

Learn how to replace the
enemy's lies with God's truth

part of the



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Overcoming **Spiritual Strongholds**



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Index of abbreviations

All scripture references are from the King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

AMP Amplified Bible • NIV New International Version • NAS New American Standard

NKJ New King James Version • NCV New Century Version • TM The Message • TLB The Living Bible

NRS New Revised Standard Version • PHPS Phillips N.T. in Modern English

• GWT God's Word Translation • TEV Today's English Version • NEB New English Bible

Editorial Team:

Editor – Alistair Metcalfe
Publications Co-ordinator – Karen Brittain
Prayers – Carl Brettle

UCB Operations Centre, Westport Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 4JF
T: 0845 60 40 401 (local rate call) E: ucb@ucb.co.uk

Welcome

to Overcoming Spiritual Strongholds

'The Bible tells us that there is more to this life than just the physical world we live in'

In our modern Western world, seeing is believing. But just because we can't see something, doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

From an early age we are taught to trust in only what we can see, smell, touch or taste. But the Bible tells us that there is more to this life than just the physical world we live in (Colossians 1:16). We are part of a spiritual realm too. Whether you are sceptical about spiritual things or confused about what Christians believe about all this, be encouraged that exploring what the Bible says about the spiritual world can be a very significant step forward in your faith.

The spiritual world existed before the physical world was formed (Genesis 1:1) and we became a part of both when God breathed 'the breath of life' into our physical bodies at creation (Genesis 2:7). Each and every one of us is now a physical person and a spiritual being, and when we become a Christian, we invite the Holy Spirit into our lives, to equip us in living our faith (Acts 1:8).

But the spiritual realm is in conflict (Ephesians 6:10–12) and the clash between God's good purposes for us and satan's desire to see us led astray means there is an ongoing battle within us. God longs to see us living in truth, transformed to be more like Him. But the enemy is a lover of lies and seeks to use spiritual strongholds – our misguided mindsets and wrong ways of thinking (2 Corinthians 4:4) – to his advantage, holding us back from growth with God and the freedom that life in Christ offers.

The idea of overcoming spiritual strongholds might seem a bit 'out there', but the Bible teaches that it's very much about what's happening 'in here' – in our hearts and in our minds. The enemy offers us chains, but God offers us the opportunity to experience true freedom. It's an offer not to be missed.

The Overcoming Series is designed to help people like you find God's help in dealing with the challenges that face us all.

Contained in these little booklets are big truths from God's Word, guidance on how to pray, and practical suggestions for change. Turn over to begin reading a selection of articles and testimonies written by people who understand what you're going through and long to help you overcome.

Then, starting on page 16, there are 28 readings from Bob Gass, author of *The Word For Today*, to help you practice new thought patterns and habits day by day for a month. As the Bible says, 'He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world' (1 John 4:4). With the help of our great God, you can overcome any challenge you face.



Discover the other titles in the Overcoming Series on page 35

Spiritual Strongholds -

Where do I start?

Our pursuit is the heart of God – His purpose for our lives and His calling set within us

'A spiritual stronghold is an area of our lives which has not yet come under the authority of God'

In ancient times cities protected themselves from enemies by building a strong, surrounding outer wall. But within the city there would be a fortified place which people could run to if the outer walls were breached. These inner fortresses were called 'strongholds'.

When a battle came, those who sought to take the city would not only need to break through the outer wall, but take the strongholds too. In his book *Demolishing Strongholds*, David Devenish suggests that when people become Christians, '...the outer wall of their life is taken...' and Jesus enters in, but that sometimes 'the stronghold...the way of thinking from before they were saved...' is not. Put simply, a spiritual stronghold is an area of our lives which has not yet come under the authority of God.

We can spot spiritual strongholds because they are based on lies which stand in contrast to the truth about who God is and who He says we are. Inwardly, spiritual strongholds sound like this: 'I'm worthless'; 'God can't be trusted'; 'Nobody loves me' and can exist in feelings of anger, despair and rejection. Outwardly, they may then be seen through issues such as insecurity unforgiveness, idolatry or addiction. Shining the light God's of truth into areas of our lives that have remained in darkness, can literally be life changing. But where do we start?

A balanced and biblical approach to spiritual strongholds is key if we are to remain and put down new roots in God's truth. Here are three key principles we need to take hold of:

Firstly, satan is real. He is present from the first (Genesis 3:1) to final (Revelation 2:10) pages of scripture. The fact that there is an enemy makes spiritual struggles both possible and probable.

Second, as Christians we are part of a spiritual battle '...against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world...' (Ephesians 6:12 NLT). The enemy does not want us to grow closer to God and therefore the purpose and the potential of a spiritual stronghold is to hold us back.

Finally, we have been given authority '...over all the power of the enemy.' (Luke 10:19 NLT). This reminds us that we have a responsibility to work with God to see spiritual strongholds brought down, but encourages us that by His power at work in us, they are completely conquerable.

While spiritual powers wrestle against us (Ephesians 6:12 NIV), there should be no fear within us (1 John 4:18). The Bible both commands us to 'be strong and courageous' (Joshua 1:9) and commends the fight (1 Timothy 6:12). Will we continue to live lives that are limited by the enemy schemes, or will we commit to seeing strongholds smashed so that we can fulfil our potential?

Step by step

Your guide to overcoming spiritual strongholds with God's help

'As Christians we are called not to be bystanders, but warriors wielding weapons that have divine power to destroy strongholds'

1. Seek a Sacred Stronghold

'The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer... my stronghold' (Psalm 18:2 NIV)

Our God is a faithful fortress. The proper purpose of a stronghold should be to provide a space where we can seek refuge, safety and shelter. God has promised us that He will be that place for us at all times and in all situations (Isaiah 43:2). But the decision to turn towards Him is a choice that is left with us.

It is important to recognise that the very spiritual strongholds we seek to

bring down are not only faulty ways of thinking, but actually represent ways in which we have not turned to God. The writer of Ecclesiastes says "There is a time...to destroy and a time to build.' (3:1-3 NCV), so as we work to see strongholds demolished, we also commit to choosing a new Christ-centred stronghold for refuge. Trusting in the safety of His promises and taking shelter under his wings is one of the most wonderful decisions we could ever make. But being ready and committed to choosing Christ is crucial.

TRY...



When we set out to demolish spiritual strongholds, our aim is to be built up in God. Living in His truth is the key to experiencing long-term freedom. (John 8: 32 NIV)

2. Prepare for Battle

'Put on all of God's armour so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil' (Ephesians 6:10-11 NLT)

God is a champion of change. He longs to see us freed to flourish and glorify Him, fulfilling every ounce of potential we've been given. But the Bible also makes it very clear that overcoming spiritual strongholds involves a battle.

Jesus didn't turn his back when he encountered the opposition; he was prepared for the fight and he faced it head-on (Mark 4:4,7, 10). As Christians we too are called not to be bystanders, but warriors – wielding weapons that '...have divine power to destroy strongholds' (2 Corinthians 10:4 ESV). But how can we practically ready ourselves for a battle that we cannot see?

The Bible's teaching offers us clarity, strategy and support for entering into battle. So reading the Word, listening to it and attending church regularly to receive teaching from others who are living it out, are key practices that can equip us to overcome spiritual strongholds. In fact in Ephesians, the scriptures

are described as the 'Sword of the Spirit' - a weapon 'sharper than any two-edged sword' (Hebrew 4:12 NIV). Practical preparation involves us getting to know the Bible and then using the truth of the scriptures against the lies of the enemy. The more we recognise the truth, the easier it will be to spot the lies.

Learn Ephesians 6:10-20. It gives us the full details of the armour and artillery that God gives us when preparing for spiritual battle. Spend time thinking about how truth, righteousness, peace, salvation and faith support us in overcoming areas of struggle.



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Matthew 11:28
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who are weary and
burdened, and I will
give you rest

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3. Lessons in Demolition: Dynamite

‘Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?’ (1 John 5:5 ESV)

When we are face to face with the issues that spiritual strongholds create, we can feel imprisoned. Our situation might feel utterly hopeless, appearing bigger and stronger than we are and even than we believe our God to be. But here’s a key truth: with Christ, victory is a certainty.

Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection sent shockwaves through the spiritual realms, as satan’s biggest boast – death – was utterly defeated. Now God ‘...gives us victory over sin

and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ (1 Corinthians 15:57 NIV) and authority ‘... over all the power of the enemy...’(Luke 10:19 NIV). Ultimate power and victory is with Christ, and by the Holy Spirit that victory power lives in us.

Some spiritual strongholds can be broken quickly when a key Biblical truth blasts through the enemies lies like dynamite, revealing more of God’s to us in a moment. Others, as we will see require a bit more time as we ‘capture every thought...and make it obey Christ’ (2 Corinthians 10:5 NCV), but don’t be discouraged: there is great hope at hand.

TRY...



Identifying any specific areas where you feel that they enemy may have built a stronghold in your life. Try noting them down and then imagining/writing out what victory might look like practically in your situation? With Christ everything is possible...

4. Lessons in Demolition: Brick by Brick

‘Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind’ (Romans 12:2 NIV)

No spiritual stronghold is built in a day. Our patterns of thinking must be influenced, established, re-enforced and then repeatedly rehearsed in order to become a habit, or regular practice. So don’t be discouraged if you discover that you need to dismantle a stronghold brick by brick with God, until the foundations of the problem are uncovered and fully dug out. Beth Moore puts it this way: ‘Sometimes the overwhelming power of a stronghold may be instantly broken, but the

renewing of our minds can take a little longer ... some “holds” in our lives are simply “stronger” than others.’

Particular examples in this case might include struggles with old habits or practices that were formed before we knew God. Old social patterns may prove tough to move on from, or elements of addiction might be resulting in regular and recurring sin in our lives. Often demolishing these sorts of strongholds involves both an internal commitment to keep bringing your thoughts under control and in-line with Christ and an external application, such as practically seeking support from a trusted friend or trained counsellor.

TRY...



Remember that honesty is a part of the journey to freedom. Think about who could ask to stand by you and pray with you, in the struggles you are facing - others can often help us to see which parts of the problem to tackle first.

5. Facing the Future

‘In heaven we shall appear, not in armour, but in robes of glory.’ William Gurnall

None of the strongholds in our lives which have been fortified by our false beliefs and the lies of the enemy are built to last. In this life we each have trials and challenges to overcome, but whether we are just beginning to identify a spiritual stronghold, or emerging from the rubble of one recently demolished, keeping an eye on eternity can really help us maintain perspective.

‘If God is for us, who can be against us?’ Romans 8:31. The future is full of hope and God reminds us that we ‘...can do all things through He who gives you strength’ (Philippians 4:13 NIV).



TRY...

(Sources: Beth Moore, *Praying God’s Word: Breaking Free from Spiritual Strongholds*; William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour*)

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ENCOUNTER *with* TRUTH

A personal testimony by Helen Pollard

Spiritual warfare is a truth encounter, not a power encounter. Jesus won the victory over Satan when He died on the cross and took the keys of death and hell. Jesus conquered death by rising from the dead. The enemy is under His feet.

He has given us authority to cast out demons in His name and by the power of the Holy Spirit, but there are some keys to knowing how to do that with love and honour to all concerned.

Let me illustrate from my own life how a spiritual stronghold is built and dismantled. They are built up in the mind, usually on top of wounding or trauma in a person's life. In my childhood, I saw how people in my village were manipulated through fear to carry out evil practices, causing harm to many. Even though my Christian Grandpa tried to protect me, I was personally abused by those who I loved. I watched while a Christian friend was horrifically killed by a car and was told, 'This is what happens to people who follow your Grandpa's God.'

Years later, happily married to a dear, godly Christian, we went through some trauma of our own. We had a baby in our second year of marriage, who we named Joe. Sadly Joe died after just 30 minutes. My trust in God was rocked and I had to battle against the thoughts that said to me, 'This is what happens to people who follow your Grandpa's God.'

We went on to have three more lovely children, which helped me believe God could indeed be trusted. We led Alpha and Freedom In Christ courses in our church. All was going well until one of our children fell ill with a life-threatening condition. Suddenly my trust in God plummeted and I had a crisis of faith.

I took a retreat to seek God, and He graciously led me to a vicar who knew how to deal with spiritual strongholds. He helped me to identify a spiritual stronghold built up from trauma upon trauma in my childhood; indoctrination with wrong beliefs about God, myself and others; and a history and culture of fear in my ancestors.

When we asked the Holy Spirit for the roots of this stronghold, things became clear. I began to see the fear and deception behind what people in my village taught and believed. The truth encounter began to bring down the stronghold (2 Corinthians 10:4–5) in my mind. With love and support, I was able to express the pain of these things – and experience God's comfort and healing for them all.

This was a journey of 18 months. It wasn't easy. There were loud shouts and tears sometimes but Jesus expressed loud shouts and tears (e.g. Hebrews 5:7) in His lifetime, too.

'IN JESUS' NAME AND AUTHORITY, WE CAN TELL THE ENEMY TO LEAVE. HE NO LONGER HAS A HOLD ON US.'

Where wounds, wrong beliefs and our history keep us trapped, the enemy can invade and gain a hold. But when truth, expression and healing are allowed in, the enemy loses his grip. We begin to resist his lies. Then, in Jesus' name and authority, we can tell the enemy to leave. He no longer has a hold on us. That's what I was able to do, with dignity and respect from the vicar and my husband.

Now that's what I love to do for others, too. In the words of James 4:7–8, I help people resist the devil through encounters with truth. I help them to draw close to God and have Him reveal and heal the wounds that caused the wrong beliefs. Then I watch how God comes close to His beloved children as He promises He will.

Helen Pollard and her husband Steve run Bespoke Growth in God, a professional counselling and coaching service with a Christian emphasis. Find out more about their work at www.bespokepollards.com

'ALTERNATIVE 'SPIRITUALITIES' TEND TO FOCUS UPON OURSELVES, RATHER THAN UPON THE GOD-CENTREDNESS THAT WE WERE CREATED FOR'



THE REAL THING

Richard Bewes OBE on the four ingredients of genuine, biblical spirituality

Spirituality... It's a buzz word today and it supposedly embraces a wide collection of beliefs. Basically what is meant by spirituality is 'those attitudes, beliefs and practices which animate people's lives and help them to reach out to super-sensible realities' (Dictionary of Christian Spirituality, Wakefield).

Go to the religion section in any major bookshop in the West and you will find an amazing kaleidoscope; books on Buddhist meditation, chant and prayer, Bhakti-Yoga, or 'How to Consult Your Angel.' It is quite probable that you will not find Bibles on display. In a central London church you can pick up a magazine featuring 'Stepping into the Boundless', 'The Shaman's Rules of Power in Business and Life' or 'Sex, Love and Tantra.' These are the giants we are up against!

Regarding true spirituality, the vital questions are these: 'What leads us to the true and only God? How can we become more like His Son, Jesus Christ? What makes for growth in moral character? What makes a person tick as a true disciple?'

There are a number of ingredients in genuine spirituality. Here are the four most important:

First, the inherited background: think of the hymns that many of us grew up on! Think of Timothy's faith that first lived in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5). Salvationist Kate Booth, a mighty worker for God who, at the age of four would be put to bed with the words, 'Now Katie, you have not been sent into the world for yourself, but for God, and for others. The world is waiting for you!'

Second, the learnt truths: all true Christian spirituality has the grace of God as its foundation, the death and resurrection

of Christ as its centre and the on-going relationship with the Holy Spirit as its dynamic; a true Trinitarian basis. The first eight chapters of Romans set out the secrets of true spirituality.

Third, the practised discipline: again, the Scriptures and prayer play their part. As a child of missionaries, Bible stories were my daily diet, coupled with family prayers, the reading of books, prayer meetings, the services and fellowship of the church and the missionary imperative. Indeed, as, in evangelism, we reach out as 'a royal priesthood' to 'declare the praises' of God to others (1 Peter 2:9), we are thus doing the priestly job; we are doing spirituality!

Fourth, the endured hardships: it is everywhere in the New Testament! Paul and Barnabas emphasised that 'through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God' (Acts 14:22). The first reason why Christians suffer is that we are following One whose footsteps took Him to a cross. The second is that God has chosen suffering as a way to spiritual progress (Romans 5:3-5). Alternative 'spiritualities' tend to focus upon ourselves, rather than upon the God-centredness that we were created for. It is the same with certain disciplines that can create a self-obsessed illusion of mystical 'holiness', without dealing with our sinful characters. Paul points to certain rituals and mystical experiences that, for all their impressiveness, caused people to 'lose connection with Christ the Head' (Colossians 2:19).

Morally, in our characters, are we becoming more like Jesus Christ? That is the crunch issue of true spirituality.

Richard Bewes, OBE is the former Rector of All Souls Langham Place London and the author of many books.



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More help with Spiritual Strongholds

Advice and Guidance

Sometimes overcoming spiritual strongholds may require practical support as well as spiritual insight. You may find it helpful to approach a church leader or team member who can offer pastoral and prayer support for the journey.

If you feel that certain behaviours, such as addictions or harmful attitudes and actions may be rooted in a spiritual stronghold, it is always wise to seek help. Dealing with these situations appropriately on a spiritual and physical level it important to ensure that yourself and others are not put at risk.

Organisations that can help

Betel of Britain

Betel of Britain is a group of caring, not-for-profit Christian communities in the heart of the UK dedicated to restoring homeless and long-term unemployed people to healthy, independent lifestyles.

www.betel.org.uk

Mercy Ministries UK

Mercy Ministries UK is a national charity dedicated to providing a six-month residential Christian discipleship programme for young women suffering from life controlling issues, such as eating disorders, self-harm, depression, and the effects of abuse in all its forms.

www.mercyministries.co.uk

Freedom In Christ

The Freedom In Christ discipleship course is a proven and effective way for churches to help Christians become fruitful disciples. It's been used by around 200,000 people in the UK. Visit the website to find out about the resources on offer and how to find a course near you.

www.ficm.org.uk

Further reading

The Bondage Breaker by Neil T Anderson (Harvest House Publishers)

Demolishing Strongholds by David Devenish (Authentic)

Steps to Freedom in Christ by Neil T Anderson (Lion Hudson)

Battlefield of the Mind by Joyce Meyer (Faithworks)

Christianity, Cults and The Occult, pamphlet (Rose Publishing)

Your 28 Days of Change

God's spirit is in you and...

'He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world'

It takes time to change long-standing thought patterns, habits and behaviour. We need to keep coming before God in our brokenness and asking for His help.

The rest of this Overcoming booklet is designed to help bring you before God for the next 28 days – to learn from His wisdom in His Word and to access His healing power through prayer.

Make a decision to set aside the time each day to read and respond in prayer. Don't worry if you miss a day or two, just pick up wherever you left off.

Keep a notebook and pen nearby to jot down anything that occurs to you while you read, or quotes that inspire you to think differently. Trust that God will speak to you personally about your healing over the coming weeks.

Remember, Jesus is on your side, willing you to succeed. Right now, He is praying to the Father on your behalf.

God's Spirit is in you, and 'He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world' (1 John 4:4).



The daily readings are written by Bob and Debby Gass, authors of *The UCB Word For Today*, and originally appeared there first. Over a million people around the world read Bob and Debby's warm, encouraging words each day.

You can receive a quarterly copy of *The UCB Word For Today* free of charge – see the back page for more details.

DAY 1 Washed, Salted, Swaddled!

'Neither wast thou washed... [nor] salted...nor swaddled'
Ezekiel 16:4 KJV

WHY ARE ONLY one in ten people who make a commitment to Christ still serving Him five years later? Ezekiel gives us some answers:

1) You must be washed! Your spiritual protection against dirt, disease and death is 'the washing of water by the Word' (Ephesians 5:26 NIV). It's not enough to step into the shower every morning; you've also got to step into the Scriptures. Jesus said, 'You are already clean because of the Word I have spoken to you.' (John 15:3 NIV). Sin will keep you from your Bible and your Bible will keep you from sin.

2) You must be salted! In Hebrew culture, they rubbed salt on newborn babies to toughen their skins so they could be handled without bruising.

Too many of us need 'special handling.' We're touchy. If we're corrected, we get defensive. Only when you've been 'salted' by mature love and non-legalistic acceptance can you be really open and honest.

3) You must be swaddled! When we're first born into God's family we're vulnerable. We need to be covered and protected. That's the value of Christian fellowship; it wraps us up in the arms of love and says, 'You don't ever have to go back to the old life again! You can begin afresh. You can be healed of your painful past. You can have good times and good relationships instead of bad ones.' Have you been washed, salted, and swaddled?

Prayer Point

Lord, I pray that the areas of my spiritual life that have become stale will once again flourish. Help me find You again in the desert of my own life. Help me worship You with the excitement of my early years; let me know a greater depth of Your love and acceptance, that the intimacy between us will be the best it's ever been, in Jesus' name.

DAY 2 You Belong!

'We belong to His dearly loved Son'
Ephesians 1:6 NLT

DO YOU SPEND a big part of your life trying to get people to accept you? Once you understand that God already accepts you and that you 'belong' to His dearly beloved Son, the acceptance of others will become less important to you. You see, when God approves of you, what difference does anybody else's opinion make?

Don't misunderstand me; you won't become uncaring or unmoved by people. On the contrary, you'll become more caring and more deeply moved by their needs, because now your own are being met by God! The fact that God accepts you transforms your prayer life. Once you realise that you have a direct pass to the throne room you'll

stop trying to 'talk God into hearing you.' You'll realise that you can come boldly to Him at two o'clock in the morning, without worrying about waking Him up or disturbing Him. You can call on Him, knowing that you'll always be received with love and concern, regardless of the time of day, no matter where you are or what's going on. He'll hear you because 'you belong!'

Once you grasp that, your low self-esteem will begin to heal and your reluctance to approach Him with either your sins or your needs will vanish. Why? Because you're loved! You're accepted! Nothing and nobody can ever change that!

DAY 3 Make Time For Him Today!

'I am with you always'
Matthew 28:20 NIV

'HELLO THERE. When you wakened this morning, I thought perhaps you'd talk to Me and involve Me in your day, but you were preoccupied finding something to wear for work. When you'd time to spare, I thought we'd have a few moments together, but you got on the phone and started talking to somebody else.

'I noticed that before you ate lunch at work, you looked around and seemed embarrassed to talk to Me. Maybe that's why you didn't bow your head and give thanks, even though some of your friends did. Later at home, I waited while you watched television, ate dinner and did paperwork. At bedtime I guess you were just too tired because

you dropped into bed and fell fast asleep. Do you know I'm always here for you? I love you so much that I wait every day for a prayer, a thought or just a chance to speak with you. The problem as I see it is; it's hard to have a one-sided conversation. Signed, Your Friend, Jesus.'

When did you last talk with the Lord? Or take time to listen to Him? There's never a time when He's not speaking; no room so dark, no lounge so crowded or no office so busy that He's not there. Never mistake your insensitivity for His absence. Among life's fleeting promises of pleasure is this timeless assurance, 'I am with you always' (Matthew 28:20 NIV). Make time for Him today!

Prayer Point

Lord, forgive me for the many times when You have been the person I gave the least amount of time to. Help me find a routine that brings You into the centre of my life. I know You should be the fountain of life within my chaotic lifestyle. I love You, Lord.

DAY 4 Your Spiritual Compass

'Abraham... saw the place in the distance'
Genesis 22:4 NIV

IMAGINE GOD sending Abraham to a place 'which I will show you' (Genesis 22:2 NIV). Women tend to understand this better than men. When I ask my wife what she's shopping for, she'll sometimes say, 'I'm not sure, but I'll know it when I see it!' There are things you know that you can't explain.

Listen: 'We have an anointing from God and we know things' (1 John 2:20 paraphrase). Look what happened: 'On the third day Abraham... saw the place' (Genesis 22:4 NIV). Eureka! There's nothing like the moment you see what you've been looking for, the bell rings and the spiritual compass within you registers, 'This is it!' When you're at sea, all waters look alike. That's when you need a compass. Either you have one or

you don't. When you see somebody who gets excited about things that aren't there, watch them! Either they didn't take their medication that morning or they see what you don't! Because they can get excited about the invisible, these people usually end up doing the impossible. Why? Because they've learned to follow their spiritual compass!

David defeated Goliath because he was the only man who had the faith to do it. He knew this was a life-changing moment. If he missed it, he'd go back to tending sheep! When your moment comes, rise up and say, 'This giant is mine,' no matter how many others are running away from it. God has given you a spiritual compass; learn to use it!

DAY 5 Power to perform

'He persevered because he saw Him who is invisible'
Hebrews 11:27 NIV

START USING THE spiritual compass God has placed within you. Yes, it's risky but it will open doors that nothing else will. Do you remember the widow in 1 Kings 17, of whom the prophet Elijah requested her last meal? When fear whispered, 'You only have enough for yourself,' her spiritual compass said, 'Give what you've got and God will give you back what you need!' She did and she outlived her famine!

When Saul saw Goliath, he told David, 'You can't go and fight this Philistine' (1 Samuel 17:33 TM). When David saw Goliath, his spiritual compass immediately pointed toward God and he announced, 'God... will deliver me!' (1 Samuel

17:37 TM). Look at Noah; building a floating zoo in the desert because he heard a voice that nobody else did! As a result, his family was saved, his children became leaders in the new-world and his name was immortalised. History is full of them; people like Benjamin Franklin who dared to fly his kite in a thunder storm and discover electricity; or Annie Sullivan who saw in Helen Keller greatness that would inspire the world for years to come. No, they weren't gods and they weren't perfect, they were just 'compass carriers' who saw what others didn't and had the faith to act on it! What has God shown you that others don't see? Whatever it is, that's what He'll give you power to perform!

Prayer Point

Let me engage with Your power today, Lord; to be a channel from Heaven to those around me. Whatever the situation or circumstance, let Heaven's power overflow from me today. Let me be a mirror of Your grace and a vessel of Your glory. Guide me through today, Lord, moment by moment, to see Your glory released, in Jesus' name.

DAY 6 How long should I stay?

'They sought God eagerly, and He was found by them'
2 Chronicles 15:15 NIV

YOU'LL ONLY KEEP returning to a place of pleasure; so stay in God's presence until you create memories strong enough to keep bringing you back. If you don't, you'll be lured away by lesser things. 'How long should I stay in His presence?' you ask:

1) Until you've truly repented. Listen: 'Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret' (2 Corinthians 7:10 NIV).

2) Until your mistakes have been dealt with. Listen: 'Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy' (Proverbs 28:13 NIV).

3) Until your anger subsides. Listen: 'My peace I give you... Do not let your hearts be troubled...' (John 14:27 NIV).

4) Until your fear leaves. Listen, 'Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you,' (Isaiah 41:10 NIV).

5) Until your pain is healed. Listen: 'I will restore you to health and heal your wounds, declares the Lord' (Jeremiah 30:17 NIV).

6) Until your strength is renewed. Listen: 'Those that hope in the Lord will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint' (Isaiah 40:31 NIV). All these things can be found in God's presence. So stay there, until you receive from Him what you need!

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DAY 7 On your marks... 'You will fill me with joy in Your presence' Psalm 16:11 NIV

MEMORIES OF the good times he had spent with his father were what eventually brought the Prodigal Son back home (Luke 15:17). The right memories will draw you back into God's presence, time and time again. 'How long should I stay?' you ask:

- 1) Until change begins. Listen: 'But we all... beholding... the Lord, are changed... from glory to glory... by the Spirit of the Lord' (2 Corinthians 3:18 NKJ).
- 2) Until you understand His plan for your life. Listen, 'For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future' (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV).
- 3) Until you recapture your motivation. Listen: 'I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the

Lord in the land of the living... be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord' (Psalm 27:13-14 NIV).

4) Until you receive His wisdom. Listen: 'I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you' (Psalm 32:8 NIV).

5) Until new ideas are born. Listen: 'See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you' (Isaiah 42:9 NIV).

6) Until Christ becomes the centre of your life. Listen: 'Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart' (Psalm 37:4 NIV). Have you been spending enough time in God's presence lately?

Prayer Point

Father, it's wonderful to know each day with You is new. Each day is an opportunity to break free from the past and discover something new in You. Help me shape my availability for You, Lord. Help me recognise the design of what You want to build through my life; give me a glimpse of what You are calling me to, in Jesus' name.

DAY 8 The Divine Architect 'Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain' Psalm 127:1

IF GOD HAS already built the house, why would anybody else labour to build it? Because God's the architect; we're the carpenters! We simply manifest in time what He's already designed in eternity.

It works like this: the architect first 'sees' his plan, and then he gives it to the builders to begin work. But all the plans are in place before the first spade of soil is moved. Think: God's plan for you was in place before you were even born. His blueprint for you included every detail necessary, from start to finish.

Listen: 'Like an open book... all the stages of my life were spread out before You' (Psalm 139:16 TM). That means, when you try to design a plan

that's different from His, you 'labour in vain.' But when you yield to His plan and allow Him to work through you, you begin to enjoy 'the blessed life.' Today, your only obligation is to choose what God has already chosen for you; to say 'yes' to what He's designed for you.

Paul says, 'Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed' (2 Timothy 2:15 NIV). You're to be a workman who's developed all his capacities, talents, and spiritual assets; then, when the time comes to employ them for God's purposes, you can perform with excellence. What a way to live!

DAY 9 When Jesus is in the house

'It was heard that he was in the house'
Mark 2:1 NKJ

IF YOU'RE LOOKING for a nice quiet God who won't disrupt your life, forget about Jesus! When He comes, He'll stir up your business, your marriage and your finances because He's a functioning, moving, teaching, touching, powerful God, who won't sit in the corner like an ornament!

In Scripture, people opened their homes for Jesus to come and preach. Maybe they thought, 'We'll put out a few extra chairs,' 'It'll be nice to hear a good sermon,' or 'We could use some prayer.' Are you kidding? When word got out the people came from everywhere! Talk about the power of advertising! He filled the house without a TV ministry, a tape, a brochure or a partner list!

It got so crazy that four men carrying a sick friend on a stretcher couldn't get in, so they broke open

Prayer Point

Lord, let the Holy Spirit do His work in and through me. Let the clutter of my life be removed to focus on things eternal and not momentary. When I face the battles to become what You desire, help me to be strong and stand firmly on Your Word, in Jesus' name.

DAY 10 Take your stand

'Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand' Ephesians 6:11

BEFORE YOU CAN really appreciate a new outfit, you've got to go into the changing room and take off everything that doesn't go with it. Paul says, 'cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light' (Romans 13:12). That means take off lies and put on truth; take off strife and put on peace; take off doubt and put on faith; take off sin and put on righteousness; take off ignorance and put on knowledge. Are you getting the idea? Your old armour can't stay, because not one piece is suitable for the fight ahead; it'll only weigh you down and cause you to stumble in the heat of battle.

In Ephesians 5, Paul speaks about our intimacy with Christ. In Chapter 6, we're suddenly moved

the roof and lowered him down to Jesus. That's what we need in the church today: people who know how to 'raise the roof' with their prayers, their praises and their preaching and bring down the power of God.

Get ready: when you let Jesus into any area of your life, He'll ask you to give what you can't give, do what you can't do and be what you can't be. He'll rearrange everything. That's because you've been in the same place, the same rut and giving the same testimony for too long! Today, God wants to take you out of your comfort zone. He wants to stretch you by calling you to do more than you've ever done before. Are you ready to say 'Yes'?

to the battlefield of the soul. That's the way it is; one minute you're worshipping God in ecstasy, the next you're in the fight of your life. (And it's all God!) You can't win spiritual battles without first being intimate with Him. Notice the words, '...so that you can take your stand' (Ephesians 6:11 NIV).

The armour is God's; the stand is yours! You don't need armour if you're running away. It's strictly for those who are willing to stand for what's truly important: like the salvation of your family, the survival of your marriage, the restoration of your health, your ministry, or anything else God's promised you. So today, suit up, stand up and hold your ground!

DAY 11 Need guidance? God's got it!

'His sheep follow Him because they know His voice'
John 10:4 NIV

E. STANLEY JONES tells of a missionary who got lost in the jungle. Looking around, he saw nothing but bush. Finally, he came across a village and asked one of the natives if he could lead him back to the mission station. The man agreed. 'Thank you,' said the missionary, 'Which way do I go?' The native replied, 'Just walk.' And so they did, hacking their way through the jungle for the next several hours.

Stopping to rest, the missionary looked around again and had that same overwhelming sense of being lost. 'Are you sure this is the way?' he asked his native guide, 'I don't see a path.' The guide replied, 'In this jungle there is no path. I am the path!'

Feeling lost today? Pray this prayer: 'Lord, You said, "I am the way," so I'm turning to You for guidance. I'm afraid to trust my own instincts, for too often they've got me into trouble. You said Your sheep follow You because they know Your voice. Teach me to recognise it now. Keep me from making a wrong move, for I seek only to do Your will. You promised, 'along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth' (Isaiah 42:16 NIV). Turn on the light. Smooth out the rough spots. Point me in the right direction. I submit my way to You, trusting You to direct my steps. In Christ's name, Amen.'

Prayer Point

Help me to know Your voice, Lord, and to move away from the influences and voice of the evil one. Let the depth of our relationship bring me to a place where I know when You are speaking to me. Shape my life, Lord, so that all the distractions fall away and I can focus on spending more quality time in prayer with You. Amen.

DAY 12 Hearing God

'Speak, for Your servant hears'
1 Samuel 3:10 NKJ

ONE DAY, a Native American who was visiting New York City turned to his friend in Times Square, tilted his head and said; 'I hear a cricket.' 'You're crazy!' replied his friend. 'No, I hear it,' the Cherokee answered. His friend replied, 'It's rush hour. The city's full of noise, and you think you can hear a cricket? No way!' 'Yes,' said the visitor, then he walked over to a big cement planter outside a building, dug into the leaves underneath it and pulled out a cricket.

Turning to his friend he said, 'It all depends on what your ears are tuned to hear. Let me show you.' Reaching down into his pocket he pulled out a handful of change, dropped it on the pavement

and immediately every head within half a block turned. 'See what I mean?' he said. 'It all depends on what you're listening for.'

The first three times that God spoke to Samuel, he thought it was Eli, the high priest, calling to him. But the fourth time he said, 'Speak, for Your servant hears,' and his life was changed forever. If you're serious about hearing God, get rid of the distractions and set aside time to be alone with Him. Learn to be more sensitive. God will speak to you through a) your Bible b) your thoughts c) your desires d) your circumstances e) those He sends into your life. But it begins only when you pray, 'Speak, for Your servant hears.'

DAY 13 Hovering

'And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters'
Genesis 1:2 NIV

BEFORE GOD COMPLETED His creation, He 'hovered' over it until it became something beautiful. And you've got to learn to hover too; to watch, to protect and to nourish while you wait for good things to happen. Your marriage needs hovering over. Even if you both started with baggage too heavy to carry and too painful to share, with God's help it can still hatch into a great relationship.

Your children need hovering over too. So does your business and anything else worth living for. If greatness is going to be born, expect it to take time! Don't just try to make things happen; have faith and hover! Your situation may look chaotic today but with God, chaos is curable.

Look what He did at creation! Not all eggs hatch at the same time. Not all marriages mature at the same speed. Not all children develop at the same pace. Maybe you're anxious to see things happen in your life as quickly as they did in somebody else's.

Rest assured, if you apply God's principles and keep hovering, it'll happen in God's time! It may not happen the way it did for the Smith family down the street, but it'll be 'just right' for you. Instead of saying, 'If things don't improve, I'm leaving,' pray, 'Lord, I'm in this for the long haul. I've invested too much. I'm going to sit on these eggs until You make them hatch.' When hatching time comes, you'll be glad you did!

Prayer Point

Lord, I pray that You make me determined to chase after You. I have so often tried and failed to overcome the things in life that stand between growing in my faith. Help me, Lord, to just come as I am before You and focus in on worship, prayer, Your Word and Your presence. Help me to know You are, after all, only a prayer away. Amen.

DAY 14 In the presence of the Lord

'In the shelter of Your presence You hide them'
Psalm 31:20 NIV

HERE ARE SIX THINGS you'll find in God's presence which you won't find anywhere else:

1) Hope. 'I was right on the cliff-edge, ready to fall, when God grabbed and held me... Thank You for responding to me; You've truly become my salvation!' (Psalm 118:13 & 21 TM).

2) Love. 'God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, Who has been given to us (Romans 5:5 NIV).

3) Protection. 'In the shelter of Your presence You hide them from the intrigues of men... You keep them safe... from the accusing tongues. Praise be to the Lord, for He showed me the wonders of His Love' (Psalm 31:20-21 NIV).

4) Forgiveness. 'Come now, let us settle the matter,' says the Lord. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool' (Isaiah 1:18 NIV).

5) Direction. '[And] whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it"' (Isaiah 30:21 NIV).

6) Joy. 'In Your presence is fullness of joy, at Your right hand there are pleasures forever.' 'Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete' (Psalm 16:11 AV & John 16:24 NIV). All these things are waiting for you today; in the presence of the Lord!

DAY 15 Developing a strong spirit

'The strong spirit of a man sustains him in bodily pain or trouble' Proverbs 18:14 AMP

WE'RE EACH MADE up of body, soul and spirit. Our spirit (inner man) is where God comes to dwell. But that doesn't mean we'll automatically have a 'strong spirit'. No, your spirit is like your body; it must be nourished. Do you want to develop a strong spirit?

First: spend time in God's Word. Why? Because it renews your mind and produces Christ-like qualities in you. Jesus knew the power of Scripture first-hand. He studied it as a boy, hid it in His heart and through it was able to overcome satan in the wilderness. Your Bible will: a) feed your soul. 'When Your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight' (Jeremiah 15:16 NIV) b) keep you strong in temptation: 'How can a

young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to Your Word.' (Psalm 119:9 NIV) c) make you sharp: 'The unfolding of your words gives... understanding' (Psalm 119:130 NIV).

Second: recognise the power of prayer. Listen: 'He went up on a mountainside by Himself to pray' (Matthew 14:23 NIV). If Jesus needed to spend time in prayer, so do you. John Bunyan said, 'You can do more than pray after you've prayed; but you can't do more than pray until you've prayed.' Think about that. In prayer, you commit it all to God, otherwise who's running things? Just that thought should bring us to our knees. Want to develop a strong spirit? One that will sustain you in bodily pain or trouble? Do these two things!

Prayer Point

Lord, help me to realise the importance of prayer, the need to spend more time in Your presence and the desire in my heart to build a deeper relationship with You. You know every hair on my head, Lord, and no thought of mine is a secret to You. Father, let me be a light; a symbol of hope for your Kingdom, in my family, my workplace, my community and my nation, in Jesus' name.

DAY 16 One size fits all!

'My yoke is easy and My burden is light'
Matthew 11:30 NIV

BEWARE OF THE 'one size fits all' mentality. We may all be saved by grace but we each have a different journey: a personal one pre-planned by God. You'll have grace only for the assignment God's given you; outside that, you're running under your own steam. When Jesus said, 'My yoke is easy and My burden is light' (Matthew 11:30), His listeners understood Him clearly. You see, they lived off the land and they knew that nothing was worse than an ill-fitting yoke that constantly irritated the ox and made the plough twice as hard to pull.

The plan of God for you will be a comfortable fit. You won't chafe under it and you won't burn out. If you do, it's a good indication that you're

labouring under the weight of somebody else's expectations and not God's! Where God guides, He provides. With His instructions come His wisdom and His strength.

Paul writes, 'it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil His good purpose' (Philippians 2:13 NIV). He'll give you: a) the desire b) the ability c) the right conditions d) the right connections. Need a little more assurance? 'I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.' (Psalm 32:8 NIV). 'Your ears will hear a word behind you, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right or to the left.' (Isaiah 30:21 NAS). What more do you need?

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DAY 17 How's your response time?

'The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, 'Ananias!' 'Yes, Lord!' he replied' **Acts 9:10 NLT**

HOW OFTEN DOES GOD have to speak to you before you respond? David said, 'It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees' (Psalm 119:71 NIV). Does that mean God wasn't speaking to David before he got into trouble? No, it just means that: a) David wasn't listening, or b) He didn't like what he was hearing. Either way, he'd have been better off if he'd listened and obeyed. The question isn't, 'Is God speaking?' The question is, 'Are you listening?'

Jonah didn't like what God told him, so he ran away, and look where it got him. Are you doing that? When God told Moses to go to Pharaoh, Moses told God to find somebody else for the job.

(Exodus 3:11). Ever do that? Ever say to God, 'What about my past failures? Or my inexperience? Or my lack of finances? Or my lack of education?' If you try to figure everything out first, or wait until you have all the answers before you begin, you'll never start! It's in the doing that you experience the knowing!

Jesus said, 'The words I have spoken to you – they are spirit and life' (John 6:63 NIV). It's what God says to you personally that becomes direction, power and the ability to do the job. When God called to Ananias, he immediately replied, 'Here I am, Lord!' (Acts 9:10 NAS). That's it: just get up and go! That's what God wants from you today: a rapid response!

Prayer Point

Father, help me to respond to You in the right time. Help me to focus on Your voice, to the place where I can say 'Yes' to You the moment You speak. I come to You in surrender Lord; help me not to promote myself, help me promote You. Push me, Lord, to open up my life to You completely that You might be the Champion of me for the good of others, in Jesus' name.

DAY 18 Total surrender

'You're not in the driver's seat; I am' **Matthew 16:24 TM**

TOTAL SURRENDER COMES at a price most of us don't want to pay, for it means a) forsaking our own agenda b) relinquishing our desire to control either the method or the outcome c) giving up our need for approval.

Jesus said, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me' (Matthew 16:24 NIV). Crosses were made to die on and the thing we must crucify daily is our ego. E-G-O is Edging God Out! A great preacher once had a conversation with God that went like this: God said, 'I've seen your ministry; how would you like to see mine?' 'What do I have to do?' said the preacher. 'Give me back My church,' said God.

'But Lord, it is Your church,' he said. 'No,' replied God, 'You decide when the service starts and when it ends. Worst of all, you control everything in between. You even call it "my church."'

Immediately the preacher fell to his knees and prayed, 'Lord, from this day on, it's not my church, but Yours. Not my ministry, but Yours. Show me what You can do because my best falls miserably short of the mark.' The stupidity of independence is as old as Adam; the desire to be significant on our own terms. We must all come to the place where we realise that we can't take one breath, think one thought or accomplish one thing worth doing without God!

DO YOU NEED PRAYER?

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DAY 19 Your hand is God's hand

'Never walk away from someone who deserves help; your hand is God's hand for that person' **Proverbs 3:27 TM**

LISTEN TO THESE WORDS: 'I'm the little boy who gives up his favourite teddy bear that a stranger may be comforted, the mother holding her child and thanking God it wasn't him who died, the teenage girl cutting ribbons for symbols of remembrance, the fire-fighter who called in sick that day only to discover that somebody else died in my place, the volunteer searching the remains of a building in hopes of finding someone still alive, the dog-handler searching for bodies, who has to comfort my animal when only the scent of death remains. I'm the woman who gets up and goes to work every day in spite of tragedy because I have a family to feed. I'm the first passenger back on a plane, even though I'm terrified, because

somebody has to be first. Who am I? I'm nobody special. I'm just doing what I can.'

One day Matthew Barnett, director of The Dream Centre in Los Angeles, found a little boy eating out of a rubbish bin. After taking him back to the centre, feeding and clothing him, the little guy looked up into Matt's eyes and asked, 'Hey, Mister, are you Jesus?' The Bible answers that question in these words, 'Never walk away from someone who deserves help; your hand is God's hand for that person' (Proverbs 3:27 TM). You may think you're 'nobody special', but you are. Each time you reach out in love, 'your hand is God's hand!'

Prayer Point

Lord, help me to love at Your intended level. Let me look for the good in people and believe for the best in them. When I come across situations that cause me grief and pain, I pray that You would help me have a positive attitude and not declare defeat at the first instance. Thank You God for the wonderful opportunity I have to share my faith with others. Amen.

DAY 20 Start consulting

'God did this so that they would seek Him' **Acts 17:27 NIV**

PHONES, DIARIES AND electronic organisers have become our slave drivers. Ask yourself, 'Can God interrupt me? Can He get my attention, short of a catastrophe?' Some of your greatest God experiences will happen when you've something else planned. Pray that you'll be sensitive enough to realise it's God and obey Him rather than your appointment book.

If you decide to pursue your agenda instead of His, don't be surprised when you run into a brick wall and end up asking, 'What went wrong?' The answer is, 'You didn't consult God!' Look at Mary and Martha when Jesus visited their home in Bethany. Martha's focus was on cooking dinner for Him; Mary's was on soaking up every word. Both are necessary, but

when forced to choose between the two, the Lord will always choose the one who sits at His feet in adoration and learns from Him.

Listen to the men who'd just encountered Christ on the Emmaus Road, following His resurrection: 'Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road?' (Luke 24:32 NIV). God can give you a solution 'on the road' that will solve a problem waiting for you at work. He can de-stress you so that you sail confidently through a test in school. He can even give you direction for your future while you're doing mundane things around the house. All He requires is that you a) be sensitive to Him b) be available to Him c) be responsive to Him.

DAY 21 Walking sticks!

'Trust in the Lord... lean not on your own understanding' **Proverbs 3:5 NIV**

ABBOTT VAUGHN WRITES: 'At my father's house, we had a little cupboard where he kept walking sticks from several generations. When we went out for a walk, he'd pick one to suit the occasion. David said, 'Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me' (Psalm 23:4 NIV) and I've often been reminded that God's Word is a staff we can lean on.

'During the war when we were in such danger, the verse "They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord" (Psalm 112:7 NIV) was our staff on many a dark day. When our child died and we were broken-hearted, I found a staff in the promise: "Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning" (Psalm 30:5 NLT). When I was away from

home for a year due to poor health, not knowing if I'd ever return, this staff never failed: 'For I know the plans I have for you... plans to prosper you... plans to give you hope and a future' (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV). In times of doubt when I didn't know which way to go, I went forward leaning on this staff: 'In quietness and trust is your strength' (Isaiah 30:15 NIV). And in emergencies, when there was no time to figure anything out, this staff never failed me: 'He that believeth [trusts in God] shall not make haste' (Isaiah 28:16 KJV).'

Solomon says, 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding' (Proverbs 3:5 NIV). What are you leaning on today?

Prayer Point

When I think of all the times You have been there for me, Lord, my heart fills up with joy. Thank You for being my provider, my shelter, my counsellor, my healer and my friend. I pray that You would surround me with people who will be a reflection of Your grace. In difficult circumstances be my deliverer, Lord, and more than anything, Jesus, show me Your glory!

DAY 22 Who's covering your back?

'Point your spear towards Ai, for I will give you the city' **Joshua 8:18 TLB**

GOD SAID TO JOSHUA, 'Point your spear towards Ai, for I will give you the city' (Joshua 8:18 TLB). It's amazing how bold you become when you know your back's covered! When God's behind you, 'no weapon forged against you will prevail' (Isaiah 54:17 NIV).

Remember as a child how secure you felt in a fight, knowing your big brother or sister was behind you? The problem is that we say all sorts of things without first checking to find out if God's behind us. When satan says, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?' (Acts 19:15 NIV), you'd better be sure of two things: a) that you're in right standing with God b) that it's His fight as well as yours! Jesus said, 'Whatever you bind on

earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven' (Matthew 18:18 NIV). There must be agreement between both realms.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray, 'Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' (Matthew 6:10 NIV), because if it's not happening where He is, it won't be happening where you are either! As 'labourers together with God', we need to fight only what He fights. You don't want to move anything He doesn't want moved or raise anybody from the dead except the Lazarus He calls forth. You want to do on earth only what He's already declared to be His will in heaven. That way you know your back's covered!

'YOU ARE NOT ALONE' - GOD

DAY 23 Find a prayer partner 'Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying' Acts 12:5 NIV

SOMETIMES IT'S HARD to pray for yourself. That's when you need somebody else to agree with you in prayer. Not somebody who'll judge your situation or pray for the world at large, but somebody who knows how to intercede with God for your finances, your children and your marriage.

James had just been executed and Herod was planning to kill Peter the next morning. You'd think he'd have been up all night praying like crazy, but he wasn't. 'Peter was sleeping' (v6). Wow! Where do you get that kind of faith? Listen: 'The church was earnestly praying to God for him' (Acts 12:5 NIV).

Any time you can sleep in the face of death or experience unnatural grace in the midst of chaos,

it's usually because of two things: a) you've learned how to hand the situation over to God b) somebody is praying for you. The church didn't pray, 'Lord, if Peter was really a man of God he wouldn't be in this mess,' or 'Now that he's in jail, who's going to preach for us next Sunday?' No, while they prayed for a breakthrough, God was at work on the other side of the city dispatching an angel to set Peter free. That's how it works!

Feel as if your prayers aren't getting the job done? Find somebody who'll agree with you in prayer, for Jesus said, 'If two of you... agree about anything... it will be done for you by My Father in Heaven' (Matthew 18:19 NIV).

Prayer Point

Father, help me to find someone who will stand with me in prayer, someone who shares the same desire as I do, someone who will sharpen my spiritual life and provoke me to a deeper relationship with You. Lord, help me believe today that this prayer and the other prayers I pray will be answered if they are in line with Your will. I declare Your authority in prayer today.

DAY 24 Praying but not expecting! 'Because of her gladness she did not open the [door]' Acts 12:14 NKJ

AFTER THE CHURCH prayed all night for Peter's release from prison, he suddenly shows up at their door. When Rhoda tells them, 'It's Peter,' they reply, 'You're out of your mind.'

Listen: 'Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door... they were astonished' (Acts 12:16 NIV). There are three important lessons here for you:

1) Don't just ask; expect! God will astonish you by: a) His timing: 'Before they call, I will answer' (Isaiah 65:24 NIV) b) His methods: 'The Lord sent His angel and rescued me' (Acts 12:11 NIV). Stop limiting God!

2) Be alert; you might miss it. They were all praying but only Rhoda responded to Peter's

knocking at the door. And when you've got her spirit, you'll respond too; a) you'll get a divine 'intuition' that something's about to happen b) you'll begin looking for the answers while others are locked into a posture of praying but not really expecting anything c) you'll recognise the answer when others don't d) you'll be willing to leave the crowd in order to respond to God.

3) Open the door. Listen: 'Because of her gladness, she did not open the [door]' (Acts 12:14 NKJ). How often have you come home from church moved but not changed? You can grow old in a pew, believing but not experiencing; rejoicing, yet never receiving what God's got for you. The word for you today is a) don't just ask, expect b) be spiritually alert c) open the door!

DAY 25 Get moving!

'I have begun... Now [you] begin'
Deuteronomy 2:31 NIV

BECAUSE SO MANY TROUBLES result from reckless haste, the Bible talks a lot about waiting on God. And that's a good thing. But look out; you can 'blow it' by over-waiting. God said, 'I have begun... Now [you] begin to conquer and possess' (Deuteronomy 2:31 NIV).

You say, 'But I'm waiting for God to move.' Maybe He's waiting for you to move! God promised Abraham a great future, but it didn't happen until he left his comfort zone and 'went, even though he did not know where he was going' (Hebrews 11:8 NAS). Scary stuff! When Pharaoh's army trapped Israel at the Red Sea, God commanded His people to 'go forward' (Exodus 14:15 NKJ). The time for waiting and praying was over; they had to move in faith.

Prayer Point

Lord, help me to get beyond the apathy in my life. Help me to motivate myself and realise that I have a wonderful opportunity to become all that You have desired for me. Lord, I'm grateful today that my faith exists to prove I'm part of a global family of believers, who are all praying for Your Kingdom to come and Your will to be done on Earth as it is in Heaven, today. Amen.

DAY 26 What it means to be a 'member'!

'You are... members'
Ephesians 2:19 NIV

ROBERT FROST WROTE: 'Home's the place where, when you go, they have to take you in'. If your children stood outside your house pleading to get in, wouldn't you say, 'Come in, you don't need to beg; you're my flesh and blood'? Well, when Jesus died He left us the keys to God's house. You can come in any time you want. Paul says, we're 'no longer strangers... but fellow citizens... of His household... a holy temple' (Ephesians 2:19, 21). Here's what that means:

1) As 'fellow citizens' we're ambassadors of another kingdom. 'What does an ambassador do?' you ask. He a) knows the mind of his king b) stays in constant communication c) keeps his heart set on his king's interests alone d) represents him well e) is ready for recall at a moment's notice. So what kind of ambassador are you?

Later, they were told to demonstrate their faith again by marching across the Jordan when it was at flood stage. Why? Because the only way into your next blessing is through your immediate fear!

The ten lepers Jesus healed were told to go and show themselves to the priest. Luke records, 'As they went, they were cleansed' (Luke 17:14 NIV). If they'd waited to see results first, they'd never have been healed. It happened only when they started moving. What has God told you to do? Get moving! It's only when you begin to fight that God joins you and makes you more than a conqueror (Romans 8:37). If you wait for Him to show up before you enter the battle, you'll wait in vain. Move out in boldness today and see what happens!

2) Because we belong to 'the household of God', we can come into His presence any time, with any need and know we'll be received with love. God is the Father you always hoped for and you're the child He always wanted. If you've any doubts look at the cross; that's how much He wanted you! But remember, every family member needs to a) contribute b) be loyal c) protect the family's good name.

3) We're 'a holy temple'. Once God had a temple for His people; now He has a people for His temple. Christ lives in you; thinks and carries out His will through you. That means you're accepted... empowered... and more than equal to any situation.

DAY 27 Do you need strength?

'Those who wait upon God will get fresh strength'
Isaiah 40:31 TM

GOD DOESN'T tell us how He'll answer our prayers or even when, but He does promise those who wait on Him one thing: strength. Tony Evans points out that the Hebrew word used for 'wait' comes from a word also used in the making of rope. Every rope starts as a thread and every thread added just increases its strength.

Getting the idea? Every time you wait on the Lord you add another thread to the rope; you get a little stronger and a little more able to cope. Feel as if you're just hanging on by a thread? Wait in God's presence and let Him turn it into a rope. But waiting is not always passive: sometimes it's active, like waiting on a customer, seeing that his or her needs are met. Waiting is not so much a

position, rather a focus. Isaiah says, 'You will keep in perfect peace... all whose thoughts are fixed on you' (Isaiah 26:3 NLT).

Whether it's sitting prayerfully in God's presence, or actively carrying out His will, you've got His assurance that your strength will be renewed. Listen to these promises: 1) 'Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.' (Psalm 27:14 NIV). 2) 'Wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him' (Psalm 62:5 NKJ). 3) 'As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master... so our eyes look to the Lord our God' (Psalm 123:2 NIV). Need more strength? Wait on God more!

Prayer Point

Help me be patient, Lord, and not run ahead of You. Father, show me the rhythm of Your Holy Spirit, so I may do things in Your perfect timing. Let me know the seasons of Your Kingdom and don't let me be distracted by the circumstances I find myself in. I pray, Lord, that my life would be an instrument in Your hands, in Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 28 Learning from Elijah

'Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly'
James 5:17 NIV

ELIJAH DID SOMETHING we keep forgetting to do. When things got tough, he recalled what God had assigned him to do: announce the end of a drought and the beginning of rain. What has God called you to do? Pull it up on your screen and start doing it. What has He promised you? Begin speaking it over your life.

Learn from Elijah: First, '[He] bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees' (1 Kings 18:42 NIV). He deliberately positioned himself not to see his surroundings. Smart move! Hang up the phone. Turn off the TV. Lock the door. Get alone with God; He has your answers. Next, he refused to give up. Six times his servant came back to say, 'There's no rain. Not even a cloud.'

But Elijah persisted in prayer and told his servant to go look again. This time he came back to say, 'I see a cloud like a man's hand.' Next we read 'There was a great rain' (1 Kings 18:45 Amplified).

Here are three important things you need to remember today: a) the greatest moments in your life will always come through prayer. God does things through prayer that He'll do no other way b) instead of obsessing over your situation, start 'factoring in' the God who can change it c) if you don't sense the Holy Spirit's power in your life, it may be because you've left the place of prayer too soon. Commit yourself to 'pray without ceasing' and God will come through for you.



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General Enquiries

UCB Operations Centre,

Westport Road,

Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 4JF

t: **0845 60 40 401***

e: ucb@ucb.co.uk

w: ucb.co.uk

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