

Living Life Without Regret

The Journey

Ed Horak

Dedication

*This book is dedicated to the wife of my youth!
Sue, you have faithfully supported me all the way.
The best is yet to come.
Thank you for your enduring faith, hope and loving patience.*

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Living Without Regret: the journey
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Contents

- Chapter 1: Purpose for the Journey** p 4
Why leave anyway?
- Chapter 2: Partners on the Journey** p 10
Who will keep you warm?
- Chapter 3: Provisions for the Journey** p 16
Is there enough to finish?
- Chapter 4: Perspective on the Journey** p 22
Are we there yet?
- Chapter 5: Power for the Journey** p 30
Do you have what it takes?
- Chapter 6: Protection on the Journey** p 35
Is your back covered?
- Chapter 7: Practical Steps** p 42
Are you positioned for the future?

Chapter 1

Purpose for the Journey

Why leave anyway?

*Blessed is the man whose strength is in You,
Whose heart is set on pilgrimage.*

Psalm 84:5

Our family set out on a journey across the planet about as far you can get from where we started. We left Johannesburg, South Africa and traveled to Washington State, USA. This journey took about thirty-six hours by plane with stopovers, a lot less than some of the journeys that others have taken in technological bygone times. It didn't exactly look like a pilgrimage but after a while we realized we had made a journey into another world. The food was different, the weather was very different, and the cars were bigger, so were the roads, even the telephone book was difficult to navigate. It still is! All this added up to 'culture shock', so bad that some members of the family would not answer the telephone at first, knowing that it was definitely was not for them. All that has changed now, what with cell

phones and a new confidence. Yes, we spoke English, and so did the natives. Everyone said we had an accent. Curious though, we could not tell. It seemed to us that everyone else had an accent! On one occasion I was asked if South Africa was near Mexico! My reply was, “Yes, you go past Mexico by about 5 000 miles, hang a left, go across the Atlantic Ocean for another 10 000 miles and you’ll hit South Africa!”

We felt we had a purpose in leaving on our pilgrimage. Time has tested that conviction many times, but still we left having chewed over the matter for at least a solid intensive year of prayer and internal searching. So to the stories of many before us who have made journeys to far off places? The Bible speaks of Abraham, Moses and the Israelites, many others who start, move and land up not only in another geographical location but a spiritual one too. Their journeys were always challenging to these pioneers of new territory, and involved risk, danger, opportunity, but never dullness. Change is never dull.

It is my goal to explore some elements of the spiritual journey that we are all called to take: out of the negative world of sin’s stagnation into the plus of the Christ life. We are all called to be like Christ. When our hearts are set on this pilgrimage, we are blessed. My prayer is that you enjoy reading on and positioning yourself in your own unique journey.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son,

Romans 8:28-29a

Think of it, why would God go to the lengths of outlining the personal journeys of men and woman who lived so long ago. It must be for us to derive profit from their failures and successes. They had literal and figurative

mountains to climb and rivers to cross. They experienced discouraging setbacks and broke through to inspiring victories. Their stories tell of treachery and intrigue, for the Bible tells it like it is, and not in terms some unreal fantasy. Abraham lied, Moses murdered, and the Israelites grumbled. Yet in all this, God's purposes were worked out in the midst of their imperfections and frailty.

Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come.

1 Corinthians 10:11-12

Our generation needs to be admonished. The end of the ages has come, and God has to get our attention. He has always been and always will be the God of purpose. We serve God in this generation according to His purposes. Of course if we don't discover these purposes for our lives, we simply take a walk into nowhere land thinking that the steps themselves are the fulfillment. No, life has a destination, a purpose and if our hearts are to be set of the journey we must have a vision to keep us on track. That vision has to be rooted in heaven, not earth and its advantages. Sure there are things to be done on earth as it is in heaven, but you have to have heaven in sight to be any earthly good.

Even Abraham had his sights set on a city whose builder and maker was God. He didn't even know up front where his earthly journey was leading. He had to walk by faith like anyone else entering into uncharted territory.

Any pilgrimage will involve heart matters. Your heart has to be 'set.' If you are not moved by conviction, convenience will keep you stuck in one place.

Our Testimony

We had reached a point where we felt led to fly the nest of our first church where we had served for 14 years. Things were relatively comfortable, ordered and reasonably predictable. This is not necessarily a bad thing in itself, but when measured in the light of God's calling, it was a recipe for backsliding. All this took place in the midst of revival, a mighty move of God in South Africa during the 80's and early 90's. We were settled. The kids had their educational future pretty mapped out; the house was paid for, two cars and so on. Yet we felt there was more. In God there is always more if you look for it. No limits, only growth. So we set about 'flying the nest.' Actually the church had a prophecy emblazoned on its foundational plaque that spoke of the nest of the divine eagle where eaglets would be sent to all the corners of the globe.

Much prayer went into the decision. That was good but in retrospect not enough. We needed more than zeal, we needed wisdom, but more about that later. We took action and tearfully left the familiarity of family, friends, and financial security. Since then the journey or ride of our lives has been exciting at best, and hair raising at worst. We became pioneers in our own 20th century way and began to sacrifice or 'give up' in order to 'go up'. We gave up the comfort of one level to go up to the challenge of another level of faith. Some thought it was presumption, and maybe to some extent it was. But I like to think of presuming that God is true to his word is a better place than presuming that His will is to stay put. It may be the will of God for one to stay put in a place, but not for the next. We felt we had to go forward on our own journey.

We learned to stay focused, develop a robust faith, be decisive and stay determined to push through a lot of opposition. We were so thankful for the launch we had got in

our 14 years of revival experience, but we knew we had to launch out.

Looking back now, the central goal of becoming more like Christ in our daily walk has become clearer. We were taken up a lot with the mechanics of moving: packing, settling business matters, traveling, and setting up house – all the ‘stuff’ of a global repositioning. When the dust settled we now faced the real challenge: an internal repositioning.

I have found that God is committed to change. He loves us too much to leave us the way we are. He seeks to reproduce Himself in us, and recreate us in His own image.

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 3:18

We had to be unveiled from our comfort zone and look into the glory of the Lord and become transformed. We developed a fresh appreciation for the Word we had been so faithfully taught but never fully appreciated till we were on our own. A handshake and a wave goodbye more or less, and you are on your own buddy. There were some tense moments in the emigration process that only the hand of God’s favor got us through. Borders presented new opportunities to release our faith watched over His word to perform it on our behalf. No red carpets on this journey.

God developed in us a deeper dependence solely on Him. We learnt that He is a jealous God in the sense that He would not and will not share us with anyone or anything else. This is not control, but total committed love. If you are going to love God in return for His love, go all the way like He did. Why reserve some insecure place for self, give it all to God. That I have found is an everyday challenge that never seems to end. Just when I begin to think I am doing

well in one area, the Lord opens up another area that needs change.

If God has called us to sow our lives for the benefit of others, we have to know Him first before we can make Him known. This involves a process of growth. We have to grow personally and learn to join together with and flow with others to truly manifest God's love. In short, the process of life in Christ is: know – grow – flow – sow. As we yield to God's Spirit, His character is instilled in us.

We now act and react differently. We think and speak differently. We are motivated by kingdom desires and seek to play our proper part in a bigger venture which is greater and more lasting than our own personal aggrandizement. We stand alongside our brothers and sisters with the purpose of going further together than singly on our own.

Chapter 2

Partners on the Journey

Who will keep you warm?

If life is to be lived without regret, it has to be lived now. You cannot put off till tomorrow what you have to do today. Life is too short for that. You have to make some moves towards the future and pioneer your way into the future. But one secret of success is to be sure to join with others on the journey. You cannot go as far as you can without joining together with like-minded pioneers. Two are always better than one.

*Two are better than one,
Because they have a good reward for their labor.
For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.
But woe to him who is alone when he falls,
For he has no one to help him up.*

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

God has called us into a community of faith, a family of believers joined and knit together into a unit that will serve His purposes in witnessing to His greatness, love and forgiveness. Jesus taught His disciples to pray: “Our Father,”

not “My Father.” Today’s 21st century rampant spirit of self centered individualism runs counter to God’s timeless plan of community. It is high calling to lay down one’s life for others, but it is nevertheless the qualifying standard for discipleship.

As a family this expectation has tested our resolve on our journey. Sure, we looked forward to a better future for the family, but the challenge remained: are we in this for ourselves or for the Lord’s purposes for His people? Servant hood is not something taught so much in modern thought, but it is the foundation for successful community. We landed up in situations where we had to relearn the lesson that serving is not optional in God’s kingdom. There were some situations as we settled in to a new way of life that we felt like we had not been treated with proper respect. People didn’t know where we had come from, and who we were? And they often didn’t care either. We discovered that we were as good as our last act of service to them! But we were learning.

We rediscovered a fresh reliance on the comfort and identity that the Holy Spirit supplied. We were helped out of situations that we had never dreamed of. He reassured us that we were not alone on the journey. We came to appreciate Jesus’ words regarding the Holy Spirit’s ministry so much more:

"If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever.

John 14:15-17

We had sought His guidance and direction before we left; now we sought His comfort as we struggled with change. Largely He brought to our remembrance what we had heard but needed to experience. The knowledge we had previously gained in our years of early growth was to a great

degree book knowledge gained in a comparatively sheltered environment. We were now on new spiritual territory as we rubbed shoulders with some interesting people. Discernment became a new word for us, for everyone we encountered did not seem to be solely of the Lord's spirit. The Holy Spirit kept pointing us back to the solid word as we learnt confidence in what He was whispering to our hearts. He guided us into the truth in some scary moments.

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth;

John 16:13

At first things are not always obvious. Otherwise why would we need guidance into the truth of any situation? Our naivety turned into sober-mindedness, but only after fighting off quite some cynicism. Change always produces challenge and it often seemed as if we were alone. Only when we reaffirmed the integrity of God's word did we walk in God's promised comfort.

I can remember God using a couple of people who came alongside us to bring us comfort. They had also charted new territory and supplied us with injections of perspective and comfort according to the scripture. There was a low moment where circumstances had not changed for a long time and matters seemed to go from bad to worse. My wife did not feel like rejoicing, yet God in His mercy literally dumped some "joy" on her through the ministry of these dear folk.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

We also took comfort in realizing that others had gone through difficult times before us. After all, the church had been charting new territory for twenty centuries and God had not yet fallen off His throne!

Been there done that! Those that have gone before

The early disciples charted new territory. This was all new for these cloistered Jews. Sure Jesus had enlarged their perspective, but now they were alone, sort of, and had the whole world to reach. The Book of Acts describes that journey and is intended by God to provide us with a blueprint for the church's motive, mission and methods!

The setting

God had called the Israelites to be His chosen vessels to witness to the world and bring forth the Messiah. Over the years they had deviated from the call and Judaism had become entrenched in the social and religious fabric of Jewish society. It had substituted mostly lifeless ritual and legalism for a vital relationship of faith in Jehovah.

Jesus' ministry ran counter to this emptiness and it was no longer business as usual in Israel when Jesus was on the scene. He was radical in His challenge of the religious status quo, both in His message and His methods. The society was all shook up over Jesus' crucifixion and the climactic resurrection that followed three days later. He then ascended forty days later and God's prophesied plan to indwell and empower His church came into being on the Day of Pentecost ten days after that. God was working out His grand plan to restore mankind to wholeness in Christ, bringing Jews and Gentiles together in a glorious reunion.

But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

*'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God,
That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your young men shall see visions,
Your old men shall dream dreams.
And on My menservants and on My maidservants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days;
And they shall prophesy.*

Acts 2:16-18

What the early disciples started out with

They started out with a mandate to reach the world and a boldness to go with the immensity of the task. But they were not alone. God was with them, in them and for them by the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus had promised to give them before He left.

The disciples had responded to the call to follow Jesus and entered into that relationship without really knowing where it was all heading. The Holy Spirit had convinced them of their need. They then walked with Jesus, sat under His teaching day and night and grew in their knowledge of God and His ways through Jesus. They then received a new nature when He breathed on them after He was resurrected. They were now anointed by the Holy Spirit for service after a time of preparation in the upper room and the great outpouring of power recorded in Acts 2:1-8. They stood ready to give out what they had taken in through their close relationship with the Lord.

After the miracle of the lame man at the Gate Beautiful being raised up, the disciples were recognized, not as educated and trained men, but as those that 'had been with Jesus' (Acts 4:13). Their relationship with Jesus was now producing miracles. The Holy Spirit who had come to reveal

Jesus to them was now revealing Jesus to others through them. Their Helper gave them the promised advantage and the stage was set for the spread of the good news across the known world at that time. The river of God's love now flowed out of their hearts and they set out on the journey of their lifetime! The same anointing that helped Jesus destroy the works of the enemy now caused them to fulfill their calling to go in His name and do even greater works. Jesus had begun building His church with those who now partnered with Him through relationship.

Personally, God has brought into our lives new friends, new partners in the journey whose wisdom and experience has proved life saving. There have been times when a phone call here and a conversation there, have steered us away from tricky situations. We have learnt to rely on the prayers and love of brothers and sisters in covenant with us. The Lord has protected and provided for us through those mature enough to want our well-being, no strings attached. So we continue on.

Chapter 3

Provisions for the Journey

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Acts 2:42

Is there enough to finish?

Relationships have to be fed and nourished. The early disciples continued steadfastly on a daily basis, feeding on the Word of God, making sure that their fellowship was soundly based.

We found in times when we could not see too far ahead, that the promises of God's word kept us steady. When you walk by faith you don't have every 'I' dotted and every 'T' crossed. I can remember having no clue whatsoever what was going to happen to the family, except that God had promised to look after us, and guide us if we committed our works to Him. Nobody likes uncertainty, least of all my wife, yet God showed Himself faithful and connected us up with the people and places we needed. There were times when nothing seemed to be happening, and all we played was the waiting game. A lot of prayer went up, so the time was not passive but active in a sense. Now I am not saying that God

precisely determined every step we took on our journey. I believe that when we fell short, His common grace and mercy kicked into gear and we came through on that. Remember God's goodness rains on both the just and unjust.

His Word has integrity. It stands up under pressure, and when we stood on it, it provided a sure platform for the next leg.

His Word faithfully committed to at least thirty-eight authors over a period of eleven centuries, and passed down over another two thousand years, has stood the test of time through generations of skepticism and doubt. The faithful of all ages have seen it confirmed by signs and wonders. Even Jesus based His life and ministry on it, and the early disciples stepped out into the unknown on God's assurances alone.

The bread they carried was wholesome nourishment. It was fresh and alive. Their knowledge was vital and experiential, not mere head knowledge. God now used the written word to continue to reveal the 'Living' Word – Jesus to a group meeting in homes in the shadow of constant threat and danger. They shared their spiritual bread as well as their natural food with the hungry. The word governed their beliefs and behavior, their position and practice. Led by the Holy they "creatively" applied the word to ever changing circumstances. In the same way that the manna from heaven had to be collected each day and not stored, the disciples nourished themselves in the Word on a daily basis.

We come from Africa where the bread was baked and distributed to the outlets daily and stayed fresh usually for only one day. It would go stale and even moldy in a short while, and would have to be eaten or thrown out. When we first journeyed to the States we shopped at the local grocery store up in the Northwest and bought bread. After a day or so, my wife would, out of habit, throw the remaining uneaten portion of a loaf out. One day a friend was at the house, and saw this happen and wondered why we should throw this

‘wonder’ bread out when it could last on the shelf at least a few weeks! Oh the marvels of chemical preservation. Since then, we have still been looking for bread that is alive; it tends to be the tastiest and healthiest too.

God’s word stands forever and never goes off. If the early disciples had need of the word to sustain them daily in their journey, is our need any less? We too need unchanging truth in a changing moral climate.

*Forever, O LORD,
Your word is settled in heaven.*

Psalm 119:89

Let the word that is settled in heaven, become settled on earth in your heart.

The word not only exposes the condition of a man’s heart, but establishes matters of practice and discipline, causes faith to rise, revives the lifeless, ensures that prayer is answered, empowers us to resist the enemy, and equips us for ministering to others in need. There was many a time when we needed all the above and some! We were so thankful that our pastors and instructors back in South Africa had drummed into us the importance of feeding on the Word on a daily basis. In our conversation, we learnt the power of speaking what we expected God to do, and not the problems we faced. You can either say what you have, or have what you say! Rehearsing the problems and challenges of life is what most people do. Those that discover God’s promises and begin to speak them over their future are the blessed ones who are delivered.

For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you

pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

Mark 11:23-24

There were times on the journey where the problems seemed so big, like mountains, but in time as we spoke the solution, they shrunk, God responded and came through for us.

Fellowship or participation in a common cause

No one dared join the disciples in their quest as a casual observer or spectator. You were completely in or not at all. You participated, threw your weight behind the cause. This was no ‘Country Club Christianity’ bent on blessings for just me. There was purpose and a price to pay for fellowship. It was no light matter. In fact for many it became a matter of life and death. Even today, this is still true for millions in the underground church in nations openly and aggressively opposed to the gospel.

And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,

Acts 5:12-14

When God manifests Himself in great power, and the people are in unity, fellowship must be a God thing. Only the Lord can truly add to the church. It is His cause and we walk in the fear of the Lord.

There were some corporate conference type meetings we attended in the 90's where the presence of God was so strong that it seemed that a weight was pressing down on the

congregation during the worship. I remember not wanting to move a finger inappropriately lest I grieved the Holy Spirit and cause Him to lift the glory up off the meeting. There was such an attraction towards God that you simply did not want it to end. These times proved to be times of refreshing that were unique. The corporate setting provided an opportunity for hungry people to participate in what God was doing and saying at the time. It was fresh manna from heaven. His presence was manifest and tangible in that all your senses seemed to be involved. Later, God was to remind me not to forget what my eyes had seen. I would be walking through some dry places and tended to despair a little. Keep fresh what you have experienced in the Lord.

"Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life.

Deuteronomy 4:9

Breaking of Bread or Communion

The disciples led an examined life. They were not prepared to walk at a distance in following Jesus. They wanted to stay close and enjoy the protection and provision of intimacy. So they partook of communion on a regular basis and maintained a pleasing transparency before the Lord. We have a tendency to drift off the mark in time if constant corrections do not take place. A captain of a ship is always making slight adjustments to stay on course as he sails the ocean. We too must not presume that because we started right in something that we will automatically stay on track at all times. All it takes is a little here and a little there, and through time we can stay on course with the Lord. Regular communion provides us with the opportunity to stay in faith and focus.

Prayers

Prayer is not a ritual that impresses God. It is the living, two- way communication process that opens up heaven's provision on earth. Notice that they continued in 'prayers' plural, not just one type of prayer. Not only did they worship God in their prayers, petition Him for strength, boldness and protection, but they released their faith through prayers that sought to extend the kingdom of God further through their lives. Many folk know only to pray for their own needs and focus most of their time in what we might say are self- centered prayer. He loves us and wants to see our needs taken care of, but He also wants us to pray prayers of thanksgiving and adoration that glorify Him, as well as pray in intercession on behalf of the needs of others. Fruitfulness extends out to others. The early disciples on their journey of faith learnt to establish God's will in their lives and ministries through prayer.

Chapter 4

Perspective for the Journey

Are we there yet?

*"Write the vision
And make it plain on tablets,
That he may run who reads it.
For the vision is yet for an appointed time;
But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie.
Though it tarries, wait for it;
Because it will surely come,
It will not tarry.*

Habbakuk 2:2-3

Jesus was propelled by vision, each step calculated to move Him forward towards the goal of His call: to seek and save the lost. The early disciples caught that vision too as they drew near to Him. When He ascended back into heaven they saw Him as the glorious Christ, now they were beginning to get a picture (vision) of the glorious church as God's plan began to unfold on the Day of Pentecost when the church was launched before the world gathered in Jerusalem.

And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. Acts 2:5

God is the master strategist that used the occasion when the disciples poured out of the upper room speaking in tongues to impact the world. The devout Jews had come from all parts of the inhabited world and were in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. The veritable explosion of God's grace took place before their eyes, and they witnessed the formation of a band of committed believers join their resources and participate in a new and living way.

Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Acts 2:41-47

This 'new breed' were propelled on a new path and their hearts became set on a pilgrimage where they were determined not to be settlers, but pioneers called to reach out to the ends of the earth. Sure, they stagnated later on, but when severe persecution hit, the eaglets were forced out of the nest of the relative comfort of familiarity as they tried to stay in Jerusalem. Jesus' followers were considered a Jewish Sect, but 'the way' was soon to be seen as encompassing all peoples, gentiles especially, when the Jewish nation

essentially rejected their own Messiah. God continued to move, and His sheep who heard His voice followed.

The church we came from in South Africa had been prophesied over by a leading evangelist to Africa as a “nest of the divine eagle” where eaglets would be sent to the four corners of the globe. That was back in the mid 80’s. Since that time, ministers have gone out from that church to the four corners of the globe. We landed up literally on the other side of the earth, about as far from our home base as you get.

Why vision is important

Vision moves you. If you can’t see something why would you want to make a move? Jesus was busy ministering and moving ahead on the basis of His calling. He kept meeting the needs of the people who flocked to Him. But there came a time where He “saw the multitudes” in their desperation and it moved Him with compassion. He saw them in such a way that it moved Him. He then called upon His disciples to join Him in prayer for harvest laborers who would help Him in His mission. He made it practical and included them as His co laborers at a new level of involvement. He shared His power with them and sent them out as in service training laborers.

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.

Matthew 9:35-10:1

What He saw caused Him to do something He had not done before. Vision focused His efforts in a new way of delegation. In our case, if we don't 'see' who Jesus really is and what he expects us to do, we will wander through life and expend all our energy in pursuing whatever the world puts in front of us. The world is full of empty pursuits that consume our time, money and energy. Distraction is the name of the game satan plays.

Be sure to consume your life on an everlasting purpose that God gives you. He commands all men everywhere to change their way of thinking and follow Him. He is building His church and when we truly see Him for who He is, we will participate in His mission.

Peter got a revelation from God who Jesus really was and Jesus immediately defined his participation as well as giving him the power to fulfill what he was now called to do.

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Matthew 16:15-20

This is the pattern: God reveals his person, gives us a new identity and purpose, calls us to partner with Him and

and empowers us for service! Revelation demands a response. When you see something in God's word or by His Spirit you have to move along His pathway. This pathway will involve the cross of denial. You will have to give something up that keeps you in the same place. Jesus began to speak to His disciples about the importance the cross would play in His life and theirs. Peter, now puffed up by his new revelation about Jesus identity as the Christ, rebukes Jesus and reaps his won rebuke in return. His misguided zeal had opened the door for satan to fill his mind with immediate contradiction.

From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

Matthew 16:21-24

Perspective is a gift from God. If you don't know where you are and where you should be going in life, activity becomes boring after a while. The treadmill of mere existence is not enough to sustain us. We are called to be fruitful. Activity without productivity is insane.

When I led a number of high school hikers on a mountain climb in the Drakensberg (Dragon Mountains) in South Africa, we often would wonder whether we would ever get to the top of the range. We had started at a bout 4000 feet, hiked to the contour path at 6000 feet, then camped for the night in our little two-man tents. The next

morning we would start on up the slopes with all our gear on our backpacks. Our goal was to reach the top at 10,000 plus feet. As the day passed there were times when we wondered how many more rises we would have to hike. They never seemed to end. Just when we thought we were at the top we would look up gain and see another rise to hike up. But then at last we were at the top and could look back and out over miles and miles of rolling land beneath the craggy pass we had just traversed.

On the way up what had kept us going was a picture from the bottom of what we had seen of the top! We knew it was there and were prepared to slog on up with those 50 pound packs.

Perhaps you feel you are just slogging on in your walk with the Lord. Look up and get perspective of the top. There is a future and a hope in Him and he will reward those who diligently seek Him and endure to the end.

Perspective must be maintained / sustained through time

Realize too that there are seasons in life where if we learn to cooperate with them with will not loose perspective and become discouraged.

*To everything there is a season,
A time for every purpose under heaven:*

Ecclesiastes 3:1

If we look at life through the eyes of a framer we know that all farmers deal with seed, soil and seasons. Their success is not a hit or miss situation. Seasons always come in sequence, and are not all the same length. Certain things have to be done within each season; otherwise you will miss the opportunity. Farmers will prepare the soil, sow the seed in the right season, be patient as the seed is watered, and wait

for the harvest at the appropriate time. There is always a process involved in a successful operation.

Determination and willingness are admirable qualities, but they have to go along with seasons. Learn to align your efforts with time and place. As you master the secret of mastering the seasons.

In our journey there have been seasons where nothing seemed to be happening. It was like winter, cold and dark. Time was spent reflecting on things in the past that had happened. They were not always pleasant. Yet it was not wasted time. What seemed bleak from the past provided a platform for a new beginning for the future. We discussed our hopes, dreamed and set new goals, all the time praying for God to take us on.

Spring is a time of preparation, plowing in prayer, planting seeds of faith and even finances in other people's lives and ministries. Whenever you sow seed do it in faith or with expectancy that it will produce more than you put in. God is the one who increases and multiplies what we do. It is His nature and plan, his MO, the way he does things.

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

1 Corinthians 3:6

Sow towards the future out of conviction that what God has promised he will do. Realize that if you only sow when it is convenient, you will probably find little opportunity. Life is mostly inconvenient. So why not sow out of conviction, not convenience. God's word is not dependant on circumstance.

*He who observes the wind will not sow,
And he who regards the clouds will not reap.*

Ecclesiastes 11:4

The one time, we knew a change was coming, and we sowed financial seed when the finances coming in were not so good. That seed was in the ground and produced a harvest months later that was perfect in its timing. From what I know, if we had not sown in season, we would not have reaped in season. We had no “visible” means of support for four months, with continuing mortgage payments due and bills to pay. Yet God, through a variety of sources, met our needs and took care of our move. Our means of support was invisible, but nevertheless just as real. Praise God.

Summer is a time of growth and cultivation. Weeding, watering and waiting! It takes effort to produce a harvest, endurance and expectancy too. Some people see summer as vacation time, but to the child of God, we still must make the most of our time. We must remain vigilant over the crop, weed around it with our obedience and prayers, so that weeds of doubt or distraction do not choke the fruit of our labor.

Fall is harvest time. We harvest in our spiritual walk in the same way as we water the seed in summer. With our mouths! Continue to speak blessing and increase over your endeavors. Faith always has a voice in line with God’s promises. Only speak what God has promised. When you receive your harvest, share it with others. Obey the command to tithe off the material increase. Take some of the bounty and set it aside for future sowing too. God provides bread to eat and seed to sow!

Remember, the Bible teaches that we reap what we sow, only after we sow, and more than what we sow.

Chapter 5

Power for the Journey

Do you have what it takes?

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony...

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Hebrews 11:1-2, 6

It takes faith to enter new territory in your spiritual journey. Faith in God's ability will see you through to victory in any situation. The early disciples' faith was evidenced as they overcame opposition that arose from religious and secular authorities. As they pioneered the church in a hostile Jerusalem, recovered from the setbacks of Stephen's martyrdom, survived Saul's persecution and the murder of James they still were able to advance the cause because of their faith. They knew they were in a fight and had to guard the spirit or core of their faith. They had to protect what they believed and continue to speak it boldly so that the fruit of their lips would continue to produce a harvest

in their lives. For the essence or spirit of faith is to believe and then speak.

That is why Christianity is called the Great Confession!

But since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak.

2 Corinthians 4:13

Faith is important to God and us. Our faith opens the door to God's provision, protection and power. We get saved by His grace through faith, receive the power to be His witness by faith, even receive our healing by faith. Faith comes as we hear God's will with our spiritual ears attuned to His Word. Faith begins where the will of God is known. Faith transports you from the land of maybe to the land of definitely so! If God promises it, and we believe it, then it is so in Jesus. That's how the disciples understood it. We should cooperate with the Lord to increase our faith so we can operate at a level beyond the desperate.

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly,

2 Thessalonians 1:3

Faith grows as it is exercised and 'fed.' We have continued to hear God's word through anointed preachers and teachers whose materials we have invested in: tapes, CD's, books, and conferences we have attended. We have felt the need to continually hear what God has to say and be reminded of His goodness and faithfulness. Faith does not come from having heard one time way back when. Stale manna does not sustain you in the daily challenges life presents. Some people spend literally thousands on this or that hobby, but not one red cent on the word of God. Only

the word of God gives you all you need for life. Some folk even think they have done God a favor by going to church at Easter and Christmas! No, He requires that we feed daily at His table. He has something new of His compassion to give us every day!

*Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed,
Because His compassions fail not.
They are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness.*

Lamentations 3:22-23

When you stop to think, life is pretty fragile. We live in a world where a hurricane can alter the course of a whole city in a matter of a few hours. Individually there is no guarantee outside the Lord that a drive down the freeway to work is a sure thing. Times are dangerous and we need to know the difference between mere human hope and faith and Bible faith and hope. Outside of God you can feel so exposed and frantically work to create your own comfort and security zone. Without the Lord who watches over us we labor in vain, even stay up at night in vain.

*Unless the LORD builds the house,
They labor in vain who build it;
Unless the LORD guards the city,
The watchman stays awake in vain.*

Psalms 127:1

Bible faith involves a trust in God that He will do what He said He will do! His word has integrity and He watches over it to perform it. He has not promised to watch over and perform our doubts.

Bible faith finds expression in confession and corresponding actions. Some folk expect God to move on their behalf with a passive posture of wait and see. Years later they are still waiting on God to take them somewhere

on their journey, whilst in fact He is waiting on them to get up, believe His word enough to move out with corresponding faith action steps. He has made His moves, sent Jesus, carve out a pathway for us to follow, and said go. Yet many are still sitting in a rocking chair of misinformation going nowhere fast! They are like Thomas waiting for some dramatic manifestation they can see with their eyes first, then they will move. No, faith requires that you see first with your spiritual eye God's plan in the Word, then take a step out onto the waters of natural uncertainty, knowing that God will supernaturally uphold you in your venture. You cannot sit before a fire and say 'warm me', without first putting some wood on the hearth and lighting it up.

On our journey we have caught ourselves praying and praying without taking steps to move forward. Nothing seemed to be happening as we prayed. Eventually we got the picture and took corresponding faith steps towards our goal. Don't misunderstand me. Prayer is important. You must till the soil, sow the seed, water the plant, but then a time comes when you must get up off the porch and go out and harvest the crop.

We activate Bible faith by believing and speaking the word, and then following up with corresponding actions. For faith without works is dead. You have to speak the end result, which you have seen in the promises of God. Anyone can describe what he or she currently has in the natural, but it takes faith to speak about that which you can only see in the spiritual. Remember what God has promised is a spiritual reality; faith makes it real or manifested in the natural realm of our experience.

"Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things

you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

Mark 11:22-24

When we pray we are instructed to say some things. We are told to say what we desire according to the promise, not what we already have. For example, you may be afflicted with some ailment, and continually describe with your mouth what you already have: the ailment. Jesus teaches that we should pray and speak what we desire. Furthermore we are to believe and say that we have the desires of our heart before we see the result of our prayers. We are to speak the desired end result, describing ourselves in those terms and stand our ground in the waiting period as the manifestation follows.

If you are sick, say in faith: “I am healed by the stripes of Jesus,” and stop saying “I still feel sick today.” Replace words that describe sickness with words that is promised in God’s word. In this way you promote healing and health with your tongue!

But the tongue of the wise promotes health.

Proverbs 12:18

Identify with God’s higher absolute truth. See things the way He sees things. He sees you prosperous, healed, and victorious over sin, fulfilled and fruitful. So start seeing yourself that way and speak in agreement with His will over your life. His will is His word!

Chapter 6

Protection on the Journey

Is your back covered?

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

1 Timothy 6:12

It would be nice to stroll through life floating along on flowery beds of rose petal ease. However things this side of heaven, are not quite so cozy. We have an adversary who is out to tempt us away from God's best. Satan, the devil will exploit any area of ignorance and or disobedience to God's will and ways in our lives.

Let's begin with ignorance. Satan works in the darkness of not knowing the victory Jesus Christ has already accomplished for us. Sure we place our trust in Jesus and confess Him as Lord, get saved and join His magnificent family. But that is no guarantee of a victorious life. Like the Israelites before us who were supernaturally delivered by the Lord through Moses, yet still had to learn how to make war in order to possess their promised land, so must the believer follow suit. We too must learn how to wage war, if we are to

possess the promises and walk in victory over sin, sickness and lack to the glory of God as a witness to the masses struggling merely to survive. A church that does not know and walk in its inheritance in Christ is a defeated church and no witness to a defeated world.

Knowledge and obedience are two keys to victory. The times where we fell short on our journey were when we did not know what to do and forged ahead anyway in misguided presumption. Of course we only found out afterwards that we moved ahead without God's perspective on the matter. An idea that you might get may be good, but check to see if it is God's for you at the time.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

Hosea 4:6

Don't be naive. We have an adversary who takes advantage of our ignorance. Ignorance is no excuse. A child may be innocently ignorant of the dangers of running after a ball into highway traffic, and still suffer the disastrous consequences. Better to check with papa first. The flesh, or that yet unrenewed part of our mind and physical appetites, and drives, will push us into things that are not necessarily of God. Realize that we need to be protected from ourselves first. Our adversary takes advantage of ignorance. But we have a father who has given us all things pertain to life and godliness. We must know and operate in them to enjoy their benefit.

...as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him...

2 Peter 1:3

We also need protection from the enemy, satan our adversary. He is the deceiver, tempter with evil, and liar. If

we ignore his existence and don't know that he is subtly seeking to trip us up, nor his tactics, we will give him all the room he needs to do his dirty work in the darkness of our ignorance. Caution: do not place too much focus on the devil. Don't fall in the ditch on either side of this with too much devil talk, or too little! Let the Lord give you discernment into what is going on and how much attention you need to pay to something. On our journey we only woke up to the fact that a 'weapon had been formed' against us and people around us were starting to listen to satan's whispers and cooperate with him in slander and deception. Protection comes when you hide yourself in God's presence through prayer and worship, claiming His promise of refuge and deliverance from wicked and unreasonable men.

Claim the following promises for yourself and your family when you sense that the enemy is orchestrating the adverse things around you.

*No weapon formed against you shall prosper,
And every tongue which rises against you in judgment
You shall condemn.*

This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD...

Isaiah 54:17

*He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress;
My God, in Him I will trust."
Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler
And from the perilous pestilence.*

Psalm 91:1-3

*...pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly
and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be
delivered from unreasonable and wicked men;*

2 Thessalonians 3:1-2

It is important to claim from God his promised protection through prayer. It is not so much facing off against the devil and speaking to him. There are times where you boldly declare the authority God gives you over satan and bind his evil schemes. But we have found that we are to be more 'son conscious' than 'sin or devil conscious.'

Remember satan was defeated and disarmed by Jesus at the cross, so really we are enforcing his defeat in our lives.

Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Colossians 2:15

Of course he does not want us to know he is defeated. On the contrary he will remind you that he is in control, and you and I have no hope of breaking free, when in fact we are free already! The prison door to of sin and shame has been bust wide open and many Christians can't even look up to see the way out. They sit in the darkness of satan's lies and deceit shackled really by vain imaginations that are the stronghold that satan has them in. It's time to break free and walk in the light as Jesus in the light. The journey is into the light, more and more revelation knowledge equals more and more freedom.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

2 Corinthians 10:4-6

Satan uses arguments in our mind to come against what we know about God in our lives. It is our responsibility to bring these wayward thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ. This is true spiritual warfare: getting a grip on what

you think. Think only God's thoughts, not the devil's. Know the difference. God's thoughts are given to us in the Bible. Saturate yourself with God's thoughts as you read the Bible. Think about what God says. The Bible calls this meditation. Then speak them out as His promise to you and follow through with obeying what He tells you to do.

There have been times where through ignorance and indecision we have let the enemy get an upper hand in situations. We found it what we were not doing that mattered more. We were praying, worshipping, reading our Bibles, and walking uprightly before the Lord as best as we knew how, yet some things were not right. We found that it was the people and situations we did **not** confront when we should have, that caused the most drama. To use an expression: it was the people we **did not** fire that caused the most problems, not the ones we did! If you do not exercise your God given authority, you give satan territory to move on.

If you are going to go forward in God expect opposition. Your adversary is not going to roll out a red carpet and welcome you in. Like Joshua and the Israelites who had to fight to take possession of their promised land, you and I will have to fight the good fight of faith and literally wrest from satan's hands what truly belongs to us because of what Jesus paid for. Why leave in the enemy's hands what Jesus has paid the price for. Take back what belongs to you: your health, wealth, peace of mind, well being.

Begin by refusing to put up with defeat through ignorance. Get into the Word, pray and praise God for the victory you have in Christ. Stand your ground with your full armor on and wield that sword of the spirit against all attacks of that lying devil. Be decisive and confident that God is backing you as you step out and obey His word. Indifference, indecision and ignorance will defeat you. The

ball is in your hands. God is with you and will guide you into all truth. Trust Him.

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth;

John 16:13

Remember God comforts us with assurances that we can do it in the face of opposition. Many times we have had to be reminded and reassured that God has never left us nor forsaken us in times when we have felt alone. God's will never changes. He is constant. We may change our position and waver, but He does not. When we have stayed in faith we have seen Him lead us in triumph over situations that looked like total failure.

Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

2 Corinthians 2:14

You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

1 John 4:4

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13

Be prepared to declare these truths in the face of circumstances that scream the opposite. That is what faith is about. It speaks the end result even when you are not there yet. Faith gives hope its necessary power. God is the God of hope and in Him there is always hope. Faith in Him works together with hope to produce the results. We walk by faith on our journey. Faith that Jesus will do what he has promised to do!

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

2 Corinthians 5:7-8

Do not be moved by what you see happening around you with your natural eye. There were times where we have had to make decisions on the basis of what we felt in our hearts. We could not ‘see’ the natural practicality of our decision, but nevertheless ‘saw’ with our hearts what was needed.

You have to learn to see with the ‘eye’ of faith. It comes with practice to know how to make decisions on the basis of what God’s word says, and not what the circumstances are dictating. It takes practice to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and get a witness in your heart to make a move that in the natural does not make sense. When you are full of the Word, you give the Holy Spirit something to work with in directing your path. God always speaks and directs our path in line with His Word. He will never contradict Himself or His Word. So constantly be in the Word and see how much more God will speak to you as to how, when and where to apply it to your journey.

Chapter 7

Practical Steps

Are you positioned for the future?

If you are reading this, the journey is not over. Allow God's passion to motivate you no matter where you are at, or how old you may be. Use the following outline as practical steps on your own pursuit. Pioneers don't settle for less than a life without regret. If life is worth living, it's worth living with excellence for the Lord.

Paint the picture - vision

Recognize that your destiny and calling will only be found as you behold the Lord face to face in worship and devotion.

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 3:18

We are changed by what we behold. Be sure to allow the Holy Spirit to paint a picture of your future in Christ. You are called to move beyond surviving the problems of life to a place of thriving.

Prepare - develop faith for the journey

*The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
"Prepare the way of the LORD;
Make straight in the desert
A highway for our God.*

Isaiah 40:3

Faith is the way of the Lord, and as you spend time practicing hearing His voice, faith will arise. Faith is like a highway where the Lord's provision, protection and purposes are established in your life, or as the scripture above puts it, 'made straight'.

Pay the price and consecrate

Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

Luke 9:23

Change involves paying a price. Things have to be left behind and the new embraced. Let go of the things that you already know hold you back. You have to let go to let God have His way.

Posture yourself in worship and humility

*And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. **Luke 7:37-39***

God's anointing flows towards us when our worship and devotion flows towards Him. Like the woman in the above passage, humble yourself before the Lord and He will lift you up above degrading circumstances. Develop a lifestyle of worship and draw near to Him in daily worship.

Position yourself with others

...the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Ephesians 4:16

Don't stand alone. Allow seasoned people of God to speak into your life and impart their wisdom to you. As they do you will be edified or strengthened. We learnt the hard way that making decisions without really yielding to the wisdom of others can cost you. Getting counsel is not a sign of weakness. It strengthens you. Ultimately you are going to do something, so you may as well get some Godly counsel.

*Where there is no counsel, the people fall;
But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.*

Proverbs 11:14

Put Procrastination out to Pasture

...of the children of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do,

1 Chronicles 12:32

When we understand that the process of life involves seasons, and we learn to cooperate with them, we will know how to wait for the opportune moment and seize the moment when we cannot afford not to move. Learn to move in sync with God's timetable. Know that God has not given you a spirit of fear, for fear is what underpins procrastination. It takes boldness to make decisions. Boldness comes from knowing God's ways and works. Know what He can do and how He will do it. Then move.

Put plans to your dreams

Goals must be set, and steps taken to fulfill the plan.

The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty,

Proverbs 21:5

Faith always has corresponding action. Put legs to what you believe. Take steps towards what you see with the eye of faith. Trust that your thoughts and steps are ordered of the Lord because you have consecrated your deeds to Him. Remember the hardest step to take is the first one. After that each step is comparatively easier. So be bold and take a step. At least you will be moving and God can direct your steps.

Press into the future and persevere

...one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:13-14

Paul learnt to forget the past so he could forge into his preferred future. His pilgrimage was defined by the purpose spoken over him when Ananias prophesied his calling in Acts Chapter nine. He could write towards the end of his life that he had no regrets. His life was complete; he had finished his journey on earth. Be inspired, you can also fulfill your life purpose without regret.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

2 Timothy 4:7

If you have never accepted Jesus as your Lord

God has made it possible for you to get into right relationship with Him.

He sent His Son Jesus into the world to live, die and rise again from the dead so that you could be forgiven of your sins, live a life that pleases Him, and joined to Him forever in heaven when you die.

God expects you to **acknowledge** your need for His forgiveness, **believe** that He raised Jesus from the dead, and be prepared to **confess** Jesus as Lord before witnesses in the world you live in.

Accept His free gift of eternal life today. Turn away from your sinful past, wholeheartedly put your trust in Him today. Pray this prayer out loud from your heart, you will be giving your life back to him, and He will love, protect and provide for you all the days of your life.

Dear God in heaven,

*I accept that I need your forgiveness for my sin.
I repent and acknowledge that I cannot save myself.
I believe that you raised your only begotten son Jesus from the dead.
I ask you to come into my heart right now and be my Lord.
I confess you Jesus as the Lord (master) of my life.
I promise to serve you all my days.*

Thank you for saving me. I am now your child, accepted into your family.

In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Friend,

Now that you have prayed this prayer, get into a good Bible believing church that focuses on Jesus and His word, read your Bible starting with the gospel of John in the New Testament, and tell someone that you have accepted Jesus as Your Lord. Pray to your new heavenly father every day, and look to God to help you in every area of your life.

God bless you.

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