

What Does Your Future Hold

# **What Does Your Future Hold?**

**Ed Horak**

# What Does Your Future Hold

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## **What Does Your Future Hold?**

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# Contents

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1	<b>What Does Your Future Hold?</b>	5
2	<b>Dreams Are Worth Dreaming</b>	25
3	<b>Deal With Dream Destroyers</b>	41
4	<b>The Power of Preparation</b>	55
5	<b>How to Step Into Your Future</b>	77
6	<b>Turn Setbacks into Stepping Stones</b>	107
7	<b>Case Study: Joseph</b>	119
8	<b>Making Every Day Count</b>	127
9	<b>Action Plan</b>	141
10	<b>Encouraging Scriptures</b>	147

## What Does Your Future Hold

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*The future need not be mysterious, or an uncertain and fearful thing. God has revealed His thoughts in His Word, and promised us the future as His gift to us.*

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# 1

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## What Does Your Future Hold?

**T**he future is both uncertain **and** certain. It is uncertain because of what we *don't* know, and certain because of what we *do* know. The future will come, there's no doubt about that. The big question to resolve however is this: are there some things that you can do to survive and even determine a better future, or do you have to simply wait upon it as it rushes towards you?

This book is not about predicting what will happen prophetically in a few years but takes the position that there are things you can do, and choices you can make to ensure that your future will be better than if you simply let the future come at you.

The decisions you make today can and will affect your future. No matter what has happened to this point in your life, there is still hope. To know where you are headed, there is no need to look to anyone else but God and yourself. Together, God and you are a majority, greater than anything you will ever face, and the only limits are those you put on yourself. Of course other people play a

## What Does Your Future Hold

part and can either help or hinder your progress, but as a later chapter shows, with God's help you can turn any setback into a stepping stone.

Attitude is a choice, so is commitment to a worthy goal. Courage and passion depend on the character choices you make in the face of difficulty. No one can make these for you. Thankfully, God has promised to strengthen us in all things. He sent the Holy Spirit to be our strengthener, and He live is us (John 14:16-17).

The things we face right now are only temporary. They will pass, and when you begin to see difficult circumstances in the light of eternity, your perspective will change. You will be able to overcome the moment and see with new clarity. Life will take on a new and motivating meaning, and you will begin to discover and understand truths that will set you free from what holds you back from a brighter future.

Enjoy the journey, it's your choice.

### **Live Your Life with an Eternal Perspective**

Ecclesiastes 3:10-11

*10 I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.*

In everyone's heart is an element of eternity. God has put that desire there. Existence only makes sense if there is a better future. Even though this verse partly speaks of the frustrations of life, in Christ you *can* find out what God is already doing, and what your part is in His plan. When you discover God's plan and your part in it, what you busy yourself with will always be 'beautiful in its time'.

## What Does Your Future Hold

There is an increasing sense that eternity seems to be coming at us at an accelerated rate. Today choices have to be made in one lifetime that previous generations did not have to make in ten lifetimes. The information age has compressed the past, present and future so close together that life seems to continually speed up. Growing up, life seemed fairly simple, but now involves so much. Fortunately, there is a place of refuge and stability that we can run to. It is found in the love of Jesus who not only has your past covered but also the present and the future!

Hebrews 13:8

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

Jesus stepped into time two thousand years ago, but now lives outside of it, so when you see your future in Him, it is always secure. Why? Because He has promised to be your shepherd and give you the necessary guidance through troubling times.

Eternal life and security is found not in easy circumstances but in God's person. The true measure of eternal life is not time, but whether you and I are in right relationship with the author of life, Jesus Christ, God's gift for your future.

John 17:3-4

*3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

God's plan and purpose for you in this life goes way beyond just 'making it to the end'. He wants you to enjoy a full life filled with righteousness, peace and joy as you worship Him. He also wants you to fulfill your calling to reach a world that desperately needs Jesus' saving love.

We are sandwiched between God's mercy manifested in Jesus' first coming, and His judgment to come at Jesus second coming. This window of time has been given to us

to live life to the full, secure in God's love in a world full of turmoil and uncertainty. We are to live now as 'citizens of heaven' (Philippians 3:20), with all its privileges and responsibilities. Heaven and earth can meet as we face the future with confidence and faith in God's helping hand. We are not alone and a preferred future is ours for the taking.

## How to Be Certain In Uncertain Times

Matthew 24:1-8, 14

*1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."*

*3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" 4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows..."*

*14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

In this account, Jesus first highlights the **impermanence** of what we see naturally in Vs 1-2. The disciples saw the huge structures of the temple as permanent. Jesus spoke prophetically about the near destruction of the buildings in AD 70. What seemed permanent would suddenly fall. In

## What Does Your Future Hold

our century for example, many have looked at the world economic meltdown that began to manifest in 2008 in this light. Things that seemed so secure turned out to be quite fragile. With all this uncertainty, we live personally, nationally and historically on the precarious edge of eternity.

Jesus then gave **pointers** (signs) to alert His disciples, and us, to future danger in Vs 3. As a caring father will not leave his children in the dark about situations to come, so does the savior of the world and friend of sinners, warn those who would listen of impending dangers.

He continues to give the gift of His **perspective** on time and events in Vs 4-8. He points out the proper response to deception, troubling wars and unsettling natural calamities. He speaks stability into unstable times teaching us that when you put your life in the hands of certainty Himself, then the world's uncertainties will not shake you. His wisdom is about where you put your trust.

He then concludes this important passage with a **prophecy** of the most definitive sign of all in Vs 14. The gospel of the kingdom will first be preached around the world and then and then only will the end come. Only when you come into alignment with this grand purpose will you experience supernatural peace and certainty in an uncertain world.

In short, the only way to be certain in uncertain times is to put your trust in Jesus alone. All else is changing around us all the time and cannot be trusted. People used to accept that when you buy a house and hold onto it for a long time, it will build equity. Unfortunately in many places, that is no longer true in real terms. This world and its systems have never been and never will be a trusted source of security.

God encourages us to look to the Lord who is the author (originator) of our faith. When we keep our eyes on the eternal we are not easily 'moved' by negative circumstances in the here and now. As we will see later in the book, faith is not some 'pie in the sky' dynamic, but a vital ingredient in accessing God's promised future.

### **What Does the Eternal Future Hold For The Righteous?**

The meek or righteous are those that have put their trust in Christ alone. They will inherit the earth and dwell in peace. Right now there will be difficult times, but because we have a blessed hope as we wait upon the Lord, we can endure to the end.

Matthew 5:5

*5 Blessed are the meek,  
For they shall inherit the earth.*

Psalms 37:9-11, 37-38

*9 For evildoers shall be cut off;  
But those who wait on the LORD,  
They shall inherit the earth.  
10 For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more;  
Indeed, you will look carefully for his place,  
But it shall be no more.  
11 But the meek shall inherit the earth,  
And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.  
37 Mark the blameless man, and observe the upright;  
For the future of that man is peace.  
38 But the transgressors shall be destroyed together;  
The future of the wicked shall be cut off.*

The eternal future of the 'righteous' and the 'wicked' is quite different. The 'blameless man' will enjoy a future of peace, but the future of the 'wicked' is one of destruction:

## What Does Your Future Hold

he will be cut off. Put another way, not everyone will automatically go to heaven and enjoy endless joy.

God is in everyone's future. The faithful will enjoy His everlasting love, whereas the rebellious will endure the dreadful consequences of their own choices. They will no one to blame but themselves. The righteous judge of the universe will be vindicated. He will be seen to have made every effort to reach them with His love.

Life on earth cannot and must not be seen as a 'dress rehearsal' for eternity. The choices you make on earth right now determine the quality of your eternal future. Your present and your future are thus connected.

### **The Blessings of Hope**

God is the God of hope (Romans 15:13), and His people are characterized by hope. Bible hope is not empty wishful thinking, but a confident expectation that what God has promised, He will bring to pass. Bible hope has a supernatural element to it. It comes from God, and is the connector between our faith and our future.

Hebrews 11:1

*1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

Faith is planted in the soil of hope, and without hope we have no expectation of a preferred or better future. Because God loves us and we love Him, hope will not disappoint. He has spoken what He wants for you in His Word. 'Feed' your faith by constantly looking into what God has planned for you as His child. You do this by thinking about His promises. His promises have to with the future. One key promise is this: the good work God has begun in you, He will see to completion.

## What Does Your Future Hold

Philippians 1:6

*6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;*

On the journey towards that final day of reckoning, we plow and sow with a confident expectation that God rewards those that diligently seek Him (1 Corinthians 9:10 & Hebrews 11:6). When we keep our eyes on Him despite distracting difficulties, we will enjoy our final reward. On the way there, hope serves to anchor the soul (Hebrews 6:29). Hope keeps us steady, so learn to hold onto hope.

You have the power to choose whether to be depressed by circumstances, or hopeful as you look to God. He is your way of escape in the midst of any trial.

Psalms 42:5

*Why are you cast down, O my soul?  
And why are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him  
For the help of His countenance.*

## **Your Past is the Best Predictor Of Your Future**

Ecclesiastes 1:9-10

*9 That which has been is what will be,  
That which is done is what will be done,  
And there is nothing new under the sun.  
10 Is there anything of which it may be said,  
"See, this is new"?  
It has already been in ancient times before us.*

If you do not know and properly interpret what has happened in your past, you will have no hope for the future, and this scripture will not be an encouragement for you. Chances are you will repeat old habits and patterns

## What Does Your Future Hold

and not change. Sadly, your past will be the best predictor of your future.

However, there is a way out of this kind of human fatalism. Positively, you must know what Christ has already done for you. He said, 'It is finished' (John 19:30). Through Christ's obedience certain things have been established that cannot be changed: God's forgiveness, righteousness, mercy and grace are already deposited in your 'heavenly account'. God now relates to you on a new covenant basis, and not on how you used to be. Your past has been swallowed up in Christ's suffering, setting you free to step forward into a new future.

These divine 'deposits' Jesus made on our behalf must be known, accessed and enjoyed by faith. If we do not mix faith with the Word it will not profit us the way God intends (Hebrews 4:2). That's how God works. He has not, and will not, change His mind on His plan for you. We are required to line up with what He has already set in motion. When we do, our future is found in God's Word, and His Word thus becomes the best predictor of our future. Selah.

See your past as cleansed by what Christ has done. You are now 'in Him' and what he thinks about you and promises to establish in your life are what defines you. The memories of past failures and the old patterns of thought that determined your actions are now irrelevant to your future.

On the other hand, be encouraged by the history of others. (Don't focus on yourself so much). You can gain useful insights from what others have gone through in the past. The examples from Bible history can provide inspiration and hope for you to press on through to victory. If they overcame in very difficult circumstances, so

## What Does Your Future Hold

can you. If God helped them, He will help you too. History is not some dusty discipline, but provides vital information and inspiration for you to receive and reach for your better future.

*1 Corinthians 10:11-12:11 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.*

The Bible warns us not to ignore the facts of man's fallen nature and the evil tendencies of the flesh. If you naively press forward into your future, you might be caught unawares of potential hazards ahead of your quest to walk in God's best. To be 'sober minded' (Titus 2:6) is not stupid, but smart. God knows there are pitfalls, and wants to impart His wisdom to us, so that we can avoid them. His best is to learn from The Word and not from bad experiences!

To get out of past ruts, God requires us to be open to an injection of His life based on His promises which connect our present with our preferred future. His promises are the language of His covenant relationship, and He injects or imparts His ability to change through them (2 Peter 1:4).

For example, God has promised to never leave us or forsake us. Because this promise is true, we can with bold confidence say about our future that God will help us and we have nothing to fear. Our approach to the future will change, and our agreement with God will determine how we handle tomorrow's challenges.

Hebrews 13:5-6

*For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we may boldly say:*

*"The LORD is my helper;  
I will not fear.*

## What Does Your Future Hold

*What can man do to me?"*

The mindset we adopt today will have a profound impact on tomorrow. 'Repentance' or a changed way of thinking, results in a changed lifestyle, and in turn a changed future. In short, your future depends on the changes you make to your thinking and habits today. As a Christian you are transformed as your mind is renewed to God's Word.

Change thus begins from within. Freedom from restrictive external circumstances may appear to be liberating, like a physical prisoner set free from a jail. However internally he may still be bound by negative thoughts and habits as he goes about his business in the 'freedom' of the outside world. These negative thoughts and habits most often get many prisoners into further trouble with the law, and they land up in prison once again.

True freedom is found in the inner recesses of your heart. The Apostle Paul was still free even though he unfairly wound up in prison (Philippians 3:13). He was reaching forward into his future while he was still in prison! He was not waiting to be let out before making the necessary internal adjustments. He took hold of negative thoughts and found His freedom in Christ alone, not his circumstances.

Do not live your life imprisoned by small and limited thinking. Do not say things like, 'When I am rich I will be generous'. Do what you can right now and start the flow of giving and receiving. Realize that in Christ you are already wealthy, and do not be fearful of losing what you have. God has promised to supply all your needs, today and in the future. The righteous will never be forsaken. That's God's promise. Believe it (Psalm 37:25).

## What Does Your Future Hold

Cooperate with God and let the inner character changes and the freedom they bring, provide the platform for change in your circumstances.

### **The Future is God's Gift to You**

Jeremiah 29:10-13

*11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12 Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity;*

The future need not be mysterious, or an uncertain and fearful thing. God has revealed His thoughts in His Word, and promised us a future as His gift to us. It is a good future containing peace, and it brings hope to the present. He knows who you are, what your current situation is, and what it will take to move into your better future.

Yet, the future does not just happen. It is dependent upon us engaging with God by calling upon Him, seeking and searching with all our hearts. It involves throwing yourself into it with all that you have at your disposal. In this way you make your way prosperous together with God.

Joshua 1:8

*8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*

'For then you will'.

## What Does Your Future Hold

In God there is **predictability** about your future. As you put your hand in His, He will always steer you into His provision, protection and purposes. There is nothing uncertain about that! His gift is to 'to **give** you a future...'

Relationship has a lot to do with responses. God makes a move, we respond. If we don't, then the offer falls to the ground. Yet if we do respond in faith, we receive all that God has promised.

In the context of the above passage, the prophet Daniel sees his *present* circumstances in the light of the *future* that Jeremiah had prophesied earlier (Jeremiah 29:1-14). Israel would spend seventy years in Babylonian captivity. Daniel along with many others had been taken into captivity and was now looking into the prophetic scrolls (the Word of His day). He realizes that God's perspective of the future is staring Him in the face. This understanding about the future condition of his people under King Darius comes to him 'by the books'. He responds to the prophecy by seeking the Lord in prayer, fasting and confession. Later on in the account, he receives revelation or God's picture for his people of the future.

Daniel 9:2-4, 23-24

*2 in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. 3 Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. 4 And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, ...*

*...23 At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision:*

## What Does Your Future Hold

*24 "Seventy weeks are determined  
For your people and for your holy city,  
To finish the transgression,  
To make an end of sins,  
To make reconciliation for iniquity,  
To bring in everlasting righteousness,  
To seal up vision and prophecy,  
And to anoint the Most Holy.*

The interpretation and application here is that God shows us the future before it happens. Our responsibility is to look, listen and see what He reveals, then take appropriate action to position ourselves to receive and walk into that future by faith.

When God shows us things to come they edify, exhort and comfort us. This is the nature of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:3). This foresight inspires us to act, and make us move towards the fulfillment of what has been spoken. Prophecy is never intended to immobilize the believer into a false fatalism.

God's way is to declare up front what He is about to do. He wants us to respond by stretching for the future as we play our part.

### **Let Go of the Former Things**

Just like a stranded flood victim trapped in a raging river has to let go of the branch to take the hand of the helicopter rescue team member, so we must let go of the past in order to take hold of God's promises.

Isaiah 43:18-19

*18 "Do not remember the former things,  
Nor consider the things of old.  
19 Behold, I will do a new thing,*

## What Does Your Future Hold

*Now it shall spring forth;  
Shall you not know it?  
I will even make a road in the wilderness  
And rivers in the desert.*

God specializes in making the impossible possible, if we let go and let Him take control. He expects us to engage with Him so that he can show us things to come.

Jeremiah 33:3

*3'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'*

God knows more than we do, and expects you to call upon Him to discover those things about our present and future that we do not know. God's plans for you are always bigger and better than your own, and He has promised to reveal them to you...if you call upon Him.

He wants to see your heart's desire and will not force you against your will into doing His. Stepping into your future is a cooperative effort where the choices you make are made in partnership with God. He imparts His ability to you at the new birth when you give your heart to Jesus, and then expects you to take the necessary steps to 'work out' your salvation. Your life must be lived from the inside out. The Word teaches that this process involves intense effort or 'trembling'. There have been times when I have worked hard in the yard or garden and got to a stage when my muscles are literally trembling from the effort.

Some Christians expect to recline on the couch and watch God 'lay it on them' without any effort on their side. They have not learnt to cooperate with God and...

Philippians 2:12

*...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling...*

## Holiness and the Future

How you live your life has a bearing on the length and quality of life that you will live on this earth. Put another way, you can determine your future by holy living.

Proverbs 3:1-2

*My son, do not forget my law,  
But let your heart keep my commands;  
2 For length of days and long life  
And peace they will add to you.*

It is clear that God rewards the obedient with the blessing of prolonged life.

Proverbs 10:27-28

*27 The fear of the LORD prolongs days,  
But the years of the wicked will be shortened.  
28 The hope of the righteous will be gladness,  
But the expectation of the wicked will perish.*

We are encouraged to live holy lives, not only for our own benefit: longevity, but also to play our part in fulfilling God's plan on earth so that He can send Jesus back to complete His plan. To live a holy life means to live in such a way that your hopes and dreams are 'set apart' for God's purposes. When you align your future in obedience to God's plans, then He is committed to watch over and protect you. Psalm 91 shows that when we set our love on God, or live a holy life for His glory, then we can expect to enjoy long life and be satisfied with it. In this way our future in God is secure.

Psalm 91:14-16

*14 "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him;  
I will set him on high, because he has known My name.  
15 He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him;  
I will be with him in trouble;*

## What Does Your Future Hold

*I will deliver him and honor him.  
16 With long life I will satisfy him,  
And show him My salvation."*

The following passage of scripture is also quite profound. Read it carefully. God has orchestrated His covenant in such a way where He expects us to 'hasten' the Lord's coming through 'holy conduct and godliness'. Pause there. God presents us with a huge challenge! We actually have a part in fulfilling the future. God is sovereign, yet He has chosen us to participate in His plan. How we live our lives counts in His grand plan for man.

### 2 Peter 3:10-14

*10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

*14 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;*

I pray that you take this challenge to heart and ask God to help you play your part with all diligence, and be found by Him at His return to be 'without spot and blameless'.

## **God Rewards Generosity**

Dorcas was a godly woman who was 'full of good works and charitable deeds' (Acts 9:36). Unfortunately she got

## What Does Your Future Hold

sick and died. Things certainly went wrong for her even though she was godly. Even though her future on earth looked over, God was not finished with her yet, and the apostle Peter was called to her death bed, miraculously raising her from the dead. Notably it was her previous life of generosity that opened the door to a dramatic turnaround. Her past impacted her future!

When taken together with the story of Cornelius' prayers and generosity (alms giving) that immediately follows in Acts 10:1-48, there is no coincidence as we see God intervening in the lives of these generous saints to dramatically alter their futures.

Not only was Cornelius future dramatically changed, but his family's future was gloriously changed too. They were saved and filled with the Holy Spirit on the same day. His alms giving, mentioned no less than three times (Vs 2,4,31), came up as a 'memorial' before God, who dramatically rewarded this man's godliness.

Your past and present generosity will open up the door to your future.

## **The Future Begins Now**

It is said that young people live in the future, and old people in the past, but wise people live in the present. It is 'high time' to awaken to God's planned future for our lives.

Romans 13:11-14

*11 And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on*

## What Does Your Future Hold

*the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.*

Thankfully, God is not politically correct: He tells the truth like it is, always. It is high time to awaken to our destinies, because the clock is ticking, and we are that much closer to the Lord's return. Your spiritual temperature, or how you live for God today, will determine where you will be tomorrow.

## What Does Your Future Hold

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*Dreams are not empty 'fairy' tale wishes but the powerful mechanism by which you create something out of 'nothing'.*

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## 2

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# Dreams Are Worth Dreaming

James 1:17

*17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights...*

**E**verything that comes from God is good. This includes the dreams He gives. They are worth living for, are never empty of His power to bring them to pass. That makes them good.

Dreams are the language of the future, and when you place proper value on what you are sensing from the Lord, His dreams become His gift to you. Dreams determine your destiny and also of those you influence. Whatever you do always has an impact on someone else's life in some way at some time.

God wants you to leave a positive life imparting legacy behind you, and the dream He has given you is the means to that end.

## **Dreams in General**

A dream is any picture, thought, vision, hope or aspiration of a preferred or better future. Dreams may come while asleep (the typical definition) or while awake: a daydream. In a general sense, your desires, imagination, goals and personal convictions are the stuff of dreams. We are all dreamers in some way, and 'see' or imagine some future possibility.

Dreams are not empty 'fairy' tale wishes but the powerful mechanism by which you create something out of 'nothing'. In this way you fulfill that aspect of your make up that is created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26a). He made you to be 'like' Him.

In this context, God is the creator, and wants you to play your part in 'creating' your future in accordance with His revealed will. Think about it. God has set it up that you have an integral part to play in 'creating' your own future. You don't live in a vacuum. God has made His move, and now it is up to you to understand His ways and respond in faith to fulfill your destiny.

## **What the Bible Says About Dreams**

First, both the Old and New Testaments record many accounts of people having dreams that either informed, or inspired or warned them of things to come.

Joseph dreamt of his future leadership role in the family (Genesis 35:5-10), Solomon had God appear to Him in a dream challenging him to ask for what he wanted (1 Kings 3:5), and Joseph, Mary's betrothed, was comforted about her innocence when you fell pregnant by the Holy Spirit

## What Does Your Future Hold

(Matthew 1:20-21). Later Joseph is warned by an angel in another dream to flee to Egypt with his young family (Matthew 2:13). Even Pilate's wife is troubled by a dream about her husband's dealings with Jesus at His sham trial (Matthew 27:19), and the great apostle Paul's ministry is directed in a new path to Macedonia (Greece) by a 'night vision' or dream (Acts 16:9).

In these and many other instances, there is a manifest supernatural element evident in God given dreams. God is supernatural, and reserves the right to communicate with mankind this way. We would do well to open up to God in this area of communication and pay more attention to our dream life.

Of course there are some dreams that replay in some form life's fears, hopes, unresolved postures and attitudes. Generally these dreams are quickly forgotten. However, God given spiritual dreams are not easily forgotten, but remembered years later. They have a definite impact on our aspirations and hopes and form the seed for our futures.

These dreams must be properly interpreted as there is a tendency to read additional things into the dream when we awaken. Specifically ask God to help you interpret a dream you feel is from Him. It is good to test all things. God doesn't mind, and it could save you a lot of later disappointment. Be prepared to receive clarification or even correction as you walk humbly before God in this.

The Bible record shows that the people who had these supernatural dreams did not have them every night. They certainly did not run around saying: 'God said thus and so' one day, and then say another thing the next day as the circumstances changed. God is not the author of confusion. Such 'religious super-spirituality' should be avoided. It is always wise to check things out before

## What Does Your Future Hold

presumptively stepping out. God has a process and a plan, provision and even a specific set of people to link up with. There is also a precious sense of timing that needs to be followed. Young Joseph found out all this after a thirteen year 'delay'.

Regarding dreams in a general sense, the Bible does teach us that when we consecrate our lives to God, He will interact with us to show us things to come by means of His Word and His Spirit. As we grow in our relationship with Him, and trust and maturity grows, the thoughts we have about the future become an integral part of our dream arsenal.

God wants us to closely follow His promptings and develop a level of sensitivity to His voice so that what seems good to Him will also seem good to us.

Acts 15:28-29

*For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:*

There was agreement between the Holy Spirit and the leadership as to what to say. In this instance of guidance, it was 'naturally' supernatural. No hype, fanfare, bombast, just a simple, but no less supernatural 'it seemed good'. Never force anything with God. He is not obliged to operate in spectacular ways, nor according to your timetable. If His leading is indeed spectacular, so be it. When Moses and the Israelites saw the Red Sea parting in front of them it surely was a spectacular sight. But note it only took them three short days after this great event to start complaining. Faith expressed through obedience is what sustains you far better in the long run. Dramatic displays of the miraculous get your attention, but faith that comes by hearing God's Word will always stand the test of time and circumstance.

## What Does Your Future Hold

Faith is the connector between your dream and the realization of that dream in the future. Faith comes when you stay 'hooked' up to God. He wants you to hear and keep on hearing His Word as a cornerstone of your devotion and resultant lifestyle.

Romans 10:17-18

*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

Conviction grows as faith grows. Conviction leads to change, and change impacts the future.

### **Be Sober Minded About All This**

God is not casual about the way He does things, and He wants His children to be careful not to adopt a casual approach to the dreams He gives them.

Ecclesiastes 5:2-7

*2 Do not be rash with your mouth,  
And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God.  
For God is in heaven, and you on earth;  
Therefore let your words be few.*

*3 For a dream comes through much activity,  
And a fool's voice is known by his many words.*

*4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it;  
For He has no pleasure in fools.*

*Pay what you have vowed--*

*5 Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.*

*6 Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say  
before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why  
should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work  
of your hands? 7 For in the multitude of dreams and many  
words there is also vanity. But fear God.*

Also, beware of 'false' dreams. They have no substance and do not deliver God's comfort in the end.

What Does Your Future Hold

Zechariah 10:2

*The diviners envision lies,  
And tell false dreams;  
They comfort in vain.*

Do not follow dreamers who may dupe you into following their false dreams. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have seen their full share of false religions, prophets and cults birthed from false dreams.

Jeremiah 29:8

*8 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed. 9 For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the LORD.*

Test what others have dreamed against God's Word. Then, you cannot put a God 'label' on something you have caused to be dreamed, and expect Him to bless it. If you do, you are on your own for God is not with you on this. Dreams from God are serious business.

## **Jesus the Dreamer**

Jesus was a dreamer or future looker. His whole life and death point to His commitment to the dream of reaching the world with God's love. He endured the suffering of the cross because He saw the future joy it would bring. He was always pointed forward.

Hebrews 12:2

*...Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame...*

## What Does Your Future Hold

He looked to the future, had a plan, stuck to it and although sorely tempted in the Garden of Gethsemane to go another route, He nevertheless obeyed and fulfilled God's dream for His life.

### **Hebrews Eleven Heroes**

The famous list of faith heroes teaches us much about dream fulfillment. God had implanted in each hero a sense of their future. Some enjoyed the fulfillment of their dreams in their generation; while others were only to see the full outworking of destiny in subsequent generations. They all moved forward in faith, their obedience and sacrifice opening the door to God's preferred future for them and their offspring.

For example Abraham is spoken of as follows:

Hebrews 11:8-10

*8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;...*

His actions may have seemed at the time to be of no lasting consequence, but his faith actions impacted future generations. God brought forth the world's Messiah through Abraham's descendents, the Jews.

Like Abraham, your faith and obedience will produce results that determine destiny.

## **Too Busy to Dream?**

What you are doing today, ought to be part of what you dreamed yesterday. Evaluate the value of what you are doing today. Are you merely surviving from day to day, or are you steadily moving towards your goals? You were created to live abundantly, not to just exist. Don't live superficially: learn to feel, not just touch; observe and not just look.

Your life counts, and when you speak, say something worthwhile. When you hear something, really listen to gain understanding. Movement has little virtue in itself; but movement towards your dream is what activity is about. Productivity is activity towards a defined future.

Being busy without a clear goal can be quite inefficient. Then seemingly urgent needs often turn out to be unimportant. Have you ever stopped something you are busy with to answer a wrong number lately? You got up from what you were doing to answer the phone, yet it turned out to be something quite trivial or inconsequential. So much meaningless 'stuff' seeks to hold your attention, and unless you keep focused on your future, you can easily slip into an overcrowded life. God expects you to be the steward of the time He gives you.

## **Too Old or Disgusted to Dream**

You are never too old to dream. Even the Bible affirms that 'old men' will dream dreams!

Joel 2:28

*28 "And it shall come to pass afterward  
That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;  
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
Your old men shall dream dreams,...*

## What Does Your Future Hold

Some of the greatest discoveries and achievements have sprung from men and woman over eighty years old. Moses became statesman-deliverer after his eightieth birthday. Abraham really only got started on his family close to one hundred years of age! No excuses here. More recently Colonel Saunders started his chicken food chain empire in his sixties!

Age should bring wisdom, but this only happens when you properly respond to life's ups and downs. Generally older people have had more ups and downs than younger people, and the secret is not to let the downs get you down. It's not so much what happens **to** you, but what happens **in** you that is at issue here. That is why the Bible says to 'guard' or 'keep' your heart with all diligence, because if you don't, things will get to you in time (Proverbs 4:23).

Sadly, some people have had the 'dream' knocked out of them through a series of adverse circumstances. They are now too frightened or disgusted to dream, falling for the lie that if they simply exist they will stay out of trouble and not get hurt or disappointed anymore.

Yet God is still there to impart hope to anyone hurt by life's knocks, and He wants to take you to a better place if you allow Him to restore hope to you. It is never too late to rise up to the challenge of a renewed dream, for in Him all things are always possible.

### **Why Dreams are Important**

You are unique and the fulfillment of your dream is a valuable part of God's plan to bless people in a special way. When you dream with your eyes wide open, you become dangerous to the kingdom of darkness. Dreams help you to let go of a past that you cannot change, and

## What Does Your Future Hold

look forward to a future that is within your reach through faith and hope. Dreams lift you up into the realm of possibility and probability. They propel you past procrastination and confront the confusion of indecision.

Your life must have a focus, a definition. If you have no focused vision your life will be marked by a lack of restraint or discipline and surely dissipate or slip away.

Proverbs 29:18

*18 Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint;...*

Dreams motivate you to press past obstacles and endure current hardships and challenges without fading. Dreams are the language of your future.

Great people talk about ideas, average people talk about themselves and small people talk about others. Make a decision to fly on the winds of what can be.

### **How Dreams are 'Conceived' or Received**

First, you may inherit your life's dream by the good example set by parents and mentors who have inspired you.

2 Timothy 1:5-6

*5 when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.*

Your life is determined by relationships. A divine stamp may have been put on you through the prayers of consecrated previous generations.

Second, your future may be defined in a day with a supernatural moment or call. The apostle Paul at his

## What Does Your Future Hold

conversion was overwhelmed with God's power and fell off his horse never to be the same again. His life's call was later articulated three days later in Damascus city (still there in modern Syria) by a reluctant and fearful believer Ananias who needed some convincing that Saul (later renamed Paul), was now to be trusted.

### Acts 9:15-16

*15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.*

Very often the more supernatural and dramatic the call or dream, the more difficulties have to be faced in the fulfillment of the dream. Paul's life was fraught with opposition, and his dogged faithfulness has inspired generations of visionaries through church history (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). There is much to learn from his life and how his dreams played out in the history of the western world in severe and perilous times.

Third, many dreams are born in dark moments of desperation. Light often comes when you experience 'divine discontent'. The status quo is not always God's best, so learn to use the 'energy' of any discontent you feel to dream of a better future. Caution: avoid sinking from discontent into the darkness of despair where there is no hope. Turn despair into a dream.

Fourth, your dream may have come as an impression or sensing in your heart or spirit. I remember sensing at one time that my family was to make our new home on a new continent. A year later, this seed impression led to a major transition and move for our family across the globe. We spent one whole year preparing our hearts and personal circumstances to make the move.

## What Does Your Future Hold

Record these impressions on paper or some audio device; otherwise they may slip away from you. What you have 'seen' or 'heard' is precious treasure to be protected when in its infancy. Circumstances and your adversary can so easily steal the seed before it starts producing in your life. If you do not carefully protect your dream it will seem after time that you never even dreamed it.

However, if you 'cultivate' your dream, as time progresses what you first saw only in part will become clearer and clearer. Keep seeking the Lord in prayer and study for clarification of your dream. If you are living a consecrated life, in accountable fellowship with likeminded Godly mature believers and walking in humility, then you can move forward with your dreams with confidence. God will give you what is in line with your heart's desires when your delight is in Him.

Psalm 37:4

*4 Delight yourself also in the LORD,*

*And He shall give you the desires of your heart.*

## **What to Get Straight at the Start**

How you start is very important. I remember in athletic track races if I made a bad start, it was very hard to recover, especially in the sprints. So, be sure that your dream lines up with God's dream as stated in the Word. Consecrate your heart motives to the Lord. Is what you are hoping to do going to glorify God or you? Impure motives are sure to lead you astray at some point. Your dreams must be submitted to Jesus' lordship. You are not your own, and Jesus is the head of the church, your life and even your dreams.

Receiving a dream from the Lord is one thing, but have you waited on Him to receive and clarify the method of

advancement He has for you? Do not presumptuously press forward with your own strategy or way of doing things. Be like King David who always sought the Lord for the strategy of battle (2 Samuel 5:19). In this way you avoid starting in the spirit and then slipping into the flesh without even knowing it.

If you are married, come into agreement with your mate and your close family for whom you are responsible. You don't want to leave them hurting in your wake. They are your most valuable fellow travelers and your first focus after the Lord.

### **Seek Confirmation of What You Have 'Heard' or 'Seen'**

1 Thessalonians 5:21

*Test all things; hold fast what is good.*

It is not wrong to seek clarity or confirmation of the 'leading' or dream you have received. Avoid glibly grabbing at any 'spiritual' encounter without being sure it is from God. Many well intentioned people have gone astray because they wrongly assumed that because something appears supernatural to them it is automatically from God. Satan is the master deceiver, and the Bible teaches that we are to 'test the spirits' (1 John 4:1). Everything must pass the 'Word' test. Does the Word of God cover what you are hoping to achieve.

Then too, you may be driven by something that you personally want, and the impression you have actually originates in your own heart and not from God. You may even desire something that is good in itself, but not necessarily God's specific and best plan for you at this time.

## What Does Your Future Hold

Here are some ways in which you can 'test' that which you feel is from God.

- Does it agree with scripture?
- Does it make you more like Christ?
- Does your trusted church oversight confirm it?
- Is it 'within' your call or draw you away from it?
- What is the time frame: when to start?
- With whom does God want you to proceed?
- How does he want you to go forward from here?
- What preparation is needed?

God does not mind you being cautious while you learn to accurately discern His voice. You certainly don't want to be distracted or even deceived into thinking that which you have heard or seen in the spirit is from God when it is not. God has ordained that you and I walk in the good works that He has planned for us (Ephesians 2:10). His provision is always attached to His plan. Aside from His mercy, God is not obliged to bless anyone's pursuits. So learn to walk in obedience to His plans and pursuits.

### **Process Summarized...**

### **...See Where You are Right Now**

Physical life is conceived when two people are in intimate relationship. It works this way in spiritual matters too. Intimacy with God through worship and prayer is paramount. Assess whether your relationship with God is close, average or distant. The closer you are to Him, the more clear things become. Maintain close communion with Him to ensure that you are on track with your dream. Time has a way of causing vision or dream 'shift' if you are not careful.

## What Does Your Future Hold

God is all knowing and we only see and know in part. He expects us to call on Him to reveal His vision or dream for us.

Jeremiah 33:3

*3'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'*

Colossians 4:2-3

*2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; 3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word,...*

Insight from God does not generally come as you watch the six o'clock news, but as you seek Him and ask for a door of opportunity to open to you.

The interpretation of a dream is another vital part of the process. Don't assume that you have properly interpreted God's will when you first receive a dream. Take the necessary time to process what you have seen or heard. If a dream or vision is from God, it must be understood and will come to pass in its proper time.

It has been said that when we wake up from a dream and still carry it when our eyes are wide open, then the action really starts. Having communicated His dream for you, God expects you to initiate the necessary steps to begin fulfilling it.

Insure yourself against setbacks, failures and false starts at the beginning by being alert to the wiles of the enemy. He will attack your thoughts and try to abort your dream in its infancy. Remember that obstacles do not necessarily mean you are out of God's will, so learn to discern and remain firm and committed to your dream.

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*If you feel pressured to back off your dream, remember that the same energy it takes to retreat from a bad situation might just be the energy needed to break through to victory. Never give up on your God given dream.*

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# 3

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## Deal With Dream Destroyers

John 10:10

*The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.*

Hebrews 10:23

*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.*

**A** dream from God is a momentous and life producing thing, so you can expect some opposition from your adversary both directly and indirectly. Satan will attempt to undermine your faith because it is the currency of your dream. Without faith it is impossible to fulfill God's dream in God's way. Human resources are simply not enough.

Dreams thrive on hope and hope must always be 'alive' (1 Peter 1:3). To stay alive, grow and produce your hope must be fed by regular meditation or musing on God's promises.

## What Does Your Future Hold

Life is not measured in length of time only, but in content or quality. Faith produces results in time, and this is what really counts. Otherwise all you have is religious activity.

God has no problem in sharing His greatness with mankind, and the dream you have received from Him is because of the largeness of His heart. On the other hand satan is small minded and will seek to restrict and keep you from fulfilling your destiny.

### **Opposition to Your Dream**

Your adversary, satan, is intent on destroying your faith in whatever way he can, if you let him. So learn to fight the good fight of faith by waging spiritual war with God's prophetic word over your life. (1 Timothy 1:18). The prophetic word is what God says about your future. Learn to continually speak God's will for your life in the face of any setbacks and seeming contradictions.

He'll accuse, condemn, undermine, and stir up people to persecute you. He will also push you to extremes either that of a self centered ego or on the other hand even false humility.

There will be obstacles and resistance to your dreams. Learn to discern between God's resistance because of any pride, presumption (Balaam and the donkey) or even improper timing and the enemy hindering you. His nature and specialty as the 'adversary' is to stand in your way.

His tactics are subtle. He may even trap you into brooding over evil so much that you are paralyzed from doing good. Evil is always overcome by doing good in the same way as darkness is always dispelled by light.

## What Does Your Future Hold

Also, if you feel pressured to back off your dream, remember that the same energy it takes to retreat from a bad situation might just be the energy needed to break through to victory. Never give up on your God given dream. Let it define you.

### **Time**

When things take time, contrary circumstances can eat away at your faith and initial firm resolve. If you begin to question the dream, you open the door to doubt and unbelief which will undermine your progress. In God there is always a due time, so learn to be patient. Faith and patience go together.

1 Peter 5:6

*Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.*

Unexpected time delays can also dampen your enthusiasm. Joseph waited a full thirteen years for the completion of one dream, then another nine years before complete the fulfillment of the second. You may be tempted to walk away from your dream after only nine days and short circuit your destiny. God does things with eternity in mind, and He thinks generationally. How will the decisions you take today impact the next generation? You have to keep the long term in focus at all times, and work back from it to gain perspective for the situations you face in the present.

Guard against the evaporation of God's breath on your dream. Make it your business to be refilled and refreshed in the Lord (Ephesians 5:18 & Acts 3:19). What God has started in your life, He intends to finish. When you understand time frames, you avoid spiritual fatigue.

## What Does Your Future Hold

Your time may not have yet 'fully come' (Acts 1:1 / Galatians 4:4). So avoid settling back in some sort of comfort zone on the way to fulfilling your dream. Your dream is unique and exceptional, and will require special effort to see it through. Time can therefore be your friend or enemy. A friend, when the dream is incubating or an enemy when the 'dust' of compromise settles on it.

Learn to press on without knowing everything. Uncertainty in some things never goes away. We only know in part, so to procrastinate is to bow to a perverted fatalism that allows life's circumstances to simply wash over you. God expects you to make decisions without knowing everything. He will back you when they are based on His Word. It's like going on a journey from one city to the next. Really, all you need are signposts to tell you that you are on track. You don't need to know every detail of the road before you start out. Keep your eyes peeled for God's signposts: little confirmations that you are on the right path to fulfilling your dream.

Beware of being sidetracked from your dream goals through petty circumstance. This may happen a little at a time, till you are far from your original objective. The 'little foxes' can in time take you far off course and sap your resolve. So take time to evaluate your progress and be ready for your time when it comes. Learn to see 'little' distractions in the perspective of the big picture of God's plan for you.

## **Friends**

Surprisingly, your closest friends may at times put a damper on your dreams. Friends often know you according to the 'flesh' or their past experiences of you, and can put limitations on you if you allow them. They have not 'seen'

## What Does Your Future Hold

what you have seen in your dream or vision, and may even be somewhat threatened by your uniqueness. They may be living well below God's higher will for their lives, and without knowing it have become envious of your new found hope and zeal.

Even though they are your friends, they may be harboring secret jealousy of what God is planning to do in your life. Of course, you may be blessed to have a circle of friends that is entirely supportive, but this may not always be the case. Naivety is just as counterproductive as ignorance. It is not that you become distrustful and suspicious of your friends, but it helps to have a sober understanding of their human frailty, and still be friends.

Criticism often comes because you are not conforming to the average. People are threatened by excellence, and your hope and determination may show up the inadequacy of someone else's character. In cases like this, be sure to associate with people who support you. Love the rest of your friends but don't give up your dream for them.

Stay committed to God and His dream for you.

John 2:23-25

*24 But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, 25 and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.*

## Family

People want the love, acceptance and approval of family. Like your friends, family may only know you according to what they have seen in the natural. Very often they understand you from a mindset of reason and not from revelation from God about you. We must learn to know people after the spirit or their hearts and not the externals.

## What Does Your Future Hold

Jesus was misunderstood even by His earthly family, yet He chose to base His identity solely on what God spoke over Him.

Mark 6:3

*Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" And they were offended at Him.*

Matthew 3:17

*And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

Sometimes it takes time before those closest to you realize that you are not to be boxed in by your past track record in the family. Hold fast to who you are now in Christ, and what God has called you to do. You are now accountable to Him.

Your family is usually the first to know about your dreams. Your dreams are still fragile and easily damaged or crushed, so be aware and protect yourself and your dream in the initial stage of conception and growth.

Young David had to stand firm against his brothers' unreasonable criticism and judgments when he came to support them at the battle with the Philistines. He had already been prophesied over that he was to be king, yet they questioned his motives. They were envious and short sighted, projecting their own issues onto him. He chose not to be offended and kept His focus on the cause at hand.

His character showed at this early age when he took on the challenge of defeating Goliath the most threatening enemy of his nation at the time. David kept the dream alive as he walked with God despite family opposition. He

chose to be defined by his dream and not confined by his brothers' jealousy.

### **Failures of Your Own**

Previous failure can make you 'gun shy' or hesitant to stay in the fight. Don't become a victim and sit on the sidelines of despair and distraction. Failure is only final when you don't get up and fight the good fight of faith again.

Failure is common to all at some time and in some measure (James 3:2). Confine any failure to the past – don't feed it, learn from it. Turn the energy of your frustration into the fuel or fertilizer of your future victories.

Shift into gear again. Failure is only permanent when you refuse to try again. Don't play it safe, rather be a 'wet water walker' than a 'dry boat' Christian. It has been said that success is going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm. Take time to evaluate your methods and the determination of your heart, and be courageous enough to make any necessary changes that will ensure victory in the next round of the battle.

You are the sum total of what God has gifted you with, your heart passion, natural abilities and talents, personality and life experiences. Don't let bad experiences dominate the rest of who you are. You are more than any bad experiences. God has chosen to live in you, and sees you as someone who is valuable and precious. Begin to see yourself the same way, and keep in mind the other aspects of your total makeup to properly process what may have happened.

For example, take what God has gifted you with and remember that He will not take it from you if you slip up along the road. His gifts and callings are 'irrevocable'

## What Does Your Future Hold

(Romans 1:29). He does throw up His hands in despair when you mess up. On the contrary He is there to pick you up, dust you off and point you back in the right direction.

Stand on this truth and turn a bad situation into a better one by keeping your attitude positive and your 'switch of faith' turned on. Never quit on yourself or God. He won't quit on you. He's still in the business of forgiveness and restoration.

Psalm 130:4

*4 But there is forgiveness with You,  
That You may be feared.*

Joel 2:25

*25 I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust  
has eaten...*

## Failures of Others

Don't be tainted by the negative testimony of others who have failed. Learn from their mistakes, don't be discouraged by them. Joshua and Caleb had to hold onto their dream of possessing the Promised Land for forty years because of the negative testimony of their peers and friends, the ten other spies. When they did eventually enter the land, they had learnt that God is faithful. The surrounding unbelief of their peers had been removed, and they could now move forward into their destiny, even though it had been delayed forty years!

Overcome negativity by the blood of the lamb and the word of your testimony, not someone else's negativity. Always go with God's Word over your life and do not allow your dream to be hijacked by placing too much weight on what others are saying, doing or not doing. They only

## What Does Your Future Hold

know in part, and certainly don't know all that God knows about you.

History is full of people who have continued the journey to victory over those who have fallen. Mt Everest was not climbed the first time anyone attempted to reach the summit.

Romans 14:10

*10 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*

When a brother fails or falls, know that God has not finished with them, and neither is He finished with you. Do not rush to judgment. Let God be the final judge. Misplaced zeal for correctness kills compassion.

Enlarge your heart and walk in love, understanding and avoid criticism and judgment. They only quench your resolve to follow through on your own dream.

## **Neutrality**

Neutrality may be defined as a 'lack of conviction' that exists when you settle for a life marked by convenient mediocrity. Slothfulness in Hebrews 6:12 means to be 'slow and without momentum'. When neutrality sets in, you become neither 'hot' nor 'cold' but lukewarm (Revelation 3:15-16). Hot is energetic and light giving, warming and therapeutic. Cold is refreshing and awakening. Both are clearly identifiable and helpful in their own way. However 'lukewarm' is middle of the road, compromising, taking things for granted, and has the danger of lulling you into a false sense of security and comfort.

## What Does Your Future Hold

We are responsible to cultivate our own spiritual passion and 'feed the fire'. Left to itself your dream or vision will cool off in time.

Laodicea was renowned for being a prosperous garment trading medical center especially in eyesight conditions. Hence the rebuke from the Lord for being 'poor, blind and naked' is particularly apt for the Christians who had let Laodicea's brand of complacent worldliness into their church. They thought they needed nothing. It was a matter of self sufficiency than led to half heartedness. That's why they needed to buy gold, (be spiritually rich); be clothed in white (to be truly pure) and anoint their eyes with eye salve so they could truly see. Their bankers, clothiers, and doctors could not really deliver the goods.

To buy something, you take what is of value to you to purchase something you value more. The Laodicean Church had become useless (lukewarm), and were in danger without even knowing it. Don't let lukewarm attitudes derail your destiny. Keep your dream alive by being alert to any complacency or neutrality creeping into your life.

### **A Lack of Sanctified Imagination**

Positive imagination is the ability to see and go beyond the here and now. Ordinary and routine things in everyday life can cause you to stagnate and lose your sense of adventure and stop dreaming. Dreaming involving thinking 'outside the box' of mere survival from day to day.

Use life's frustrations to dream of better things. Don't be put down by them, but imagine yourself further down the road. Think like God would think in your situation. Step back and take the time to dream. Let the world of the

## What Does Your Future Hold

imaginary captivate you again like it did in your childhood. Dare to dream in the face of the ordinary. Capture the thoughts God has towards you: they are like the sands on the sea shore.

Psalm 139:17-18

*17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!*

*How great is the sum of them!*

*18 If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand;*

## The Gift of Perspective

We live mostly in the moment, whereas God lives in eternity, outside of time. He sees things in terms of a much bigger picture than we do, and perspective is one of His gifts to us. When problems threaten to destroy your dreams, realize that the road to success often involves staring down and defeating problems, not sidestepping them. Character will always be developed in the fire, not besides the pool. Character is strengthened when you see things from God's point of view. He knows the end from the beginning and wants to encourage you as you make progress in your journey. He lives in your present to strengthen you, but is also waiting for you in your future.

When you stare at current obstacles and not the future objectives, you lose perspective. Do not allow problems to obscure your view of God. He is always in a higher place beckoning you onward and upward.

Revelation 4:1

*After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this."*

## What Does Your Future Hold

New vantage points always present new vision and hope. The good work He begun in you, will be completed, if you cooperate with Him. See things from His point of view. It's much better when you realize that you are actually seated with Him in heavenly places.

### Ephesians 2:4-6

*4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,*

Because we are joint heirs with Jesus in the grace of life (Romans 8:17), God is committed to training us for the responsibilities of reigning with Him. To do so, we must learn to see things from His perspective. Live above life's circumstances and as one pastor used to say, 'keep looking down' from God's high vantage point.

What Does Your Future Hold

## What Does Your Future Hold

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*The future comes to those who are prepared.*

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## 4

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# The Power Of Preparation

John 14:1-3

*1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

**G**od is never caught off guard because He has made preparations for every eventuality. Yet He expects you to plan and prepare where you can. Your future depends on your preparation. When you do not plan or prepare you actually 'prepare' for failure.

Sportsmen prepare for a sporting event for weeks and months, and in some cases like the Olympics, years before the event. It is no time to start practicing your sporting skills on the day of competition. It's too late. Unfortunately many Christians are spiritually unfit to face the day of challenge or adversity when it comes. They have not recognized or taken advantage of the seasons of preparation God has given them.

## What Does Your Future Hold

A key area of preparation is to learn to walk in God's presence. In His presence you find the joy and strength to keep moving forward into your destiny when difficult times come.

### **Priority of His Presence**

Exodus 33:13-16

*13 Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people." 14 And He said, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." 15 Then he said to Him, "If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. 16 For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth."*

Everything worthwhile happens in God's presence. God had earlier called the whole Israelite nation to be a people of His presence. The Israelites were supposed to bond closely to God in preparation for going into the Promised Land. Yet they retreated back and left it up to Moses to go into God's presence. The awesomeness of His presence was misinterpreted at Mt Sinai where the law was given, and they drew back in unnatural fear. As a result they delayed their destiny for a whole generation of forty years.

God had wanted to establish a 'new normal' where a new habit of focusing on His presence would have served them well in the challenges to come.

In the above passage God and Moses are actually conversing forty years later. God has never changed His mind about His promise to take the Israelites into the Promised Land, and Moses is as committed to His presence

## What Does Your Future Hold

as he ever was. He does not want to go forward in the dream for the nation without God's presence.

Make it your priority to enjoy God's presence by establishing a lifestyle of daily praise and worship. This privilege will enrich your walk with the Lord and prepare you for lasting fulfillment.

### **Develop Faith for the Journey**

Isaiah 40:3

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

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 or made straight. Cultivate a lifestyle of Bible reading prayer and obedience. Listen to seasoned mentors and see your faith grow towards where you need to go. Building faith is never lost time, and is a vital ingredient in fulfilling God's dream in your life.

### **Understanding God's Seasons of Preparation Wilderness Wandering and Other Things**

Preparation time ought never to be wasted. Whether you have fallen into some 'wilderness wandering' through ignorance or disobedience or are simply in 'down' time because of a season of rest, recovery and rejuvenation, always take advantage of the time, and prepare for the next stage. The future comes to those who are prepared. Success occurs where opportunity and preparation meet.

## What Does Your Future Hold

There is always a seasonal element to life, and in God's world there is always a purpose attached to a particular season. Discern and understand the season you are now in, and know what to do. When you cooperate with the season you come out better prepared.

Luke 12:54-56

*54 Then He also said to the multitudes, "Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is. 55 And when you see the south wind blow, you say, 'There will be hot weather'; and there is. 56 Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?"*

God expects us to discern the time or season we are in. Don't try to harvest in a season of sowing. For the obedient, the wilderness is preparation for possession. The Israelites who obeyed God in faith eventually did possess their Promised Land, whereas the disobedient did not. Their dream perished with them in the wilderness.

Thank God we now live in an age of grace and we get another chance to be cleansed of unbelief and be prepared to enter into our promised future.

God helps us discover what is in our hearts when we are tested. Do not be tempted to say 'it's all good', when it is not. Face up to the truth in a situation or season. You can only move to where you should be, if you know where you are right now.

Deuteronomy 8:2-4

*2 And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. 3 So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by*

## What Does Your Future Hold

*bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.*

God wants you to depend totally on Him, and develop a true hunger and thirst for His righteousness. He is displeased when you settle for fleshly natural substitutes: the leeks, melons and garlic of your 'Egyptian' slave past.

The Israelites complained about the relative discomfort of the journey, and wanted to go back to what they knew. They foolishly thought that going back was better. They had lost perspective and forgotten that the reason for being in the desert was to transition them to their future. Their hearts had to be right (Deuteronomy 8:2), and they had to be toughened up for war and conquest (Exodus 13:17).

The following sobering scriptures underscore the seriousness of pursuing one's own fleshly cravings in place of submitting to God's plans of preparation.

Psalm 106:15

*15 And He gave them their request,  
But sent leanness into their soul.*

Psalm 78:29-31

*29 So they ate and were well filled,  
For He gave them their own desire.  
30 They were not deprived of their craving;  
But while their food was still in their mouths,  
31 The wrath of God came against them,  
And slew the stoutest of them,  
And struck down the choice men of Israel.*

God will allow you to settle for something less than His best for any season, but there will be consequences. The Israelites found this out after begging God for their fleshly cravings to be satisfied.

## What Does Your Future Hold

Always seek God's face or presence, and do not focus merely on His hand of provision. His glory or presence changes us, not His miracle provision! The fact that the Israelites backslid quickly even after all the miraculous provision of food is proof enough of this (Exodus 16:1-3).

Allow the Lord to expose and thus cleanse you from things that will cause you to fall in a season of preparation. Fleshly lusts or strong desires apart from God, improper priorities or 'idols', sexual improprieties, complaining and grumbling do not position you for the future. Learn to bring your passions and appetites into submission to your dream. You cannot expect to take a city if you can't bring your own issues under God's control.

Proverbs 16:32

*32 He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty,  
And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.*

Christ like character is therefore the true measure of your progress towards your dream's fulfillment.

## Purification Process

Isaiah 40:3-5

*3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness:*

*"Prepare the way of the LORD;*

*Make straight in the desert*

*A highway for our God.*

*4 Every valley shall be exalted*

*And every mountain and hill brought low;*

*The crooked places shall be made straight*

*And the rough places smooth;*

*5 The glory of the LORD shall be revealed,*

*And all flesh shall see it together;*

*For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*

## What Does Your Future Hold

It is your responsibility to present yourself to the Lord so that He can purify your heart. God wants to straighten out anything that may be crooked in your thinking or attitude. Just as a chiropractor straightens out misalignments in a person's spine so that the body can function properly and facilitate health, so God wants unhealthy 'crookedness' removed from your life.

The valleys in the above passage speak of depression and oppression, whereas the mountains refer to pride and arrogance. Rough places are insensitivities to the concerns of others. These are all matters of the heart that hinder God's glory accessing the deepest parts of your heart. Repentance and the removal of religious hypocrisy, deception and deceit prepare the way for the Lord's return or put another way: your future.

When John the Baptist became an 'overnight' sensation after 30 years of preparation, his assignment was to prepare the children of Israel to receive the coming of the Lord by calling them to repentance.

Luke 1:16-18

*And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*

Today true prophetic ministry prepares people's hearts for the Lord's entrance and purposes. Prophets prepare God's people for the future. Their foresight brings insight or perspective to your current situation so that you can make necessary adjustments. When you listen to God's prophetic voices you prosper and walk into God's preferred future.

## What Does Your Future Hold

### 2 Chronicles 20:20

*20b Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.*

The Lord comes **to** us before He comes **for** us. He has to judge His house first, before He judges the world. To judge in this context means to purify refine, refresh, revive and release into destiny.

### 1 Peter 4:17

*7 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God;*

### Malachi 3:1-3

*"Behold, I send My messenger,  
And he will prepare the way before Me.  
And the Lord, whom you seek,  
Will suddenly come to His temple,  
Even the Messenger of the covenant,  
In whom you delight.  
Behold, He is coming,"  
Says the LORD of hosts.*

*2 "But who can endure the day of His coming?  
And who can stand when He appears?  
For He is like a refiner's fire  
And like launderer's soap.*

*3 He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver;  
He will purify the sons of Levi,  
And purge them as gold and silver,  
That they may offer to the LORD  
An offering in righteousness.*

When the Holy God comes to you, He cannot tolerate ungodliness. It must be purified out. His intent is to be close to you, reveal the power of righteousness, remove the consciousness and power of sin and replace it with a 'son consciousness'. When you look to Jesus, and yield to His refining process, most often in the crucible of difficulty,

## What Does Your Future Hold

you become better and thus more prepared for your future.

### 2 Timothy 2:20-22

*20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. 22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

The responsibility for purification is partly yours: you are to cleanse yourself through the Word, pursue righteousness, and flee youthful lusts. No one can do this for you. Others can encourage you to make right choices, but you are the one who must make a stand for righteousness.

Many go 'astray in their hearts' in times of trial. This is not God's plan for you. As the saying goes, 'when the going gets tough, the tough get going'. Be one of the tough ones who endure in these perilous end times. There is a rest for those that do.

### Hebrews 3:7-14

*7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:  
"Today, if you will hear His voice,  
8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,  
In the day of trial in the wilderness,  
9 Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me,  
And saw My works forty years.  
10 Therefore I was angry with that generation,  
And said, 'They always go astray in their heart,  
And they have not known My ways.'  
11 So I swore in My wrath,  
'They shall not enter My rest.' "  
12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil  
heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 13 but*

## What Does Your Future Hold

*exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

The apostle Peter was familiar with trial and testing, and today still offers this exhortation through his writings.

### 1 Peter 1:6-8

*6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love.*

Genuine faith is what God is looking for. Fake faith is not transparently true to God and His Word. As faith is the language of the future, to walk into God's plan for your life, your faith must be pure and free from worldly or impure influences. Even gold can perish or tarnish if it is impure. In contrast, purified gold in its best state is malleable, easily shaped in the master craftsman's hands and it always shines.

Only heat purifies. Impurities come to the surface in difficult times. When they do, they must be skimmed off; otherwise they will pollute the mix once again when things cool off.

On the other hand, good times must be enjoyed. They are the blessed fruit of God's dealings. Celebrate and testify to God's goodness, but stay alert in good times as they can lull you into complacency.

### 1 Thessalonians 2:4

*...we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.*

## What Does Your Future Hold

The apostle Paul had to go through a fourteen year purifying process in the wilderness of obscurity before being released into a more public fruitful level of apostolic ministry. He was 'approved' by God before being released to minister as an apostle. To 'approve' means to test, examine, inspect, scrutinize or determine the quality of something. Never be in a hurry to bypass God's times of approval.

Paul was able to fulfill his future and stand his ground in the storms that came against His 'house' because he was a vessel fit and prepared for the Masters use.

### **The Power of Patience**

James 1:2-4

*2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience . 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

Not all seasons of preparation are because you have 'fallen' into a trial through some disobedience or ignorance of God's will. God may simply be getting you ready for the next level. In any case patience is a virtue that will cause you to overcome in any circumstance.

Patience is produced by remaining in God's presence, and feeding on His faithfulness. The Bible promises that you will lack nothing. So far, I have found this to be true in thirty years of ministry, even when I have 'fallen' into trials through my own shortsightedness, ignorance and disobedience at times.

Patience is the ability to steadfastly wait in faith for what God has promised despite contrary circumstances that tempt you to give up and walk away from your destiny. When you are patient, you will not lack in the end. If you

## What Does Your Future Hold

take matters in your own hand and try to 'force' a result, you will fall short of what God intended. You will probably get ahead of God, stumble in some way and have to play catch up.

Patience works together with faith, its power twin, to ensure that what God has promised (your future) does indeed come to pass.

Hebrews 6:10-12

*11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

People who have waited for a long time can become 'sluggish', like a car that is running, but not really fully up to speed. Spiritual sluggishness can lead to falling short of what God originally intended for your life. Your diligence in the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, worship and bold declarations of His promises are the key here. Remember, faith is the substance of things hoped for, and hope is the currency of the future. Without it you cannot trade the present for your preferred future.

God is always at work setting you up for success. If you are impatient you may miss the divine appointments He is about to orchestrate. Be patient, trust God and avoid trying to 'make' things happen in your own strength. Abraham made this mistake when he produced a child (Ishmael) through his wife's servant Hagar. Ishmael was not the son of promise. Later when Abraham and Sarah had become fully convinced of God's integrity, they produced their miracle child Isaac in their nineties.

The fulfillment of God's promises may not pop out of the proverbial ATM slot according to your time frame and convenience. There may be some alignment needed. You

may not be in a position to receive what God has for you right now. Then God may still be working on someone else's heart too. This is where patience comes into play. The principle of seedtime and harvest – Genesis 8:22 (with some water in between) must still operate, so be patient. It probably took you some time to get where you are now, and although instantaneous miracles do still occur today, they don't usually happen every day, or all the time. God is committed to instructing you in His way of dominion over the flesh and negative circumstances, and this process of renewal does take time.

Patience and time are connected. You step into God's fullness in due season (Galatians 6:9), or God's appointed time (Hebrews 2:2). He graciously expands your capacity to contain His vision, and gives you time to adjust to necessary changes. Like a pregnant woman expands and adjusts to the growing baby within her womb, you have to adjust and learn to accommodate the new demands of the future you are stepping into. Your attitudes, actions, reactions, motivations must be reshaped to take on the future.

### **Delayed Destiny?**

Destiny can be delayed; we have seen that in the example of the Israelites wandering through the wilderness. Personally, your destiny can be delayed because of four main reasons.

First, you can delay your destiny by faulty theology where you believe God as responsible for absolutely everything: good or bad. Offense can get in if you believe God is responsible for the bad things in your life. There is no accountability for human sin in this way of thinking.

## What Does Your Future Hold

Second, scripture teaches that destiny can be delayed when you do not aggressively pursue your future with the authority God has given you. He has made His move, paid the price, paved the way and now it is your turn to press in and lay hold of what He has promised you. You must be doer of the Word.

Third, delays come when you presumptuously step out ahead of God in the flesh without enquiring of Him as to His timing or strategy in the pursuit of His purposes (future).

In cases like these, you will hear a voice behind you saying: 'This is the way, walk in it' (Isaiah 30:21). The reason God is behind you is because you have gone ahead of Him and turned to your own way. You may have started well with Him leading you, but if you are not diligent, you can go astray by getting ahead of God.

Fourth, if you accurately hear God's instructions at first you will make good progress. But if you then slip into 'cruise' mode, inertia will lull you into a sort of spiritual 'sleep walking'. God expects you to be wide awake and make the necessary mid course corrections to hit your target.

### **The Pain of Waiting**

We live in a 'now' generation conditioned to expect things delivered in a hurry: coffee in less than a minute, an oil change for the car in ten. Yet, God is never in a hurry. He is also never late. God always uses seemingly intolerable and painful delays to ensure that what we finally end up doing has a lasting and more valuable eternal element in it.

## What Does Your Future Hold

Ecclesiastes 3:14

*14 I know that whatever God does,  
It shall be forever.*

Jesus waited eighteen years to step into His public ministry. As early as age twelve, He had seen who He was and what He was destined to do as God's son ( Luke 2:49). Yet He chose to submit Himself to His human parent's imperfect authority for a long time. He obviously walked by faith in this, because on the day He was publicly acknowledged in baptism at the Jordan River, His Heavenly Father declared that He was 'well pleased' with His Son. God was well pleased with Jesus because He had walked in faith those eighteen long years.

Luke 3:21-22

*21 When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. 22 And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."*

Then, Paul, who was arguably the most influential apostle to the gentiles, spent fourteen years in obscurity before being released into his sphere of broader influence. Paul had to learn patience before being released into the fullness of His future. The revelations he received whilst on God's 'backburner', later became invaluable to the church worldwide as scripture. Paul saw many things in obscurity that astounded even Peter who had walked with Jesus in the flesh for three whole years (2 Peter 3:16).

Moses who spent forty years in wilderness isolation, provides another example. Yet he was brought out of the desert to become the deliverer of a nation. Never see 'down time' as wasted. Get with God, soak up His presence, and be filled with His Word so that when the

## What Does Your Future Hold

time is right you will be able to quickly respond to His promptings and move into position to play your part in destiny.

### **Why Wait?**

Waiting allows God the time to show you whether your faith passes 'quality control' so that it can stand tough demands (James 1:2-4).

Imagine if car manufacturers cut short their crash testing of car safety products like seat belts and airbags, releasing inferior products onto the market. There would be unnecessary injuries and deaths that could have been avoided if they had only been thorough (patient and complete) in the testing process.

Second, waiting reveals whether you have developed enough character to carry the blessing. Character and gifting function best when balanced with each other. Learn not to grumble while you wait, and take advantage of every situation: good and bad whilst on your journey. Faith and patience work together when you know that 'all things' will work out as you continue to love God and walk in His calling on your life (Romans 8:28).

God knows what you can take, and will not allow you to go beyond your 'snapping point'. Be comforted while you deal with delay, depression, despair, disputes and distractions that invariably come from the enemy in the 'in-between' times you experience.

1 Corinthians 10:13

*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

## What Does Your Future Hold

Learn to escape into God's sustaining, refreshing and enlightening presence through worship and a daily devotion to His Word.

Third, we have to wait in order to learn that we are called to serve our fellow man. Like Jesus, we are released into a position of authority so that we will serve God's people with an acceptable manner. Servant hood is not a stepping stone to greatness, it is greatness!

Matthew 20:27-28

*27 And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave-- 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

Your life ought to be measured by what you give to mankind, not by what you artfully extract from your fellow man.

Fourth, waiting serves to rid us of presumption: the tendency to jump to conclusions about how, when and where things ought to happen. God gives you the 'what'- a vision of the future. At this point you may want to take control simply believing that because God has spoken that everything will work out.

God must now give you the 'how' and 'when' of reaching for that future. God is the initiator, sustainer and processor of everything; and as such must be consulted on everything. True success comes when we do God's will, God's way, with His timing. He must get the glory no matter what.

Romans 11:36

*36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.*

## **Making the Most of Your Wait**

Realize that today is the only day you have right now. Make the most of it whether the circumstances are good or bad. Your attitude is vital. Practice for greatness right where you are.

Joseph went from 'entry level' slave 'top slave' in Potiphar's household and then from 'regular prisoner' to 'top prisoner' in Pharaoh's prison all because of his attitude. Promotion can even come when you feel imprisoned!

He had come to realize that God was with Him no matter what situation he landed up in. (Genesis 39:2-3). He let God's presence define his day, not the adverse and uncomfortable challenges. He rose to the top no matter where he was faced with.

Your gift may need to be 'stirred up' (2 Timothy 1:6). Things tend to settle after the initial excitement and stirring of a vision. Repeatedly reflect on your progress.

Talk to likeminded people who have your best interests at heart. Receive their encouragement and affirmation. Find a symbol of your dream: a photo, picture or promise, and keep it before you, in your Bible or on the refrigerator if needs be. God gave Abraham a picture of the dust of the earth and even the stars of heaven as encouragement of the number of his future descendents.

Go the extra mile by doing more than the expected minimum: wash, dry and put away the dishes before anyone asks you!

Invest in your future by being ready to move at the drop of a hat. Alertness is not optional. God can and does move

## What Does Your Future Hold

suddenly. Sluggish and slothful sleepers are always left behind.

Matthew 25:5

*5 But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept...*

Be like the wise virgins watching and waiting for the moment. This passage and the next underline the need for alertness.

Matthew 25:13

*...Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.*

Hold onto your confidence. Without confidence you cannot fulfill God's will. Only God can give you an eternal perspective on the adverse things that may be happening to you now. When you realize that in the end there will be a favorable eternal outcome to your life, you have the strength to hold on to your confidence and not cast it away and lose the reward God has stored up for you.

Hebrews 10:32-38

*But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: 33 partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; 34 for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. 35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:*

*37 "For yet a little while,*

*And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.*

*38 Now the just shall live by faith;*

## What Does Your Future Hold

*But if anyone draws back,  
My soul has no pleasure in him."*

I am not advocating a form of faith that circumvents all struggles. This side of heaven there will be struggles, and we do have need of endurance in the face of opposition. After all, we don't live in a spiritual vacuum without frictional resistance in the spirit. We have an adversary who seeks to hinder God's will (1 Thessalonians 2:18), and we cannot afford to draw back before receiving God's promise.

Call to remembrance times of intimacy and victory you have enjoyed as well as the fruit you have borne. Do not forget what your eyes have seen. Personally, there have been times when I have despaired while waiting for God's promises to manifest, but have then been reminded by the Lord to remember His faithfulness in tough times. He has always proven Himself to be faithful, and has come through for me and my family in our need.

Learn to rejoice in the midst of affliction and add another weapon to your arsenal that enforces your adversary's defeat every time. God's will is clear: rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

*16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

What Does Your Future Hold

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*Have you really wondered why God shows you things to come? It is not merely to warn you of impending danger so that you can prepare, but His higher purpose is to present you with opportunities to creatively participate in shaping your tomorrows.*

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## 5

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### How To Step Into Your Future

**A** better future only comes to those who take steps towards it. Reaching your preferred destination depends on taking the following key steps. Remember where God guides, He provides.

#### Co Labor with God

God has promoted the New Testament believer to the high level of covenant friendship. Friends share some things and even promote each other's well being. But John 15:15 teaches that Jesus held His disciples in such high regard that He shared '**all** things' that He heard from His Father with them. Think of that, '**all** things', not just some things.

John 15:15

*15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.*

God is so committed to you that He held nothing back in Christ. He expects no less a commitment from you. He

## What Does Your Future Hold

desires a divine partnership, where you co labor with Him to save the world! He has even sent the divine 'paraclete' or helper, the Holy Spirit, to take hold together with us against things that stand in the way of His dream for us.

1 Corinthians 3:9

*9 For we are God's fellow workers...*

What a challenging truth: God has chosen us to work with Him to fulfill His plan for man. He has even mapped out a set of 'good works' He wants each of us to fulfill.

Ephesians 2:10

*10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

Your privilege is to work with God in discovering what exactly He has for you to do. Thankfully you have the Holy Spirit to guide you in this pursuit. He will enlighten you to the hope of your calling, and help you see the potential God deposited in you the moment you accepted Jesus and became a new creature in Him.

Ephesians 1:18

*8 ...the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling...*

God is with you, in you and for you. Your future is brighter than your past when you are in Christ and He is in you (2 Corinthians 5:17).

## Coming Things

Isaiah 45:11

*11 Thus says the LORD,  
The Holy One of Israel, and his Maker:*

## What Does Your Future Hold

*"Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons;  
And concerning the work of My hands, you command Me.*

John 16:13

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

Have you really wondered why God shows you things to come? It is not merely to warn you of impending danger so that you can prepare, but His higher purpose is to present you with opportunities to creatively participate in shaping your tomorrows. God is not a fatalist, nor should you be. We know that some things that are prophesied are going to come to pass whether we like it or not, but there are countless creative opportunities for God's grace to flow through you towards your preferred future.

You still have the power to choose...within the frame work of His sovereignty. Religious robots are no fun for God or anyone else for that matter. You are a displayer of His glory, and tomorrow is your inheritance. God loves it when you do well (Psalm 35:27), and has come to share His glory with man (John 17:22).

God shows you promised 'big picture' things to come through His Word, and also by means of His prophets. They 'see' and communicate a prophetic edge or 'future sensing' to the body of Christ so that, as a whole, we can orientate our specific doings within the framework of God's broader plan and destiny. When you listen for, hear and understand what is being said you are edified, exhorted and comforted about the future (1 Corinthians 14:3).

When God shows you things to come, it is as if you have 'gone into the future' and seen what will take place. Your responsibility is then to establish a witness with what you have seen by verbalizing it. In this way, your future is

## What Does Your Future Hold

determined by your agreement with God's revealed will. This ought not to be so strange or unusual, as Jesus taught that He only spoke and did what He saw His Father doing.

John 8:38

*8 I speak what I have seen with My Father...*

God lives in the eternal present, so when you enter His presence through prayer and worship and 'see' His will for your future, all He expects is a witness or agreement followed by corresponding obedience of necessary Spirit empowered action.

When you walk in His vision for your future, His supernatural provision is guaranteed. To be fully fruitful and avoid aimless activity, you have to see the future and step towards it.

## **Cultivate a New Way Of Thinking**

Mark 2:22

*And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.*

You cannot go to new level of life in God with an old mindset. Your spirit may have leaped when you heard God's Word, but your natural mind immediately goes to work trying to talk you out of God's best. Back in the day, new wine had to be put in new wineskins otherwise it would be spilled through the cracks that would develop from the old, hard and inflexible skin.

An unrenewed mind is like an old wineskin, which must be softened by the 'oil and water' of the Holy Spirit's work in

## What Does Your Future Hold

your heart. Dreams are about life transformation, and transformation is about renewing the mind.

Romans 12:2

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

Be prepared to go to places you have never been before. Dreams are all about new places. Settle it in your heart that you are an adventurer, a 'wet water walker' if needs be, and not a 'dry boat' Christian.

Joshua 3:4

*...for you have not passed this way before.*

Don't let your way of thinking limit God's plans for your life. He will work with what you give Him. If you only give Him permission to move according to what has already happened, then He is limited to your past. Make a choice to be open to new possibilities. Don't focus on what cannot be done, but on what can be done when you surrender everything to God. His future for you is always greater than your own mental construct.

Ephesians 3:20

*Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us...*

Things happen according to the 'power that works in us'. If the power is quenched through unbelief, then things don't happen.

Abraham, the father of our faith, had to become fully convinced that what God had promised (a child at age ninety nine); He was fully able to deliver on. Notice,

## What Does Your Future Hold

Abraham did not start out fully convinced in His mind, and in the process even took matters into his own hand. He was under pressure and agreed according to the custom of his day to have a child through Hagar, his wife's handmaiden. Regrettably this act of the flesh set in motion an enmity between Ishmael, the offspring of this union, and Isaac who was born later to Sarah, who at age ninety, become pregnant with him.

In like manner, you may need some convincing over time, or as the Bible puts it: 'renewing' of the mind to God's ways. Think about God's promises often. In this way, you will be 'reasoning' together with God, using His Word as the medium of exchange. His Word has the capacity to penetrate deep within your heart, bringing an assurance of God's best for your future.

Isaiah 1:18

*Come now, and let us reason together,"  
Says the LORD,...*

Hebrews 4:12-13

*12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Practice taking every negative thought 'captive' by placing them 'under' the authority of God's Word. Wayward thoughts that contradict His Word will control you. I make it my business to speak out what I know to be God's will every time I have a negative thought. I literally talk to myself and say out loud what God's Word has to say about my health, finances, future and so on when negative thoughts come. If you let a negative thought take up 'residence', another will come and join it, and soon a mental 'stronghold' will be established that will exalt itself

## What Does Your Future Hold

against the Word. These strongholds can and must be undercut by simple mental choices made on a daily basis.

### 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

*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,*

Choose to focus your thoughts on your promised future and God's pathways. Mentally rehearsing your problems only drives negativity deeper into your soul.

Actively look for positive things to think about. The Bible puts this way:

### Philippians 4:8-9

*Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things.*

To realize your dream you will be pressing forward in a world characterized by negativity. Take Joshua and Caleb as an example. They brought back a positive report from their spying mission into the Promised Land, whilst the ten other spies did not. The ten's negativity outweighed the 'can do' vote ten to two, and that day the fate of over two million Jewish people was sealed for another forty years in the wilderness. Sadly Joshua and Caleb had to endure that time 'down' time too. Such is the sad effect of negative thinking. It affects those around us. Negativity must be vigorously resisted especially when God has spoken.

Only when the next generation had been cleansed of doubt, double mindedness and unbelief, could they go in

## What Does Your Future Hold

and possess what belonged to them. It is my conviction that many believers today do not walk in the fullness of what God has planned for them, simply because they have not had their minds renewed to His will and ways.

Optimism is a choice you make to align your thinking with God's thoughts. Right now He is thinking positive thoughts about you. How do I know? His Word says so:

Jeremiah 29:11

*11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.*

### **Co-opt Help from Supporters**

1 Corinthians 15:33-34

*33 Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."*

The opposite is also true. Good company inspires good habits. Your friends can exhort you to greater heights than you could reach on your own.

Your friends may be imperfect and incomplete in their counsel, but God only has imperfect people to use to propel you into your future. Don't close yourself off to people in your life that God wants to use despite their imperfections. After all, He has to use you and me while we grow up in Christ. Jesus started out with imperfect disciples, and even after over three years of intense training, still had to keep reminding and correcting them.

The dormant potential in you can be unlocked through association with the right people. The right people in your life are those who are secure enough in themselves to

## What Does Your Future Hold

freely value who you are, and play their part in releasing you into your future.

Joshua's faithful support of Moses' ministry was rewarded as he took over the leadership of God's people when Moses died. His long term relationship with Moses provided the platform for his own leadership where Moses was secure in his leadership and was thus able to propel Joshua in his.

In another example, the prophet Elisha's persistence and the value he placed on his association with Elijah saw him become doubly anointed as he took on the mantle of that great prophet. Elisha rearranged his life to pursue what he greatly valued. He stuck to Elijah 'like glue' so that he could receive the impartation of God's anointing. Many desire God's best but never enter into the delight of the fulfillment of their dream future simply because they have not endured the discipline of what it takes to get there!

Elisha followed Elijah from Gilgal, the place of circumcision or sacrifice, to Jericho the city with large defensive walls. These walls speak of offense. Be careful not to take on another's offense towards the one you are pursuing or following. Guard your heart against speaking evil of the ones you are related to. At Bethel or the House of God, Elisha saw the importance of a strong relationship with the presence of God through prayer and worship. At the river Jordan, he had to separate from the other prophets who even mocked him. Their carnality would have held him back from seeing Elisha go up to heaven, and he would have missed receiving his blessing (2 Kings 2:1-9).

In a New Testament example, Paul benefited from Barnabas opening the door to ministry for him (Galatians 2:1-9). The power of this association propelled him forward in his destiny.

## What Does Your Future Hold

Transitions from one level of your walk with the Lord to the next take place in association with people God has ordained to help you. No matter how anointed and called you may be, you still need others to assist you in fulfilling your destiny.

If for some reason you isolate yourself, you become cut off from the flow of blessing that occurs when you are properly related in the body of Christ. The life flows through the joints in the body (Ephesians 4:16). This is God's way. Be sensitive to who God wants you to be associated with, and actively trust Him for divine connections. Good people standing by your side not only open doors, but lift you up when you stumble (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10). Two are always better than one, especially when you allow your friends and trusted associates to give you their perspective on your blind spots – areas of weakness and vulnerability that you cannot see for yourself (Proverbs 27:17). Iron sharpens iron making it more effective. It is not so much who you know, but who knows you, that is a great help when you are stepping into your future.

Even Jesus solicited the prayer support of His disciples when He faced huge temptations in the Garden of Gethsemane as He made final heart preparations for the cross. Later on after Pentecost, the disciples went to their own company for prayer support when threatened by the religious leaders (Acts 4:23). Friends can also bear your heavy burdens when you are weighed down, and provoke you in a good way to 'love and good deeds' in the areas of your strengths (Proverbs 27:6).

On the other hand, your potential can also be kept locked up through wrong associations. When the people you associate with are insecure in themselves, they tend not to

## What Does Your Future Hold

value who you are, and are indifferent in releasing you into your future. Even seemingly 'spiritual' people around you can hold you back. Choose your friends carefully. Their counsel will either help or hurt you.

Take a step further in this. You are called to serve other people. Seek to be someone's 'divine connection' and God will see to it that someone else is yours. Be authentic in your relationships, love people from your heart with compassion and empathy. Search for common ground in relationships and look for areas to complement rather than clash. It's all about respect, honor and attitude. Never take any relationship for granted. Many marriages and churches suffer through simple relational neglect born from ignorant indifference and complacency.

### **Count the Cost**

Luke 14:28

*8 For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost...*

The best time to count the cost is at the beginning of a venture. Count the cost of what it will take to pursue your dream, and as a sober minded caution what will happen if you don't.

Resolve is born from counting the cost. God wants to use you in His plan, and change you to become more like Him. Don't settle for mediocrity and deny your potential and destiny. God has sovereignly placed the future in your hands! We are co laborers that must respond to His grace through our faithful obedience to the call. Your dream must be firmly grasped in both hands, held down, even possessed with force where necessary.

There is a price to pay...always, no matter what.

## What Does Your Future Hold

Luke 9:23

*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.*

The cross speaks of a denial of self. Self wants to protect what it has become comfortable with. To change involves paying a price. Old things have to be left behind and new things embraced. Let go of what you know holds you back. To let God have His way, we have to let go of our own ways. God's ways are always higher (better) than ours (Isaiah 55: 9).

### **Come into Divine Alignment ... ... with Your Mouth**

Hebrews 10:23-24

*23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.*

Confession in this instance means to 'profess' or 'say the same thing as'. It speaks of words of agreement from the heart and not some mechanical parroting of words without any faith attached to them. Here you totally identify with the person who has said it in the first place.

There is a language or vocabulary of God's kingdom that you must learn and totally identify with. For your dreams to come true, your mouth must come into divine alignment with God's promises. He is faithful to bring them to pass, and your responsibility is to stay connected to Him by speaking out loud your hope in agreement with His Word.

Your thoughts, words, and actions must correspond; otherwise they will work against each other. When you think and speak negatively you are disagreeing with God and undermining your faith.

## What Does Your Future Hold

The Hebrews Eleven heroes of faith all reshaped or framed their specific and allotted time periods. They altered something that was already in existence. In like manner, God expects you to change your world by fulfilling your dream.

Hebrews 11:2-3

*3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.*

The fulfillment or 'framing' of any dream is always preceded by an acceptance of what is unseen and intangible. Your future is to a large measure dependent on coming into alignment with God's promises with your mouth.

### **Call Things into Existence**

Could the following possibly be true of you the believer too?

Romans 4:17

*God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did...*

This is God's Modus Operandi – how He works. He can take nothing and make it into something by calling it into existence with creative words. The question is how far does God want us to go in imitating Him in our realm of stewardship?

Can we call those things that He has promised for us into existence by faith, and actually see change come that would not have happened if we had not engaged in this way? Or do things just sort of happen anyway?

## What Does Your Future Hold

Consider what Jesus taught His disciples when he cursed the fig tree.

Mark 11:22-24

*22 So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God.  
23 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.*

Sounds a lot like what we have been talking about. We are expected to play our part in speaking the desired end result and not just continually describing (complaining about) what we already have. We are to speak to our mountains!

When we speak faith filled words about something, things change, especially when they pertain to our promised future. Faith gives substance to things hoped for (Hebrews 11:1). The future is what we hope for, and faith that is spoken now can alter destiny!

Magicians, no, history makers for God's glory, yes! This is all about His story where we make His name famous. When you speak God's revealed plan, the wheels that have always been turning in heaven now start turning on earth. Your faith engages heaven's provision and purpose and you begin to see God's...

Matthew 6:10

*... will be done  
On earth as it is in heaven.*

Prayer is no longer an empty religious ritual but a divine partnership of covenant power that creatively connects heaven's resources with earth's need. Watch your words and use them powerfully to define and direct your future

according to God's revealed will. You can have what you say, when it lines up with God's will.

## **Choose to Exercise the Power of Your Will**

Life is made of choices. It has been said that we are as happy and successful as we choose to be. This may seem hard for someone to hear when they are in dire circumstances, but the Bible teaches that with God all things are possible (Mark 10:27), including making the choice to see things from a higher perspective.

God helps you when you make right choices. He has promised to bless you and your descendents if you do (Deuteronomy 30:19). He does not want you to feel sorry for yourself, blame others, the government, family, your old church, boss, and so on. He will help you move in the right direction towards your future, but will not make the choices for you.

Ruth provides a powerful Old Testament example of the power of the will. When Naomi was leaving Ruth behind in Moab to go back to her homeland, Ruth exercised her will in powerful statements that changed her destiny. She had no idea of where her words would take her, but she was moved by her convictions. She wanted to stay with Naomi, no matter what, and stated her faith as follows:

Ruth 1:16-17

*16 But Ruth said:*

*"Entreat me not to leave you,  
Or to turn back from following after you;*

*For wherever you go, **I will** go;  
And wherever you lodge, **I will** lodge;  
Your people shall be my people,  
And your God, my God.*

*17 Where you die, **I will** die,  
And there **will I** be buried.*

## What Does Your Future Hold

*The LORD do so to me, and more also,  
If anything but death parts you and me."*  
(Emphasis added).

She is quoted as directly saying 'I will' at least four times, and her will is implied in another two occasions. Her determination to seal her future with Naomi is clear. It is that kind of verbal determination that set the platform for her sure outcome. As the story progresses we find Ruth enjoying blessing beyond what she imagined at the start of this journey. She eventually marries Boaz a wealthy landowner, and is included in the genealogy of the Messiah Himself, a special honor for a woman of Gentile extraction. Don't despise small steps. A long journey begins with the first step, then the next, and the next. The boy with his small lunch took a small step to let go of his few little sardine size fish and a few small lunch 'loaves'. When placed in Jesus' hands they grew to feed a huge crowd! You only get to know God in a new way when you courageously let go of what you have at present, and step out into the future.

### Philippians 3:13-14

*...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.*

Paul learned to forget the past so he could forge into his preferred future. He chose to forget the bad things that had happened to Him and press towards his preferred future. He still had vision, even when he was locked up in prison from where the above words were written.

He had learnt to prize what is of value. His life still had meaning and continued to help others through his writings (letters). His present was attached to his future, and he saw himself going somewhere, not round and round like a

revolving door. Purpose propelled him forward, despite the difficult circumstances he so often faced.

## **Commit Time to Focus**

Proverbs 29:18

*18 Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint;...*

Proverbs 4:25

*25 Let your eyes look straight ahead,  
And your eyelids look right before you.*

These scriptures speak of focus. Too broad a focus dissipates energy. Get rid of clutter and things that cause you to be distracted from your goals. Set priorities and evaluate whether something you are doing is propelling you towards the fulfillment of your dream or putting the brakes on by spreading you too thin.

Being an all-rounder is fine, but dreams come to pass in full color, and not in shades of beige. Concentrate on what moves you the most; what makes you cry or laugh; what captivates your thoughts; and what do you do really, really well. These are the result of gifts the Holy Spirit has given you to fulfill your destiny and build God's kingdom.

Jesus ministered to a blind man who at first could only see people like trees moving (Mark 8:22-25). So he put His hands on him again, and the man miraculously saw everyone clearly. There was a process involved in the restoration of this man's natural eyesight. I believe God will clarify your spiritual eyesight as you present what you have to Him. Generally you never move towards what you cannot see. Let Jesus work with you to focus your sight or vision. When you comprehend something clearly, you will be able to apprehend or lay hold of it so much better.

## Clarify Your Goals

When you clarify and write down your goals it dramatically increases your chances of fulfilling your dreams. Goals measurably define your future. When they fit within the general framework of God's revealed will; you can expect Him to bless your efforts.

Write out one major defining statement of **who** you want to be, and **what** you hope to achieve by **when**. Then break up this life mission into short term (weeks and months) sub goals that will give you a measure of your progress. When you take these relatively small steps on a regular basis, you get further than when you try to make one or two giant leaps towards your desired dream and collapse in a heap somewhere totally exhausted and frustrated.

Always include a time frame when you write your goals; otherwise you will not be able to measure your progress. The time frame holds you accountable to do what must be done today in order to reach your goal for tomorrow.

Be flexible with your goals: you may find after a while that you have set your targets too low as you gain strength, momentum and experience. As you grow, new horizons may open up. So be open to adjust your goals up or down. This does not mean you are compromising, but simply adjusting and making course corrections on the way to the ultimate goal.

An example of written goals, see Chapter Eight: Action Plan.

## Construct a Pathway

You need a written strategy or plan of action as well as corresponding works or deeds to put your faith into gear. A plan is a clear set of steps you must take towards your goal. When you plan, you are led towards plenty because you avoid wasteful activity and aimless busyness.

Proverbs 21:5

*5 The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty,...*

Talk is important, but clear steps must be written out and committed to the Lord in prayer.

Psalms 119:133

*133 Direct my steps by Your word,  
And let no iniquity have dominion over me.*

His Word gives you all you need to follow His pathway in whatever you are engaged in. If you follow His timeless principles, what you put into practice will play out according to His will. The steps you take will already have God's blessing or empowerment on them.

Earlier we saw that words are vital in fulfilling our dreams. But there is a caution: mere words alone are not enough. There must be follow through.

Ecclesiastes 5:2-3

*2 Do not be rash with your mouth,  
And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God.  
For God is in heaven, and you on earth;  
Therefore let your words be few.  
3 For a dream comes through much activity,  
And a fool's voice is known by his many words.*

When you are on the move, keep moving when the territory gets unfamiliar. Take calculated 'faith risks' that

## What Does Your Future Hold

stretch you towards unfamiliar territory. We are required to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). When you surrender more and more to God's control you see more and more of what He sees. Surrender opens your eyes to God possibilities.

Planning your pathway is never wasted time. Build into the plan some reserves that allow for 'course corrections'. You don't want to be stretched out so thin that you 'burn out' financially, physically or even emotionally. Keep investing in your overall well being and stability. Keep fit, protect your emotions and continuously feed your spirit with the Word. When you wait on the Lord He will recharge your inner strength with His power.

Isaiah 40:31

*...those who wait on the LORD*

*Shall renew their strength;*

*They shall mount up with wings like eagles,*

*They shall run and not be weary,*

*They shall walk and not faint.*

## **Cut out Compromise**

Proverbs 4:26-27

*26 Ponder the path of your feet,*

*And let all your ways be established.*

*27 Do not turn to the right or the left;*

*Remove your foot from evil.*

Compromise means to roll over on your convictions as the result of pressure in the heat of the moment. The biggest compromises have to with taking short cuts.

When you do God's will you have to do it His way. You cannot make up your own way. Integrity is one of your most prized possessions, so avoid questionable techniques

## What Does Your Future Hold

rooted in the ways of the world and not in God's Word. God is interested in both **where** you are headed and **how** you get there (2 Corinthians 3:10, 13). There are no short cuts to excellence in God.

The enemy will undermine your self esteem and confidence if you compromise. He will bring accusations against you that will tempt you to shrink back from God's presence through guilt and shame. When you shrink back, you distance yourself from the very source of the strength you will need in times of challenge.

The psalmist Asaph almost stumbled when he was tempted to complain about the seeming prosperity and success of the 'wicked' (Psalm 73:1-14). He regained his firm footing only when he went into the sanctuary of God's presence and received a long term perspective there of the disastrous future of the wicked. No matter how well some people seem to be doing, compromise always comes with a consuming price in the end.

Psalm 73:17-19

*17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God;*

*Then I understood their end.*

*18 Surely You set them in slippery places;*

*You cast them down to destruction.*

*19 Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment!*

*They are utterly consumed with terrors.*

### **Continue to Grow in Your Capacity To Receive from God**

God never asks you to do things beyond your capacity to contain the grace He makes available to you. Your heart (or capacity) is 'enlarged' as you 'soak' up His presence in worship, prayer, Bible study and meditation.

## What Does Your Future Hold

### Psalm 119:32

*32 I will run the course of Your commandments,  
For You shall enlarge my heart.*

Obedience and the capacity to do more (or grow) are connected. When you obey the last thing God said to do, you qualify for the next thing. Your spiritual muscles are exercised and you grow to where you need to go. A divine deposit is made every time you meditate on or internalize God's Word, and as you set out in faith to obey God's commands, He is there to empower you to get the job done.

True maturity is not merely about accumulating Bible knowledge and faithful church attendance. It is more about the capacity to conceive and bring forth fruit. To be led by God's Spirit is another mark of maturity, along with the ability to reproduce spiritual fruit in other people lives. If you are a true Christ follower you will influence others to follow Him too.

Spiritual growth is not automatic through time. Each day has a purpose, and must be approached that way. Make up your mind to engage with trustworthy mature believers and grow with them on purpose. Your decision to grow spiritually will be richly rewarded.

### 1 Peter 2:1-3

*2:1 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

'Taste', 'lay aside', 'desire': these are all actions we must initiate. We are responsible to come to the Lord's banqueting table, receive what is planted in our hearts, and then have it watered. God is responsible for giving the increase.

What Does Your Future Hold

1 Corinthians 3:6

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

1 Thessalonians 3:12

*And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love...*

Growth occurs when you respond to God's loving advances. He is constantly wooing you to draw near to Him. You receive His capacity to produce when you enter His presence and are changed as you behold His love and mercy.

Spiritual growth never happens in a vacuum. When you become doers of the Word you truly grow. Jesus put His disciples to task as they were learning and growing. He did not wait till they had completed their time with Him to send them out. He gave them 'in service' training, and He has not changed His method with you and me.

Be motivated by His love and compassion flowing through you. Jesus was moved by compassion and met people's needs because He loved them.

Matthew 14:14

*And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.*

## **Count on Diligence**

2 Peter 1:2-5

*2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through*

## What Does Your Future Hold

*these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

*5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith...*

Verse five - 'Giving all diligence'. This is our part. God expects us to diligently respond to His divine enablement or grace. Verses two through four point to God's gifts to us: His grace, peace, power, promises..., but verse five enlightens us as to our responsibility. Both are needed to be fruitful.

We have received a divine 'deposit' of God's Spirit inside us, now we are required to add to our faith what we might call 'additives' – like those a motor car engine needs to run smoothly. This is the price we must pay to see His plan come to pass. This is like seed we sow towards our future. A farmer takes valuable seed that he could eat or sell, and sows it towards his future crop. This is the price he pays in the now, to ensure a future.

The apostle Peter teaches that faith for growth does not stand alone and must be supported by:

- Virtue or moral excellence / integrity
- Spiritual knowledge that comes from intimacy
- Self control or spiritual discipline
- Perseverance or a stick to it quality with patience
- Godliness or living life in the fear of the Lord
- Brotherly kindness or being good to others
- Love - the unconditional God kind.

Diligence involves obedience over a period of time. For example, the Jericho march lasted seven days without any apparent change. It challenged the Israelites to keep going round the city based only on their convictions. They

## What Does Your Future Hold

marched in silence for seven days and then let out a great shout and the walls came down (Joshua 6:1-20).

Do not be tempted to undo your faith by a simple lack of due diligence over time. In many situations you face, God may appear to move slowly, but he always comes through if you do not faint or fall away. When you personally possess the above seven 'faith additives' you will speak into your future and become:

- Useful – and not be barren or unreceptive
- Fruitful – you will be able to bear fruit
- Clear – you will be able to see more clearly
- A strong tower – you'll not stumble and fall.

2 Peter 1:8-11

*8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; ...*

### **Three Consequences of a Lack of Diligence**

Diligence is such a powerful force in propelling your future that there are serious consequences if you lack it.

First, you will come (or stay) under the rule of another person and be forced to do what you don't want to do.

Proverbs 12:24

*24 The hand of the diligent will rule,  
But the lazy man will be put to forced labor.*

## What Does Your Future Hold

Take finances for example. Laziness can lead to debt where money (or the lack of it) rules us. We were created to have dominion, not be dominated by anything, least of all the lack of money.

Second, you will crave or have desires, but find little fulfillment.

Proverbs 13:4

*The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing;  
But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.*

Don't let unfulfilled desires and dreams define your life through a lack of discipline. Dreams without diligence amount to no more than empty wishes.

Third, you will suffer poverty. The man who tills his land (is diligent), will be satisfied. The opposite is also true.

Proverbs 28:19

*19 He who tills his land will have plenty of bread,  
But he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough!*

## **How to Become Diligent**

Diligence is the daily application of productive habits in the important areas of life. Godly habits are no substitute for faith but serve as an application of a commitment to what you already know to be true. Consider this by an unknown author:

### ***The Power of Habit***

*I am your constant companion.  
I am your greatest helper or your heaviest burden.  
I will push you onward or drag you down to failure.*

## What Does Your Future Hold

*I am completely at your command.  
Half the things you do you might as well turn over to  
me,  
And I will be able to do them quickly and correctly.  
I am easily managed; you must merely be firm with  
me.  
Show me exactly how you want something done,  
And after a few lessons I will do it automatically.  
I am the servant of all great individuals  
And, alas, of all failures as well.  
Those who are great I have made great  
Those who are failures I have made failures.  
I am not a machine,  
Though I work with all the precision of a machine  
Plus the intelligence of a human being.  
You may run me for profit or run me for ruin;  
It makes no difference to me.  
Take me, train me, be firm with me,  
And I will put the world at your feet  
Be easy with me, and I will destroy you.  
Who am I?*

*I am habit!*

To develop diligence you have to 'wake up and smell the coffee' as some say.

Proverbs 6:9-11

*9 How long will you slumber, O sluggard?  
When will you rise from your sleep?  
10 A little sleep, a little slumber,  
A little folding of the hands to sleep--  
11 So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler,  
And your need like an armed man.*

Just a little procrastination here and there does a lot of damage through time. We don't have unlimited time to do God's will. We must 'redeem the time' or make the most of

## What Does Your Future Hold

every opportunity (Ephesians 5:15-16). Hours of inaction add up to days, then weeks, months and eventually wasted years and sadly even a lifetime of regret. To make each day a masterpiece involves more than slouching on the couch watching mindless TV amusements. Take steps to lead the life you imagine you can.

When you define your vision, you add direction and decisiveness to your activity. Motivation, passion, joy, strength, creativity and fulfillment soon follow.

Proverbs 29:18

*18 Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint;...*

### **Still Feeling Stuck?**

When motion in your life slows down or ceases your emotions most often do not. The frustration, anger, regret, discouragement and fear that creeps in, can paralyze you. Insignificance, unmet desires and financial free fall can cause you to freeze and stay stuck in a world of crisis. Medicating your life with mindless amusement, food, chemicals and empty pursuits does not help. You only grow older and weaker, but no nearer your goals. Crisis soon follows. Today 'midlife crises' seem to be common among much younger generations.

Surprisingly, an impasse (being stuck) can serve as a catalyst for change where you become desperate enough to take charge of the situation and do something new. A rock bottom emotional experience can bring you to repentance. Unfortunately, the same experience can result in self pity and endless attempts to escaping reality. Thankfully, when you discover who you really are in Christ and who Christ truly is in you, you will begin to navigate

away from old destructive paths, and chart your new destiny.

Crisis can also be our counselor when we cast the care on the Lord and open ourselves to receive His perspective and help. When we realize He loves us with an unchanging everlasting love, we receive the courage to do some deep soul searching without condemnation. In this way we can begin to see the way of escape and take steps towards the light.

### **Receive your future by faith**

In short, to step into your future, you must receive your future by faith. Let it root deep down in your heart. Then respond to the Lord's dealings by seeking His counsel through prayer and fasting. Rearrange your life by thinking, speaking and doing new things in line with your future.

When the Israelites finally possessed their Promised Land, they had stood on the promises, prepared their hearts and pushed forward with God's plan. Their victories were no accident, or even a matter of chance, but rather a fulfillment of choices they made to follow God's process and plan.

## What Does Your Future Hold

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*Learn to confine a setback to the past, and do not let it define your future.*

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## 6

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# Turn Setbacks Into Stepping Stones

### Things Happen

**T**his side of heaven both good and bad things happen to everyone. Sometimes they may be unfair or even undeserved, but for the committed Christ follower, there is a comforting promise found in the following scripture.

Romans 8:28-29

*28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

First, all things (good and bad) will only work together for good as you love God and walk in His purposes for your life. This promise is therefore conditional. If you are far from God, or have a half hearted relationship with Him, the enemy is going to exploit the gap between you and God and pound you with accusation and guilt. He may even tempt you to think that God has supposedly let you

down in a bad situation and try to undermine your faith for the future.

Second, you have a part to play in cooperating with God to turn a setback into a stepping stone. Passive faith or resignation is not what this is all about. In bad situations, what happens **in** you is more important than what happens **to** you. Keeping your heart and soul healthy is the key here. (More a little further on).

This chapter will focus on several pointers to help you turn adversity or even abuse into an advantage and cause you to continue being useful for God.

### **Where Setbacks Come From**

Setbacks cannot always be directly blamed on your adversary: the old line 'the devil made me do it'. The setback may be the result of your own or someone else's ignorance, folly or even disobedience. Some things that happen are within your control, while others are not. The point here is not to become trapped in playing the blame game, but recognize the source and do something about it. It doesn't help to keep blaming someone else for their part in the setback, or even feel bad about the mistakes you may have made. You have to move past the setback. Learn to confine a setback to the past, and do not let it define your future.

Don't believe the enemy's lies about God's nature or ways. He will try to convince you that God is standing in your way, trying to teach you something. God is always good and will never tempt you with any form of evil. The Bible teaches that the devil's way is to take advantage of our strong desires (lusts), and entice us to do evil. When we yield to temptation and sin, a setback of some sort will surely follow (James 1:13-14).

## What Does Your Future Hold

Think of the prodigal son. He was drawn away from his purpose in life by a strong desire for an independent identity. One thing led to another and he squandered his inheritance on prodigal living. When he finally came to his senses he went back to his father's house. His father (like God) was eagerly looking for his return, and immediately received him back with great rejoicing. His setback was turned around because **he** did something about it, not his father (Luke 15:11-22)! The son may have lost everything, but he still had his will. He chose to turn and go back to where his identity, provision, authority and purpose lay.

In times of setback there's always mercy in God's throne room when we draw near to Him. God made His move by sending Jesus, and now expects us to make ours.

Hebrews 4:16

*16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

God's mercy does not even dry up after one or two setbacks (Psalm 118:1). He is longsuffering and patient. It is also His nature to be merciful with the one hand, and then with the other enable or grace us with the necessary strength and wisdom to press on past the setback to a better future.

You may have heard the saying: 'It doesn't matter how much milk you spill, just don't lose your cow!' The point here is to stay connected to the source. In cases where you are primarily responsible for a setback, remain convinced that God loves you, and your sins already forgiven in Christ. Commit with His strength not to sin in that area and thank Him that your even the particular sin you committed is forgiven. Refocus on Jesus, and do not rehearse you sin over and over. Be 'son' conscious, not 'sin' conscious. Realize that in bad times when you stumble

and fall, you can run *to* Him! He will receive you with open arms of forgiveness, not a fist of judgment.

### **Personal Testimony**

When our family left the relative comfort of our homeland in South Africa, with its familiarity and job security, we experienced some good and bad things on our journey in the early months after arriving in the United States.

The good things stemmed from the grace and mercy of God. The bad things were rooted in our naivety, ignorance, foolishness, presumption and pride as well as a dose of 'good old fashioned' persecution. Our responses were varied. There were times where we did not handle our circumstances well at all. We knew that God was with us and cared about us, even though it didn't always seem that way. Then there were times where we felt things were just plain unfair, but that didn't help much either. We learned to drop that approach and take hold of His hand and press on in faith.

In looking back it became clear that God was mostly interested in what was developing in our hearts. Of course He cared about the practical difficulties associated with moving and settling in a foreign country, but these things were small in comparison to what He wanted to do in and through us. Time and again God reminded us to develop and maintain a positive attitude, and to be thankful for what we did have rather than complain about what we did not have, or were experiencing. The journey is not over yet.

### **How Many Setbacks Can You Take?**

The apostle Paul suffered enough setbacks for ten men, yet he kept the faith. His example towers high in church

history as a testimony to God's faithfulness and the nature of spiritual warfare.

2 Corinthians 11:23-28

*...in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness--*

This list chronicles the severe persecution he received for fearlessly advancing God's kingdom in a hostile world.

On one occasion he and his preaching partner Silas were unfairly thrown in a Philippian jail (Acts 16:22-26). They were beaten and held in stocks in the innermost part of the prison. Yet at midnight they faced down the temptation to complain that God had not come through for them, and begun doing what they could in their terrible circumstances. They praised God and sung out so loud that the other prisoners heard them at midnight. They did what was within their reach and God responded with a mighty deliverance. Their praise moved heaven and earth, and a mighty earthquake rocked the jail setting them and the other prisoners free.

Praise in a time of setback is like going on the attack when all else is saying lie low, lick your wounds and feel sorry for yourself. Praise says yes to the future, and no to the shame, guilt, frustration, anger, excuses and unbelief of the past. Make a habit of praising and thanking God in all

things (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Not **for** all things, but **in** all things!

## **Paul's Shipwreck**

On the occasion he was shipwrecked with two hundred and seventy six others on his way to Rome as a prisoner after having appealed to Caesar, we see Paul stepping up in faith after a severe and dangerous setback. This setback was not of his own doing but definitely due to the folly of those in authority over him.

The account of the ship wreck in Acts 27:1- 44 is too long to quote in its entirety but well worth reading. Take a moment to do that.

Paul was on his way to Rome, knowing that God had ordained that he speak to 'Kings and rulers' as part of his calling. Even though he was under the charge of Roman soldiers in difficult circumstances, God's will was going to be worked out!

At first, sailing conditions were with a measure of difficulty, but when the stormy season approached, Paul advised that the voyage would end in disaster! He had heard from the Lord on this and now advised the seaman not to press on at this time. The helmsman and the owner of the ship of course had other ideas, looking to the unsuitability of the harbor for the winter. They did not want to stay there for the winter and lose revenue. Later, their loss would be **far greater** for not having listened to the preacher! There was a majority 'vote' and they set sail toward the island of Crete, Paul's lone voice now blown away in the soft and promising sea breeze. The preacher now looked a little foolish sitting in the back of the boat.

However the weather turned bad, and a storm raged that forced the crew to let the ship drive before the wind. They had to lighten the ship's load and on the third day even had to throw the tackle overboard. They soon lost all hope and stopped eating! Meanwhile, Paul had been before the Lord in prayer, and an angel advised him that they would not lose a single life, only that they would be shipwrecked. (Isn't it true that we want to hear the Lord say that absolutely everything will be miraculously **taken away**? We don't always want to hear that we still have to go **through** some things till we come out safely on the other side.)

In the ensuing drama of the ship being run towards the shore, Paul was able to be the channel of God's mercy to everyone on the ship. The centurion in charge was now listening to the preacher a little more closely. Paul advised that they eat and get ready for the desperate scramble to the shore. In the meantime, they had lost all the cargo and the profit the ship owner in his lack of prudence had hoped to make!

In the midst of great danger, rain and cold, every single one of the ship's two hundred and seventy six passengers were able to make it to the shore of the Island of Malta where they were kindly received by the friendly locals who build them a fire to warm them up. Paul's prophecy had come true in the midst of the disastrous circumstances. Total loss in the midst of this shipwreck was avoided!

### **Recipe for a Shipwreck**

We can all learn from this account by noting that the sailors opened the door to trouble by being **dissatisfied** with the suitability of the harbor for wintering. Their **impatience** contributed to their lack of judgment as they

## What Does Your Future Hold

relied on their **own natural judgment**. They lacked discernment in this situation and most importantly **ignored the word** of the Lord given to Paul. (The Bible teaches that we will prosper when we believe the prophets (2 Chronicles 20:20). Paul was a prophet as well as an apostle (Acts 13:1), and had spoken the Word of the Lord to them in warning.

Finally, the sailors looked only **to the circumstances** of the favorable soft south wind at the start to lead them.

Look back over the previous paragraph and see whether any of the highlighted areas have applied in any previous setback you have suffered.

This is one recipe you don't want to cook up if you can help it.

### Things to Learn From This Setback

Storms do come, and to be forewarned is forearmed. A strong foundation in doing the Word is also critical.

Luke 6:47-49

*47 Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: 48 He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. 49 But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."*

How you react to threatening situations will determine the final outcome. Do not fear. Fear attracts trouble whereas faith attracts God who comes to the rescue.

## What Does Your Future Hold

### Acts 27:24-25

*'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.' 25 "Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.*

When fear comes, realize that God has not given you a spirit of fear, but of power love and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). You have the choice to **refuse fear**. As a child of God it is unnatural to fear. Refuse to entertain fear when it comes knocking on the door of your heart and mind.

**Thanksgiving** is another key ingredient for turning a setback into a stepping stone for deliverance. Note that Paul gave thanks in advance of their deliverance. Thanksgiving and faith are inseparable. If you really believe God has heard your cry, then you will be prepared to give thanks in advance of the manifestation of God's intervention.

### Acts 27:35-37

*35 And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat. 36 Then they were all encouraged, and also took food themselves.*

A last lesson from this account is that it is best to **stick together in trouble**. They were all saved from total loss when they stuck together around the man of God.

### Acts 27:31

*31 Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved."*

Not a soul was lost and Paul eventually took passage on another ship to complete the journey. God's will was

eventually done in Paul's life despite the delays and extreme hardship. Paul looked to God to **stay calm in the storm**, obeyed His voice and was the catalyst for saving all the rest on the ship.

When you do the same you will come out of a setback stronger, and others around you will benefit from your faithfulness to stand strong in the Lord as well.

### **Three Pointers towards Your future**

Your future depends on whether you grasp the following pointers in times of setback.

First, know where setbacks come from and deal with them appropriately. If you had a part in initiating it, then repent and move on. If someone else was instrumental, forgive them and move on. If the enemy is behind it, resist him and press on with boldness (1 Peter 5:9).

Second, guard your heart and mind from developing a victim mentality. God has made you more than a conqueror in Christ (Romans 8:37). Don't play the blame game and watch your attitude.

Third, realize that things will change for the better when you play your part. Failure and setbacks are temporary when you do what is within your reach. God will see to it that He meets you at the point of your faith. So feed your faith in difficult times, and do not retreat. The future is too bright for the faithful to be forfeited by neglect and passivity. He will strengthen you as you wait on Him.

Psalm 27:14

*14 Wait on the LORD;*

*Be of good courage,*

*And He shall strengthen your heart;*

What Does Your Future Hold

*Wait, I say, on the LORD!*

Isaiah 40:31

*31 But those who wait on the LORD  
Shall renew their strength;  
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
They shall run and not be weary,  
They shall walk and not faint.*

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*During Joseph's 'down time' God was able to build His own character into Joseph's life as He positioned him for promotion.*

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# 7

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## Case Study: Joseph

### Joseph the Dreamer

**J**oseph's story takes up a significant part of Genesis (Chapters Thirty Seven through Fifty), and provides a fascinating case study for all dreamers.

Joseph was the favored son of patriarch Jacob and was blessed with a many colored robe he received from his doting father. He was hated by his envious brothers when, at age seventeen in his youthful zeal, he unwisely shared his God given dreams of leadership in the family (Genesis 37:1-11). The two dreams showed his whole family bowing down to him. His brothers were particularly upset by them, and Joseph's coat was taken from him as he was thrown into a pit by his jealous and insecure brothers. Later he was picked up by slave traders, and sold into Potiphar's household.

Even having suffered this setback, he was actually favored by Potiphar who recognized and rewarded his excellent spirit. This was as sign of things to come.

## What Does Your Future Hold

### Genesis 39:1-2

*39:1 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. 2 The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man;*

The Lord's perspective was that Joseph was a 'successful man'. In all likelihood Joseph didn't see it that way at first, as he was seemingly so far from fulfilling his dreams.

Later, he was falsely accused by the rejected slave owner's wife, who repeatedly harassed Joseph. Once again, Joseph lost his coat in a household incident, and was summarily thrown into prison.

Here he again rose to the top. He continued to serve where he was, and eventually interpreted two fellow inmates' dreams. The baker and cupbearer were both restored to Pharaoh's court, but Joseph was quickly forgotten. Notably, God was still 'with Him' through yet another trying period of rejection and 'delay' (Genesis 39:23).

He languished in prison for another two years before being suddenly called to interpret Pharaoh's troubling dream about the seven fat and lean cows. Although initially forsaken, falsely accused, and forgotten, suddenly he now enjoyed supernatural favor in Pharaoh's household. He was instantly promoted to the palace, given a new robe and delegated great authority over the whole Egyptian realm. He got married, had two children, and later in severe famine times was used by God to help his desperate extended family who was struggling back in Palestine. Joseph's gracious actions saved the whole family, including his brothers who at this point did not even recognize him after all the years.

## What Does Your Future Hold

Joseph's dreams of leadership were literally fulfilled in a foreign land. It had taken him thirteen long years of obscurity and difficulty to become an 'overnight sensation' in the land. His wisdom was known throughout the kingdom and far beyond in the known world.

Like the proverbial donkey that got thrown into the pit, and stepped up on the dirt that was thrown on him, Joseph stepped up on the 'dirt' for all those years. Eventually he stepped up into the fulfillment of his destiny. He had not given up on God despite all the disappointments that seemed to keep him far from his dreams. He shook off the rejection, discouragement and persecution, and stepped into his future in God's perfect timing.

During Joseph's 'down time' God was able to build His own character into Joseph's life as He positioned him for promotion. Of course, Joseph had to cooperate with God by staying faithful. Without realizing it, Joseph was circling within the orbit of his destiny. Potiphar worked for Pharaoh, the prison was Pharaoh's, and the baker and cupbearer were Pharaoh's servants. Unknowingly he was so close but yet still so far.

Perhaps you are closer to your destiny than you know! Maybe all you can see is the hand of the enemy, but what the enemy means for evil, God can and will turn around for good, if you stay faithful to your call.

Genesis 50:20

*20 But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.*

Adversity and the people opposed to you may unwittingly be pushing you towards your destined palace. Joseph held

## What Does Your Future Hold

onto his dreams, learning that he could not make them come to pass in his own strength.

He eventually learnt that all dreams have an appointed time.

Habakkuk 2:3

*3 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.*

In summary, Joseph understood the following about his dream future:

- His dream had an appointed time: a due season. With God's timing comes favor, anointing and divine connections. For example, God only sent Jesus in the **fullness** of time (Galatians 4:4). The religious, social, political and prophetic climate had to be right. Any old time will not do with God. He has a plan, so be patient.
- He learnt the consequences of sharing his dream prematurely with the wrong people. Trust God for the right people, and to be in the right place, at the right time and for the right purpose (motive). Even close family and friends may not understand God's dealings in your life. They did not dream the dream. You did. So they have to accept matters by faith, and not everyone has faith! Even Jesus' brothers were offended at Him at one point (Mark 3:31-35). Joseph also learnt to keep his dream alive even in the most difficult and unfair circumstances.

## What Does Your Future Hold

- He learnt to get along with all types of people, even when they let him down, used and abused him.
- His dream had to develop into full fruition over a period of time. First, he had to be placed in authority in Egypt, then later his family came for help and eventually were all restored to one another. It took another seven years after he was positioned in the palace for his family to be fully restored.
- He learnt to let his dream define him. Although he was in the prison, he did not let the prison get inside him! He was able to shake off a victim mentality.
- He discovered that when a dream comes from God it takes God to bring it to pass. His role was to remain faithful in what he could put his hand to, no matter the circumstances.
- He came to understand God's ways. God was always with Joseph, teaching him to trust Him alone, with the right attitude. Joseph faced difficult people: jealous brothers, a persistent tempter, and fickle and selfish fellow prisoners. He overcame disappointment and guarded his heart against bitterness and cynicism. A God dream will not let go of you. It sustains you in difficult times when delay, discouragement and disasters come.
- He realized that a God dream makes God look big. A God dream is bigger and lasts longer than your own life. God's dreams have legacy built into them. Joseph's family lineage was later to include the Lord Jesus. God's dream for the salvation of man

## What Does Your Future Hold

was carried through Joseph to the next generation and then on through the next right down to our time. Even after two thousand years of delay, discouragement, and sometimes great darkness, Church history is still unfolding today. God's greatest hour (and ours) is yet to come, individually and corporately. Legacy means that future generations benefit from your contribution. Selfish living has no place in your future. Live your life for the benefit of others. God will see to it that you are well taken care of (Matthew 6:33).

- He found that preparation time is never lost time, and be willing to sow into the dreams of others. Joseph sowed into Potiphar's household, the prison keeper's well being, the baker and cupbearer's lives, and then finally into Pharaoh's kingdom. He learned that his life was given and spared for the service of others. He developed his administrative gifts as he served others. These skills would later be used for good as chief under ruler in Egypt. His faithfulness in little matters was rewarded with much later on.

Matthew 25:20-21

*21 "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.'*

Don't despise the day of small things (Zechariah 4:10). Be faithful in what is at hand, and like Joseph develop an excellent spirit where your attitude and motives will be noticed and bring you favor and deliverance.

## **Bonuses Joseph Enjoyed Because He Held on to His Dream**

Joseph held on to his dream and was eventually rewarded for his patience and character in three key areas.

First, he enjoyed the fruit of proper relationship in marriage. He was given a wife versus being captured by Potiphar's wife's illicit advances.

Second, he enjoyed unrestricted movement at the end in Pharaoh's kingdom versus the restriction of the pit, slavery in Potiphar's house and the prison yard.

Third, he grew to a broad place of rich fulfillment. His dreams came true. This was always God's plan for Joseph's life.

Psalm 118:5

*5 I called on the LORD in distress;*

*The LORD answered me and set me in a broad place.*

God had turned every aspect of Joseph's distress over thirteen years into something positive. This has always been and always will be God's way. He will do the same for you.

## What Does Your Future Hold

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*What you do today determines where you will be tomorrow. In a year's time, you will wish you had started on your dream a year ago.*

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## 8

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# Making Every Day Count

Psalm 139:16

*"You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in Your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed"*

**G**od is not surprised by what you get up to each day. He knows in advance the choices you will make and whether you will faithfully follow Him or not. He loves you nevertheless, and has a great plan mapped out for each day you live. He wants you to seek Him continually to discover His wisdom for the good works He has specially prepared for that day.

Psalm 90:12

*12 So teach us to number our days,  
That we may gain a heart of wisdom.*

We each have a number of days in which to fulfill our destiny. It takes God's wisdom to know what to do, when, how and with whom. Being busy for busyness sake is not God's plan. He is looking for fruitful productivity towards a goal, and every day counts.

## What Does Your Future Hold

The question to ask at the end of each day is: 'Am I closer to fulfilling my God given goals or not?' Or, at the beginning of the day ask: 'What can I do to bring Him glory today?' You cannot afford to live in memory land of old revival glories, some great sports achievement, a financial windfall, or even the day you got married as your best day. **Today** is your best day, for it is the only day you have to rejoice in! Don't get me wrong, good memories can motivate you to keep going, but today is the only day you have to make changes that will affect your tomorrow.

An eighty seven year old lady was asked what it was like in her day. She replied with some disdain, 'today is my day!' Like her we will get more out of our today's if we adopt her positive attitude about today rather than wistfully look back to some past time.

After all, the attitude you adopt and what you do today determines where you will be tomorrow. In a year's time, you will wish you had started on your dream a year ago.

### **What a Difference a Day Makes**

The Bible is full of examples of particular days that made a world of difference to various individuals and the people they touched. When Thomas showed up at a meeting and saw the risen Christ, his life changed forever. Earlier, his doubt had him in the wrong place. Thankfully the Lord came after him and brought him back on track with his destiny (John 20:24-29).

The day Saul fell off his horse on the road to Damascus changed the course of church history (Acts 9:1-5). One day he was a religious maniac, an accomplice to the murder of Christians, then the next day his heart had softened as he encountered the risen Lord in a vision.

## What Does Your Future Hold

Even the day King David looked upon Bathsheba from his rooftop proved to be climactic. It changed everything. The day Samson gave away the secret of his strength to the wily Delilah, proved to be the beginning of his end. Infamously, September 11 changed the course of modern American and world history as the World Trade Center Towers in New York City came crashing down at the hand of radical Muslim extremists.

A day's events can and do count for eternity. Take Anna the prophetess for example. She lived in Jesus' time and spent her days in intercession for the coming Messiah. She did this for at least eighty four years since her early twenties. She was widowed after seven years of marriage and now focused her whole life on serving God with fasting and prayers night and day. She had become very sensitive to the Lord's voice, and come into the temple at the very instant that the just and devout man named Simeon was blessing the baby Jesus who was brought there by Joseph and Mary.

Luke 2:38

*38 And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*

Both Simeon and Anna were rewarded for their continued daily devotion over long periods of time. They had a perfect sense of timing, and their lives would never be the same: they had seen the Messiah face to face.

It takes no ability, talent or character to grow old, but it takes diligent devotion to step into divine moments of destiny. God has called you to thrive in Him, not just survive. He came that you could partake of His life: a deep satisfying quality of life that brings Him glory.

## What Does Your Future Hold

John 10:10

*I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*

Some people begin to retire from the day they start work, at least in their minds. They make plans to start enjoying life only then, and essentially grind away for many years missing grand opportunities each day to see things through God's eyes. They miss them because they are focused so far in the future that they miss what is right in front of them.

The question you may ask is: 'How old will I be in the four years it will take to complete this course I have just signed up for?' The answer is, of course, exactly the same age as you would be if you did not sign up! So sign up for what you love doing, and start doing it. A thousand mile journey begins with the first step. Take it and see where it all leads. You can't afford to die, without having lived a full life. Start today.

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, God poured out the Holy Spirit on all flesh (Acts 2:1). This day changed everything. Up till this time, only the prophet, priest or king was anointed for special service. Now all who called on His name could be filled with the Spirit and enjoy God's abiding and powerful presence.

In his later years, John the revelator was in the Spirit 'on the Lord's Day' (Revelation 1:10), when He heard God's voice calling him up to a higher place where he saw visions of the future. That day changed things forever, sealing future events in mankind's history that have inspired millions over the centuries to wait expectantly for the triumphant return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## How to Make Each Day a Masterpiece

To bring an order to each day so that it does not point aimlessly at some vague future hope, consider doing the following.

**First**, value your day the same way God does, He does not waste a single one. Treat it as God's gift to you. You will have to give an account to God for the stewardship of your time. It is not yours to do with as you please. Like Jesus, we are to work while it is day (John 9:4) and 'redeem' the time (Ephesians 5:16), or make the most of the opportunities God gives us each day.

**Second**, find out from God the chief purpose for each day. In this way you can order any sub goals to fit into the God given framework for that day. For example, if Sunday is a day for rest and spiritual replenishment, why would you want to dishonor that day's purpose by not going to church, and rather working in the yard, running all over town shopping, and finishing up drained and exhausted? Look ahead at your day and ask yourself whether what you plan to do will bring you closer to your life goals or not. Change your plans if they do not. Live an examined life.

If the day is primarily for preparation, then prepare, don't clutter up the day with other pursuits. Start small, win often and build momentum that way. David killed the bear and lion, before he took on a giant. Things build over time.

**Third**, decide not to carry any regrets from yesterday's failures, disappointments and frustrations into today. They only suck the life out of you. Don't be like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus who said to Jesus, 'We were hoping' (Luke 24:21) as they looked back on the disappointment of the betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus just

three days earlier. Here Jesus was with right there with them, very much alive in their midst, and yet they did not recognize Him because of their consuming sorrow. It took this act of God to come to them, arrest their descent into mediocrity and bring them back on the path to their destiny. What will it take for you to see Jesus in your present, without looking back in the rear view mirror of regret? Make sure you are headed in the right direction.

**Fourth**, and connected to this, is to have an attitude of gratitude each day for the good and perfect gifts God He gives you. Learn to rejoice in the positives and reject the negatives. A thankful heart keeps the 'switch' of faith turned on. Grumbling and complaining keeps you from your better tomorrows. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness of unfruitful living for forty long years because they grumbled and complained on what should have been a short two to three week journey towards the Promised Land.

**Fifth**, consecrate each day in prayer to the Lord in the morning. The rest of the day is sanctified this way, and things go smoother when you release your faith 'with your mouth' in the morning before the day starts. Speak God's promises over your day. This gives God a chance to direct your day, rather than let it wash over you like an indiscriminate incoming tide. How is this so? God backs up His promises, and when you speak them in faith, He is there to watch over them.

**Sixth**, at the end of the day take time to relax, reflect on your progress and replenish your spirit soul and body. If indeed each day is God's gift to us, then thanksgiving at the end of a day is always appropriate. If you have had a hard day, find something in it to rejoice over. Focus on that, rather than the negatives. Keep a personal journal where you write down the Lord's encouragements,

## What Does Your Future Hold

promises, and insights. Your end of day reflections will definitely propel you forward into the next day with greater wisdom and confidence. Writing things down in a journal gives God a chance to help you clarify the issues and get His perspective on what happens.

### **Understand the Times...and Know What to Do**

1 Chronicles 12:32

*"...of the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do."*

When you understand the times you live in, you will know what to do. In David's time, the sons of Issachar had this anointing. They joined David at a tumultuous time in Israel's history when the kingdom was being transferred from Saul's hand to David's. You could say that we are also living in difficult and perilous times as the Bible puts it (2 Timothy 3:1).

In nature, there is evidence that the earth is 'groaning', what with increasing incidences and severity of tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, famines and pestilent diseases.

Romans 8:22

*For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.*

In society, times are difficult and dark with much distress amongst nations and people groups. There are famines, refugee and human trafficking problems, pestilences and wars. The wars being fought today involve more and more destructive weaponry, and it seems as if the whole world in many ways is closer today than it has ever been from self destructing.

## What Does Your Future Hold

Matthew 24:6-7

*And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.*

*For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.*

Personal moral breakdown, political manipulation, pandemic disease and grinding poverty in many regions all point to the need for a radical injection of God's love, mercy, forgiveness, wisdom and life. God expects you to play your part (know what to do) in your sphere of influence. Where matters are out of your control, don't fret, but pray that laborers are sent into that area or harvest.

Things that are going to happen anyway (things that 'must come to pass'), are in God's hands. There is therefore no use worrying about the quickly emerging new world order and government. In the end, man's efforts to save himself will fail, and Jesus will return for a glorious church triumphantly fulfilling its destiny in these end times. More than ever the church must keep its eyes on the Lord.

You and I must take advantage of the momentum of the age and use what is at our disposal: technology and ease of travel to spread the gospel. As things get brighter (revelation) for the believer, they will get darker (deception or false light) for the religious and ungodly. God is sending waves of glory to wash over His church in preparation for the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21). The Holy Spirit is already moving mightily on all continents around the world. Get in on where God is already moving and play your part. Don't delay. God has planned a place especially for you.

## Develop a Prophetic Sensitivity in Three Areas

The Lord will give you understanding through His Word and by His Spirit (Psalm 119:130 / John 16:13) so that you can prepare and play your part in the great end time outpouring that is already happening. God wants you to develop understanding and sensitivity to His dealings at three levels: the individual, family and church levels.

**First**, you have to learn to navigate your own personal life in difficult times, and then **second**, let God help you play a redemptive role in your immediate and extended family. **Third**, get involved in your local church. God wants you to put your shoulder to the plow and support its vision with your time, talents and treasure.

We all fit within the bookends of the first and second comings of Christ. God's prophetic timetable is the matrix in which we make choices which will be judged in the end. The 'last days' fit into a 6000 year timetable to be consummated with a 1000 year earthly rule of the soon to be returning Lord Himself.

1 Peter 4:7

*"But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers."*

Spiritual alertness is not optional in these dangerous times. Watch and be sober, and avoid the intoxicating effects of false and ultimately empty pursuits. Make decisions based not on short term circumstances and relief, but rather on the eternal foresight and purposes of God.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3

*But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.*

## What Does Your Future Hold

*For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.*

Do not believe everything you see and hear in society. Things that 'they say' are not always as they seem. Information is coming through to the average man in a 'processed' form, and is not raw and organic! The processors have an agenda, and very often it is not God's. So take care. Filter everything through an understanding of God's will and ways found in the Bible.

A classic 20<sup>th</sup> Century example was when the British Premier Neville Chamberlain came back to British soil in 1939 and pronounced 'peace in our time'. He was pursuing a misguided policy of appeasement with Hitler's Germany. The Second World War that broke out shortly thereafter exposed the hidden agenda Hitler was following. Peace without the Prince of Peace – Jesus – is at best short lived and falls short of what God has planned. I believe the same applies today with some of the 'peace' efforts in the Middle East.

Thankfully, we can trust what Jesus has said. He will return for a glorious triumphant church no matter what condition it may seem to be in right now. The unjust will not get away with their evil, and will have to face God in the final judgment (Revelation 20:11-15). It is imperative then, to know what to do in these times. God has called you to be a person of action, not just reflection. There is no time for idly sitting by as the world accelerates towards a climatic show down between righteousness in Christ and unregenerate man's futile attempts to save himself and this planet.

## Know What to Do

Personally, it is high time to awake to your destiny and make the necessary moves towards your future. Spiritual hunger can and must be cultivated. Pull up any love for other things (idols in your life) and plant yourself in God's Word and presence through study, prayer and worship. Change comes as you taste and see that the Lord is good on a regular basis.

2 Corinthians 3:18

*8 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.*

Focus on His present glory and not the present darkness of what may surround you in the world. Keep looking to the light, and the One who started you on your journey of faith. Jesus is, and will be, the same in your future as He was in your past. Don't be overwhelmed with the world's information overload and fall into a stupor of confusion and hopelessness. You are called to make a difference in your sphere of influence. You are God's minister of reconciliation right where you are. Be bold, be strong and believe. God has not given you a spirit of fear or timidity, so take captive every thought that tries to convince you otherwise.

The lines are drawn, at least in God's eyes, and you must confront complacency and false comforts.

Zephaniah 1:12

*And it shall come to pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and punish the men who are settled in complacency, who say in their heart, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will He do evil.'*

God is and will do something about things that are standing in the way of your future. So, be full of God's

## What Does Your Future Hold

Spirit, for by Him alone can you make the most of every opportunity. He has the grace (empowerment) and love for you to overcome any and every adverse circumstance and situation.

### Ephesians 5:15-18

*See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,...*

Disentangle yourself from what ensnares you. Travel light and allow your fellow believers to help you put off any hindering influences or 'weights' in your life.

On a corporate level, it is imperative that you be functionally related to those in the church that God has set in your life to be built up in the faith. Avoid the temptation to relegate 'organized' religion to the junk heap of your hurts and frustrations. Be part of the solution, and realize that personal destiny always takes place in tandem with other believers, no matter how imperfect they may be.

### Ephesians 4:16

*...from whom 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.*

Because it is a time of spiritual warfare, keeping rank or functioning in your right place in God's army makes you a helper in the war. Many believers are not properly led, nor properly submitted to God's strategies as manifested through the church. They are 'lone rangers', or 'loose canons' and doomed to minimal effectiveness.

## What Does Your Future Hold

1 Chronicles 12:33, 38

*Of Zebulun, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: they were not of double heart...*

*All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king.*

In our time, Jesus is our King, and He is calling His people to sign up for service on His 'battleship'. He wants you trained for spiritual warfare, effective in battle, not a casualty endlessly licking his wounds on a 'hospital' ship, or casually sipping sundowners on some 'cruise ship' of comfortable 'country club' style of Christianity.

When you know your place, march in step with the Lord's vision for the Church as a whole, then you will be fruitful and a laborer in the harvest. This is a season of tremendous worldwide harvest in the midst of great distress. Jesus is the answer to mankind's ills, and He must be the center and periphery of all you do, both individually and corporately.

As you live out the whole truth for the whole man, your life will communicate hope for the future. Let today be impacted by your eternal future, always secure in Christ, the great dream giver and dream fulfiller.

What Does Your Future Hold

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*The person of action is rewarded with success.*

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## 9

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### Action Plan

Joshua 1:8

*8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*

James 1:22

*22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only...*

**S**ometimes the biggest gap in life is the one between hearing and doing. The highway to nowhere is paved with good intentions. Only the person of action is rewarded with success. Take time right now to write down your initial impressions in the following areas of your life. You can refine, add to, and even take away some points later, but at least make a start at writing things down right now.

Use the following example as a guideline for how to go about this exercise. It shows the difference between purpose, dreams, convictions, goals and strategy. They are

## What Does Your Future Hold

all connected and they work together to make your God given dreams come to pass.

Perhaps you have never done this sort of thing before. Don't brush it off; give the exercise your best shot with what you know at this stage. There is something special about writing things down. God chose to write things down for us in the Bible to stand on. So follow through and do the same. There is no harm in doing the exercise, only a benefit.

Try to keep your statements concise and clear. If you have more than one dream, it will have its own goals that should be written somewhere else, perhaps in your own 'life journal'.

## Example

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### **My life's purpose is to:**

*Play my part in building God's kingdom through media resources.*

### **My dream is to:**

*Own a successful media company that has local, national and global reach.*

### **I will stand by the following convictions / core values:**

- *Produce only quality products*
- *Have honest customer relations*
- *Actively seek to further team members dreams*

### **My long term goals are:**

- *To build a local reach media company located in XYZ by end of...*
- *To build that company to reach nationally by ..., and worldwide by ...*

### **My short term goals are:**

- *To register company with XYZ authorities by November ...*
- *To set up and run a website by December ...*

## What Does Your Future Hold

- *To raise venture capital of XYZ dollars, pounds etc by March ...*
- *To recruit IT, admin and marketing staff by February ... to start March ... to*
- ...

### **My plan (the what) and strategy (the how) is:**

*To start in June ... by choosing the most suitable city to locate the business; then to work with agencies and contacts to recruit staff and select a suitable facility for the business.*

~

### **Note:**

You probably have noticed that there ought to be much more that is broken out to make things happen. However, start with the exercise below to get you started. Later on, 'flesh out' your life goals in more detail according to a plan that will unfold in time as you continue to seek the Lord each day.

The time for simply letting things happen to you is over.

Philippians 3:12-13

*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.*

The future is in God's hands and He wants to give it to you.

What Does Your Future Hold

**My life's purpose is to:**

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**My dream is to:**

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**I will stand by the following convictions:**

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**My long term goals are:**

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What Does Your Future Hold

**My short term goals are:**

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\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
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**My plan (the what) and strategy (the how) is to:**

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# 10

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## Encouraging Scriptures

**U**se the following scriptures as a ready reference to encourage you as you journey into the future. Regularly read and declare them out loud to yourself so that you build yourself up in the faith. When you make these declarations, you come into agreement with God and His Word. He has promised to watch over His Word to perform it in your life.

### ***For this life ... and the Life to Come***

#### **Ecclesiastes 3:11b**

*Also He has put eternity in their hearts,...*

#### **Psalm 37:9-11**

*For evildoers shall be cut off;*

*But those who wait on the LORD,*

*They shall inherit the earth.*

*10 For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more;*

*Indeed, you will look carefully for his place,*

*But it shall be no more.*

*11 But the meek shall inherit the earth,*

*And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*

**Matthew 5:5**

*Blessed are the meek,  
For they shall inherit the earth.*

**John 3:15-16**

*...that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

**John 10:10**

*I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*

**John 14:1-3**

*"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

**John 17:3**

*And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

**Romans 6:23**

*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**Romans 10:8-11**

*But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

**1 Timothy 6:12**

*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 John 5:13**

*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.*



***Practicalities ... Right Here and Now***

**Joshua 1:8**

*This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*

**Jeremiah 29:11-14**

*11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12 Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*

**Psalms 37:4**

*Delight yourself also in the LORD,  
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.*

**Psalms 37:23**

*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD,  
And He delights in his way.*

## What Does Your Future Hold

### **Psalm 112:4**

*Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness;  
He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.*

### **Psalm 130:5**

*I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,  
And in His word I do hope.*

### **Psalm 138:3**

*In the day when I cried out, You answered me,  
And made me bold with strength in my soul.*

### **Psalm 138:8**

*The LORD will perfect that which concerns me;  
Your mercy, O LORD, endures forever;  
Do not forsake the works of Your hands.*

### **Psalm 139:16**

*Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.  
And in Your book they all were written,  
The days fashioned for me,  
When as yet there were none of them.*

### **Psalm 145:19**

*19 He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him;  
He also will hear their cry and save them.*

### **Proverbs 3:1-2**

*My son, do not forget my law,  
But let your heart keep my commands;  
2 For length of days and long life  
And peace they will add to you.*

### **Proverbs 12:24**

*The hand of the diligent will rule,  
But the lazy man will be put to forced labor.*

### **Proverbs 21:5**

*The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty,  
But those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty.*

**Habakkuk 2:2-3**

*"Write the vision*

*And make it plain on tablets,*

*That he may run who reads it.*

*3 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."*

**Hebrews 12:1-2**

*Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*

*looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,...*

**Prayer of Consecration  
For the Future**

*Dear Heavenly Father,*

*I thank and praise you for the wonderful gift of my future in Christ. I receive all that you have planned for me, and I rejoice that you have seen fit to fill with me with hope and purpose.*

*Help me to see the difficult things I face with Your perspective. Strengthen me to make each day count, and lead me into Your peace and provision.*

*I consecrate to use my time wisely to prepare for the future, and I chose to be diligent in all that I do with a thankful attitude that pleases You.*

*I look forward to the future with expectancy. Fill with afresh with Your Spirit, so that I might glorify you with my future.*

*In Jesus name,  
Amen.*

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **If you have never accepted Jesus as your Lord**

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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: \_\_\_\_\_

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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