingdom in fear, without acknowledging Him as King.

God is of course the owner of salvation, healing, and deliverance (Kingdom benefits), so it would only be right to get to know Him before we begin to utilize His property. Unfortunately, many people come into "the House" with a spirit of entitlement or an attitude that the owner owes them something simply because they've been allowed to come into His home. That's just one mindset out of many that requires spring cleaning. Still using the layout of a house as an example, let's explore how we may want to conduct ourselves while living in God's Kingdom. If we're going to give God the praise that He's due, we might as well do it the right way.

*#1. We should never bypass spending time or fellowship with the owner of the house before we venture into various areas of the home.* This is what I call a "Living Room" experience. When I first thought about this I asked myself the question, "Is there such a thing as a dying room? If not, then why is the entrance area of most homes referred to as the living room?" With careful reflection, I came to the conclusion that the living room is the abiding place or the part of the house where people generally spend most of their time before entering into other areas of the home.<sup>5</sup> Salvation works just like that.

When God initially redeems us through our faith and confession in Christ Jesus, we have to spend time in fellowship with Him so that we don't ultimately find ourselves content with what He possesses as opposed to who He is.

Fellowship should always come first in any relationship. Jesus gives us a clear example of this in John 15:4 (KJV) when He compares Himself to a vine and compares you and me to a branch that gets its life from the vine: **“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.”**<sup>6</sup> Just as a branch will wither when disconnected from its vine, we will also wither or dry up when disconnected from Jesus.

No fruit or productivity can rise up from a dried up saint. Fellowship is the crux of our faith. That’s why Jesus tells us to “abide” or remain in Him and He in us. Staying connected to Jesus gives us access to more territory in His Kingdom.

*#2. Intimacy gives us access to the Kingdom (divine rule or reign) of God in our lives.* I call this a “Bedroom Experience.” Jesus breaks it down like this: **“... without me ye can do nothing”** (John 15:5b, KJV).<sup>7</sup> I am sure that you have heard this statement before: *It takes two to make a thing go right!* Just as true sexual intimacy requires a man and a woman, which is the appropriate process used for reproduction, we should never expect to reproduce God in this world without going through a process of intimate fellowship with Him.

The fact that Jesus uses the analogy of a vine and branch when describing our relationship with Him speaks to our total reliance upon Him to produce fruit or to be productive. When a branch is cut off from a vine or a tree it looks like it’s still alive; it looks like it can still produce, but in actuality it is dying. The good news is that all the branch has to do is stay connected to its source, and it will begin to reproduce by default. Like a branch, all we have to do is stay connected to our source. Then we will ultimately reproduce or be productive.

This is how people who can't find a job create a business. This is how people who've lost everything give back to their community. This is how people get up after they've been knocked down. As believers, our intimate "Bedroom Experience" of studying the Word of God and prayer is the praiseworthy guarantee that we will definitely reproduce the Kingdom that God has deposited on the inside of us regardless of what's going on around us.

*#3. We have to rid ourselves of fear, which ultimately hinders our faith in God.* This process of cleansing is what I call a "Bathroom Experience." A person who does not wash himself will eventually be less desirable to hang around. That does not make him a bad person; it's just an undeniable fact that our bodies need daily maintenance. This state also applies to our souls. Anxiety, fear, anger, and other feelings attach themselves daily to our minds, our wills, and our emotions. Therefore we have to "wash-up" every day to keep ourselves from becoming filthy. Jesus told His disciples, "**Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you**" (John 15:3, KJV).<sup>8</sup> When we bathe ourselves in the Word of God we eliminate the buildup of dirt (fear, anxiety etc.) that our souls collect on a daily basis.

There is a process involved in this "spiritual bathing," and Joshua helps us understand it: "**This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success**" (Joshua 1:8, KJV).<sup>9</sup> Joshua tells us that we should never stop speaking about the Word of God. We are told to "recite it" or to meditate upon it—day and night. Did you know that your faith is strengthened by what you hear yourself saying on a daily basis? Fear doesn't wash away by talking about what frightens you. Fear leaves when you constantly hear yourself saying what God proclaims in His Word. That's

why verse 9 goes on to tell us how God “**commands**” us to be strong and courageous (Joshua 1:9, KJV).<sup>10</sup> Not knowing what God commands us to do will ultimately produce discouragement and fear. The presence of God’s Word always eradicates fear.

I could go on forever using the analogy of a house and how we are to conduct ourselves within “the Kingdom of God,” but I think I’ve made my point. We simply have to wash ourselves daily with God’s Word if we want to operate within His Kingdom. Faith and fear were never designed to cohabitate in one environment. Nevertheless, you will often find that religion brings an atmosphere of fear.

When religious (fearful) people initially desired to experience the Kingdom of God, they looked for an outward manifestation, but Jesus (the Word of God) gave them more than what they were looking for: “**The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU**” (Luke 17:20a–21, KJV [emphasis added]).<sup>11</sup> Religion is usually more concerned with what’s going on externally than internally. The Word of God tells you that you are the house that houses the Kingdom of God and that it’s up to you to keep up the maintenance of the Kingdom that resides in you. That’s one of the reasons that I praise God today, because He will never give you and me a Kingdom without the ability to maintain it. He doesn’t save us and then give us brand-new filthy houses, so we shouldn’t expect to give our houses back to Him filthy or full of fear. “**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).<sup>12</sup> He gives us the power to keep our houses clean. This also dispels the myth that we need hours of prayer for the power to do menial stuff like brushing our teeth and washing our faces. Just as God has already given you the ability to maintain your personal hygiene, you already have the ability to keep your

soul clean. **“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”** (2 Corinthians 7:1, KJV).<sup>13</sup> The good news is that I don’t have to be filthy if I don’t want to be filthy. I don’t have to walk in fear and anxiety if I don’t want to. In fact, nothing is holding me back from having a clean house, because He has given me the faith that I need through the Word that He’s already spoken. That’s just one more reason to give Him praise.



## Chapter 4

# HOME ENTERTAINMENT

You become what you entertain.

I'll never forget the time that I saw entertainment come to life. I was heavily into reality music or what you would call "gangster rap" when I lived in Richmond, California. But there was one particular season of my life during which I quickly found out that whatever you entertain will soon become your reality.

Two female friends of ours had agreed to steal some items for us while we sat in the car waiting. Tyrod was playing some of his self-produced music in the car while we waited for the girls to come out. However, in the midst of smoking weed and talking, some of the lyrics to Tyrod's song stood out to me. I told him to rewind the tape and we both recognized the fact that I wasn't just high—his lyrics were actually describing our theft attempt while it was in progress. Tyrod's music also described how the girls with us would eventually be caught. When we got out of the car to see what was taking so long it was no surprise for us to find out that both girls had been apprehended by the police. That's when entertainment hit home for me.

Call it coincidence if you want, but I firmly believe that this event had something to do with the lyrics and the lifestyle that we were entertaining at that time. One of the definitions for the word "entertainment" is: *"to have people as guests in your home or in a public place."*<sup>1</sup> I believe that we unknowingly made theft and incarceration a "guest" in our

lives through the music and the words that we were giving credence to.

When you entertain something it becomes a guest: *“a person who is invited to visit or stay in someone’s home.”*<sup>2</sup> The key word here is “invited.” Whatever you entertain or praise is what you invite into your house or into the sanctuary of your soul.

Have you ever heard the proverb, **“Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof”** (Proverbs 18:21, KJV)?<sup>3</sup> The content of this passage explains itself; if you speak life you will get life, and if you speak death you will get death. However, it should also be noted that the proverb can be interpreted as such: be prepared to get exactly what your mouth praises.

Whether you agree with these people’s lifestyles or not, please hear me out; I need to make a point. In Tupac Shakur’s song, “Death around the Corner,” he says, “I see death around the corner” and “my destiny is to die.”<sup>4</sup> The song was ironically released one year before his sudden death. Tupac’s rival, Christopher Wallace (also known as Biggie Smalls), also died a sudden death. He released an album entitled “Ready to Die” in 1994 before his death in 1997.<sup>5</sup> After he died, an album of his collective work was released; it was titled “Life after Death.” At some point we all have to admit that “death and life” are a byproduct of what comes out of our mouths. Regardless of who you are, where you come from, or what you believe, it is important to watch what comes out of your mouth.

Let’s dig even deeper. Because society has a tendency to look at women as weak, I will use this particular group to describe how entertaining or praising God produces hope in the face of discouragement, strength in the face of weakness, and life in the face of death—even for those who may be

perceived as insignificant. We can definitely change our circumstances when we learn how to control what we say in the midst of what we're going through.

Darlene Zschech (pronounced “check”) is an Australian worship leader at a 10,000-member church; she also has a gold-certified album. She has penned songs that have been sung for the Pope at the Vatican and for the President of the United States, but her songs of praise were created while she was in pain. She is quoted as saying, *“I felt I could either scream and pull my hair out—or praise God.”*<sup>6</sup> In 1993, she created the song, “Shout to the Lord,” while she and her husband were struggling financially with two babies. They had a motorcycle parts business that wasn't doing too well, and money was tight. Instead of writing sad, melancholy songs that rehashed her struggles, she wrote about her God. *“Mountains bow down and the seas will roar at the sound of your name,”* are the words that she used to praise God in the midst of her pain, and now her music is being heard all over the world. She praised her way out of poverty and misfortune, and now those struggles are in her past.

We can change the world and our own circumstances simply by what comes out of our mouths.

An organization called “Bring Love In” creates new families from widows and orphans in Ethiopia, and they tell the story of a woman named Hawa.<sup>7</sup> This woman wanted to get an education, but her father adamantly denied her. Therefore, at the age of 12, Hawa left home against the wishes of her father. Unfortunately, her father was also the town witch doctor and promised to curse her if she disobeyed him. Well, shortly after she left her parent's house, she got so sick that the doctors told her to go home and to get rest, because they didn't know what to do. She decided to return to the same place that she had initially run away to, and there just

happened to be a Christian woman staying next door. This is where God shows up.

The Christian woman knocked on her door and asked if she could pray for Hawa. She told Hawa that God wanted to heal her. Even though she had never heard of Jesus or God, Hawa agreed to let this woman pray for her, and by the end of the day she was completely healed. Hawa's father spoke a curse over her, but Hawa's neighbor spoke a blessing that broke the curse. Only a few days later, Hawa went to church for the first time and gave her life to Christ. Shortly after that she moved in with her Christian neighbor and stayed there for a couple of years. Hawa's life changed because of the guest she "entertained" in her house. God is good, but the testimony doesn't stop here.

In her own words, Hawa gives us more insight into the madness that tried to contradict her praise. She says, *"When I was 16 I decided that I wanted to go visit my family, I thought that if God was so powerful and real to me in my life, that I could show them what he had done for me, and he would help them as well, but when I arrived back in the village my family would not even talk with me. My father told everyone that they were not allowed to even look at me, and that I was no longer his daughter any more, and so I lived on the street for a year while I tried to find work."* Hawa finally found work in a man's house; he eventually raped her and got her pregnant. Because no one believed her, she went back to working odd jobs in the streets for 10 years while caring for her son with hardly any provision. At this point of the story, it doesn't look like Hawa has a reason to praise God at all.

Nevertheless, God has a method even in the midst of madness!

One day, after being out of work for several weeks, Hawa was preparing to go out and beg when she looked at her

son and desperately desired more for him. *“I decided then and there that I was going to tell God that I wanted something different, and so for many days I went to church every day to pray[.] I begged God, I asked him to change things. [She said, ‘I want to do more for you!’]”* Her circumstances caused her to plead with God to take her away from where she was and to use her for a better purpose.

God answered her prayer. Hawa says that after several days of praying and pleading with God she felt like she was supposed to call the man that raped her. She struggled with the urge, but nevertheless she called him. He picked up the phone and before Hawa could figure out how to address the man who had assaulted her, he responded, *“I have been wanting to talk with you for many months. I am a Christian now, and wanted to tell you that I am sorry for what I did.”* He went on to say, *“I wish I could go back and stop all that from ever happening, but now that I know where you are I want to meet my son, I want to be part of his life, I want to tell him that I am sorry, I want to be his father.”* God answered Hawa’s prayer by giving her provision for her son.

However, Hawa still needed provision for herself. She went back to church and pleaded with God for several more weeks in prayer. Suddenly, the same Christian neighbor who had initially helped Hawa told her about an organization that was looking for strong Christian women who could be a mother to children that were orphans. This had become Hawa’s passion and it would be a natural fit. Hawa has since been hired and has become a surrogate mother to six children through “Bring Love In.” However, what most excites me about this true story is that the interviewer wanted to stop interviewing Hawa several times during the more sensitive portions of the interview, but Hawa kept urging him to go on with the words, “Praise God!”

Hawa and Darlene Zschech have something in common that I think we all need to pay close attention to. They both chose to entertain God rather than to entertain their problems. They chose to offer up praise instead of complaints, which ultimately changed their lifestyles. There is power in your praise!

Now, let's tie these testimonies together with scripture for a powerful conclusion. When Jesus entered into the home of Zacchaeus, people didn't understand His action and spoke against it. **“And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be GUEST with a man that is a sinner”** (Luke 19:7, KJV [emphasis added]).<sup>8</sup> Religion and the complaints of others should have prevented Zacchaeus from entertaining Jesus as a guest in his own home. But Zacchaeus prevailed in praise. **“And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold”** (Luke 19:8, KJV).<sup>9</sup> Notice that Zacchaeus never addressed his haters—he only addresses Jesus. If he would have acknowledged the complaints of the people who were around him, he would have been giving them praise. He gave Jesus praise by saying what Jesus wanted to hear: **“I give . . . I restore.”** He chose to praise God through a lifestyle change—an act of repentance.

One of the biblical definitions for the word praise is “confession.”<sup>10</sup> Whenever you change your confession to what God wants you to confess, you are giving Him praise!

Let me pause right here to say that many times we try to repent or change our minds by saying what we think people want to hear. Judas committed suicide by running and confessing to religious people instead of running to Jesus.<sup>11</sup>

Jesus responded to Zacchaeus by telling him that salvation had come to his house. **“And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to THIS HOUSE, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham”** (Luke 19:9, KJV [emphasis added]).<sup>12</sup> Notice that we have no indication that Zacchaeus had done anything different other than make a confession. Jesus affirmed him based on his confession. No action was performed other than what he had said, but Jesus still affirmed him. That’s because life was in his mouth, and whatever you say in faith represents the life that you want to live in the eyes of God.

Abraham was a pro at offering God praise when there was nothing tangible to praise God for. He had no children when God named him the “father of many.” Nevertheless, he kept saying what God was saying, and his praise finally produced what he had been confessing.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly enough, Jesus calls Zacchaeus **“a son of Abraham”** once he had made his confession of faith. When you entertain God in the sanctuary of your soul, you will become pregnant with praise. Ultimately, when you give birth to praise—when you say what God is saying and speak life instead of death—you will reap what you have sown.

When our “home entertainment” or what comes out of our mouths is in agreement with God, we become one with Him, because nothing can come out of you unless it’s already in you. **“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh”** (Luke 6:45, KJV).<sup>14</sup> What’s going on around us won’t matter too much when we learn how to entertain what God has put in us.



## Chapter 5

# GOOD HOSPITALITY

I can vividly remember running away from home several times when I was younger. The image of my mother coming around the corner and reluctantly picking me up in her '87 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme is forever etched into my brain. Our arguments were fierce and sometimes violent, so I escaped the best way that I knew how—I ran away.

Now that I look back on how arrogant and foolish I was to leave the shelter and comfort of my own home due to minor inconveniences, I cringe. From experience, the only place that I can think of that will give you a place to stay, transportation, food, and clothing for free is jail. Nevertheless, I was willing to throw all of that away at a moment's notice, because I felt that I was being treated unfairly by my mother. At that time, I didn't recognize her hospitality.

Years later, I can now say that I've become more appreciative of the generosity that my mother once showed me. When you encounter the task of bills and taking care of major responsibilities on a regular basis, you tend to sober up. In fact, if I knew then what I know now, I would never have tried to run away from home. It's easy to flee from a good thing when you have bad intentions. Therefore, I can only imagine that it would be more difficult to stay in a bad place when you have good intentions.

Here's my point: *The Spirit of God wants to live inside of us even though we're not the most hospitable place to dwell.* Though He would never force His way in, He will continue to knock on the door of our hearts until He gets a

welcome mat. He's not like I was with my mother: leaving her for good as soon as I considered the conditions unbearable. But He is relentless in His pursuit to take up residence. And although He refuses to immerse Himself in our sins, He won't run away for eternity due to deplorable conditions. That being the case, the only right thing to do is to become more hospitable to the idea of His Holy presence living on the inside of us.

We are God's house.

I can remember growing up and not seeing myself as a place that God would want to inhabit. My grandmother's Bible rearing had become a thing of the past. I knew God was real, but there were so many religions to choose from that I gave in to complacency. Yet no matter where I went or what I did, I couldn't shake that subtle pull. I can even recall a time when a homeless person walked up to me and an associate of mine and witnessed to both of us about Jesus while we were getting high in a public place. It's as if God was striving to make His way into my heart even though I worked hard at not letting Him in. The fact that God wouldn't leave me alone tells me that He specifically wanted me. I happen to believe that each one of us has the ability to give God a unique purpose-filled life, and that's just one reason that He comes after us individually. Each one of us has been uniquely hand-crafted by God to give Him praise.

The Bible tells us that God inhabits our praise<sup>1</sup> and since the word "inhabit" means "to abide, remain, or dwell,"<sup>2</sup> we know that God will definitely make His home in these earthen vessels when we give Him the unique praise that He deserves. We see this situation in the life of Zacchaeus. As I mentioned before, he gave God praise by "the lifestyle" he was willing to live for Jesus. **“. . . Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by**

**false accusation, I restore him fourfold”** (Luke 19:8, KJV).<sup>3</sup> Now that’s the kind of praise or lifestyle that draws the presence of God. Notice how many times Zacchaeus uses the word “I.” His lifestyle change was not only a praise offering to God, it was a personal change for himself.

Ultimately, a changed life is the best offering of praise that we can give. In this case, Zacchaeus was considered a thief or a swindler, but now he was willing to give back and restore anything that he was accused of stealing. We already know that it is better to give than to receive, but it is far better to give than to take. Zacchaeus gave his life to Jesus instead of continuing to take it into his own hands. When we try to live our lives without God, we are taking what does not belong to us. God Himself said, **“Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine:”** (Ezekiel 18:4a, KJV).<sup>4</sup> We all belong to Him so it’s only right for us to give Him the lifestyle that He’s due.

I have been to many funerals and I’ve read many obituaries but when you have actually seen or experienced someone living for God, it outweighs a good eulogy on any given day. In other words, we can say all the nice things we want to about somebody when he is gone, but the people who really knew that person can testify to whether or not he offered himself as a living sacrifice better than the eulogist can. No one is flawless, but someone who is empowered by grace to sacrificially please God is a beacon of light that simply cannot be hidden. And in the eyes of God, a sacrificial lifestyle is nothing short of good hospitality. In fact, it is a reasonable gesture.

Reason suggests that none of us should have to try convince anybody that God is worthy of our thankfulness and praise. However, this is a generation that worships created things more than the One who created everything.<sup>5</sup> We even see God Himself reasoning with His own people to allow Him

to cleanse them from their complacency.<sup>6</sup> Now we find the Apostle Paul pleading with us to offer up our lifestyles to God as a living sacrifice.

**“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”**

– Romans 12:1, KJV<sup>7</sup>

We are being told here that living a lifestyle that is pleasing to God makes good sense considering all the goodness and mercy that He’s already shown us. God has been so good to us by empowering us to live a life free from the bondage of sin. He has been merciful to us by not counting our sins against us. With all that being said, it only makes sense for us to honor Him with our lives.

However, Brother Zacchaeus initially offered his life as a sacrifice of praise to God through the words that came out of his mouth. The scripture does not tell us that he did anything other than “say” what he was going to do, and that alone became an acceptable sacrifice. That would almost seem to contradict my recent statements that exhort us to offer our entire lives in order to bring God praise and not just our words. But in actuality, our words dictate everything we’re going to do even before we do anything. Simply put, your words are the gateway to your actions.

Jesus accepted Zacchaeus’s words as actions. Therefore, when he verbally repented before God, it was as if he simultaneously offered up his life. His confession revealed changes that had already occurred in his heart. Therefore we are taught that our “words” of praise ultimately become a sacrifice to God. **“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, THE FRUIT OF OUR LIPS giving thanks to his name”** (Hebrews 13:15, KJV)

[emphasis added]).<sup>8</sup> In essence, we want the words that we say and do to be acceptable to God.

Can I be even more direct with you? We're all looking for acceptance in some kind of way. The only problem with that is when we try to gain acceptance from other people more often than from our Father in Heaven. If we truly want to avoid insecurity, jealousy, and envy, we need to focus on pleasing God more than other people. When you please God, the opinions of other people become secondary to the divine will of your Creator. Maybe that's why King David said, "**Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable IN THY SIGHT, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer**" (Psalm 19:14, KJV [emphasis added]).<sup>9</sup> When what I do becomes acceptable in God's sight—when my life pleases Him alone—then there's no room for another sacrifice.

Centuries ago, God required us to offer up animal sacrifices to show our adoration toward Him and to atone for sin. But when Jesus became the ultimate atonement for us through His death, burial, and resurrection, He taught us how to offer our bodies as living sacrifices instead of dead ritualistic and religious offerings: "**Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:**" (Hebrews 10:5, KJV).<sup>10</sup> Following the example of Jesus, our bodies (homes) should be prepared for God and not for man. We are here to please our Heavenly Father above all else and that helps us put our lives in perspective. If God's primary objective is to live inside of me, then I shouldn't give too much credence to what goes on around me. My focus should be on Him.

A hospitable person is primarily concerned with his guest. Nobody in his right mind opens up the door and tells total strangers to flood the house with trash while a guest is there. Most people don't throw things around the house and

make more clutter when they have guest. It's customary to treat your guest with dignity and respect while he is there. So how should we treat Jesus, our honored guest?

Do you remember the story of the disciples and Jesus in the storm? Note that Jesus was in the same ship as His disciples. They must have been hospitable to Him because the Bible says that Jesus was “**. . . in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow:**” (Mark 4:38a, KJV).<sup>11</sup> But when the storm came, the disciples forgot who their guest was and began to give credence to what was going on around them. They even went so far as to wake Jesus up in order to ask Him whether or not He cared that they were about to perish. That would almost be the equivalent of teenage children getting hungry and asking their wealthy father whether or not he cared that they might die from starvation. As odd as that might look, that's how we respond to our Father in Heaven when we become frantic or fearful even though He's right there with us in the storm. Romans 8:31 (KJV) is one of the key scriptures that I use to remind myself of just how ludicrous unbelief really is: “**What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?**”<sup>12</sup> If Jesus is in our “ship,” then it makes no sense to praise the problem we are facing more than the presence of God. Look at how Jesus responds to the problem with his disciples: “**And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?**” (Mark 4:39–40, KJV).<sup>13</sup> I am more amazed at the question that Jesus asked His disciples than how He solved the problem. In the eyes of God, fear should never have dominion in the life of a believer. Jesus wanted His disciples to think about that.

Since God was in the ship with them, He expected the disciples to operate in faith regardless of the storm that surrounded them. They simply forgot who their guest was, and

sometimes that's what we all do. It is possible for us to spend more sacrificial time worrying about what's going on around us than we do honoring the God that lives inside of our hearts. However, here's a golden nugget for us: *No person, place, or thing should ever be the recipient of more praise than God!*

After their amazing encounter with Jesus, the disciples could only turn to one another and ask, **“What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”** (Mark 4:41b, KJV).<sup>14</sup> It is safe to assume that the disciples did not realize the power that their guest had over everything that surrounded them. No doubt the wind and the sea were both loud and intimidating. Extreme anguish and death were the only feasible outcomes they could see. Yet the Bible teaches us that, **“The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea”** (Psalm 93:4, KJV).<sup>15</sup>

The good news is simply this: *nothing that surrounds us will ever be more powerful than Jesus, who is living inside of us.* No matter how crazy the situation looks, God is still greater than whatever challenges we may be currently facing. In fact, you and I can bless the Lord “at all times” and, His praise can continually come out of our mouths when our hearts become His home.

That's the kind of praise that has the ability to change the world.



## Chapter 6

# NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

OK, the foundation has been laid. The first five chapters of this book addressed God dwelling on the inside of us in the most biblical and simplistic way that I know how to explain it. Now it's time to go to another level. It's time to focus on someone other than ourselves.

The person that you are and the things that you do don't just affect you. Your praise should affect the people around you. Allow me to give you some practical examples of what that looks like.

The word "praise" has several synonyms: bless, exalt, extol, glorify, magnify, thank, and confess.<sup>1</sup> Of course these actions should be directed toward God, but when other people see and hear us perform these actions under the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it has an effect on them. This is similar to what is commonly known as the "12th Man"; the tradition can be defined as the state where the fans of a particular team are standing ready to support their team with shouting, stomping, or whatever other method they can use to distract the opposing team.<sup>2</sup> In professional football there are only 11 players allowed to represent a team on the field per play. However, when the crowd roars, as you may observe during a Seattle Seahawks game, there is an impact made on the players on both sides of the field. On one side, the opposition is distracted or disabled. On the other side, the home team is empowered or encouraged. Hence the title, the "12th Man." In fact, fans of the Seattle Seahawks at one point were recorded in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for

achieving the highest decibel level in a U.S. stadium at 137.6 decibels.<sup>3</sup> Now let's put that into perspective; a jet engine at 100 feet makes about 140 decibels of noise, which means that the noise sustained in the stadium was enough to jeopardize the hearing of the fans.<sup>4</sup> In other words, their praise had a very powerful effect on everybody who was at the game that night.

The first time that “an individual” was considered the 12th Man was when E. King Gill assisted his team by coming out of the stands and suiting up in case they needed him. Gill had tried out for the team but “*lacked experience and the ability to play varsity.*”<sup>5</sup> Interestingly enough, Coach Bible (his real name) remembered that Gill was in the stands and sent for him to suit up when the team was in trouble.

Gill never actually played in that game, but his readiness to play went down in history. The fans were riled up by his impromptu appearance, and his team went on to win. King Gill's actions gave him a legacy among his peers simply because he stood ready to support his team when Coach Bible called for him. This small but noble act affected everyone around him, and it is still remembered today.

Question: *Are we living the kind of life that contagiously affects the people living around us?*

For example, you can have the most attractive house on the block, both inside and out, but if your neighbors don't maintain their property well enough it can drastically decrease the property value of your home. What goes on around you will affect you whether you like it or not. Nevertheless, you as “an individual” can drastically have an effect on what goes on around you as well. It is highly unlikely that someone would walk into your house with muddy boots and stain your pristine carpet. However, if people walked in and saw spots everywhere with cloths all over the floor, they might not be so inclined to take off their shoes. Without one word being

uttered, you dictate the way that you want people to honor your house simply by the way that you honor it yourself. You are the “12th Man” in your home and whatever you praise or exalt will affect everything and everybody around you.

God doesn’t change our lives just so that we can personally say that we’ve been changed. The people around us should be dramatically affected as well. For example, I’m not writing this book just to say that I wrote a book; I’m writing it to honor God and to inspire the people who read and/or hear it. That is my purpose. This is where the rubber meets the road.

Jesus did not come to this earth just to say that He was here. He didn’t come just to perform miracles. He came so that you and I would be inspired to not only do what He did but also to do “greater works.”<sup>6</sup> He affected His family, He affected His community, and He changed the world as we know it. Now that many of us operate by His Spirit, He has become what Malcolm Gladwell calls “The Tipping Point.”<sup>7</sup>

In his book, Gladwell tells us that “*Ideas and products and messages and behaviors spread just like viruses do.*” Of course we know that viruses are highly contagious, so the thought being conveyed is that when we become contagious or viral with our ideas and/or behavior, we create a “Tipping Point” in our homes and in the community where we live.

As soon as you begin reading Gladwell’s book, you are hit with the example of “Hush Puppy Shoes.” They’re a kind of off-brand shoe that didn’t receive much recognition until the mid-90s. The shoe went from selling 30,000 pairs in one year, to 430,000 pairs in one year, to four times that amount with a continued increase in sales. The shoe won awards and it was eventually endorsed by famous designers such as Calvin Klein and Donna Karan. The designers of the shoes were baffled at how an out-of-style brand could make such a grand comeback. However, the kicker is what sparked the comeback.

Gladwell tells us that a group of kids in a small village had decided to wear the shoes simply because no one else was wearing them. Two fashion designers then noticed the fad that these kids started and decided to use it to promote something of their own. The shoe “blew up” from there and went on to become a household name. Therefore, in this case, a few kids simply decided to get up and do something contagious, and it went viral. They didn’t draw up the blueprints for the shoe; there’s no record of them fasting and praying for the shoe to become acceptable to the consumer. They just wore the shoes.

Here’s a few more challenging questions: *Is the God in us hidden somewhere in a closet or are we wearing Him in such a way that He’s going viral in our community? Are we the “12th Man” for the God who lives inside of us or not?* I have no doubt that if we really are, somebody somewhere is willing to stand up and testify about it.

Earlier we talked about one of the only times in scripture where somebody causes Jesus to look up. Now let’s talk about someone who caused Jesus to stand up. I’m referring to a brother named Stephen.<sup>8</sup> He was stoned for unapologetically telling the truth to all those who stood by in the seventh chapter of the Book of Acts. However, if you read the entire chapter, you’ll see that all he’s doing is sharing scripture. He only becomes offensive to people when he begins to talk about Jesus. That teaches us that the vast majority of people will accept biblical principles but not many people will embrace divine power. That’s because divine power will challenge you to change while biblical principles will only satisfy your intellect. Reading the Bible without the Spirit of Jesus can only give us an external religious experience.

Stephen challenged his environment in order to praise God beyond his society’s customary ways. For that reason,

because he was not only willing to die praising God but also because he was willing to forgive the people that were killing him, Jesus stood up while he was dying.<sup>9</sup> Prior to this event, we often see Jesus “seated” at the right hand of the Father. I believe that Stephen affected his neighbors in such a way that Jesus Himself had to testify.

In a neighborhood watch, citizens come together to ward off crime in their community. In fact, if they see a crime, they are encouraged not to intervene but to report the event.<sup>10</sup> Again, they are strongly advised not to intervene. People who involve themselves in neighborhood watches are considered more effective if they simply use their level of influence as opposed to administering personal justice. In the same sense, we are not being asked to enforce God’s rules and regulations within the scope of our limited abilities; instead, we are simply being asked to influence the world with our God-given praise.

Stephen influenced his neighbors with his praise. The Bible says that while he was being stoned, he was “**calling upon God.**”<sup>11</sup> That certainly had to be an intense and unforgettable sight. It probably weighed so heavily on someone in that crowd that change was inevitable for him.

Oh, did I forget to mention that there was another young man in the crowd that day who went by the name of Saul?<sup>12</sup> Today we know him as the Apostle Paul. Only two chapters later, he had a miraculous life-changing experience.<sup>13</sup> I don’t know, but perhaps Stephen’s last utterance of praise had an effect on the change that occurred in Brother Saul’s heart—after all, Stephen was a good “12th man.” He understood the fact that God doesn’t just want to live inside of us, He wants us to let Him out. That’s the kind of praise that will change the world.



## Chapter 7

# FROM THE INSIDE OUT

*“In my country we go to prison first and then become president.”* – Nelson Mandela<sup>1</sup>

Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in prison but went on to become the president of his own country only four years after his release in 1990.<sup>2</sup> Question: *How does someone with that kind of criminal background resurface to become president?* Nelson Mandela must have thought it was humorous when he made the ironic statement that people in his country go to prison first and then become president. Unfortunately, in the United States, government officials usually break the law after they get into office. Yet we still have the example of Nelson Mandela, someone who achieved the near impossible against an insurmountable political wall with far less than an impeccable record. I can only imagine the opposition that he faced and the adverse conditions that surrounded him. He was up against a system that had never seen him accomplish what he had set out to do. Yet he had strong inner resolve that catapulted him beyond the madness that encompassed him. He has been credited as having strong faith in God, but it was what he did with that faith that has since inspired generations.

*“As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.”* – Nelson Mandela

Our light, or the praise that we give God, is not just for us; it's for the world to see and be inspired by. In fact, the purpose that God has given us on this earth has been woven into the lives of other people whether we know it or not. I

can't tell you how many times I've gone into jails and prisons thinking that I was going to minister to somebody else only to be surprised by the words that came out of my own mouth: *"My whole life has been hand crafted to inspire you."* I don't think that I fully understood what I was saying whenever I uttered those words, but I'm beginning to understand them more and more each day. Our lives have been hand crafted to inspire other people. In essence, we are here to be inspired by God so that we can ultimately inspire others.

The word "inspiration" has the prefix "in-," which also has the connotation of "into"; this latter meaning gives us a clear picture of intimacy.<sup>3</sup> Our first obligation on this earth is to have an intimate and ongoing relationship with God. That is why I spent the first five chapters of this book dealing with the very foundation of our Christian faith, which is intimacy. Our "house" should be filled with Him. However, the prefix of inspiration gives us the idea of breathing. When you breathe, you inhale and exhale. Our second obligation on this earth is to exhale God into the people who God has given us to influence. You should be breathing on somebody. Your "house" should affect the neighborhood in which you live.

The Apostle Paul was very good at inhaling. He was a biblical scholar by all accounts. However, it wasn't until he had an encounter with Jesus that his purpose to exhale was revealed to him. At one point, he tormented Jesus by trying to serve God in his own way. Nevertheless, when Jesus came into his life, he was given the purpose and destiny of witnessing to unbelievers—God's way. I'll let him tell you his testimony in his own words:

**"And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.**

**But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee FOR THIS PURPOSE, to make thee a minister and a**

**witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, TO OPEN THEIR EYES, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”**  
– Acts 26:15–18, KJV (emphasis added)<sup>4</sup>

Jesus let Paul know as soon as He saved him that He didn't want him to play church with his new life. His purpose was revealed to him and regardless of the madness that surrounded him, he was to fulfill that assignment. Paul tells us that he experienced extreme labor, beatings, and imprisonment as well as almost dying many times.<sup>5</sup> He was shipwrecked three times, and during his many journeys to do God's will he was exposed to dangerous rivers and thieves. His own people became a risk to him; some even pretended to believe and serve the same God that he did. He lost sleep, undergoing hunger and thirst while praising God. He was cold and without clothes while praising God. He had the responsibility of taking care of all the churches that were under his care, yet he still reached beyond all that external pressure to give God praise. He experienced far worse than many of us ever will, but he is quoted as saying, **“In EVERY THING give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”** (1 Thessalonians 5:18, KJV [emphasis added]).<sup>6</sup> Brother Paul became a messenger in the midst of all the madness that he was experiencing. That's when you know you're winning: when your purpose becomes greater than what's going on around you.

When Paul was in prison he encouraged his brothers to understand that what he was going through was occurring in order to encourage other people who might be experiencing the same conditions. His trials weren't meant to create “pity

parties”; they were meant to inspire others to preach the Gospel!

**“But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;  
So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;  
And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”**

– Philippians 1:13–15, KJV<sup>7</sup>

It wasn't Paul's condition that encouraged others but the way that he conducted himself while he was in that condition. The way that we praise God, regardless of what surrounds us, should inspire others to do the same. This is why I gave you the example of Zacchaeus and how he praised God against the press. We looked at the life of William Wilberforce and how he endured 46 years of opposition in order to achieve the abolishment of the slave trade. We feasted on the testimonies of Darlene Zschech and an Ethiopian woman named Hawa, and how they sang praises to God against the most extreme odds. These are real-life examples of people who let their light shine in the midst of darkness.

When you are focused on shining you don't have time to dwell in the darkness. You can't be counterproductive while focusing on productivity. In other words, you don't have time to focus on the faults of others, the gossip of the day, or the scandal of the night while you're focused on building people up. Light and darkness cannot occupy the same space!

**“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.**

**Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.”**

– Matthew 5:14–15, KJV<sup>8</sup>

You and I were created to give God’s light **“unto all that are in the house.”** But if we’re not focused on using that light to illuminate others, we can definitely bring shade and dimness. For example, I remember going to different churches and events ministering poetry that I had written in an art form called “Spoken Word.” The response was incredible, and people were constantly telling me how they were inspired to change through these presentations. However, there was an older gentleman at my church one night who saw the response that I was getting from the people before it was time for him to minister. He got up right after I sat down and railed about how the Holy Ghost wasn’t in that stuff. It crushed me, and I stopped writing and sharing my poems for a long time.

Years later, I saw that same gentlemen in Dunkin’ Donuts and we greeted one another with love. Over a few cups of coffee he began to share something with me that really shocked me. He told me that around the same time that he had said those discouraging words he was not “in season” or in step with God. That taught me something right there. Just as light is influential so is darkness. Either way, whatever’s in you will eventually come out of you and affect somebody else. That’s why we need to focus on giving light unto all that are inside and outside of the household of faith. Sharing the light of God to all those who are around us is how we truly give Him praise, and it’s definitely not a part-time job.

**“The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out.”**

– Leviticus 6:13, KJV<sup>9</sup>

In the sixth chapter of the Book of Leviticus, we see an altar that burns sacrifices continually. Interestingly enough, these particular sacrifices focus on sins that might have been committed against one's neighbor. God wants us to always be mindful of how we interact with others. In fact, God commanded that there would always be a fire burning so that sacrifices of atonement could be made continually for those who may have rubbed their neighbor the wrong way. Let's dig even deeper.

Similar to the altar in Leviticus 6, God wants the fire of His Holy Spirit to constantly burn in the life of the believer. He wants us to always have the ability to offer Him a sacrifice of praise. However, we can't offer God a sacrifice of praise if we're not mindful of the people in our immediate sphere of influence. Jesus tells us to be reconciled to our brother before we offer a gift to Him on the altar.<sup>10</sup> Our praise will always influence other people, because we can't offer praise to God without having a good relationship with our neighbors. God commands us to go and set things right with our brethren if we want our sacrifices to be acceptable to Him. Therefore, we should never be solely God centered. Whatever God gives us on the inside should constantly bless the people around us. We, as believers, should change our environment by default. Your praise has the power to bring change.

That being said, I'm going to say something that might not be popular or well liked, but I need to conclude with this powerful statement:

### **REPENT.**

In this sense, the word repent simply means to change the way you think to match the way that God thinks.<sup>11</sup> I know most people don't like change, but if we're not thinking about other people we're not thinking the way that God thinks—we need the mind of Christ.<sup>12</sup> Jesus became a living sacrifice to

God for other people. We do not go to church just so that we can feel better about ourselves. We're here to pour ourselves out for the sake of other people. There's a crazy world out there filled with people who are waiting for us to breathe on them. That's why you have to release whatever business, ministry, or manifestation of praise that God has given you in this life. You can't keep all that caged up inside.

Your praise may be contemporary or unconventional. People may talk about you, and you may not be understood. Nevertheless, regardless of all the madness that surrounds you, you have to glorify God with your praise. Somebody's life may depend on it. To help you in your journey, I have written a 31-Day Praise Devotional (included at the end of this chapter) along with a model Prayer of Salvation that you can pray if you have yet to allow Jesus to come into your house. I pray that your light will shine even brighter—to the point that your neighbors will eventually ask, *“What must I do to be saved?”*

**“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”**

– Colossians 3:16, KJV<sup>13</sup>

*You have a reason to give Him praise!*



# PRAYER OF SALVATION

I suggest you read **ROMANS 10:8–13 (KJV)**.  
(This is just a model of prayer)

Father GOD in heaven,  
I come to You because only You can save me.  
Only You can give me the strength that I need to stop  
rebellng against Your purpose and plan for my life.  
I confess that I have sinned and that only You have the power  
to change my mind through Your Word.  
I believe that You sent Your Son JESUS the CHRIST to be a  
perfect sacrifice for my sins.  
And I also confess that JESUS died, was buried, and rose up  
from the dead so that I could be made free from the guilt and  
shame of past offenses.  
I confess and believe that I can now overcome addictions  
because of the shed blood of JESUS CHRIST, my LORD  
AND KING!  
I now ask that you fill me with your HOLY SPIRIT.  
I confess and believe that I am going to be a witness to the  
world that the Word of GOD can change your heart and mind.  
I am a new person!  
I will devote myself to prayer and the study of GOD’S WORD  
daily so that I can grow.  
I truly believe that my name is written in heaven.  
JESUS is coming back for me and in His Holy name I decree  
that I am free!  
PRAISE GOD!

*You officially have a reason to give Him praise!*  
**“Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken  
unto you.”**  
– Jesus



# 31-DAY PRAISE DEVOTIONAL

## DAY ONE

SUGGESTED READING: DEUTERONOMY 4:9 (KJV)

### HOLD ON TO YOUR SOUL

Sometimes life will show its true colors  
Those days when you feel smothered  
Misunderstood or betrayed by your own sister or brother  
Just when you're about to unfold  
Hold on to your soul

Don't go crazy when you can't find a hand to hold  
Don't look for every season to be warm—it does get cold  
When death gets too close  
When drugs begin to overdose  
Families split, fathers leave their post  
When you think you're the only person that you can depend  
on the most  
Hold on to your soul

Because if you lose faith right now  
You make it easier for someone else to throw in the towel  
When you feel like you just can't carry the load  
You just have to hold on to your soul

Remember God is in control  
You have the right to remain bold  
No situation can make you fold  
Because God gave you the strength to  
hold on to your soul

### STATEMENT OF FAITH

*Today, I praise God for strengthening my soul. I will not lose my mind.*



**DAY TWO**  
SUGGESTED READING: JOSHUA 1:9 (KJV)  
**POTENTIAL**

A man can never achieve what he fails to believe  
He only fails to give birth to what his mind can't conceive  
That thing that you continue to imagine, visualize, or vision  
Somebody somewhere is waiting on that invention

Could you have already made millions off of something you  
thought of months ago?  
If God gave you the seed, why don't you water it and make it  
grow?

Can you hear yourself saying, "*That was my idea?*"  
Are you comfortable watching someone else make it real?  
It's time for you to get up and make it happen  
Real talk—everybody knows you have the potential but we're  
waiting to see some action

Why not you?  
There is something you can do  
Take all those visions you thought were nonessential  
And begin to utilize your God-given potential

**STATEMENT OF FAITH**

*Today, I praise God for all the creative ideas and visions that  
He has given me. He has put success in my hands.*



### **DAY THREE**

**SUGGESTED READING: ISAIAH 66:13 (KJV)**

#### **WHAT DOES A MOTHER SEE?**

A mother sees everything in me that I have yet to see  
She holds an intimate part of me  
Her disappointment is more to me than a thousand lashes  
Her tears have taught me more than a thousand classes  
Her eyes are full of wisdom because of each painful  
experience  
Her testimony to me has become the strongest fence

What does she see through eyes that burn with fire?  
Whatever it is, that's the side that I think I most admire  
I remember the times when she corrected me over and over  
again  
Maybe she just wanted to bring out the fire within

That makes me wonder what my mother saw in me when I  
was born  
Was there any spiritual revelation in such a tiny form?  
Well even if I didn't have someone to tuck me under the cover  
The Bible says that God comforts me just like a mother

#### **STATEMENT OF FAITH**

*Today, I praise God for comforting me like a mother. I have  
no reason to ever feel abandoned.*



## DAY FOUR

SUGGESTED READING: PSALM 124:1–2 (KJV)

### SERIOUS HELP

I dealt with the circumstances  
As they came I remained sane  
Taking sudden glances at the problems I couldn't change  
It was a terrible thing, without trust it was so strange  
I was looking for inner peace but found no release in my own  
brain

I came to the conclusion that it was nothing but confusion  
When I walked in pride believing my own illusion  
Refusing help for myself  
So broke within while lavishing in outer wealth  
I was in need of some serious help!

Too many threats, so I tried not to listen  
I lived life carelessly on my own mission  
When I think of how much I trusted in myself  
Nothing could've brought me back without God's help

### STATEMENT OF FAITH

*Today, I praise God for helping me even when I didn't know  
that I needed His help. He is my Helper.*



## DAY FIVE

SUGGESTED READING: HEBREWS 13:5 (KJV)

### CONTENT

There's no worry when you're satisfied  
Appreciate the fact that you can walk outside?  
People don't complain about hot weather when winter's on the  
rise  
I guess it's true: "*You never miss your water until your well  
runs dry*"

With all this noise, my joy is hidden in quiet time  
There's no greater satisfaction than a peace of mind  
Today, it would be nice to just leave all my troubles behind  
Of course I want some things to happen now—but it will all  
eventually fall in line  
I will be content in the meantime

No need to make a big fuss  
We need to find something else to discuss  
If I don't have it right now—it's just not meant to be  
I'm content with what God has already given me

### STATEMENT OF FAITH

*Today, I praise God for already giving me everything I need.  
And whatever I don't have, He will provide!*



## DAY SIX

SUGGESTED READING: ROMANS 4:20–21 (KJV)

### IT SHALL BE

I don't care what it looks like— my testimony is still the same  
When somebody asks me and I don't know how to explain  
It shall be

Despite doubt and shame that can break the strongest will  
I've received the grace to overcome and I will stand still  
A smile is seen across my face from the depths of my heart  
I can see the finish line even though I had a slow start  
It shall be

It was all worth it—endurance in times of turmoil  
It's getting closer now—the joy of walking on new soil  
It's been a long time but I know that GOD will never leave me  
alone

It's true: anything worth having is worth waiting for, and  
sometimes the hours are unknown

But regardless of how long it may be  
I keep saying to myself: It shall be

### STATEMENT OF FAITH

*Today, I praise God for giving me the faith to believe Him. His  
Word is greater than my opposition.*



## DAY SEVEN

SUGGESTED READING: MARK 11:22–24 (KJV)

### STEP OUT ON FAITH

In this place in time  
I've searched the depths of my mind  
When I look out the window of my soul  
Such a strong desire I find

To finally do the things that GOD created me to do  
Yet only a few words encourage me to go on through  
But I know them to be faithful and true

Can you get yourself out of this mess?  
Can you yourself empty the burden of stress?  
You already know what happens whenever you trust in your  
own flesh  
You already know that GOD knows best  
There's no need for you to lose any more rest

This next move is about to change your life  
Move that obstacle out your way and don't look twice!  
It's never too late  
To take this opportunity and step out on faith

### STATEMENT OF FAITH

*Today, I praise God for ordering my steps. Nothing can stand  
in my way but unbelief.*



## **DAY EIGHT**

SUGGESTED READING: PSALM 36:5 (KJV)

### **WORDS IN THE SKY**

Words passing by on the clouds of a stormy night  
Hearing the heavens roar in excitement, clenching my pillow  
tight

GOD is speaking in the roll of thunder that I hear  
Counting down the seconds as His words draw near

Do I truly recognize and appreciate the wonder that is before  
me?

This is a praiseworthy night that can only be compared to  
morning glory

This storm is telling a story

As I turn out this man-made light to see God's illumination

I'm urged to fall asleep but I resist the temptation

Sometimes a storm can be seen as such a disposable thing

But only in the storm do God's words truly sing

So don't ask for rain and thunder to pass you by

This is your opportunity to hear words in the sky

### **STATEMENT OF FAITH**

*Today, I praise God for the sensitivity to hear His voice in the storm. He's teaching me through the things that I encounter.*



## DAY NINE

SUGGESTED READING: ROMANS 8:28 (KJV)

### TAKE YOUR MEDICINE

Everything happens for a reason  
I'm not going to blame my misfortune on demons  
I'm not even going to consider this a negative situation  
Because I do believe that what I'm going through is producing  
patience

I'll be able to tolerate almost anything once I get through this  
When hard times come, I won't have a fit  
I will look back and see this particular season  
And I'll laugh because it all happened for a reason

Hard times were never meant to make me give in  
I always had a way to escape but so often I refused my  
medicine  
Simply because of the taste I tried to replace God's grace  
But the purpose of God's will always be stronger than my  
haste

Now I understand that everything is working for my good  
And the medicine of patience is working as it should

### STATEMENT OF FAITH

*Today, I praise God that no matter what I go through, it's going to work to my advantage. Everything is working on my behalf.*



## DAY TEN

SUGGESTED READING: GALATIANS 6:1–2 (KJV)

### GOD'S JOB

No one asked you to change who you are  
I wouldn't even go that far  
You don't have to reshape anything that you consider straight  
There's nothing in you that I have the power to recreate  
You don't have to give me a philosophy of who you claim to  
be  
I love you like a brother or like a sister—even if you're totally  
opposite from me

Whatever you need to do to get you through the day  
You already have the tendency to do it anyway  
I'm not complaining or fault finding—relax  
You've come too far for me to let you go back  
So I might just say something that challenges you to change  
But you know that I would never act funny or treat you  
strange

If you're wondering whether or not I'm going to send you to  
hell, that's odd  
I've already come to the conclusion—that's God's job

### STATEMENT OF FAITH

*Today, I praise God for giving me the wisdom to know how to minister to people's shortcomings. I will be merciful to others as I consider my own challenges.*



**DAY ELEVEN**  
SUGGESTED READING: MARK 4:39–40 (KJV)  
**THE OTHER SIDE**

Feeling discouraged?  
Let us pass over to the other side  
Insecurities seem to flood what used to be a safe ride  
Let us pass over to the other side

As the waters of doubt roll in  
Even as you travel against the strongest winds  
Don't worry about the storm outside  
Jesus Himself said, "Let us pass over to the other side"

Sometimes our religious boat floats so well  
But when trials come, where is the God that you said would  
never fail?  
You call for help and even though you know He's right there  
Something inside you screams, "*God I'm in trouble, why  
don't you care?*"

Do you really need to be afraid when God is in your boat?  
Is He real to you right now or just another scripture to quote?  
Take your mind off the weather; I know it looks crazy outside  
But God Himself told you, "We're going to the other side!"

**STATEMENT OF FAITH**  
*Today, I praise God regardless of my circumstances. I will  
make it to the other side of my problems.*



## DAY TWELVE

SUGGESTED READING: PSALM 27:13–14 (KJV)

### WAIT

Another day goes by  
You wonder how long it will be  
In so many ways you desire to be free

Is there something you can do to get you through?  
Is there somebody special that you can talk to?  
So many questions but what do you do  
When it takes so long to get a breakthrough?

You're always talking about God  
You tell people how much He set you free  
Then worry no more when He says, "Wait on Me"

Yes, I know sometimes you don't even know what to do  
But just comfort your patient soul because somebody else is  
waiting too  
The good news is that God controls our fate  
And He's faithful to deliver the soul that will simply wait

### STATEMENT OF FAITH

*Today, I praise God for hope. I truly expect God to deliver me.*



**DAY THIRTEEN**  
SUGGESTED READING: JAMES 5:19–20 (KJV)  
**YOUR MINISTRY**

I know a young man that's hard headed—always talking back  
With no father at home, he stays in the streets  
His mother brings him to church, but that's a last resort  
And suddenly you become his only outreach

I know a young lady that wants to be a grown woman  
Nobody taught her restraint, so she likes to flirt  
She's not silly enough to go and have a baby  
But it's no big secret, she's just playing church

What happened to the girl in the miniskirt?  
What happened to the boy with no father figure?  
Well, somebody was too busy to put them first  
So eventually the streets became their babysitter

**STATEMENT OF FAITH**

*Today, I praise God for the people that He's given me to help.  
They (whoever they are) are my ministry, and I will take them  
seriously.*



**DAY FOURTEEN**  
SUGGESTED READING: LEVITICUS 6:13 (KJV)  
**LIFE IS A SONG**

Everyday has its own melody  
There are some days when almost everything seems to be out  
of key  
But we've all been given the choice to tune in or out  
Just because the song is boring, we don't have to let it play out

I don't know about you, but I don't like being off-key  
Old dry music will never be a reflection of me  
No matter how you jazz it up, it's got to be the #1 cut  
I listen to the songs of individuals who have achieved that  
ultimate rush

The lyrics don't need to be complicated; originality outweighs  
complexity  
And please don't confuse a stale hymnal with spiritual ecstasy  
The world needs something burning with passion and alive in  
you!

“Your life” is the kind of music I like to listen to

**STATEMENT OF FAITH**

*Today, I praise God for people with passion. I need to be  
around somebody who keeps my flame lit.*



## DAY FIFTEEN

SUGGESTED READING: GALATIANS 4:16 (KJV)

### TRUTH OR DARE?

Is it me or someone I venture to be?  
Should I paint you a daring adventure of someone that you'd  
like to see?  
Or I could just simply tell you something about the real me

Would you rather hear my future plans or the actual  
experiences that set me free?  
I could give you a bunch of "I cans" but nothing could do  
better than telling you of how I came to be

However, you seem to give me no choice as I search the  
sincerity of your voice  
So I'll just politely tell you that my Truth might not make you  
rejoice!

People are so quick to utter their entire mind when there's no  
limit on time  
But they wouldn't be so quick to speak if there was no privacy  
to hide behind

Why ask me for the truth daringly  
If you know that you're only going to receive it sparingly?  
The truth I have for you might just leave you bare  
You can't handle the truth—so why dare?

### STATEMENT OF FAITH

*Today, I praise God that we don't have to lie. The truth must  
be told even when it's not popular.*



## DAY SIXTEEN

SUGGESTED READING: MATTHEW 5:14–16 (KJV)

### I STILL REMAIN

In this world there is guilt and shame  
Fathers separated from their sons  
Men held captive to unseen chains  
But somehow life remains

In this world there is fear and blame  
Struggle for dominion and power  
The loss of spiritual gain  
But somehow life remains

In this world there is Abel and Cain  
Murder for envy and approval  
So much visible pain  
But somehow life remains

In this world there is loss of name  
Forgotten identity  
A life so plain  
But somehow life remains

In this world there is need for change  
No wonder I still remain

### STATEMENT OF FAITH

*Today, I praise God that I can be the change that I want to see. Where others see problems I see purpose.*



**DAY SEVENTEEN**  
SUGGESTED READING: PSALM 23:4 (KJV)  
**HOW SOON WE FORGET**

When fear had me on bended knee  
He was there to rescue me  
Tears of shame and discomfort gave me over to hours of  
prayer  
But His response was, “How soon you forget—I’m always  
there.”

God says: “I was there when your family called you a  
‘spiritual nutcase’  
I was there when you lost job after job  
I didn’t forsake you when you gave up that apartment  
How could I lose sight of you—I’m God!

“I was there when they denied you access to your bank  
account  
I was listening when you couldn’t find anybody else to listen  
When your loved one took his last breath  
I was all that you had left

“Look at what I’ve brought you through!  
Forgetting Me should be the last thing you to do”

**STATEMENT OF FAITH**

*Today, I praise God for being with me during the worst times.  
He will never leave me or forsake me.*



**DAY EIGHTEEN**  
SUGGESTED READING: GENESIS 50:5b (KJV)  
**NOT IN VAIN**

The sorrow that you see in my eyes  
No pain can describe it  
This emotion that I have  
There's no feeling like it

How can you describe this loss as gain?  
My suffering is more than a poem  
What can I do now  
That someone close is gone

I can only take what's left of this soul  
And surrender my will  
Listen close for those silent words  
That cause me to be still

I'm still searching for joy  
In the midst of this misery  
But your life was not in vain  
Just a reminder of the person that GOD called me to be

I will come back—even though the pain took me away  
I lost something valuable but that's not where I plan to stay  
The night only came to help me appreciate a brand-new day

**STATEMENT OF FAITH**

*Today, I praise God for every person, place, or thing that I  
have lost. Because now I truly appreciate everything that I  
have to gain.*



## DAY NINETEEN

SUGGESTED READING: 1 JOHN 2:6 (KJV)

### TWO WRONGS DON'T MAKE A RIGHT

All else has failed and we are still not at peace with one  
another

How can you call yourself my “Christian” sister or brother?

The sarcastic remarks only to justify your own opinions

Is this the kind of fellowship that Christ has given?

So be it then

I will ask for your forgiveness—only to encourage you

I will take the heat, only to get us through

I'll take the blame to glorify His name

But the fact that it has gone this far is really a shame

You claim to believe in the same God I serve

Yet you have the audacity to say that I get on your nerves

Well, God will be the final judge

Because when He looks down on my heart, He'll find no  
grudge

You might still have a problem by the end of the night

But at least one of us should be wrong so that we can get this  
thing right

It's not worth the fight

### STATEMENT OF FAITH

*Today, I praise God for giving me the heart to make peace. I  
am a peacemaker!*



**DAY TWENTY**  
SUGGESTED READING: PSALM 133:1 (KJV)  
**ONE OF US**

This is us  
We all know each other  
This is where we hang out  
To come together as sisters and brothers

You're just like Him  
We're just like you  
Some of us just fit in somehow  
But nobody here is brand new

We like to talk that talk  
I'm free to tell you how much my feet hurt  
You don't have to act like you're in church  
And if you're not dressed up, don't worry, I've seen worse

We're all having a good time  
Everybody's got their own style  
I feel like I'm back in high school  
Why don't we just hang out for a while?

**STATEMENT OF FAITH**

*Today, I praise God for genuine fellowship with other believers. I will not forsake this assembly.*



## DAY TWENTY-ONE

SUGGESTED READING: JAMES 3:10 (KJV)

### WORD OF MOUTH

Somebody told me about her  
She told somebody about me  
That same somebody didn't know either of us  
Now everybody knows all three

We get to conversatin'  
Telling all that business  
You know exaggerated fairy tales  
Always attract a witness

Don't say that I told you  
Keep it under your hat  
You know I'm telling you the truth  
Now this is where she was at

All that trash talk  
Doing the devil's work with ease  
And you got the nerve to get upset  
When "your" business ends up floating through the breeze

That's why I separate myself  
From those who use their lips for evil  
You've got to have something better to do  
Than to talk about other people

### STATEMENT OF FAITH

*Today, I praise God for a mouth that speaks blessings instead of curses. I will use my words to build people up and not to tear them down.*



**DAY TWENTY-TWO**  
SUGGESTED READING: JOHN 20:29 (KJV)  
**BEHIND THESE WALLS**

Men cry through anger and pride  
Waiting for a brokenness inside  
Memories of yesterday bring sorrow  
Reflections of tomorrow have died

Young men find love in darkness  
Old men hold on to their ways  
With so much evil surrounding  
How can anybody give GOD the praise?

Maybe because he or she has been set free  
Maybe somebody has been redeemed from their past history  
And if you ask me, "Why are you so happy and what do you  
see?"

I'll simply reply, "*I see some of these same men being set  
free . . . just like me*"

Even if it's something that I can't physically see  
It is what I believe it to be

**STATEMENT OF FAITH**

*Today, I praise God for not allowing me to be moved by what  
I can't see. By faith I believe that it will be.*



**DAY TWENTY-THREE**  
SUGGESTED READING: PSALM 118:24 (KJV)  
**THE SUN HAS RISEN**

This morning I woke up and turned on the lights so that I  
could see  
These lights lit up the whole house with the flick of a switch  
and a surge of electricity

This morning it was dark outside my door and I wasn't  
dressed  
I was just glad to be living in a house where I had more than a  
lot less

But this morning, when I got prepared to open the front door  
to where I live  
I wasn't quite ready to receive what only GOD Himself could  
give

When you look outside to see the sun's horizon is better than  
the artificial light that you have on the inside  
It becomes easy to get up and take these legs for a walk  
outside

Look at this new day that GOD has given  
Without a doubt, the true Light has risen

**STATEMENT OF FAITH**

*Today, I praise God that Jesus is the light of my life. I will not  
settle for a substitute.*



**DAY TWENTY-FOUR**  
SUGGESTED READING: PSALM 22:2 (KJV)  
**MY SAFETY NET**

I have fallen  
There is nothing to grab hold of  
I can see the ground coming  
Gravity pulling with no love

My strength is useless  
It's too late for thought  
Nothing else matters now  
Anybody would scream—as they ought

But I have a safety net  
One that I cannot see  
I know it's down there somewhere  
Set up just for me

I chose to skate  
I was warned not to do so  
Now that I have slipped  
There is only one way to go

My safety net  
God told me so

**STATEMENT OF FAITH**

*Today, I praise God for being a safe place for me. My life is in His hands.*



**DAY TWENTY-FIVE**  
SUGGESTED READING: HEBREWS 11:6 (KJV)  
**A FATHER'S REWARD**

My father asked me to cut the grass  
So I prepared for the task  
But when I saw how big of a yard he has  
I just knew that I wouldn't last

However, I was obedient  
Even as clouds gathered in the sky  
I knew my blessing would come expedient  
As the clouds passed me by

But it began to rain on me  
My excuse for not cutting the grass that day  
Then I remembered what my father said recently  
"Now is the time; there is no better day"

So I cut the grass in the rain  
Having faith that it would soon stop  
Doing what my father told me  
Whether I felt like it or not

Then just when I got halfway  
Struggling with a bag full of wet grass  
The clouds started to break away  
And all I could do was laugh

My father's reward came in finishing the task

**STATEMENT OF FAITH**

*Today, I praise God for endurance. I will seek God, being confident that He will reward my efforts.*



**DAY TWENTY-SIX**  
SUGGESTED READING: ROMANS 5:8 (KJV)  
**DO WE REALLY WANT LOVE?**

Love is more than an emotion  
Love is more than how I feel  
Love is . . .  
The ability to experience pain for someone else's pleasure  
Love is real

But this is fire in a cold place  
This is the murderer or rapist forgiven without a grudge  
When someone that you love leaves you stranded  
The power comes in your ability to still love

Can we shake hands with the prejudice and humble ourselves  
to the racist?  
Or do we disguise ourselves behind solemn faces?

Love feels real good when it doesn't cost you to love  
But when will "your" blood be worth shedding for true love?

**STATEMENT OF FAITH**

*Today, I praise God for the ability to love people the same way that He loves them. I will love people unconditionally.*



## DAY TWENTY-SEVEN

SUGGESTED READING: 1 JOHN 1:6–7 (KJV)

### FELLOWSHIP IN THE MIDST

How could I forget Your loving kindness and tender care?  
Why didn't I say thank You when it was my life that You  
spared?  
Where is that grateful spirit that You wait for night and day?  
You saved us, we acknowledged it, then we turned and went  
astray

I need to walk with You in fellowship while in the midst  
You alone brought me through the storm—how can there be  
no praise in my home?  
You kept me in every trial; I'm still alive  
To You I give all the glory for this soul that You revived

We say that we want fellowship, but what we give is what we  
get  
So God I seek true fellowship with You—and not just when  
I'm in the midst of darkness

### STATEMENT OF FAITH

*Today, I praise God that my time with Him isn't based on  
what I'm going through. I will stay in fellowship with Him at  
all times.*



## DAY TWENTY-EIGHT

SUGGESTED READING: PROVERBS 17:27–28 (KJV)

### OPINIONS

We would be better people if we could visualize our words  
If we could see the end result of traveling sentences that are  
suddenly heard  
If we could only picture phrases as they travel their emotional  
mazes  
We would be more concerned about the after effects than the  
brief look on people's faces

We would caution our approach with a wisdom tooth  
We would rebuild our thoughts even as they linger in their  
youth

What is love if our craftiness always takes advantage of  
affections?

Why must our thoughts become such lethal injections?

I could cut you up in several different sections  
But I would rather reprove my own imperfections  
If you think about it  
Your opinion is only the result of a bad reflection

I refuse to let my words become a lethal injection

### STATEMENT OF FAITH

*Today, I praise God that my words are being chosen carefully.  
I will be selective, because my words are infective.*



**DAY TWENTY-NINE**  
SUGGESTED READING: JOHN 14:6 (KJV)  
**LIFE**

A mirage  
Pieces of a puzzle  
A picture without a frame  
The inside of a bubble

So organized in chaos  
Extreme imagination made visible  
The cloud over a cloud  
The unopened envelope

What emotion is this?  
Unknown but commonly felt  
Life as we perceive it  
Is only death if absorbed by itself

What purpose is there in purpose  
If that purpose has no meaning?  
What lifestyle is relative  
If we live like we're just dreaming?

Actually, life is not really what we claim  
It's just words and thoughts that we maintain  
It's all confusing and sometimes insane  
But true life only comes through JESUS'S NAME

**STATEMENT OF FAITH**

*Today, I praise God that Jesus removes all the confusion in my life. He is the only way for me.*



**DAY THIRTY**  
SUGGESTED READING: 1 PETER 2:2 (KJV)  
**GROWING PAINS**

I see so much of me in you  
So much that you have yet to see  
You do almost everything I used to do  
Son, you're just like me

A smaller version of my dreams  
The child inside of my memory  
What a joy my children bring  
So innocently running free

But you have some things you need to learn  
Sit back and listen for a minute  
Your eyes show little concern  
Until they behold my image

What will you do in my absence?  
Are you prepared for adulthood?  
Let me guide you in your adolescence  
Such as a father should

I see you slowly walking up these steps  
Trying your hardest to maintain  
Just remember that I call you blessed  
Even through your growing pains

**STATEMENT FAITH**

*Today, I will praise God through my process. His Word is helping me to "grow up."*



## DAY THIRTY-ONE

SUGGESTED READING: PHILIPPIANS 3:13–14 (KJV)

### IT TAKES MORE

At the last minute something inside whispers,  
“Keep on Going”  
Somebody somewhere obviously feels that I can do more  
He must not see the fatigue showing  
Does anybody out there recognize that my face is on the  
floor?

I guess there would be no benefit in me giving up right now  
The next step wouldn't even be considered an accomplishment  
Nothing behind is worth more than today  
Somehow I see God giving me hope when I feel unequipped

So when I feel like I've done enough  
I won't sit down and lick my sores  
I won't consider it as too much  
God is saying, “I want more”

As for you, when doubt comes and you feel infected  
Jesus died, was buried, and resurrected  
And He's only coming back when you've been perfected  
So just renew your mind when weakness is detected

Of course it takes more  
But that's what we're praising GOD for

### STATEMENT OF FAITH

*Today, I praise God for sending His Son Jesus to give me  
dominion. I will not break, because I have what it takes.*



# REFERENCES

## INTRODUCTION

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10. “. . . Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.” (Luke 19:5b, KJV)

11. “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” (1 Corinthians 6:19, KJV)
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3. “Spring Cleaning” (Oxforddictionaries.com)
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6. “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” (John 15:5, KJV)
7. “. . . without me ye can do nothing.” (John 15:5b, KJV)
8. “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” (John 15:3, KJV)
9. “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” (Joshua 1:8, KJV)
10. “Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.” (Joshua 1:9, KJV)
11. “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” (Luke 17:20a–21, KJV)
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2. “Inhabit” (Strong’s Dictionary)

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5. “They worshiped created things more than their creator” (Romans 1:22–25, KJV)
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9. “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.” (Psalm 19:14, KJV)
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13. “And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?” (Mark 4:39–40, KJV)
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5. “Dallas Morning News – October 12, 1930” (Sports  
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6. “Greater Works” (John 14:12, KJV)
7. “The Tipping Point” (Malcolm Gladwell)
8. “Stephen” (Acts 7, KJV)
9. “Jesus Standing” (Acts 7:55–56, KJV)
10. “Neighborhood Watch – A Manual for Citizens and Law  
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11. “Stephen Calling upon God” (Acts 7:59, KJV)
12. “Saul, also known as the Apostle Paul” (Acts 7:58, KJV)
13. “The Conversion of Saul” (Acts 9, KJV)

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

1. “Nelson Mandela Quotes” (Brainyquote.com)
2. “Biography of Nelson Mandela” (The Nelson Mandela  
Foundation)
3. “Inspiration” (Online Etymology Dictionary)
4. “Apostle Paul Tells Agrippa His Testimony” (Acts  
26:15–18, KJV)

5. “Paul Almost Died Fulfilling a Lifestyle of Praise” (2 Corinthians 11, KJV)
6. “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:18, KJV)
7. “Paul Encourages the Brethren” (Philippians 1:12–14, KJV)
8. “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.” (Matthew 5:14–15, KJV)
9. “The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out.” (Leviticus 6:13, KJV)
10. “Be Reconciled to Your Brother First” (Matthew 5:23–24, KJV)
11. “Repent” (Online Etymology Dictionary)
12. “The Mind of Christ” (Philippians 2:5–13, KJV)
13. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (Colossians 3:16, KJV)

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