

## The most important choice you can ever make

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### **Foreword:**

We live in a world where we have to make so many choices daily. Some of the choices are insignificant, like what we will eat or wear. Others are bigger choices, like where we invest our money to provide for our retirement.

There is however one choice which is more important than all these choices. To be honest, it can rightly be viewed as the most important choice you could ever make, because it will determine where you will spend eternity. This choice is the choice for Jesus.

In "*The most important choice you could ever make*", you will discover what joy and peace there is to choose Jesus as your Saviour. At the end of the book, you will not only understand what it means should you *not* choose Jesus, but also what it means should you *choose* Jesus and hence live a radical life for God.

## **What does the world we live in look like?**

There is so much need in our world today. We read about it and see it all around us – that it has formed part of our everyday lives. There are so many hands extended to something or someone for help.

Have you ever wondered why the world looks the way it does today? It is the effect of sin and the work of Satan. Satan blows his destructive fire onto the earth and so many people fail to realize that he is the one who is busy with a fierce onslaught onto mankind – specifically on your soul. He wants to break you down systematically and is busy with an onslaught on your thoughts so that you believe that the state of our world is normal.

Do you realize how easily accessible evil things in life are? The fact that evil things are easily accessible plays right into Satan's hands, because as such he doesn't have to do much to convince you to do evil. You would make a big mistake if you misjudge the power of Satan, because we are warned in 1 Peter 5:8: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (NKJ).

Do you also see the unbelievable need, or do you perhaps not notice it anymore because:

- Your emotions are already so numbed
- Satan has such a hold on your thoughts and life that you have been too blind to see the truth
- Your life is so busy that you don't have time anymore to come to a standstill and notice the need around you
- You believe that the above is part of a normal society

## What does your life look like?

### **The foundation of your life**

So many people nowadays rely on worldly things to bring meaning into their lives. Success is measured by possessions, status and financial value. This is not the right foundation upon which to build your life. Worldly standards cause many people to pretend that they are happy, whilst in reality, they feel empty inside, lonely and lost.

Which of the following statements is true about your life?

- It feels as if your life is empty and aimless
- Everything is too much for you
- You are disappointed with what the world offers you
- You are weighed down by worry
- You are looking for meaning in life
- You don't have peace in your life

The list goes on: you feel unfulfilled, lonely, void of passion, sad, sick, tired of life, empty deep inside you, jealous, fearful, stressed, over worked, experiencing financial pressure, you have no dreams and there are bad things in your life which you just can't resolve.

Which mask do you have to wear today to make your life a bit more bearable, based on one or more of the above statements which is true about you? Have you stood still for a moment and asked yourself on which foundation your life is built: the world or God and His Bible? Or perhaps you have no foundation in your life. What could be the reason for that?

- Life has crushed you and it's difficult for you to see the meaning of life
- You chose not to have any foundation – perhaps you think that you don't need a foundation for your life
- Your outlook on life is perhaps horizontally focused, in other words, you look at people for direction in your life. You 'worship' something, a person, or a group here on earth and strive to be like him / her, they – in order to fit in

- Perhaps you have no foundation because nobody has told you about the wonderful message of Jesus and what He came to do for you.

Perhaps material possessions, your job title at work or your social status is your foundation. But think about this properly: Do you believe that there is future security in your status, shares, policies, properties, bank statement or position at work? Perhaps you believe your foundation is Christ, because you sometimes pray and go to church and read your Bible. If however you do not give your life completely to God and seek His will in everything you do; if you do not have a living relationship with Him, you have to be careful, because God warns in Revelations 3:15-16 “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.” Ask yourself the following questions to determine if you are a lukewarm Christian:

- Do you know God only when things aren’t going well whilst the rest of the time you do not need Him in your life?
- Do you go to church on Sundays or read your Bible or pray to God because you have been taught to do so, or because you really have the need to do so?
- Do you have an active, personal relationship with God, or do you use your knowledge of God for personal gain?
- Do you see prayer as a spare tyre which you can use in case of emergency?
- Do you do things your way, or God’s way?
- Do you rely on your own wisdom / insight when it comes to choices?
- Do you know what it means to be totally dependent on God?
- Where are the priorities in your life – does God fit in with effort around your daily agenda or is your agenda scheduled around God?

Most people measure themselves in worldly terms. In Ecclesiastes 1:14, the preacher warns: “I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.”

The following areas receive a lot of attention. Look at the questions after each area and determine how big a role that area plays in what you think of yourself.

## Success

By worldly standards, success is measured by what you have, where you live and what you drive.

- Is it important for you to compete on material level?
- Do you trample on people to get to the top?
- Are titles important for you?
- Do you think that you achieved your worldly success on your own steam or as Deuteronomy 8:17 says: "You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me."

## Value

It's simple – the more hours you work, the more money you earn, the more you impress others – the more valuable you are in the eyes of others.

- Do you think you're worth more than the beggar on the corner?
- Is your happiness in life determined by how many people like you – in other words, the more they like you, the happier you are?

## Potential

According to worldly standards, your IQ count determines how much you will achieve in life.

- Has someone told you at one point in your life that you are stupid and won't achieve anything in life, or that you are clever and will achieve much – and these remarks define your life?

It is important to build your life on the right foundation, namely Jesus, because the result of a life built on this world, is eternal death!

## The wonderful news

### Did you know?

- Do you know the origin of sin? Read Genesis 3 of Adam and Eve, to understand why the world came to sin
- Because of the fall from grace, we are all born in sin and our lives are recognized by sin: As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one". (Rom 3:10)
- Mankind's disobedience brought a divide between God and man
- The net result of sin is eternal death. It doesn't matter who you are or what you achieved on this earth – if your life's foundation is not build on God and His Word, you will earn eternal death.

### God's master plan – the good news!

God's master plan is set out in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (NKJ) Jesus came to this earth to live amongst people like you and I to teach us about the truth of God and his master plan for mankind, to give us hope for an eternal life with God.

Jesus died for us and with that He took the punishment meant for us onto Himself. He was risen from the dead and through that, He proved victory over sin, death and hell. Can you imagine how much God must love us, to send his own Son to be crucified so that we can be saved?! Read the details of Jesus' crucifixion in Matthew 27: 32-54 to understand exactly what Jesus endured for us.

After Jesus completed his work on earth he ascended to heaven, but in His place on earth, God sent the Holy Spirit to live in your heart until He will come again to gather his children. (Acts 1:1-11). Jesus' cross has become the proverbial bridge between God and man and God's hands are extended to welcome you – all you have to do, is to choose for Him.

## What does it mean for you?

Perhaps you are wondering what it all means. If you accept in earnest that you are born in sin and that Jesus came to this world to redeem you from your sin and if you choose Him truthfully as your only Saviour from eternal death – look at the extent of His gift to you:

- You become his child and subsequently part of God's family. You become a descendant of God and his kingdom, or a prince / princess of the only God of the universe
- You obtain eternal life, in other words a place in heaven to live – your earthly life is only a thought

This gift is meant for everybody – without exception. Everybody is equal in His eyes: rich or poor, sick or healthy, pretty or ugly, old or young, smart or uneducated. God's love for you is immeasurable. Look at what is written in Rom 5:8 "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." God's grace for you is never-ending and never too late! Should you choose Him, it doesn't mean that you will never again sin, but that when you sin and confess your sins truthfully, He is true and just and will forgive your sins.

God wants to be the King of your heart; He wants to be number one in your life; He wants your life to revolve around Him. As written in Matthew 6:33 "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." God wants a personal relationship with you – He wants to laugh with you and cry with you – He wants to carry you in tough times and dance with you when it's going well.

You are placed on this earth with a purpose – it's not by accident. Only you can fulfil this Godly calling; nobody else can do it for you. How wonderful to know that each person is a part of God's greater plan for the world.

God wants to give you a life of abundance; He wants you to enjoy your life on earth. Just look at His wonderful promise in John 10:10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." How can you decline such a gift? All you have to do is to choose Him.

## **A choice for Jesus**

### **It's time to choose**

Do you dearly want Jesus to *save your life* through intercession with God which means you receive eternal life as a gift?

Do you dearly desire to experience a *radical turn-around in your life* – a revolution which will drive change in your life which will exceed your highest expectations?

*Are you yearning to experience His heavenly peace*, which surpasses all understanding (Phil 4:7) regardless of our broken lives in this broken world? Are you yearning for a radical, purpose driven life here on earth, designed to *praise God every moment*?

Well, you have a choice!

When it comes to making a choice for Jesus, you can be certain about the following:

- No-one can force you to choose. Not even God will force you to choose Him, because He created every human being with a free will
- Nobody can choose on your behalf
- The choice is not hereditary. It doesn't help if your parents chose God and now you assume you are also saved. Each person has to make the choice by himself
- Should you not choose, you automatically chose eternal death! In Matthew 7: 13 -14 it is written clearly: "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. <sup>14</sup> Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."
- Jesus will return to collect those who have chosen for Him and to condemn to hell those who did not choose Him. There is no mid-way, because it is written: "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God." (Rom 14:11)

Do not delay any longer. You do not know the day of your death and should you not have made the choice before you die, it will be too late. As is written in 1 Thessalonians 5:2: "For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night". Are you ready now to make the most important choice in your whole life? What are you waiting for? What do you choose?

Jesus, here is the crown of my life

Now that you have made the most important choice of your life by choosing Jesus, please raise your hands to the heavens and give Jesus the crown of your heart!

If you believe sincerely that your life is riddled by sin and that you need Jesus to save you, you can now close your eyes and pray the following simple words to God:

*Dear Lord, I know that I am full of sin. I also know that I deserve death because of my sin. I believe that Jesus came to the world to die for my sins and was resurrected so that I can be free. I want to follow you as my only Saviour. Please, live in my heart and take control of my life. Thank you Lord, that You have saved me and forgiven me. Amen*

Write your name and the date below on which you gave your heart to the Lord. Let it always remind you of the choice you made:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

You chose the Lord and gave your life to Him in prayer. Based on that, you can now make the following biblical promises your own:

Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. ~ Romans 10:13

No height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. ~ Romans 8:39

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ~ Romans 5:1

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 ~ Romans 10:9

He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 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. ~ 1 John 5:12 – 13

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. ~ Revelations 3:20

Welcome to God's family! Now that you have made the choice you can be certain of the following:

- At this very moment, there is a feast in heaven as God's kingdom is celebrating your choice
- I am certain God has tears of joy!
- I am certain that His angels are singing and dancing for joy
- I am also certain that Satan is deeply unhappy about your choice

Please continue to read further in order for your relationship with God to commence immediately!

## **What does a life with Jesus look like?**

### **It is a journey, not a final destination!**

*Father, I am afraid and helpless and still an infant when it comes to my relationship with You, but I have made the choice for You – please help me to understand my Godly purpose here on earth and to live it to Your glory. Amen.*

It's not the purpose of this booklet to generalise your relationship with God or to summate it – each of our relationships with God is unique. The purpose of this booklet is rather to open a few windows for you, so that you can see what is important for a radical life for God.

The heading says it all: The choice you made, will take you on a journey like no journey you've undertaken before. God wants to be the captain of your life-boat to show you the direction. A radical life for God is not about rules but about your personal, active relationship with God. It takes an effort to succeed in any relationship. If you thought that everything will fall into place now that you gave your heart to God, or that suddenly you became a super being, you are mistaken – we still live in a sinful world and we are still just as exposed to the bad things in life. The difference is that God is always with us. Just look at the wonderful promise in Matthew 28:20: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." We do not have to be afraid.

The biggest danger in our relationship with God is that we fall into a comfort zone and expect that God has to do everything. We have to continuously ask God to stir an inextinguishable hunger inside us for Him. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" As a deer longs for water streams, so I long for you, oh Lord. (Ps 42:2).

The good news is that you don't have to be a minister or preacher to live a radically different life for God – not all of us are called to be in full time service. It is wonderful to know that God also calls you, no matter what your occupation, and can and wants to use you to His glory. Do not be afraid for what God has in store for you – He only wants what is good for you: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." (Jer 29:11)

How sad to know that all those people who never choose God, as well as those which choose for Him but have a shallow relationship with Him - will never come to their full potential in Him. Think for a moment how different our world could look if the whole human race lived radically for God.

God wants to give each of us a fulfilled life and He wants to use our talents to glorify His name. To live radically for God means we have to care for what He cares for and it is to do everything to the glory of His name. Thus, it is not at all about you, but about God!

Just as a baby cannot eat solid food from his first day, so you have to know that you cannot experience spiritual maturity from day one – you have to eat the right spiritual food to ensure that you will grow in your relationship with God. Don't ever stagnate in your spiritual growth – it just gives Satan more hold on your life. Each one who gives his or her heart to the Lord, has to start their life journey with God somewhere.

The well-known evangelist Billy Graham always asks people who just surrendered to God, to do four important things. Be mindful that these four things don't fall into a mundane routine and that you do it only out of habit, but rather let it become a lifestyle upon which the grounding is formed in your relationship with God:

1. Read your Bible every day

Peter says the following well-known words in 1 Peter 2:2 "As newborn babies, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." The Bible is God's compass for our lives and He speaks to us through His word. The more you read the Bible, the more you will experience that you can use it to direct your life. You can start applying the principals in the Bible to your life and start living the life God wants you to live.

God's word also brings hope in this broken world. There are so many promises in God's Word which we can make our own and which can provide us with hope. And there is an eternity perspective to His promises: His promises and words were true yesterday, is true today and will forever be true. Therefore, hold onto the Lord's wonderful promises.

Just as one needs food and water every day to survive, we also need spiritual food and water in order to grow spiritually. We can find that spiritual food and water in the Bible. When we read and study our

Bible every day, we are sustained by God's Word. That leads to spiritual growth. We thus need to drink the words of the Bible to enable us to survive and grow spiritually.

There are so many advantages to reading the Bible every day. Thus, make time every day to read from God's Word, to ponder on it and apply it to your life.

## 2. Pray continuously to God

In Matthew 6: 5-15, Jesus teaches His disciples how to pray. He also gives them a model prayer, probably the most well-known prayer in the world, namely, the Lord's Prayer. Jesus himself spent a lot of time in prayer. We read throughout the Gospels that Jesus retreated to places of quiet to pray to His Father.

From Jesus' example, it is thus clear how important it is to talk to God often; to ask Him what His will is for your life; to know Him in everything. Speak to Him in simple language – you are not going to impress Him with many or important words. The Lord wants us to share everything with Him - He wants to be part of every bit of detail in your life. Ask Him to teach you to pray, as He wants you to pray. After all, it is written in Matthew 7:7: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you”. We should never underestimate the power of prayer – God can solve any problem.

Never forget that God specialises in the impossible. Do not try to limit Him with your thoughts, because He does not think as humans do. Remember the words of Mark 10:27: “And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.”

Another important point you have to remember is that you received one mouth and two ears. You thus have to speak less and listen more – also in your prayer life. Often in prayer, we focus so much on what we want to ask the Lord, without making time to just be still in His presence. It is more often necessary to just be still before God.

As your relationship with God grows, your prayer life will also mature. You will find that you will pray more for others and less for yourself. Ask God to show you what you should pray for.

There are so many people who believe there is a particular recipe to follow when you pray: you have to be at a specific place, you have to be in a kneeling position and your eyes always have to be closed. This is not true. You do not always have to use words when you pray – you can talk to God in your thoughts.

You do not always have to close your eyes (although it helps you focus) and your body position does not indicate whether God will hear you or not. And whether you pray in your bedroom, office or in the garden, it does not matter either. God desires that you communicate with Him. Make time to pray.

You can literally talk to God any time of the day. Long conversations in your quiet time or short prayers whilst you are sitting waiting somewhere. It is however important to start and end each day in prayer with God. Try it – you will soon experience the difference it makes to your life. Also talk to God before you start or plan anything.

When you pray, you have to pray with confidence. You should not doubt. Always remember the promise in Romans 8:26: “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

Remember also to not just always ask, but to also give thanks and to praise God for His grace. As you can deduct from this section, it is important to make time for daily prayer. Take off your watch for a change and be still before God – your strength will be renewed.

### 3. Join a church

In his letter to Timothy, Paul’s view about the role of the church community is clear: “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” (1 Tim 3:15). It is important to be a part of the Christian community for support, fellowship and that which is important in a family.

But how do you know as a newly saved, which church to attend? As you know, there are many different churches. Some are very formal in their services and others’ approach is more informal. The only real important factor is that the church must be operating in the Spirit of God, i.e. by the leading of the Holy Spirit. If not, false doctrine will be spread and people will be misled and eventually they will lose their faith in Jesus Christ. If the Holy Spirit is not present in the church, then that church is in effect dead.

As a church is really made up of the members of that church, it goes without saying then that these members must have the Holy Spirit living inside them – the church is commanded by Jesus in Matthew 28:18: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” This baptism will give you full access to all the power of the Holy Spirit –

however, please read the section at the end of the book entitled – “It’s not about you - the full surrender!” to understand more about the full surrender of your life to Christ through the Holy Spirit.

The church is there to aid the growth of your relationship with God. The Christian family shares in your triumph and pain. When you attend church regularly and join in the activities of the community, you will discover that it is joyous to know that there are fellow Christians who also do not have all the answers and who can walk the journey with you.

#### 4. Live your faith through love

Should you want to know more about love and the importance of love, read 1 Corinthians 13: 1- 13. One thing which is very clear in 1 Corinthians 13 is that you cannot live your faith, without love. God wants us to reach out to everyone to reveal His love – also to our enemies.

The purpose of our creation here on earth, is to give glory to God and you can do that through your actions – actions speak louder than words. When people look at you, they should be able to see that you are living a radical life for God and they should be envious of your inner peace and spiritual resolve no matter your circumstances. How can you show that you are living radically for God? Live your faith wherever you find yourself; share your faith with everyone; share your experiences with people; talk to them about God; ask them about their faith. Sometimes, you don’t need to say anything - your love and support will suffice. Ask God to bring opportunities along your way to share His love with others.

Remember, we are not secret agents for God; we should carry His light in this dark world; we should be his hands and feet. What a privilege to be used in God’s service and to spread the good news! Go today and live radically for God, by showing through your love and actions, what a wonderful life we have in Christ.

You are going to experience setbacks on your journey with God. At times, you are going to be tired and frustrated and feel despondent. When you stumble, you always have to get back up. The Lord will help you each and every time! Hold onto his promise in Isaiah 43:2 “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”

Take the Lord's yoke on your shoulders today and do not tire, for Jesus says: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt 11:29)

### **To be different, like Jesus...**

*Jesus was radically different! Nobody can deny that.* His Sermon on the Mountain in Matthew 5-7 is probably one of the most well-known parts in the Bible. In these 3 chapters, Jesus explains so well what it means to be radically different, as He was. You have now reached the point where you have to measure your life to these truths. Whether you have just given your heart to the Lord or whether you are already in a relationship with God, read this section aloud and then answer this one question: "Am I willing that my life be marked by His words?"

YES

NO

When you read this section in Matthew 5-7, it is easy to see – that what He asks, is not what the world asks of us. God longs for people who are willing to be radically different as Jesus was.

As a Christian, you are going to deal with most concepts which Jesus discusses in the mountain sermon daily. You have to strive to handle it as Jesus handled it. When you struggle to live as radically as Jesus did, do not despair and think that what God asks of us is impossible. He wants to help us to be more like Him, every day.

Below follows a short discussion of a few of the concepts Jesus touches on in the mountain sermon. It isn't the only concepts – as many more can be discussed but these are few which are important for a radical relationship with God. The text references with some of the points are also not the only text references thereof. Should you want to, you could reference other sources for more text references on a particular topic.

## Dependence

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:3). One of the biggest ailments of our time in modern civilization, is surely stress and anxiety. In our rushed lives, we worry ourselves about everything and we have stopped being as dependant as when we were young. We put our faith in worldly things like our finances and our employers. That, whilst Jesus so clearly states in Matthew 6:34: “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” It is time to be like sheep before God again. Pray Psalm 23 aloud and believe the following:

- Sheep do not worry about anything (food, water, place to sleep, safety, future, finances, work, kids), because they know that they are dependent on their shepherd who will look after them.
- The spine of sheep are not strong enough to carry heavy loads, therefore they do not even attempt it.

We should apply the concept of being sheep in our own lives. The only way to rid ourselves of worry is to do the following:

- Hand over the things which worry you to God – and leave it with Him! That means everything and anything, because nothing is too big or too small for Him to resolve.
- Ask Him to help you! Jesus says in Matthew 7:7: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you”. And Paul says in Philippians 4:6 “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”
- Trust in Him to resolve the things you handed over to Him, in His good time. Do not take back that which you gave Him – that is where faith comes in. Trust, like just little children can trust – without reserve. It is here where your true faith in God is tested! Read Proverbs 3: 5-8 on how to radically trust in God.

Always give thanks to God that He wants to help you resolve your problems in His time and way. “In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” (1 Thes 5:18)

We are often under the misconception that God is not really able to solve our problems; that it is probably too small or too big for Him to bother Himself with; that He is possibly too busy to want to

also take my problem onto Himself; that I'm intelligent enough to sort out my own problems. Think again: God wants to be involved in your life in the tiniest detail! Hold onto God's promises in His word; do not doubt it. Remember that God never slumbers – He cannot wait for you to share your problems with Him! "The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge". (Psalm 46:11).

### **Material things**

"To have, but to own nothing". If only that was our view about material possessions! The question is not "how much of my money do I want to give Him" but rather, "how much of His money do I keep for myself".

We have to remember that everything belongs to God, also our money and possessions. He lends it to us – we borrow from what actually belongs to Him: "The earth is the LORD's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." (Ps 24:1)

We are not supposed to be reservoirs which just gather; we have to give and share freely. That also includes giving our tithes. There are disparate views on the giving of tithes. Take God's instruction in Malachi 3: 8 - 12 seriously and experience His blessing in your life. Never say that you want to wait until you earn enough before you begin to give – give from today, that which you have! It also doesn't help to give away that which you want to get rid of – you have to give the best, or rather, the first of the harvest. The saying which goes: "What you give, you'll get" is also applicable about giving money. You cannot expect God to bless you if you are not prepared to give.

Do not boast about your material possessions – it can be taken away at the blink of an eye. Do not look for future security in material things – you'll regret it. Do not be arrogant if you own more than others. Remember Paul's words in 1 Cor 4:7 "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"

Instead of boasting about what you have, rather be grateful for it. Always be thankful for what God gives you and enjoy it. Also remember, the more you have, the bigger your responsibility to manage that which is His. "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" (Luke 16:11).

Remember that you are only temporarily on earth and there is no meaning in hoarding material things – you cannot take it with you to heaven in any event. Rather listen to Jesus' warning in Matthew 6: 19-20: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal". Collect things which have eternal value – or rather, purchase shares in heaven.

The last point I want to raise about money, is rather meant as a warning: please do not think that you can give royally just so that you can receive God's blessings. He looks at your heart when you give.

### **The Exams of Life**

Read 2 Corinthians 12: 8-9 and James 1: 2-3, 12 about the exams (the difficult times) in life. To grow in your relationship with God, means that you will 'write exams' every day of your life. These 'exams' can be in various forms for example testing, suffering, illness, sadness, work disappointments, love disappointments, someone jumping the traffic, someone speaking ill of you etc. God tests your reaction to everyday things which happen to you.

Someone once said: the true flavour of a tea bag only comes to the fore when in hot water. This can be true about Christians as well. God tests your heart through trials on your journey. You cannot grow spiritually if you don't pass these trials.

God dearly wishes for us to keep our eyes focused only on Him throughout the storms in our lives, so that we can experience His peace, regardless of our situations. Our hearts are laid bare and our characters formed when life does not always pan out as we had hoped it would – and God uses these experiences to shape us to how He wants us to be. God is in the middle of the storm – we just have to learn to see Him with our spiritual eyes.

To be stable every minute, regardless whether it's going well or not, is a sign of true spiritual growth. It is never comfortable – we are only human – but we have to strive to focus on Him and to trust Him in every situation. The more you trust, the less you have to know or understand! You're not always going to get the answers to the hurt and pain in life, but believe truthfully that God will let it work to your benefit. When you're going through a difficult time, you have to do two things:

- Praise God through your tears; praise and worship His Name

- Do good to others and give more to others in times of hardship

When you do these two things, you will experience an inner joy which cannot be influenced by your external circumstances. You do not have to worry that God will test you above your abilities. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, Paul gives us the following assurance: “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”

### **Choices**

Our lives comprise choices – every moment of every day. How wonderful to know that God wants to be a part of every single decision / choice you make – big or small! If you think your own insight and wisdom is always going to let you make the right decisions, you are sorely mistaken. God invites you to make Him part of your decisions. After all, he possesses a bottomless source of knowledge, wisdom and insight which He wants to share with you.

God can see into the future – we cannot. Therefore it makes sense to ask Him to help with big or small decisions. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (Rom 8:28). All we have to do, is to ask for His help and insight!

### **My time and God’s time**

Our lives are so rushed: we don’t have time to wait anymore; decisions have to be taken now and results need to be available immediately. When we ask God for something and He doesn’t react immediately, we get upset and take matters into our own hands. Patience is a fruit of the Spirit which we have to acquire. (Gal 5:22-23).

One thing we have to realize is that God is all-knowing and that He will provide the right outcome at the right time. We should never force our time schedule on God and think that He is denying us something which we are asking for. Read what Peter says in 2 Peter 3:8 about God and time: “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

Should God not react within your time frame, it simply means the time is not right yet or He has something better in mind for you than that which you asked for. Again, it's about trust in Him for an outcome which will exceed all your expectations.

### **It's not about you – the full surrender!**

“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever.” (Rom 11:36). The world teaches us that everything revolves around me and what I want, but God wants to teach us that it's not about us, but about His glory and kingdom – it's about breaking with the flesh and living a holy life in God's eyes: “Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” (1 Pet 1:16). We have to die to the flesh: “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” (Rom 8:13). It's about a full surrender!

You've surrendered yourself to God without reservation – that means that you've laid down your whole life before Him (dreams, occupation, ambitions, talents, goals, money, time, family, future – yourself!) so that He can shape you and use you in His master plan for the world. We are commanded by Jesus to ask the Holy Spirit to completely fill or consume us so that we no longer walk in the flesh, but in the Spirit – “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.” (Eph 5:18). Allow the Holy Spirit to change and renew you, so that you can overcome sin. You will never be able to overcome sin through the flesh – only once the Holy Spirit has filled you, will you be able to overcome sin through His power.

The Holy Spirit wants to renew your thoughts, for if your thoughts are renewed, then your actions change - He wants to make you more like Christ and wants to give you the ability to discern so that you can know what is right and wrong. As Paul says in Romans 12:2: “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” When you are completely filled with the Holy Spirit, one or many of the gifts of the Holy Spirit will manifest in your life – see 1Cor 12. These free gifts are given to us to be used to build up or strengthen others. You will have to learn to give yourself to Him in all circumstances; to have faith and belief in Him, regardless of the situation. Let Him guide you on the path He chose for you – then you will also walk in His will. Listen when He speaks to you and do what He asks of you.

Earlier in the book, you saw how the world defines success, value and potential. God's definition of success is simply whether you were true to His command. In God's eyes, your value and potential is immeasurable, since it is determined by Him and not by man. It's not about whether you have been personally successful and whether you achieve all your dreams and ambitions here on earth and whether you impress everyone with who and what you are – it's all about God. One day, when He returns, He will ask each of us whether we were true to His command.

### **The fruit of the Spirit**

In Galatians 5: 22-23 Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. These are traits of true believers. Strive to bear the fruit of the Spirit in your life – it's a sign of spiritual growth and maturity.

It is good if you measure your life against these 9 things which God asks of you, and to ask God to help you to make visible, those fruits which aren't visible.

You have to strive to be more like God; therefore you constantly have to search for proof of this fruit in your life and strive to instil it in your life.

### **Forgiveness**

We can never live a radical life for God if we cannot forgive. And if you wondered how many times you have to forgive someone, you can read about it in Matthew 18: 21-22. When Peter asks Jesus if he should forgive someone seven times, Jesus answers that he should forgive him 70 times 7.

Forgiveness is a difficult one. It is easy to say you will forgive but not forget. To not forget, is actually to not forgive completely. And to not forgive, will bring a divide between you and God.

Our very best example of forgiveness is Jesus. Even when he was hanging on the cross, he asked the Father to forgive the people, because they know not what they do. Can you forgive as Jesus forgave those who crucified Him? This is how we are meant to forgive - even people who do not deserve to be forgiven according to us. Jesus says in Matthew 5:44: “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you”.

## **Gratitude**

Be grateful for everything you have in life (big and small)! Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” Do not become complacent and forget to be grateful for the little things. Give thanks to God and praise His name always.

## **God wants to be the priority in your life**

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” (Revelation 3:20)

If you are serious to live radically for God, you will want to place God first. The excuse of too little time will not work; you will have to change your priorities to enable your schedule to work around God – and not the other way around. You will have to make time to spend quality time with Him every day. Ask God to help you find balance in your life so that you can spend sufficient time with Him – He must be your First Love.

## **You are placed on earth with a purpose**

You are placed on earth with a purpose and only you can live out that purpose. What is your purpose? Jesus says in Matthew 5:14: “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.” You are not on earth by accident! God created you with a special purpose. Nobody can live out that purpose but you!

The longer you postpone living in a radical, active relationship with God, the longer you are going to wait to live and enjoy a fulfilled life on earth. You cannot determine yourself what your purpose is in life – only God can do that for you. Know this: in the end, God’s kingdom shall reign – you are only a string of wool in God’s big tapestry.

## **God’s command**

At the end of Matthew, just before His ascendance, Jesus commanded His disciples, a command which is still valid today for all His children: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things

whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”  
(Matthew 28:19-20).

Never forget God’s command. Go forth and be *God’s messenger* with confidence. It does not matter where you are – live your belief: whether you are at school, university, work, house, jail, church, sports or a party! You are going to learn so much from your relationship with God, so do not lose these valuable lessons. Apply it to your life and share it with others.

Use the things which happen to you in your life and learn from it, because this knowledge will carry you in times of need! Read books, speak to people about your relationship with God; acquire friends who think similar to you – do not attempt to stand alone.

### **Obedience to God**

Always be obedient to God – never forget where Adam and Eve’s disobedience led them and us to. Be obedient to God in the little and big things in life. When God asks you to do something, do it without asking a bunch of questions – just do it!

When you sin – which happens every day – confess and repent your sins immediately and truthfully before God and ask Him for forgiveness. In Psalm 103:1, we get the assurance that He will forgive us and think of our trespasses no more: “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.”

### **God is in control – believe it!**

“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will”. (Ephesians 1:11) “Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?” (Lamentations 3:37).

We will never have all the answers about all the evil in the world. God allows evil as part of His master plan. It doesn’t mean that God likes the evil things which happen, but He allows it in the fulfilment of His master plan.

Because God is in command, you can know with certainty that He is also in command of your life. Now that you've made the most important choice of your life, namely to follow Him, you can live in abundance, knowing that nothing can tear you from God's hands.

### **A Last Word**

Now that you have given your life to God, re-look at the world in which we live. Your perspective will be different, because your heart is now filled with the Holy Spirit. Now you look at the world through God's eyes and you see incredible need or rather, the immense amount of souls which have not chosen God yet. Only God can bring healing to this broken world and He uses you and I to fulfil His will.

Perhaps you cannot see how you can make a difference in this world, but do not be afraid – He promised to be with us until the end. He will guide us and equip us with the necessary tools to do His work – all we have to do is to make the radical choice for Him! He is going to expect you to climb out of your safe little boat and to walk on water like He once did – all you have to do is to trust Him.

We have to deliver God's Good News to the world! In order to do that, you and I have to be willing to place our own agendas on the back-burner and follow God blindly. Or conversely: we have to be radically different than this predictable world; we have to be radically different, as Jesus was; we have to go against the wind; against the stream; dive into the deep sea – this is where He needs us most!

*Strive to be more and more like Jesus every day and live your purpose with confidence.*

*What are you waiting for?*