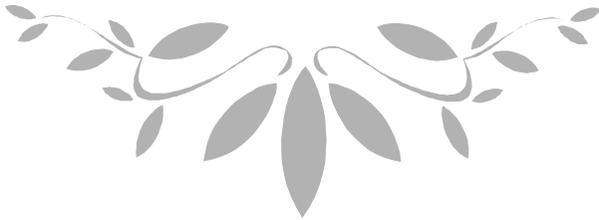




GLEANNINGS  
FROM THE  
THRONE OF GOD



# **Gleanings from the Throne of God**

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# *Introduction*

he road path of life is characterized by various phases with different experience at every phase. Another interesting thing is that the experiences at each phase are peculiar to each individual. They may appear similar, but in reality they are different. So that tells me a lot about the God we serve, whose wisdom no one can measure. Every individual made to pass through the face of the earth has a peculiarity about him/her both in physical appearance and in the experiences each passes through in every stage of their lives.

As I pass through my own experiences in life, some very good, some fairly good, some bad and some very challenging, I am privileged to seek the face of God and understand why I am made to go through these processes, the end result of the processes and what is expected of me as I pass through each process in order to achieve the expected result and obtain the prize if there is any to receive. The answer to my enquiry brought about the book “Gleanings from the Throne of God”

This book contains a series of life changing messages which God has used in making a big impact in my life as I

long for more of Him each day. In the bid to know the mind of God concerning the various issues of life and invariably to prepare us for eternity, this book has explicitly given understanding into the experiences of life that will help us enjoy our walk with God here on earth and also prepare us for the life after.

It cuts across various aspect of our lives, ranging from our relationship with God, our life of worship to the Living God, Marriage, Parenthood, and also the issue of Worry and many more. I have experienced great peace and learnt more of God in the course of writing this book.

With writing this book, I know better that there is no mountain too high and no valley too low for God to overcome. 'Gleanings from the Throne of God' gives an insight into tapping from the abundant provision of grace made available at the mercy seat of God. With confidence in the Holy Spirit, I guarantee a life changing experience as you take time to gleaning with me from God's throne in the course of reading this book.

## BOOK

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# 1

## *THE JOY OF THANKSGIVING*

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n my years of walking with God I have tried to gain understanding as to why the Lord gives certain instructions and commands. I have tried to know the mind of God concerning some demands He makes of His children. And one of such demands is the issue of giving thanks in all circumstances, both in good times and bad times.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 5:19-20

<sup>19</sup>Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord. <sup>20</sup>always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

I wondered why God would require us to give Him thanks in the midst of great trials and challenges, and why He would command His children to thank Him even when all is not

well. I tried to imagine someone in great grief who is probably mourning his/her loved one and such a person is asked to give thanks to God. And I concluded in my heart that this is a hard teaching. But mindful of the fact that the will of God for us is not of evil but good, to give us hope and to bring us to an expected end, I decided to inquire of the Lord for an understanding into the issue of thanksgiving.

I am sure many would have concluded that Job of the Bible gave thanks in the midst of his own trials, but many will also agree with me that in the mere sense of it, that is a very difficult thing to do. It takes great faith and knowledge in God's word for someone to get to the point of giving thanks in the midst of grief.

I want us to understand that there is a difference between resigning to fate thus giving thanks to God anyway and genuinely giving thanks to God as a form of true worship of the Lord God Almighty in the midst of calamities and trials. The thanksgiving God requires is true worship and not just lips service where deep inside we wonder if God really understands what we are going through for Him to ask us to give Him thanks.

How is it possible to get to the point like Job did, where we can truly say, “the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised” (Job 1:21b)? The joy of Thanksgiving is the point where you have a good knowledge and relationship with the God you serve and you perfectly understand that the Lord has you in mind no matter what you are going through. You are confident of the fact that your names are written on the palms of His hands and not a

strand of your hair will fall off without His knowledge. You are sure that God loves you unconditionally, and that whatever you are passing through is just a means to an end. And with the knowledge of His unfailing love for you, you just want to say thank you to this wonderful God.

Know for a fact that it is only God who sees the end from the beginning and He understands why you have to pass through such rough terrain. And though you are grieving at the moment, it is just a means to an end; though you are financially bankrupt, it is just a means to an end; though you are facing diverse trials and challenges, it is just a means to an end.

As children of the living God, we need to seek the face of God for an understanding to know why He requires us to give Him thanks in all circumstances, why He demands unconditional praise from us at all times. We need to search out how we can attain the point of giving thanks no matter how bad the situation of our lives gets. We need to learn how we can reach the point in our lives where we can look at the troubles and challenges of our lives in the face and just look up to heaven and say what Job said, *“may the name of the Lord be praised.”*

I know many people will agree with me that attaining this point of worship and fellowship with God does not come like a piece of cake. It takes cultivating a consistent relationship with God and gaining insight into the mind of God over the situations of our lives.

Job, the Bible says was a righteous man and there was none like him in his days (Job 1:8). I would not be wrong to

assume that Job understood that even in the height of the trials that befell him God was still with him. And that knowledge gave him the comfort and a basis of worship. He understood that God would not allow such troubles to befall him if He was not taking him somewhere. The devil might have intended it for evil but the Lord meant it for good and so Job worshiped God. Although Bible records show that Job asked questions, he never cursed God.

This same confidence was also displayed by Abraham the friend of God. Abraham knew the God he served and was willing to offer his only son - the fulfillment of God's covenant with him as a sacrifice to the Lord at His command. He knew that God had the power to raise his son up again. Abraham understood that for the Lord to ask him to offer up his son as a sacrifice, He was up to something. And so he obeyed.

He knew that the will of God for him was perfect. And in the midst of this, Abraham was going to worship God. Genesis 22:4-5 records that *“immediately Abraham saw the place where the Lord had directed him to from afar off, he told his servants to wait while he and the son go further to worship.”* As far as Abraham was concerned he was just going to worship. I am sure a lot of people will agree with me that what God asked Abraham to do was the height of tough request, yet Abraham regarded this as worship.

Going back to the two major questions of this study; i) why does God require us to give Him thanks in all circumstances, and ii) how do we arrive at the point in our relationship with God where we can truly give thanks to God

in all circumstances - that is, a true worship which is a pleasing aroma in the presence of God-given both in our good times and bad times.

### *Why Does God Require Us to Give Him Thanks In All Circumstances?*

Like so many others, on many occasions, I had thought and asked God questions as to why He would have us give thanks even when things are not going so well and we seem to be enveloped in great pain, or some other form of challenges. And as I began to trust God over this issue, the Holy Spirit dropped the word “Acknowledge” in my spirit as a form of translation for the word Thanksgiving. I tried looking up the synonyms for the words “thanks and acknowledge” and I found the word “recognize.” That is to say the words thanks, acknowledge and recognize are similar in meaning. So I will try to translate the passage 1Thessalonian 5:18 like this: *“acknowledge/recognize God in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”*

God wants us to acknowledge Him in everything we are going through. In truth, whether in good times or bad times God's presence never leaves us. Psalm 121:3-5 tells us that *“He will not let our foot slip, and He who watches over us will not slumber, the Lord watches us, the Lord is our shade at our right hand.”* The fact that we are going through tough times at the moment has not changed the content or power of the word of God spoken in Psalm 121:3-5. Our present situation is not a proof that God has left us. Remember He said, *“even though we walk through the valley of shadow of death, His rod and His*

*staff will comfort us.”*

And so bearing this in mind, we need to acknowledge the presence of God in our lives at all times. We need to acknowledge Him even more in our troubled times. This acts as a comfort in our lives, and as evidence that the challenge of that moment will not last forever, and most importantly because Thanksgiving is the will of God for us in Christ Jesus. We get the devil confused when we praise and acknowledge God in our troubled times.

In order to appreciate this better, let us consider this illustration as an example. (Note that this story is not a true story but just an illustration). Once a member of the US military troop died in battle in Iraq and the president of the United State of America rose up from his busy schedule to pay a condolence visit to the bereaved family. The presence of the president in the home of the grieving family is regarded as an honor. In fact, the visit will be in the daily journals and newspapers and many people will say that this soldier died in honor. It will be said that he was more honored in death than while he was alive. The president will be given a special seat and treated with respect. The mother of the soldier will not tear the president's clothes and ask why her child was sent to battle. It will be a thing of honor that the president attended the funeral.

Now here is the King of kings and Lord of lords ever present with us even in times of trouble, but we never bother to say thank you to God for being there always or arrange a special place for Him in our hearts and lives even in our grieving moments. What most people do is to ask why? They

just wonder why they have to be the ones to go through all such challenges. Yet the Lord never leaves nor forsakes us.

We treat the presence of a mere mortal with so much pride and honor without a place for the God that can heal all wounds, turn our lives around for good, take us from one level of glory to another, make us soar up on wings as eagles and ultimately change our story. How much more are we to acknowledge, respect and treat with honor the presence of the King of kings, the Maker of the heavens and the earth in our lives, in our situations, at all times, in all seasons, through good and bad times.

When we have come to understand that God is always with us, we will acknowledge Him. We will give Him praise and we will want to do nothing else but to say thank you to the God who never stops loving us not minding our shortfalls. We should appreciate Him not just for the things we have seen Him do, or the things we are believing Him to do in our lives, but most of all for His reassuring presence in our lives and situations. The presence of the Lord in our lives is the only guarantee we need for a fulfilled life on earth. The presence of God stills the storms of our lives; His presence is bigger than any president we can see, bigger than any state governor or even any town chief.

If the Lord visits you on your sick bed, you are guaranteed healing; if the Lord visits you at your workplace you are guaranteed a divine promotion; if the Lord visits your studies, you are guaranteed a spirit of excellence; if the Lord visits your home, you are guaranteed peace from heaven; if the Lord visits your marriage, you are guaranteed a joyful

and lovely marriage; if the Lord visits your business, you are guaranteed a successful breakthrough. All the Lord is asking is; *“My children, acknowledge my presence, give me praise, sing me songs of thanksgiving and let Me do the impossible in your lives.”*

The Lord is our ever-present help in times of trouble; this is a good enough reason to thank God always. We do not need any better reason to give God the thanks and praises He deserves more than the reason of His awesome presence in our lives at all times. The Lord is requiring that we give Him thanks because He needs us to acknowledge that He is there with us and for us at all times no matter what we are going through. And the fact that we acknowledge and thank Him for His presence in our lives takes us steps above the challenges we may be going through. It carries us steps above the devices of the enemy.

No wonder God told the children of Israel to praise Him in their troubled times. Just the sound of the trumpet and a shout was all it took to bring down the walls of Jericho (Joshua 6). The secret behind the victory of God's people was that for six days they circled round Jericho acknowledging the Lord with the sound of their trumpet. We need to develop an attitude of praise and thanksgiving even in the face of challenges.

The book of 2 Chronicles 20 tells us about the deliverance the Lord brought about for the people of Judah under king Jehoshaphat as they worshiped and gave thanks to God in the face of battles from three tribes - the Ammonites, Moabites, and the people of Mount Seir. They acknowledged the Lord with their praises and by the time

they got to the battlefield, they met only dead soldiers. That is what praise does in the lives of God's children.

By acknowledging God with our praises and thanksgiving, we are displaying our trust in His ability to lift us out of our challenges. By true worship and thanks to God, we move God to do the impossible in our lives. That is why the Bible says to give thanks in all circumstances. The Bible also tells us that *“in all our ways we should acknowledge Him, and He will direct our path.”*

### *How Can We Give Thanks Even When Things Are Not Going Well?*

Let us now consider how to get to the point in our lives where we can freely and truly appreciate and give thanks to God both in good and bad times. Giving thanks flows freely from a joyful heart. This leads to the topic of our study, “the joy of thanksgiving.” A heart that is joyful will always give thanks, but we should note that joy is not a display of emotions and does not spring up from things that are seen. Joy is not felt only when things are going right.

Joy is a fruit of a Holy Spirit. It is one of the fruits that grow from the Spirit of God living inside of us. It's a deposit of the in-filling of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the sons and daughters of the living God (Galatians 5:22-23). The Bible tells us in Ephesians 1:13-14 that *“having believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have been marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.”* If that is the case, we have the deposit of the gift of joy in our lives as soon as we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and have been marked with the promised Holy Spirit.

### *Be Born Again*

To simplify this matter and break it up into steps, it is better to understand it from this perspective: In order to have a life of all-around thanksgiving, you first need to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. You need to accept Him as your Lord and personal savior. It is in Him that our lives are marked with a seal which is the promised Holy Spirit that produces the fruit of Joy which then translates into a permanent life filled with thanks and praises to God.

### *Cultivate The Fruit Of Joy*

There are t understand the workings of the fruit of joy and how it can translate into Thanksgiving. I was a victim of such deprivation until I began to seek a lot of people who are born again but still do nothe face of God on how I could always give Him true praise in the midst of troubles.

Joy, as a fruit of the spirit, was deposited in our lives the moment we believed along with all the other fruits of the Spirit. But we will not enjoy the in-filling of this fruit until we ask God to help us stir up the fruit in our lives. We need to cultivate a life of joyfulness; a life that yearns to see the hand of God in all things. Not a life that complains or a life that wallows in self-pity. A life that will give thanks always is a life that is filled with boldness and has confidence in the power of God.

As I mentioned earlier I did not understand how the joy of thanksgiving in the midst of trials works in my life until the Lord gave me that word "Acknowledge." That was all I needed to stir up the fruit of Joy in my own life, and I can

truly give thanks no matter what comes my way. In order to have a thankful life we first need to stir up the fruit of joy in our lives.

The seal of the Holy Spirit is a sure evidence of the presence of God in our lives and it is this presence of God that we need to acknowledge, appreciate, praise and give thanks to at all times. When we start to honor, treat with respect, praise and give thanks to the presence of God in our lives, then we will start to see Him display more and more of His presence in every area our lives and situations.

One important point to note is that we need to always make room for the leading of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It is a biblical fact that once we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we are marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit, but we need to allow the Holy Spirit take His rightful place of leadership in our lives. We need to cultivate a life of total submission to the Spirit of God which is what will secure for us a continuous life of thanksgiving.

The Holy Spirit will not act and we will not experience His active presence in our lives when we do not give Him the right to operate within us by following after His leadership. The Bible tells us that “He is the Spirit of truth and will lead us to all truth,” and this includes the truth of the knowledge of God. Remember, you cannot acknowledge a God you do not know.

### *Lives of Men Who Gave Thanks to God*

We need to consider men in the Bible who by acknowledging, praising and giving thanks to God have

experienced great deliverance from their challenges. Remember that by praising God we move God to do the impossible in our lives and situations.

*Acts 16:25-28*

*<sup>25</sup>About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing Hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. <sup>26</sup>Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. <sup>27</sup>The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup>But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"*

By singing hymns and praying, God rose to liberate and deliver Paul and Silas from chains and imprisonment. Paul and Silas understood the importance of acknowledging the living God and they saw results. If we read further in that passage we'll realize that they were not just released from prison, those that imprisoned them apologized to them and gave them a glorious escort out of prison. They challenged God with their hymns and prayers and the Lord came to their rescue.

Another passage amongst many passages in the Bible that touches my life on the issue of thanksgiving is 2 Chronicles 20.

*2 Chronicles 20:1-3, 14-24*

*After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to make war on Jehoshaphat.*

*<sup>2</sup>Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, "A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the sea. It is already in Hazazon Tamar" (that is, En Gedi). <sup>3</sup>Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to enquire of the Lord, and proclaimed a fast for all Judah.*

*<sup>14</sup>Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly.*

*<sup>15</sup>He said: "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the Lord says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. <sup>16</sup>Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel.*

*<sup>17</sup>You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your position; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Don't be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you.'"*

*<sup>18</sup>Jehoshaphat bowed with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the Lord. <sup>19</sup>Then some Levites from the*

*Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the Lord, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.*

<sup>20</sup>*Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, Judah and the people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful."* <sup>21</sup>*After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying*

*"Give thanks to the Lord,  
for his love endures for ever."*

<sup>22</sup>*As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.* <sup>23</sup>*The men of Ammon and Moab rose up against the men of Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped destroy one another.*

<sup>24</sup>*When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked towards the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground; no-one escaped.*

The passage above shows the power of praise; God delights in the praises of His people. Our true and sincere

worship is a sweet smelling aroma pleasing unto God. He is always moved to do the impossible when His children praise Him. Chains are broken, deliverance is seen, and those in bondage are set free in the midst of praising God. The Bible has revealed to us that God dwells in the praises of His children and remember that where the presence of God is there is liberty.

When we praise God we usher His presence into our lives, and His presence brings light, and where the light of God is darkness flees. There is power in praising God. There is nothing our self-ability can give unto the Lord except to give Him true worship at all times.

*2 Samuel 6:12-16, 20-23*

*<sup>12</sup>Now King David was told, “The Lord has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God.” So David went down and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing.*

*<sup>13</sup>When those who were carrying the ark of the Lord had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. <sup>14</sup>David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the Lord with all his might, <sup>15</sup>while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of the trumpets.*

*<sup>16</sup>As the ark of the Lord was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her*

*heart.*

*<sup>20</sup>When David returned home to bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, "How the King of Israel has distinguished himself today, disrobing in the sight of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would."*

*<sup>21</sup>David said to Michal, "It was before the Lord, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the Lord's people Israel - I will celebrate before the Lord. <sup>22</sup>I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor."*

*<sup>23</sup>And Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.*

One thing that I have learned from this passage is that praising and dancing before the Lord knows no laws, no regulations, no conditions and no boundaries. It is an expression of the heart that is filled with the knowledge and the awesomeness of the living God. David understood what the presence of God meant to his reign as King. The presence of God symbolized in the ark of God in the house of Obed-Edom brought bountiful blessings that everyone could see and speak about.

David understood the magnitude of prosperity, blessings, and abundance that was entering the City of David and you tell this king not to praise God without restrictions. And we

can see that God did not take lightly the fact that anyone would try to hinder the life that was pouring praises on Him. David merely rebuked Michal with words, but the Lord shut her womb for life. We should not let anyone or anything stop us from praising God.

Just as the presence of God ushered in prosperity, blessings, abundance, victory, good health, breakthroughs into the house of Obed-Edom and in the City of David that people could see and talk about, so much more is the presence of God going to do in the lives of His children, those who worship God in truth and in spirit. And just like David rejoiced unhindered before the Lord God Almighty, so also should we continually rejoice and give thanks before the Lord for His presence in our lives. The Bible says this is the will of God for us in Christ Jesus.

### *Reasons Why We Need To Give Thanks At All Times*

1 Thessalonians 5:18

give thanks in all circumstances, for this is  
God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

- 1) The first and most important reason why we must give thanks is that it is the will of God for us in Christ Jesus. It has been emphasized in the course of this study that Thanksgiving is an acknowledgment of the Lord God Almighty in the fullness of His splendor, grace, love, mercy, and power. Thanksgiving is a way of inviting the presence of God into our lives, and this is pleasing to God because the Lord seeks to always be in

fellowship with us.

- 2) Thanksgiving is a food for our soul as children of the Most-High God. A heart that gives thanks is filled with the Joy of the Lord. Not the joy that comes from the things that are seen, but the joy that comes directly from the throne of God as a fruit of the spirit. A joyful heart harbors no bitterness, malice or hatred. A joyful heart expresses itself in love and thanksgiving. So when the devil tries to take-over your mind with bitterness, you need to combat it with a joyful heart and thanksgiving to God. No wonder Paul says “we should speak with one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; always giving thanks to God the father for everything.”
- 3) Thanksgiving also helps overcome worry. When we understand thanks to God as a means of acknowledging God in our situations and challenges, we rest assured that the presence of God will silence the storms of our lives. So, whatever we are going through once the presence of God is invited into the situation, the story must change for the better.
- 4) A heart that is filled with praises to God is always receptive to the blessings of God. A heart that will always give thanks to God, will always receive heavenly blessings. Remember when praises go up, blessings come down.

- 5) A life that will always give thanks is a life that will always conquer and will always be victorious in life's battles. Remember the stories we considered earlier; the victory of King Jehosaphat, the walls of Jericho, Paul and Silas' release from prison, and many other stories in the Bible and in our present-day lives. Praise and Thanksgiving bring about divine liberty. It breaks the chains of bondage, and the people of God are at liberty to worship Him even more.
  
- 6) A life that gives thanks is filled with the Holy Spirit, and the fruits of the Spirit are deposited and displayed in such a life. A life that gives thanks is filled with and displays great Love and as mentioned earlier is filled with the Joy of the Lord. And because we acknowledge the Lord, He will always fight our battles for us and so we can enjoy divine peace. All other fruits of the spirit are evident in our lives.

The Lord seeks true worshipers, a people who will worship and praise Him, giving thanks at all times in truth and in spirit and in all circumstances. The Lord desires people in whom, and through whom He can display His majesty and power as in the days of old. God said in His words that "If His people will not praise Him, He will raise stones to praise Him in their stead." Are you going to allow the Lord replace you with stones? It is time for the people of God to give Him unconditional praise.

David understood the importance of giving thanks to God

and that inspired Him to write the book of Psalms. He acknowledged the Lord in all his ways and he prospered. No wonder he was called a man after God's heart. David was a man just like you and me, but he was able to distinguish himself and had a special place in the heart of God because he lived a life of thanksgiving to God.

David made God the number one priority in his life, and God, in turn, gave him a special place in His program. David was no ordinary king; he had a special position in the mind and agenda of God.

You and I also have an open invitation to hold a special place in the purpose and plan of God if only we can give Him a special place in our lives. Let us start to acknowledge and praise God in our lives, let us start making Him the daily V.I.P (Very Important Personality) of our lives and our story will not remain the same. God is seeking true worshipers to bless; surely I will be one of them.

## BOOK

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# 2 *EMPTY PURSUIT*

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**I**n all my life I have dreamt and desired to be wealthy and have all the material comfort of this life. I have desired to drive the best cars, have the best electronic gadgets, travel the world and give my children the best that this life can offer. And the seemingly good aspect of all this is that I didn't want to cheat, steal, cut corners or visit any witch doctor to gain wealth. I was brought up in a Christian home with high moral standards, married to a man who would not encourage such and above all, I pride myself as a born-again Christian so the back door was not an option for me. I then resolved to work hard in my pursuit of wealth. I developed great business ideas with no money to implement them. My ideas were so beautiful that if I mentioned them to people they'd ask where I get all these lofty ideas from, but there was no money to finance them. So in short, my hopes of achieving my dreams were getting slimmer by each passing day.

I then began to pray. I must confess that I prayed very hard, but the more I tried my hands on making honest wealth the harder it seemed that my dreams would come true. I diligently paid my tithe on the very little resources I was getting from my small business until it became very difficult

to even afford the tithe. I lamented to God just like Job did, but one thing that was totally impossible for me to do was to seek other means of wealth creation as mentioned earlier.

So I resorted to saying that if God would not make me rich after all my assumed worship and fervent prayers then shame on Him. But I got a very interesting response from God to the resolve of my heart. First I was watching the Oprah show one afternoon and she was talking about the secret to success. She said she had never bargained to be as rich as she is now, but right from her twenties, she had prayed to live a life of service to humanity and so God saw her heart and added riches unto her. In the course of the program, I decided to write down the things I learned and began to change the tone of my prayers. So I started praying for a life of service too, maybe by giving my life to God's service, He might just decide to give me my heart's desires.

But the height of God's touch upon my life came one fateful morning. Prior to this day, I had been having problems paying my tithe. Each time I kept money aside for tithing, one heavy need would strike and I would be forced to use the tithe money in meeting that need. But on this particular occasion, I was determined that nothing would stop me from paying my tithe. I kept the money for tithe aside as my usual custom, and again this heavy need arose and I began to pray that God should just provide a means of meeting the need because I did not want to spend my tithe money. I already had a backlog of outstanding tithe to be paid. But God shut His ears and nothing changed.

Eventually, I had to spend the tithe. So on this fateful

morning, I had just dropped my children in school and was driving home. In the course of the drive home, I began to question God on why He would not even give me a chance to pay my tithe. He knows the intentions of my heart and why would He not just come through for me even on matters that required fulfilling His commands?

Strange enough God responded to my questions. He answered and said He is God Almighty, and He is not a hungry God. He does not delight in unworthy sacrifices. He said, "I am God and I make millionaires of men; He said that 'have I not read that a cattle on a thousand hills belong to Him.' He the Lord owns the world, the heaven is His throne and the earth His footstool". He frankly told me He did not need the peanut tithe that I had to pay if I would not give Him myself. I wondered which part of me the Lord wanted because whatever He wanted, I was willing to give. But it was not until then that I realized that I was too busy with worldly affairs and the pursuit of worldly dreams and that I had not made any preparation for my eternity and yet to me I was born-again.

In the course of our conversation, the Lord told me that all I had been doing was chasing after the wind. He opened my heart to understand that all my struggles and strive, no matter how honest they may seem, were just chasing after the wind. God was waiting for me to exhaust myself in the pursuit of my dreams before He stepped in.

After that encounter, I began to pray that God should show me the things I need to change within me in order to have a meaningful life. For a long time, it seemed God did

not speak to me again. But I began to experience some pruning and chiseling in my life that told me God was at work over my life. I began to experience God's remolding of my life into someone more usable by Him.

I am sure that I am not the only person experiencing such dealings with the Lord. There are a lot of Christians out there chasing after the wind just like I was. Although they have dreams of a comfortable life and have decided to pursue their dreams in the most honest and honorable manner devoid of all back-doors, yet what they are actually pursuing is the wind.

Luke 12:28-31 tells us that *the first thing to pursue in life is the Kingdom of God; all other things shall be added unto us* (including the fulfillment of our dreams). Luke 12:32 tells us that *our father in Heaven is already pleased to give us His Kingdom*. All our heart's desires and dreams can only become a reality if we seek first the Kingdom of God.

I generally like to look at this issue as getting two things for the price of one. I call it a heavenly bonanza coming straight from the throne of Grace. I would like to point this out that desiring good and comfortable things of life is not bad, David said in Psalm 27:13, that *he is confident of this: he will see the goodness of the Lord on the Land of the Living*. The Bible also says in Psalm 34:10 that *the children of the lioness may hunger and grow weak, but those who seek the Lord will lack no good thing*. From these passages we can conclude that God does not want His children to live in lack of anything good, therefore desiring riches and the good things of life is not a wrong desire, but what makes it bad is the priority we place on the

pursuit of wealth. As Christians, our first pursuit should be the Kingdom of God, how to prepare our lives for eternity, learn and cultivate heavenly attitudes. We have the Bible as our manuscript on which we base our rehearsals here on earth for our heavenly lives. Luke 12:33 tells us *to start to build up heavenly treasures that are far more secure.*

The beauty in changing the focus of our earthly pursuit is that we get two treasures for the price of one. We have all we desire here on earth and also have a heavenly heritage. In our busy schedule, we need to pause and look up and tell God, “I am ready to slow down and surrender all pursuits into your hands,” and let God Himself take the lead.

*Luke 5:1-10*

*One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding round him and listening to the word of God, <sup>2</sup>he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup>He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.*

*<sup>4</sup>When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water, and let down the net for a catch.”*

*<sup>5</sup>Simon answered, “Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”*

*<sup>6</sup>When they had done so, they caught such a large*

*number of fish that their nets began to break.<sup>7</sup> So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.*

*<sup>8</sup>When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"<sup>9</sup> For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken,<sup>10</sup> and so were James and John the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partner.*

*Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men."*

The passage above gives a beautiful illustration of what most of us as Christians are experiencing in our pursuit of life's comfort and riches. Like Simon we have toiled for many years, and needless to say, we have engaged in a lot of empty pursuits and chasing after the wind with our thinking set on "we can do it ourselves so God should wait till we make our millions and then we can have all the time for heavenly things." But we are completely wrong; the latter comes before the former. That should be the order of priority arrangement in our lives. God first and other things follow.

Simon Peter had toiled all night and in fact, he had given up for the night when Jesus saw him and sat in his boat. If Simon was still in the deep waters toiling that night, he would not have caught the Master's attention and his boat would not have been available for Jesus to sit in. But because God needed him for better services He wearied him early

enough and Simon retired for the night.

Now the question is: How many of us are still toiling hard when we are supposed to be tired? How many of us are still giving it just one last try when we are supposed to surrender and let God take charge. God will not interfere with our pursuit while we are still struggling and toiling hard. He is waiting for us to give up our struggles and let Him take over. The earlier we do that, the earlier we have our dreams materialized.

Simon had given up for the night, his boat was at the edge of the water and readily available for Jesus to sit in. We are not just to give up and go to sleep. That is what lazy people do and God says He hates laziness. But we are to give up all struggles and start making our lives available for God's use. We need to give God more attention in our lives; those former busy times used up for empty pursuits should be redirected for God's use. We should be on alert and ready to receive clear instructions from God on how to use our time and energy to meet God's needs and ultimately our dreams. If God prepares a way for you in your business deals, you will achieve in just one business meeting what five years of empty struggle cannot achieve for you. God will prepare the hearts of men to favor you.

Simon was on alert and his boat was ready and available when Jesus gave the instruction to put out into deep waters and let down the nets for a catch. Simon replied that although he had toiled all night (like most of us) and caught nothing, but, because Jesus had given the instruction he would let down the nets. Although he had his doubt due to

previous experience, he was sensible enough to exercise a little faith in Jesus that changed his life.

Simon caught more fish that night than he had ever caught in his entire life of fishing. Two boats were filled with fish to the point that the boats began to sink. That is what God is calling us to come and enjoy. It is called “a stressless toil,” not a hard toil, but a stress-free toil. Matthew 11: 28-30 says *we should come to Him, all of us who are weary and burdened, and He will give us rest. We should take His yoke upon us and learn of Him, for His yoke is gentle and humble in heart and we will find rest for our souls. For His yoke is easy and His burden is light.*

In Ecclesiastes 2:22-26, King Solomon asked a question that we all must sometimes ask ourselves. He says “*What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun, even at night his mind does not rest*”. Solomon concluded all these to be meaningless. This is coming from a man that is said to be one of the richest men in Bible history.

Vs 24-25 brings the beauty out of toiling, it says, “*a man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work.*” This he says “*is from the hand of God, for without Him who can eat or find enjoyment.*” Can you comprehend what Solomon is saying? He said that to obtain fulfillment and satisfaction in all our hard work, even this comes only from God. I now understand that for us to end all struggles, what we need to do is rest all of these struggles in the hands of God.

Vs 26 says, *to the man who pleases Him (GOD), He gives wisdom, knowledge, and happiness, but to the sinner, he gives the task of gathering up and storing wealth to hand it over to the one*

*who pleases God. This too he says is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.* If only we take time to please God, how stressless our lives and toils can be. Even sinners will start to work for us while we rest in the act of pleasing God.

Ecclesiastes 5:19 tells us that *“when God gives a man wealth and possessions and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work is a gift from God.”* Such a man the Bible says *“seldom reflects on the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart.”* What a stress-free life God has purposed for His children.

Psalm 37:4 says *we should delight ourselves in the Lord, and He will give us the desires of our heart.* Also in Psalm 37:25 David said, *he was young and now he is old, yet he has never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging for bread.* That is to say, what we are working at would not only be to our benefit but also to that of our children. What a provision for the righteous.

### *Life Of Service*

Many Christians really have a lot of things mixed up about serving God and having personal pursuits. Most of the time we tend to think that since we have prayed and committed our ways unto the Lord we can carry on with our lives as we wish and spend the rest of our time serving ourselves. Well, that is not how it works. Some also think that since they have engaged so much in humanitarian services and presently serving as church workers, what more does God require?

Well, to tell the truth, all of these acts of service are good,

but the first thing to do as Christians is to pause and seek God's face on how to be of relevant service to him.

After Paul's encounter with Jesus, the Lord sent Ananias to restore his sight and specifically gave the instruction that Paul was His chosen vessel to carry the name of the Lord to the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel (Act 9:15). God in most cases gives specific areas of service according to the gifts He has deposited in us, even though we have a broad training.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 tells us about different kinds of gift, different kinds of service and different kinds of working all from the same God. We need to seek the face of God to discover our own place in His scheme of things. We need divine training and wisdom on how to fit into God's plan for our lives and for the whole world. 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 tells us about the gifts for service available at the throne of Grace and Vs 11 says God gives them to each one as He determines. So we need to seek God for the manifestation of our own gift of service and how to use it meaningfully for His glory.

### *Empty Sacrifice*

Now going back to where I started, for several months I could not pay my tithe and that was an issue I struggled with. After the Lord spoke to me on how He was not interested in my tithe but rather my life I stopped all attempts to pay tithe and began to seek the face of God on how I could be of relevant service to Him, and how I could make my life please Him.

We need to note that tithing and giving unto God without

a yielded life is a total waste of time. God does not delight in such sacrifices. We cannot continue to cheat people, steal, cut corners and then pay our tithe and give church offering or help the poor and think, “well since the money is used for God's work then it is okay.” Well, dear friends, it is not okay. If we do not help the poor with this ill-gotten wealth they will still be helped anyway. So let us not indulge ourselves in bad thinking.

Also, some Christians do not have time for God's business because they are too busy looking for money or having too much pressure as housewives, and with some its office pressure. So they would rather just give church offerings and make charity donations to make up for this lack of time. I have also heard on television, where Christians give donations to the work of other ministries because they do not have the time to physically engage in God's service.

Though giving in itself is not bad because in truth the Lord God Almighty commanded us to give to the poor, help those in need, because in doing so we are doing the will of God. And He also commanded us to pay our tithe to His house so that there might be food in His house, but doing these without yielding our lives to Christ is all empty sacrifices. God does not delight in our money; all He needs is a yielded life that will focus solely on Him. He wants to fellowship with us, not with our money. He desires a relationship with us not with our gift. Whatever we give to the Lord came from the Lord, remember the book Deuteronomy says that it is the Lord who teaches our hands to make wealth.

He is the God of all flesh and there is nothing impossible for Him to do. He can decide to turn all the sand of the seashore to gold if need be, all it takes is a word from His mouth. He said if men will not praise Him, He would raise stones to praise Him in their stead. So what can't God do? But He says all He desires is a closeness with us, a time of fellowship and friendship like in the Garden of Eden. Every other thing is secondary.

The very first step in giving; is the giving of our own lives. Romans 12:1 says, *we should offer our lives as a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God; this is our spiritual act of worship.* So before we can offer any acceptable sacrifice unto the Lord, we need to first offer our lives as a holy and pleasing sacrifice to God. Anything short of this is not acceptable.

We should note the fact that God is not demanding sacrifices and offerings from everybody. God demands sacrifice only from His chosen ones, His children, the descendants of Abraham, heirs to the throne of God and joint heirs with Christ Jesus. It is to these people that God has given the instruction to pay tithe and offer sacrifices to Him that is a sweet smelling aroma pleasing to Him. God did not give His Laws and Commands to the Canaanites, Babylonians, Moabites and all those who serve foreign gods, He gave His Commands and Laws to those He brought out of slavery in Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, the descendants of Abraham, children of promise, a people separated unto the Lord. These are the people who have been bought by the precious and priceless blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the redeemed sons and daughters of God.

And unless we fall into this category of people, we offer empty sacrifices.

As I began to spend more time in prayers and cultivating a relationship and friendship with God, things gradually started getting easy. And for the first time in my life, I paid my first fruit offering. Doors are beginning to open for my family and I. Now there is a glimpse of hope. I have a happier and more fulfilled life, and it can only get easier.

Friends, there are too many promises for the provisions of our needs as Christians in the Bible for God to take the issue of our needs with little seriousness. All we need to enjoy and have these promises fulfilled in our lives is to receive and believe in Jesus. Seek first those things that are pleasing unto the Lord. Find your rightful place in the plan and purpose of God and begin to live solely to please Him. It is only then that we can have a fulfilled life on earth.

### ***Other Books by the Author***

Because the Lord Seeks Godly Offspring  
Covenant of God  
Stressless Toil  
God's Rules of Engagement in Marriage  
The Sacrifice That Pleases The Lord  
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