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CORNERSTONE APOSTOLIC WOMEN ARE WOMEN WITH A DESTINY

They know that their lives are god's excellent workmanship.

They are strong in his strength,
refined and polished in his ways,
fruitful in every good work and ever increasing
in the knowledge of god.

(Psalm 144:12, Ephesians 2:20).

MY LIFE: GOD'S EXCELLENT WORKMANSHIP

SUSAN TANG

CORNERSTONE APOSTOLIC
"WOMEN OF DESTINY" SERIES

BOOK ONE

Bringing women back to God's ancient ways that are guaranteed to give
women rest.

Jeremiah 6:16

Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the old
paths, where is the good way and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for
your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

GRACE BEFORE HE BREAKS

Do you remember, He took the
Loaves of bread?
And, looking up to heaven, He blessed
And then He brake.
He gave to His disciples
That thousands might be fed.

O, my life, borne upon His Hands,
Just like that loaf of bread
And looking up to Heaven,
He blessed and then He brake.
Yes, there is grace before He breaks,
Grace before He breaks.

**Why need my heart be broken?
And my life be torn in parts?**
And why need that bread be broken?
There is just a simple reason...
There are hundreds waiting, hungry,
To eat and to be filled.

“Behold, the multitudes are waiting
Sitting down in ranks.
Yes, your life, your heart will be broken
Just like that loaf of bread.
Your inner life must flow out,
Else multitudes will not be fed.
But I would that you remember,
I blessed before I brake.”

Susan Tang

Greetings Ladies,

I am so glad you bought or borrowed a copy of this book in the CORNERSTONE SERIES. There are five books and this is the first one you are reading.

This book is designed to counsel you in the things of God — we want you to be enlightened, educated, envisioned and empowered for your Christian living. There are a few things that you need to do if you want to get the best out of this book.

1. Put yourself in the relax mode. Make a cup of tea or coffee, choose the most comfortable chair and tell yourself you are going to sit down for two hours in the presence of God and let Him work in you.
2. You must know you are entering into very important counselling and teaching sessions from the Word of God as you spend time with this book. The books in this series are designed to counsel you in the things of God. They are not meant to just give you some information, so get a marker or highlighter ready.
3. Respond at once when God speaks to you. If you must cry, cry. Put down the book, talk to Father God and cry your heart out. Remember tears are unexpressed prayers.
4. Read this book in one sitting. Do not get up until you have finished it. This book is written in a simple and readable style. You can read it in just two hours and during this time, respond to God and let Him speak to you.

Yes, ladies, enjoy your adventure with this book. I am so glad I can touch your life and meet you through this series of books. It is always so good to hear someone say: “I know you through your books and I have been your student even though I have not come to STATION OF LIFE!” I covet your prayers as I work on these books. May God continue to work into your life, which is precious to Him as He has His plans and His purposes all wrapped up in your life. I leave with you the words from 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.

PREFACE

In days like these, there is such a need for apostolic ‘cornerstone’ women to rise up. In fact, thousands of years ago, King David foresaw this great need even in his days. This is why he prayed ardently in Psalm 144:12 that God would raise up ‘cornerstone’ women in his nation.

“Let our daughters (women) be as cornerstones, polished after the similitude of a palace.” David implored God with deep passion. He then went on to mark out the tremendous blessings and the compelling influences that women would bring to society and the nation when they rise up as God’s strategic vessels and truly fill the places God had made for them.

Two years ago the Lord led me to pioneer the CORNERSTONE APOSTOLIC WOMEN MINISTRY. Although the ministry was well received and the meetings well attended, I felt that something was missing. The women who came for the meetings were all eager to rise up and learn but still they seemed a far way off from catching the God-imparted vision.

CORNERSTONE APOSTOLIC WOMEN MINISTRY HAS A VISION — That Christian women will return to the ancient ways of God, like the great women of the Bible and live a union life with God. Only in this way can women successfully

- (1) rise as God’s strategic vessels to forward His great plan of salvation
- (2) be an unrelenting force against the powers of darkness and
- (3) be a compelling, elevating and lasting influence upon our society and nation.

There has been such an upsurge of women in leadership all over the world lately. This should not surprise us at all because God's Word, our clear road map into the future prophesied that this would happen. (Read DAVIDIC INTERCESSORS, selling at Christian Book Stores). Yes, in the political, academic, economic, social, medical and scientific sectors, women have risen and done great, great exploits, but what about within the church or within God's kingdom? Are Christian women really doing exploits for God or are we only contributing to God's kingdom by singing some special songs, baking some cookies, paying visits occasionally to orphanages, old folks' homes, etc ... Yes, Christian women should do all these but they should also move beyond these activities. We should certainly be doing more because we are the ones who are connected with the resources of God. We are also to glorify God by our good works.

Do Christian women today have good works to show the world? Are these confined only to giving 'angpows,' Christmas hampers to unfortunate children and old folks once a year? Is it donating some blood or taking underprivileged people on a fishing trip or to a good meal in a posh hotel? It is wonderful when we are doing these things but because times are changing so rapidly, wickedness is on the upsurge and the love of many people has gone so cold, we definitely need to do more. Almost every part of the world is being shaken and reshaped by all sorts of global forces of change. In view of this, God must raise up apostolic cornerstone women, who, with insight and focus, will take His vision and birth it upon earth at His timing.

Do you not get disturbed when you hear of leprosariums, orphanages,

mini-hospitals, caring homes for the aged, for prostitutes, for abused children, mobile-libraries for poor children, organizations raising funds for Aids and Cancer research etc ...being pioneered, funded and run by non-Christian women? These women have such vision and benevolent love and what they have done is wonderful. But where are the Christian women? Why are Christian women taking a back seat when it comes to doing good works that will impact society and the nation? Why do they not pool their resources together and do what non-Christian women have done? Christian women should be showing the way. We are the ones who know God and we have His resources. More than that we are the recipients of His commandments to glorify Him by our good works. What have we done with His resources and His commandments?

Ladies, we need to accelerate God's purposes on this earth and God's purposes can only be accelerated on earth provided they are first accelerated in our own lives. This is why union life with God is indispensable. It is not going to church, singing in the choir, going for missions, etc...it is union life with God.

1. Union life with God will help us understand the times and seasons of God and know what to do - we will get into the right activity for Him. God is indeed searching the earth for such women, who, like the sons of Issachar, will understand His timing (1 Chronicles 12:32) and get to do what God wants them to do.

1 Chronicles 12:32

And of the children of Issachar; which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment.

2. Union life with God will allow God to position us accurately and place us in destiny's path. So many good prophecies in our lives have not come into fulfillment because we are not willing to place ourselves (change) in the pathway of destiny. (Change requires death to self, humility, repentance and brokenness.)

3. Union life with God will allow us to see things from God's perspective. Oh, this is so vital. When we see things from God's perspective, we will realize our lives are being lived in God's timing and therefore they should be lived on God's terms and in God's will - not our own! Like Jesus, we must tailor the use of our time and our earthly resources to God's priorities.

4. Union life with God will cause us to rise to the occasion by tapping into God's resources to live for Him and to do His work in these trying and difficult times when the world is heading for bankruptcy economically, morally and spiritually. God's resources are not found on the outside, they are always found on our inside, in our spirit man where there is a stream that will never run dry as long as we are in union with Him. This overflow stream is called "PASSION."

O Lord, sometimes it is so difficult to communicate this vision to the women of today. They are so busy with so many things, so stressed out with activities. So many hear and get excited with the vision for only a few moments. We pray in days like these, you will raise up many women who will take this vision and run with it. You do have many, many such women hidden in the nations of the world who will indeed read this book and catch the vision. Let what I have written go far beyond my time — let

it speak long after I have gone home to You.

I felt led to take a sabbatical year of rest and waiting on the Lord, and it was during this time that the Lord spoke to me from Habakkuk 2:2:

*“Write the vision, and make it plain on tablets (paper) that he (she) **may run who reads it.** “*

Write again? I had just finished writing **DAVIDIC INTERCESSORS**, which took me ten months. If these five books in the series are going to take as long, I could be here in Lahad Datu for a number of years. “Do you think you can take it?” someone asked with deep concern. Yes, I can. Definitely I can because I recognize that the highest success in life is to be able to accept with a cheerful heart and a masterly mind the destiny that God has given me. Breaking into the destiny He has chosen for me is to enter into His rest. I do not believe anyone of us has enduring worth or significance unless God loves us and we reciprocate His love, find our place in Him and learn to fit into this place with an excellent spirit. Life is that simple: we do what He wants us to do and we will find rest. There is no need to compete, to compare or to catch up with anyone. Amen. Each one to his own destiny because God’s ways and wisdom are inexhaustible.

Every time I write as directed by the Lord, the sense of joy and destiny envelopes me. There is this flow on the inside that is hard to explain. I often type and worship, worship and type because God’s manifested presence is wonderful. It brings with it such a sense of worth in His eyes, such a sense of destiny and fulfillment. We all know for certainty that we

have the abiding presence of the Lord, but it is the manifested presence that we want. So often when one gets into the loneliness of leadership with focus and aspirations that others do not understand, Father God comes to encourage and refresh us by manifesting His presence.

O Lord, it is your manifested presence that we covet. Come often and visit us in this way to bring the sense of duty and destiny to your church in every nation.

John 14:21

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Ladies, what you are now reading is the first of five books. These will be readable books so that you can easily finish a book in just 2-3 hours and be able to receive godly counsel and ministry for yourselves. Working on five different books will also give me the ability to expand God's revelation truths. Each book will describe a different characteristic of an apostolic or a cornerstone woman, the woman with a destiny!

We are selling the books at very affordable prices so that women from all backgrounds can afford to buy a copy. So do get some extra copies to bless your friends. Yes, educate your friends, enlighten them and empower them through the precious Word of God. Three women have told me that they turned away from attempting suicide and started to heal after they read the book, ***“HOW TO DEAL WITH YOUR BROKEN HEART.”*** If God tells me that my spiritual destiny, the reason for being alive, is just to stop these three women from taking their own lives, I am

satisfied. Life is that simple: do what God wants you to do and you will find meaning and rest in life. Yes, do what God wants you to do! This is the way to break into your destiny, hail, you woman of destiny!

INTRODUCTION

1. Why do women have more sorrows than men?

2. The need to recognize that God is working in our lives.

When I ask women whether they believe they have more sorrows than men, the answer is always in the positive. One sobbing woman asked, “Why does God have to give us women so many sorrows, why do women have to suffer more than men? Physically, men are better off than us. What women have to go through physically men will never be able to understand.” This lady had gone through three miscarriages, two complicated operations in her fallopian tubes, had suffered from painful menstrual cycles and had lived in fear of breast cancer.

I believe the answer lies in Genesis 3:16. Remember the three-fold curse pronounced upon womanhood because of the sin of Eve, the mother of all living? What Father God said in the Garden of Eden should make us all shudder. Father God actually pronounced a three-fold curse on all womanhood and the first was that women would have their sorrows multiplied! This is terrible! I honestly prefer, in this context, the word “addition” than multiplication! To have my sorrows added four and four is eight but to multiply my sorrows four by four is sixteen!

Genesis 3:16

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

Years ago, when I asked a warden in a mental institute why there were so many more men in that institution but so few women, he gave me a very interesting reply. Firstly, he said, women made the men mad! And secondly, “Ah...you women talk a lot, lah. Everything that goes into your ears comes out almost immediately through the mouth!

This makes hurts more bearable and life endurable! But we men are not made like this. See, we have this nobility - everything that comes into our ears is actually kept deep on the inside. We hurt and hurt and hurt and then we explode! By the way, you may want to know that the statistics are the same worldwide; there are more men than women in the mental institutions.”

He gazed into my face and said, “Now, you are the preacher. Tell me the spiritual reason or give me a religious answer for it! Ha, Ha.” Almost without thinking, I told him, “Men go mad because they do not go to church! Do you know that the statistics are the same worldwide, that there are more women than men in church! So you see, going to church will keep you sane!”

Yes, even though women do have more sorrows than men, women can still maintain their sense of equilibrium because they are interested in a relationship with God. Women are more spiritual and religious in nature. They want union life with God and union life with God will definitely make all human predicaments bearable. With Him as our navigating force, women can learn to face great adversities with great dignity.

This is why the apostle Paul said in his epistle that when a woman exercises faith in God she will be delivered from further problems

associated with childbearing. Childbearing problems are problems brought about by husbands, children and personal health because these are inevitable when a woman wants to bear a child.

1 Timothy 2:15

Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

It behoves us to remember that great men and women in the Bible were produced through great trials. Yes, they were trained and manufactured through the furnace of deep affliction and burning testing. Father God has no other way to produce greatness, sensitivity, spirituality or nobility in a person except by taking that person through the “ups and downs” of life. Yes, the dealings and the workings of God in our lives are the dynamics that will produce spirituality and maturity in our character.

In this book I am sharing with you the lives of four very, very ordinary women - yes, lowly women of no repute - and how by their yieldedness they put themselves in destiny’s pathway. They allowed God to bring them into a high, high degree of usefulness. Each woman was used mightily by God to forward His great plans and purposes. Yet these women enjoyed no publicity, received no accolades and no awards from men. None had any brick-and-mortar monument built in honour of her name, but spiritually, each woman had made an indelible mark in the great plans of her Creator. Yes, as they enter eternity’s door, there will be accolades, rewards and hosts of angels welcoming them and the Father saying, “Well done, my good and faithful servant.”

I pray you will emulate the lives of these four women, whose lives have

spoken so powerfully into mine. May you rise to be the next Hannah, Naomi, Rizpah or Naaman's slave girl.

A. A GLIMPSE INTO THE LIFE OF KING DAVID

King David was one of those great men who recognized that God's divine hand was behind all the ups and downs in his life. This is why he did not grow bitter even though he had to go through such calamities. In Psalm 109 he cried out, "I am tossed up and down like the locust ... this is thy hand; that thou, LORD, (not the devil, not fate and definitely not people) hast done it" (Psalm 109:23, 27).

Yes, God does allow us to be tossed up and down to experience both the heights (blessing, promotion, success, etc.) and the depths (pain, failures, reproach, brokenness, etc.) of life. If we want God to lead us then we have to totally abandon ourselves to Him, and like the children of Israel, be led through the depths and through the wilderness. Only there can we truly see the saving and the redeeming hand of God.

Psalm 106:9-10

He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.

Hannah, mother of the great prophet Samuel, was a woman who knew the workings of God in her life. She enforced this truth of being 'tossed up and down' in these simple words: "The Lord bringeth down, and the Lord bringeth up, the Lord bringeth low and lifted up."

1 Samuel 2:6-7

The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; he bringeth low and lifteth up.

If David had not been led through the many 'ups and downs' in life we will not have many beautiful writings called The Psalms today. This book covers the whole spectrum of human emotions and this is so because God had taken its author through them all. In the midst of all the turmoil, David learned to know God intimately, to understand His times and His ways with him. In his final benediction and charge to his son Solomon, David's words were, "Know thou the God of thy father" (1 Chronicles 28: 9). David did not say, "Know the God of Abraham, Isaac or Jacob" but he precisely charged Solomon to know his God.

What David knew was the understanding of God's dealings and God's times in his life. Times of joy and sorrow, times of prosperity and adversity, times of comfort and pain, times of success and failure, times of achievement and loss, times of health and sickness etc ... yes, times of God's favour but also times when His billows would go all over him until he felt he could take it no more and he had to scream, "Remove thy hand from me!" (Psalm 39:10). David took it all because he knew that all the dealings came from the loving hands of God. Though they looked and felt life-threatening, the waves did not overwhelm, the hurricane did not uproot and the floods did not drown because his times were in God's hands.

God worked greatness and nobility into this man by bringing him through those very good times and through those very bad times. It is not

surprising when the scriptures tell us that several prophets had recorded the life of David in these words, “With all his reign and his might, and the times that went over him!” What times? The times of God’s dealings and workings in his life, the times when God purposely planted him in the wilderness and had him settled in the desert; for years he had to run and run and run like a hunted dog from King Saul. David hardly complained because he knew that these were God’s workings and that trees of worth and beauty can only be produced through weathering the harsh elements in the wilderness and desert.

Isaiah 41: 19-20

I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

Yes, whether he was led up to the mountain top (the ups) or whether he was led down into the valleys (the downs), David just yielded to the Lord, knowing that God is both the God of the mountains and the God of the valleys. As long as his times were in God’s hand, David knew that when he was up in the harsh mountains, there would be ‘rivers’ waiting for him and when he was down in the dark valleys, ‘fountains’ would wait for him. When he was led into the wilderness, there would be ‘a pool of water’ and when he was in the desert, there would be ‘springs of water.’ No wonder David came out with this beautiful song, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want” (I will never be in lack as long as God is leading me) Psalm 23:1. Ladies, this promise was made not only to David, it is made to all of us as long as we love God like David loved

Him. Oh, that we too will know David's God!

Isaiah 41:18

I will open rivers in the high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

Yes, the Creator has multiple ways and varied means of fashioning and shaping us to conformity to the likeness of Jesus Christ. He unleashed all those ways and means on David! So we see David going through them all - shepherd, psalmist, poet, armour-bearer, soldier, outlaw, fugitive, king, adulterer, murderer, saint, prophet and God's standard-bearer. What a life! Through them all, God brought him to the place in destiny's pathway that God wanted him to be in.

B. A GLIMPSE INTO THE LIFE OF JACOB

The great patriarch Jacob came out of great, great testing. Through much pain, he finally learned to yield to God's divine workings. He came out so transformed that even Father God Himself acknowledged that change! It was God who changed his name from Jacob, meaning 'crafty' or 'self-ruled' to Israel, meaning 'prince of God' or 'ruled by God'. Jacob's sufferings were intense. Even in his old age, God did not let him go, but He kept working into his life. It was in his advanced years that he went through a famine and was finally uprooted from his homeland to breathe his last in a foreign country.

Sigh ... and how did he spend the prime of his life, the best years of his manhood? He spent them in a kinsman's house where he was repeatedly cheated and was so badly treated that he developed health problems of deep anxiety and insomnia. He chafed over the open sores of his family life with his two wives and children constantly fighting. His home was not a happy one — it was one that was filled with strife and contentions. His sons cheated him and his favourite, Joseph, was taken away from him. He was inconsolable after his loss. He had only one daughter and she was raped. His reputation was ruined when his sons committed a gruesome act of murder. He had to live in constant fear of his brother, Esau, and his beloved wife Rachel brought him defeat and disgrace when she hid her father's idols in her baggage. He worked 14 years to marry her but she died prematurely while delivering her second child. It is no wonder that when Jacob stood in front of Pharaoh, he said that his years had been evil and few! Yes, it was indeed a sad and weary life that breathed itself out in

the land of the pharaohs. But remember, Jacob was God's Masterpiece! Yes, mean, weak, crafty, deceptive and manipulative Jacob. Does this sound like you? Are you conscious of the similarities between him and you? Whether we like it or not, we all have a 'Jacob' in us, and God, the Divine Workman knows all about that baseness hidden within our hearts, and He knows just what to do! If He can fashion such a piece of clay like Jacob, someone so far from sainthood, then He can definitely do the same with us. Yes, in the end, we can only say, "O how poor the material, but how excellent is God's workmanship!"

"Do not forsake the work of thy own hand, O Lord, but continue to perfect and bring it into completion!" David prayed in Psalm 138:8.

The apostle Paul and prophet Isaiah both acknowledged that human lives are indeed God's workmanship.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Isaiah 64:8

But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.

When we look at what Jacob had to go through, we may think that the devil had been leading him and that the devil was responsible for all his sufferings. But no, the scriptures state that Father God was the only one who was responsible! "I alone led him," God said and "There was no foreign god with him." Through the prophet Isaiah, God reiterated that

it was He who “gave Jacob for a spoil.” Why? So that Jacob would learn to walk in His ways and be obedient to His law, so that Jacob (the self-ruled man) would become Israel, (the God-ruled man). Notice God said that Jacob was created but Israel was formed (sculptured, moulded). Yes, through fire and floods, through much pain and sufferings, God finally formed or moulded Israel!

Isaiah 42:24

Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law.

Isaiah 43:1

But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

When I read these scriptures I broke down and cried. O God, don't You know how to lead people? Why must You give this man such a bad time? Worst of all, You repeatedly said that You love him and that he is the apple of Your eye. Is this the way to treat someone You love? Yes, it is, because love will never allow us to remain the same.

Deuteronomy 32:10-12

He found him in the desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.

As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.

God led this man through the fire again and again. God knew that this was the only way to change Jacob. To loose him from this mean selfish, crafty, deceptive, manipulative and pseudo-spiritual spirit, God had to expose him to the fire for only fire could destroy those stubborn ropes that had kept him bound for so long. No wonder, God wants to take each one of His children through the fire.

Mark 9:49

For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.

Isaiah 43:4

Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.

Notice God did not say, “if “ we pass through the waters or “if” we walk through the fire but “when.” The preposition is important because “when” leaves us with no option. It means that fire and floods will come our way - yes, God will take us through them and when we learn to trust and yield to Him, He will surely see us through. Remember the story of the three Hebrew children? When they were thrown into the fire they were bound

from their head to their toes! But when the Babylonian king looked into the fire he realized that the only thing that was burnt in the fire was the ropes that bound them! Ladies, God certainly has a powerful word for us in this heart-moving story. Those ropes were burned in the fire because they were not God's ropes! God did not put them there! They were king Nebuchadnezzar's ropes and God wanted them burned so that these men could go free! Remember how this heathen king cried out, "I saw four men loosed!" Well, they went into the fire bound up but they came out of the fire unbound! Unbound! Untied! Unshackled! Loosed! Freed! How wonderful!

Daniel 3:21-25

Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

Yes. Yes. Whatever God did not put into our lives is meant to be burned up when He takes us through the fire. God did not put that mean, manipulative, crafty and selfish spirit in Jacob and neither did He put that pride, insecurity, violent temper, jealousy, covetousness, possessiveness, superior complex, manipulative and lying spirit in us. When He takes us

through the fire, He wants to see these things burned up. He wants to see us loosed from these shackles. The fire is meant to destroy the ropes that bind us, it is not meant to destroy us! Amen.

Yes, the Master workman knows exactly what He is doing. He will not let us go because He loves us and remember, love will not allow us to remain the same. Parents who love their children have to inflict pain at times so that they will learn to depart from foolishness, vileness and lawlessness. None of us are born with Christ-likeness, nobility or princeliness in our character. We learn them and learning is painful because the human nature is not easily taught. King David knew the perniciousness of the human nature and this is why he went beyond praying, "Teach me, O Lord." David was prompted by the spirit to pray, "Make me, and deal with me O Lord" (Psalm 119:17, 27).

Yes, God will keep working in us and working into us because God knows that the worth of a person does not lie in how much that person has accomplished and achieved for Him but in how much that person has allowed Him to work into his or her life. God's judgement of success is so different from ours. What man calls success is often a very superficial and temporary thing and proves nothing as to the rightness or wrongness of a life. Today, success is judged by one's accomplishments and achievements and not by one's character (the rightness or wrongness in conduct).

A man can be a homosexual, reads pornography and habitually curse in private but if he can draw crowds to his meeting he is a success in the eyes of men. Or another one may habitually flirt with his secretary, beat his wife and is not honest with his words and money but because he has

planted some big churches, he is termed successful in the eyes of men. No! No! If success is judged according to only the outward, then we have definitely deviated and lost the standard and the biblical judgement. To God, success is never found in the ‘outwardness’ of a life or in how much we have accomplished or achieved for God. It is always found in the ‘inwardness’ of a life, in how much we have allowed God to accomplish and achieve in us. Yes, true spiritual success is found in how much we have allowed God to work or to build into our lives. Judging by this biblical standard, don’t you think many a life which has been termed noble and worthy in the sight of God would unfortunately be judged a sad failure in the eyes of men?

CORNERSTONE APOSTOLIC WOMEN MINISTRY wants to educate women and to bring women back to the ancient ways of God. It is imperative that you know that there can be no true union with God if we do not yield to His workings in our lives; if we do not change and let Him build into us the rightness of character. God told the children of Israel that it was impossible for them to enter into union with Him and that He could not ‘walk’ with them unless there was an agreement between them. To live in agreement with God means we have to change, to rise up to His standard and live right; otherwise walking with Him is impossible.

Amos 3:3

Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

Yes, change is not possible if we do not allow God to work into our lives. It is God’s dealings and workings in our lives that produce humility, brokenness and repentance. Change is deeply painful but it is

indispensable if we want a courtship or union life with God. Yes. Yes. We have to accept that our lives are indeed God's workmanship.

God wanted the prophet Jeremiah to grasp this truth so badly that He ordered him to go down to the potter's house to observe the work of this clay specialist. Jeremiah saw the potter's skillful hands digging into that lump of clay, breaking it, pressing it, beating it and fashioning it. As the prophet stood in deep observation of the potter's work, Father God spoke, "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel" (Jeremiah 18:16). Years later, God enforced the same truth through the apostle Paul by saying, "O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?" (Romans 9:20-21).

King David, author of most of the Psalms, understood these lessons so well that he never cried out against any of God's dealings or workings in his life. Rather, he cried out against his own sins, failures and waywardness. This man just yielded to the workings of divine love over and over again and again. Why do you think God called him a man after His own heart? David could yield because he knew that God wanted to deal with his heart. God wanted to expose its baseness, its vileness, its depravity and its perversion. He knew that divine love is strong, fervent, pursuing and disciplinary. O that we may know God as David knew Him and that we yield to Him as David yielded. Then, may we too, be called women after His own heart. David yielded to the workings and the dealings of God in his life with absolute trust. He cried out in Psalm 32 that all of his times

(good and bad) were in the hands of God. To be in the hands of God is to be in the safest place in the world! Yes, the times may be bad and you may feel terrible but continue to lift your spirit and voice towards Him and say, “O God, I do not know the answer to all that is happening in my life but I yield to you. Speak to me about the changes You want me to make permanently in my life. I am going through terrible times but I feel deeply comforted that even these terrible times are in Your hands. Work in me, yes, work in me.”

CHAPTER ONE

The workings of God in the life of Hannah.
An ordinary mother brings salvation to a nation by
relinquishing her deepest desire.

HANNAH

An ordinary mother who brought salvation to God's chosen Nation by relinquishing her deepest desire.

- The source of her problems.
- The way she handled them.
- The final result in God's hand.

Hannah's problems came from her years of barrenness. In her days, a barren woman was looked upon with loathing and ridicule as barrenness was considered a curse from God. Hannah knew the pain of rejection, ridicule, gossip and reproach. Not only was she robbed of the joy of motherhood, she was also robbed of the joy of having friends and a social life. Hannah called herself "a woman of sorrowful spirit," and the scriptures said that she was "in deep bitterness of soul." In her conversation with the priest Eli, she confessed that it was out of "abundance of complaint and grief" that she had come to seek God (1 Samuel 1:16).

1 Samuel 1:16

Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto.

Yes, with Hannah, none other than God could help. Her husband Elkanah tried to reach her with his love and gifts but he could not. The long years of meekly endured suffering that originated from deep, deep inner conflicts, reproach, rejection, fear and the cruel jibes of Peninah, Elkanah's first

wife, were too much for her. Her grief brought her great isolation and loneliness. She had become inconsolable. But thank God, Hannah did have a relationship with Him. I know this because the scriptures said that she called herself a handmaiden of the Lord, meaning she had served and waited on Him before. She also knew how to prevail in different types of prayers, with words, tears, sighing and groaning, which later climaxed into a vow. She was able to exercise faith in Eli's prophecy and genuinely received it into her spirit. By the time she left the temple she was rejoicing as though she already had her baby in her arms!

It is wonderful when deep sorrow of heart and pain drive people into the presence of God and cause them to prevail in prayer. Hannah had prayed many, many times at home, I am sure. Well, this time when she prostrated herself in the presence of God in Jerusalem, it was different. The scriptures tell us that "she continued in prayers." The actual meaning is that Hannah multiplied her prayers and multiplied her prayers. Well, pain and sorrow do this to a person — they make her multiply her prayers!

When Hannah prayed on and on and on something happened to her! This woman connected with Reality! Yes. She touched God and God touched her! In those long hours of prayers, God apprehended Hannah and instantly she cried out this prayer of relinquishment, "I will give my son back to you!" How wonderful! She reminds me of another person who forsook and abandoned everything and counted it as dung when the same thing happened to him. That man was the apostle Paul in the New Testament.

Hannah actually turned her deepest desire into her highest sacrifice as she communed with God in the temple at Shiloh. It is amazing. She had

gone there to pray for a son. She had dreamed, envisioned, cried, fought, hoped, longed for a son but now she told God that she would return the son to Him. It is said that desperate people make impulsive and senseless vows. Well, Hannah was definitely desperate but her vow was definitely not made out of a spasmodic impulse neither was it senseless. It was definitely prompted by the Holy Spirit and it came because God had so impacted into her that she was willing to relinquish her rights to her son; she was ready to turn her deepest and greatest desire into her highest and supreme sacrifice. Yes, prevailing in God's presence will certainly make us do the impossible — turn our deepest desire into our highest sacrifice.

It is amazing what people are capable of when they touch Reality. It was said of St. Francis of Assisi that when God apprehended him, he ran to the market place in his village, tore off his princely robes and shouted, "I have touched Reality - I am now reborn! Reborn! Then he put on a beggar's garb and went about preaching and helping the poor and the sick.

When I was a young Christian I read the story of Jim Elliot, who, together with a group of missionaries, was speared to death by the Auca Indians in the Amazon jungle. These men had abandoned their careers, families and country so that they could bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to these cannibals, and they were killed by them. When their deaths became public, the world cried out, "What a waste, what a terrible waste of youth, talents, potential and opportunities in these lives. What utter foolishness! Why did they throw away their lives like this? What made them love these Indians more than their own lives?" The answer is simple. These men had connected with Reality and when they did, they relinquished

even their own right to live; each one of them had turned their deepest desire into their highest sacrifice. In Jim Elliot's Bible, they found these words scrawled across the front page.

“He is no fool who gives what he can never keep to gain that which he will never lose.”

Jim Elliot certainly lived what he preached and believed in. This is a tremendous story and it spoke deeply into my heart. It gave me focus and a standard for my Christian living. I thank God I read the right book and had the right foundation and right beginning for my Christian living. **Yes, the right foundation to one's Christian living is vital because the building takes after the foundation.** So many today live their Christian lives in a 'crooked' manner because they have a crooked and flimsy foundation. **My right foundation to my Christian life taught me not to compete, contrast, compare or to catch up with others but to connect with this Reality, and to focus not on anything else but on wanting to apprehend Him, and the purpose to which He has called me into. In other words I was to break into the spiritual destiny God has for me.** So many today talk about dreams, visions and reality but if all these do not culminate into making us relinquish our selfish desires and totally abandon ourselves to God, then of what use are these dreams, visions and much learned knowledge? O that we might touch God and connect with Reality!

*Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence,
will prevail to make; What heavy burdens from our bosoms take
What parched grounds refresh as with a shower!*

Trench

If we can have more Hannahs there would be more Samuels! The reason why Samuel was so mightily used by God in one of the darkest periods in the history of Israel is because his mother, Hannah gave one hundred percent of herself when she gave him back to God. Her spirit of relinquishment and abandonment provided Father God with a prophet for the nation. Samuel was God's strategic vessel to the nation and God's contact point with His people.

Yes, Hannah had to be driven into desperation. So desperate was she that her prayers had to climax into a vow because God must have Samuel. How amazing Hannah's need (for a son) and God's need (for a prophet and judge) should intertwine. If Hannah had not said, "I'll give him back to you!" God would not have had a judge or a prophet called Samuel (one whom He Himself must personally train) for the nation. So there is a purpose for all of Hannah's sorrows and pains. We do not know how long she endured the grief and reproach but we do know that God's hand was behind it. The scriptures say that "God had shut up her womb and God did so "year by year"(ten, twenty years?). Yes, the pain and sorrows were meant to drive her into a deep, deep seeking for God, a seeking which was to culminate into a vow! No vow, no return of her son to God, no return of her son to God, no prophet for Israel, and God's plans and purposes for His nation at this time would be thwarted, obstructed and hindered. O that we may all touch Reality and pray, "I will give him (son,

husband, career, position, boyfriend etc) back to you.” When we turn our deepest desire into our highest sacrifice we do not know what will actually happen.

Yes, God had taken Hannah’s life and He had been working into it although Hannah was not aware of it. As earlier stated, all her sorrows and pains had a purpose. Her life was wrapped up in God’s great plans and purposes for His nation and she was a vital link to God’s strategic vessel for Israel. God could not let her go - to let her go would mean a letting go of His plans and purposes for Israel. God had to bring her, through sorrow, pain and disappointment to a position where she was willing to relinquish her son to Him.

The story of Hannah is not completed until we take another look at her three years later when she finally weaned Samuel and left him at the temple of the Lord. Samuel, God’s strategic vessel for the nation, the only prophet who had the privilege to anoint two kings - Saul, the first King of Israel and David, the greatest king of Israel - was offered to Jehovah together with two bullocks, an ephah of flour and a bottle of wine! Did he cry when his mother left him there? He was just about three years old (Hebrew mothers weaned their children at this age) but already he knew how to worship God. What a mother Hannah was in teaching him the ways of God. I believe every day she would have told him that his real home was the temple and that his position and destiny in life were to serve the Lord. She must have taught him the Word of God and deep sacred truths; otherwise, how could a child at this age part with his mother, and remain in the temple with Eli, an old man and minister to the Lord?

Hannah did not cry when she left her son and went home alone. Alone. There was no more baby in her arms, no more the feel of warmth between her breasts, no more gurgling sounds. How could she adjust to all these? The bond between mother and son must have been strong especially when she had been breastfeeding him for so long. The soul ties must be almost formidable, but no, not with Hannah. The song she sang to the Lord is deeply telling. God did an excellent work in her life; this workmanship was superb! Hannah sang as she left the temple declaring that **her joy was in the Lord (not in her son) and that her honour came from the Lord (not by having a man-child)**. She went on to exalt the working of God in her life and said, “The Lord is a God of knowledge!” Then she went on to admonish others to yield to the workings of God in their lives for when they do, their end will be fruitful and beautiful.

1 Samuel 2:1-10

And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoyce in thy salvation. There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is here any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.

The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifted up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them

inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of the saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

Yes, ladies, unhealthy soul ties are terrible. Soul ties often cut us off from the best God has for us, obscure our future and sabotage our destiny in God. Break them off! **They can be broken off when you allow God to impact you on the inside.** Like Hannah, determine that you will leave your 'Samuel' at God's altar. Daily tell yourself that Samuel has to go for God wants him out of your life. Continue to wait in God's presence and let Him impact you. God may have many other 'Samuels' for you just as He had five more children for Hannah. When Hannah walked away that day, she never knew whether she would ever have another baby again but it did not bother her at all. She had finally learnt to make God the source of her joy. Have you too, lost a child and are still grieving over it? Or was it a husband, a boyfriend, a parent? Let it go. Break off the soul ties. Seek God right now even while you are reading the book and tell Him you want those soul ties broken. You have been grieving too much. When we have too much of any thing or when we go into excesses, we give place to the devil, so it is time to bury the grief of the guilt and move on with God and learn to make Him the source of your joy. Yes, if you have made Him the source of your strength, guidance and wisdom, then now make Him the source of your joy. I leave with you the words of two great men, the prophet Habakkuk and the celebrated poet Wordsworth.

*What, though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now forever taken from my eyes,
Though nothing can bring back the hour of glory
Of radiance, of splendour in the grass We must not grieve but find
strength in all that remains behind*

Wordsworth

Habakkuk 3: 17-19

Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD is my strength, and he will make my feet like hind's feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.

CHAPTER TWO

The workings of God in the life of Naomi

A common housewife, together with her daughter-in-law, comes into her spiritual destiny by her selfless loving and mentoring.

NAOMI

A common housewife whose genuine love and selfless mentorship of her daughter-in-law brought both women into their spiritual destiny.

- The source of her problems.
- The way she handled them.
- *The final result in God's hand.*

Naomi. A common name. A common face. A common woman. Who would ever dream that God had a spiritual destiny for her? Who would ever think that this woman would actually play such a strategic role in the line of the Messiah? Like many middle-aged women, Naomi's security was found only in the warmth of her own family: a loving husband and two loving sons. Her life was comfortable and undisturbed for as long as she could remember. Then one day, the family nest was disturbed by a dreaded famine. When there was no food in their own land, the family decided to migrate to Moab. Much as Naomi disliked being uprooted, she had no choice but to follow her husband into a foreign country.

Many other families had done so and Elimelech, Naomi's husband, decided to follow suit. What Naomi did not know was that the famine and the family's migration into Moab was part of God's dealing in her life. After settling in Moab for some time, God tightened His grip on Naomi and a chain of other events followed. God could have prevented them but He did not. Firstly, Naomi's husband died. Naomi must have grieved much because her husband had died without witnessing the marriage of

his two sons. Although the death of her husband brought her great sorrow, nevertheless, Naomi was comforted when her two sons married. Yes, now she could find security and joy in her two daughters-in-law. But oh, no, Naomi, this did not seem to be God's plan for you. God wanted you to go far beyond just having a comfortable home; God has a destiny in view for you! Naomi's bliss lasted for only some years before the next tragedy struck! The first son died; after some time, the second died! The grief within this household must have been great for there were three widows! There was a grieving Naomi, a grieving Orpah and a grieving Ruth.

Yes, God used these events in Naomi's life: a famine, migration, sickness and death, to deal with Naomi. Remember Hannah said, "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: He brigheth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; he bringeth low and lifteth up" (1 Samuel 2: 6-7). Yes, God Himself reiterated this truth to the nation of Israel in the book of Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 32:39

See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.

Unknown to Naomi, God was actually moving her into a very strategic position which only she could fill. God had chosen Naomi to mentor Ruth (a mother in the Messianic lineage) and to direct her into marriage with Boaz. Yes, God had to move Naomi into position. The work that God had chosen for her to do was so important that everything that had taken the priority in her life had to be taken out of the way! Naomi's outcry against God was that God had 'emptied' her! Yes, Naomi, He had to do it so that only Ruth, God's choice woman for the Messianic line could be the centre of your attention! Know that your destiny is to mentor Ruth, and bring her back to Bethlehem so that She could marry Boaz and bring forth a son called Obed Who is to be the grandfather of David! David was the man after God's own heart and it is through him that Jesus, our Messiah will come. You see, Naomi was God's indispensable link to David and Jesus. Jesus is God's strategic vessel to bring salvation to mankind.

The ways of God are intricate, deep and definitely beyond human searching and understanding. Where We marry is important in the sight of God because a marriage with the wrong person could sabotage God's will for our lives. Can you imagine what would have happened if Abraham had married Jezebel? Definitely they would not have produced Isaac! Or if Moses had married Delilah or Deborah had married Ahab? Yes, in God's great plans and purposes, Ruth must marry no other, but Boaz, so that together, they would produce this godly offspring called Obed, the grandfather of David. Human lives are meant to live out only God's plans and purposes. Often, in moving us into the place where God wants us to be, He has to empty us. Why? Because people listen better to God when they do not have much to lean on! God knows the perversity of the human heart and this is what He said of the nation of Israel.

Jeremiah 22:21

I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, but thou saidst, I will not hear. This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice.

Yes. Let is not fight it, I am sure we all agree that we seek God more and hear God better when we have problems. When people are able to get all they want and need from their fleshly efforts and enterprises they will riot seek after God. So often, in His fatherly and patient love, God allows a crisis to make us correct our priorities in life. To Naomi, her family was the most important thing in her life - this is why God had to deal with her. Should the family take priority in our lives? No, it should not. We must never allow our families to infringe upon God's plans and will for our lives. Even the family has to take second place when it comes to the will, the plans and the purposes of God.

God could only direct Naomi and have her shift her whole concentration to Ruth after the death of her loved ones. This was the same with Abraham. When God wanted Abraham to fulfill His plans and purposes, He had to move him away from all his family members and all his familiar surroundings. Doesn't God believe in families? Of course He does! Definitely. But, He also said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37). What He wants from us is that we do not allow anything, not even family members to thwart His will for our lives. We must not be ignorant of the wiles of the devil; if he cannot use our enemies to stop us from doing the will of God. He will use members of our household. Remember Jesus warned that, "a man's foes shall be that of his own household" (Matthew 10:36).

How did Naomi actually handle all these 'ups and downs' in her life? Not well at all! Oblivious to the plans and purposes of God, Naomi became very bitter. By the time she trudged back to her homeland, her friends could not recognize her! Do you know that bitterness shows on one's face? When her friends called out to her, "Naomi, Naomi," meaning "Pleasant, Pleasant," she stopped them and said, "Stop calling me Pleasant, call me Bitter for I have become very bitter over the workings or dealings of Almighty God in my life! He has not been fair or just to me; He came against me. When I left my homeland I was full but now I have been emptied...I am very, very bitter"(Ruth 1:20-21). Sigh... poor Naomi, and poor indeed are we when we accuse God wrongly and do not have an inkling as to what He wants to do with our lives.

Whatever bitterness Naomi carried in her heart, we are thankful that she did not allow the spirit of hatred and isolation to come in. After all that she had gone through, she still carried much love and kindness within herself. She was totally unselfish when it came to caring for her daughter-in-law. She wanted Ruth to 'find rest' with another husband and she used all her energy to see that Ruth found happiness with another man. God richly rewarded her for doing this. The bonding of these two lives led them to break into their spiritual destinies, fulfill God's plans and purposes and also put them into a position of great honour and privilege. Yes, very often, on our own, we are not able to do what God wants us to do or go where He wants us to be. We need to be 'bonded' or to be 'linked' up with other people so that the common goal can be achieved. Ruth needed Naomi and vice versa.

Ladies, young and old, this is one lesson we must learn in our earthly journey. We cannot work alone. We all need help and we need to be

bonded with someone else in order to build or to do what God wants us to do. Younger women must learn to glean from the experience of the older ones and listen to their godly instruction. If Ruth had not listened to Naomi's instructions she would have missed getting married again and missed breaking into her spiritual destiny. Yes, by herself, Ruth would never have been able to go far because she just did not know what to do. Likewise, older women like Naomi must continue to give themselves to others. If Naomi had not given herself to Ruth, would she have been able to break into her own destiny as a 'foster mother' to Obed? I doubt Naomi would ever have had any other future than to die in bitterness and obscurity. Yes, older women who have been weaned of family responsibilities must continue to give themselves to others ... in doing so they will break into their own usefulness and destiny.

Yes, a woman on her own will never be able to fulfill God's plan and purposes but together with other women, she will. The scriptures have such wonderful things to say of Naomi's sunset years in the house of Boaz. She actually took Obed, the grandfather of David, into her own bosom and personally nursed him! She was his foster mother or 'nanny'.

Ruth 4:16-17

And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbours, gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Yes, what do we finally see from this woman who had earlier testified that God had vexed her soul and taken all justice from her? We see her radiant

with joy and happiness, nursing Obed as her own child and surrounded by rejoicing neighbours.

Ruth 4:14-15

And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel.

Things turned out so well when they were all in the hands of God. Surely God had not forgotten this woman, who though beaten down with much sorrows had not lost love or concern for others. She had thought more of her daughter-in-law's happiness and rest than her own. May God speak to us loudly from Naomi's life. Yes, the pressure, the emptying, the sorrows and the losses were all necessary to move her into the position or place God wanted her to be. What a story! That God would come and turn the life of this very ordinary middle-aged woman up-side down and inside-out and put her in destiny's pathway! Never in her wildest dreams had Naomi thought that she would be so important, even indispensable in God's plans and purposes. Perhaps this is your story too. You and your family have had your lives disrupted and you are so discouraged. Oh God, why, at this period of my life are You allowing me to go through so much? Why is my family unnerved and upset like this? Seek the Lord yourself, submit yourself to some deep soul-searching and just rest in Him. Things will work out for good as long as you continue to love Him because God's word says so in Romans 8:28.

Romans 8:28.

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.

Please put your book down now and spend some time in prayer. Ask God why He wants to 'empty' you. Have you been trying to dodge His calling, His will for your life all these years? Have you hardened yourself in unforgiveness and pride? Have you despised the workings and dealings of God in your life? Is it so hard for you to believe that all redeemed lives are wrapped up in His plans and purposes and that only the workings of God into our lives will bring us to fulfill His will?

Father God, forgive our pride, our shortsightedness and rebellion. O, how we need the cleansing blood of Jesus and the animation of the Holy Spirit to bring us cleansing, focus and repentance. We acknowledge Your greatness and Your right over our lives. Work in us and into us what You desire and bring us into whatever place or position You want us to be in. We thank you.

CHAPTER THREE

The workings of God in the life of Rizpah

A violated woman brings about the unification of a nation and the reconciliation of two dynasties by overcoming her personal pain and tragedy.

RIZPAH

A woman whose personal rights had been violated. Yet through her personal pain and tragedy she brought about the unification of a nation and the reconciliation of two dynasties.

- The source of her problems.
- The way she handled them.
- The final result in God's hand.

Rizpah. What an uncommon name. I have not come across this name all these years of my life. However, after God showed me the value of this noble and devoted woman I have given this name to someone. God used Rizpah's life to bring about the unification of the nation of Israel and the reconciliation of two great dynasties, David's and Saul's.

Rizpah, I am sure must have been a beautiful woman or else she would not be in the king's harem. She was a concubine or a mistress of King Saul and had borne him two sons. Later, after Saul's death, his general Abner 'went in unto her'. Abner had a sexual relationship with her (2 Samuel 3:7). Abner must have been so smitten by her beauty that he overlooked the protocol or the royal rule — to sleep with the concubine of a king is synonymous with wanting to take away his kingdom! Adonijah, a half-brother of Solomon had wanted to usurp Solomon's power by planning to sleep with Abishag, David's concubine. Solomon immediately put him to death. (1 Kings 2:16-25). Absalom, another son of King David slept with David's concubines when he usurped his father's throne (2 Samuel 16:21-22).

2 Samuel 16:21-22

And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy fathers concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong. So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father 's concubines in the sight of all Israel.

I wonder if Rizpah had any say in the two sexual liaisons in her life, first with King Saul, and, then with his general, Abner. In the first case, she was chosen and had to be available to the king. In those days, kings chose their concubines and when you were chosen, you had no way out. With Abner, her personal rights were violated. Abner was not her boy friend, fiance or husband - he just took her to bed. Yes, as a concubine, Rizpah had very little status, influence, personal rights or choices. Yet God had a spiritual destiny for this woman because God knew what she was capable of and she became His catalyst in two defining events in the history of the nation.

Yes, Rizpah may have been just a concubine, someone's mistress or just a sexual toy to men, but nevertheless, like Rahab, (Joshua 2) she became a woman of great worth. This is why God makes sure the record of her life is with us today. When Saul's son, Ishbosheth, heard of Abner and Rizpah sleeping together, he was furious and accosted Abner. Abner was deeply shamed and offended and decided to shift camps! With his honour impugned, he initiated negotiations with David and decided to join David's camp by transferring both his allegiance and the kingdom to David! Abner could do this because it was Abner who had kept the entire northern kingdom loyal to Ishbosheth. Ishbosheth could prevail as king

only because of Abner's military strength (2 Samuel 3:6-21).

Surely the ways of God are strange and mysterious. An entire northern kingdom, Saul's dynasty, was brought to an end because of Rizpah's presence. Saul's dynasty came to an end and David's dynasty began ... all without bloodshed! It was just handed over to David! Rizpah, who told you that you are only a worthless concubine? Did you know you were God's catalyst in ending one dynasty and beginning another? Did you know that on the day you were born God knew He could use your presence in this world to fulfill His plans and His purposes for Israel? If the devil had wanted to destroy you by instigating Abner to violate you or rape you, God had, in His mercy, turned the tables around. He turned something vile into something beautiful.

Years later, when David wanted to break the curse of the famine in Israel, Rizpah's sons were executed mercilessly and their bodies left out in the fields. What a tragedy. Rizpah, deprived of a husband, had only her two sons to lean on and now they were violently taken away from her. Worst of all, David refused to let those bodies be buried until rain fell from heaven, signalling that the curse had been broken. Who would have guessed that Rizpah, only a king's concubine, could rise to the occasion?

The scriptures record that Rizpah stood guard over the bodies of her sons. Day and night, for probably as long as five months, she kept vigil over the remains of her loved ones so that they could receive a proper burial. To die without being properly buried was the ultimate shame and curse according to the tradition of those days. Rizpah simply refused to let this happen to her sons. She could not do what she would like to do (prevent her sons from being executed) but she made sure that she would do what she could (ensure that they were honourably buried). Such was her mother's love, devotion and nobility. What an iron will! When David heard of it, he was deeply moved. He hurried to Jabesh Gilead, collected

the bones of Saul and Jonathan and also the bones of Rizpah's sons (with the five sons of Merab) and, in all probability, had all of them buried together in the tomb of Kish, Saul's father. How wonderful! Rizpah had bent the steel will of a king! Yes, Rizpah's sons, together with their father, King Saul, and Jonathan were honorably buried at the family's burial ground. What David did was actually an act that symbolized David's own reconciliation with Saul, the man who had mercilessly persecuted him in a vain attempt to keep him from being king of Israel. The saga of King Saul, Israel's first king ended with his honourable burial with his own ancestors, and Rizpah, his concubine was the catalyst. Although quite unaware of it all, God had used her brave and selfless act to reconcile these two dynasties.

CHAPTER FOUR

The workings of God in the life of Naaman's slave girl.

An ordinary orphan slave girl plays a key role in God's plan of salvation to the Gentiles by allowing God to place her in destiny's path.

NAAMAN' S SLAVE GIRL

An ordinary orphan slave girl who, in spite of personal losses, allowed God to put her in destiny's path. She played a key role in God's great plan of salvation to the Gentiles.

- The source of her problems
- The way she handled them.
- The final result in God's hand

Nameless. Unrecognized. No rewards or awards, yet she was mightily used by God. She was not aware of the good that she had done. Eternity will reveal it and God will surely reward her. This is the story of the little orphan slave girl in Naaman's court.

She was not aware of it but God was moving her into her destiny to fulfill His plans and purposes. Yes, she had a destiny. Does this shock you? To think that even slave girls have a destiny? Can an unknown person with absolutely no reputation have a part in God's great plans? Why not? We often think that only important people like kings, captains, dignitaries and people of great repute or brilliance have a destiny but not a slave girl. Well, you are wrong. This girl, whose name we do not even know, had gone through much personal losses and tragedy to come to the place where God wanted her to be - in the courts of Naaman.

2 Kings 5:2-3

And the Syrians had gone out by companies, And had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; And she waited on Naaman's wife. And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.

We are told that a group of wicked plundering Syrian soldiers had gone out to burn her village with fire, killed her family and dragged her back to Syria as a slave. This girl had every right to be bitter, but she was not. When she heard that her master, Naaman was sick with leprosy, she spoke up and told her mistress that there was a prophet in Israel who could heal him. She spoke up! By her speaking up, this little girl had broken into her destiny! **What she said brought about the 'linking' of a great army General and a great prophet - Naaman and Elisha. When Naaman was healed, he turned his heart towards the God of Israel. Naaman in turn brought Jehovah worship back to Syria, and God's plan of salvation to the Gentiles was brought into fulfillment.**

Yes, this whole chain of events started because of the testimony of this orphan slave girl who had learnt to yield to the ways of Jehovah. She did not allow her personal losses to hold her back. It is no small thing to have your family violently taken away from you at such a tender age, to be uprooted from your own homeland and forced to serve as a slave in a foreign country. Moreover, she had to serve in a Syrian court and most probably served the very people who had given her so much misery and pain.

All this happened to her because God wanted her in Syria, specifically at Naaman's court, to be His mouthpiece at the right time. Yes, this little girl had to be at the right place at the right time to do the right thing! This is what spiritual destiny is all about. We know she had to go through a lot of pain, but could her pain be compared to God's pain? Wasn't God in pain too because He knew that thousands of Syrians would go to hell if they did not turn to Him for salvation? God needed someone to bring Jehovah worship back to Syria and He found Naaman. But someone else besides Naaman was needed. Someone was needed to 'link' Naaman and Elisha and this was where this slave girl fitted in. What a mighty witness and vessel God found in Naaman - an influential army general - who would carry the gospel back to Syria unhindered. Listen to how Naaman expressed his unpretentious faith in Jehovah.

2 Kings 5:17

And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD.

In spite of the personal tragedy she had gone through, this girl had not lost her faith in the living God. Someone may well ask, "How can you believe in Him after what has happened to you? Where was your God when the Syrians came, burned your village and killed your parents? If He knew and if He cared why didn't He help you when you needed Him most? God never stood up for you, why should you stand up for Him now?"

People today lose their faith in God so easily. “My boyfriend left me or my father died because God never healed him even though I prayed. I went bankrupt or I lost my baby and so my faith is gone.” Isn’t this sad and pathetic? But ah, this little slave girl was so different; she rose to the occasion and spoke up for God. This girl spoke so loudly into my life. In spite of going through so much she did not falter in her faith.

Oh God, grant us more girls like this young slave girl in these end times where faith is weak and fear is strong. We need not know the name of this slave girl but we need to know her strength, her obedience and her yieldedness. Help us to know that what ever pain we have to go through, it can never be compared to the perpetual pain You have in Your own heart over the sinfulness and waywardness of Your people and the suffering of these who are lost. As we wait on You, renew our strength, our hope, our faith and our love for You.

CONCLUSION

THE NEED TO RECOGNIZE THAT GOD'S LOVE IS FERVENT, HOLY AND ENDURING.

A. The *fervent* love of God

Surely God is the only one who loves the way He loves - with fervency. Even though He knew the worst about Jacob and called him a worm: "Fear not, thou worm Jacob"(Isaiah 41.14), He still loved him. God's love for him did not begin with the thought of what Jacob could become; God's love for this man was already there before he was born - yes, even when Jacob was in his mother's womb, a rascal in the making, God loved him! God loved him as Jacob but God did not want him to remain a Jacob - God wanted to transform him into Israel (Malachi 1:2, Romans 9:11).

The Psalmist David knew this. He talked about God keeping His eye on him even when he was in his mother's womb (Psalm 139:13-16). Yes, because God loves so fervently and so passionately, He has to pursue us. Have you been pursued by God? Have you ever felt 'hunted down' by Him and you have to scream like David screamed, "Remove Your hands!" or "Give me a break, please!" It is wonderful to be pursued by someone who loves you and whom you love. No one wants to be pursued by someone whom you do not love! This is our problem; we do not want God to pursue us because we do not love Him! Love for God will allow Him a 'free hand' in our lives.

Psalm 139:7-12

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand shall lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

Job, who suffered much, described God as a lion who seemed to enjoy tracking him down, hunting for him! This man had experienced the fervent love of God. **Yes, because God loves fervently, He has to pursue us and to hunt us down because His passionate love for us will never allow us to remain the same.**

B. The *holy* love of God

God has a strange way of expressing His love. He says that because He loves us He has to 'spank' us or inflict pain on us so that we will learn (Hebrews 12:6, Revelation 3:19). All of us have very low thoughts of love and we often believe that love is only caressing, soothing and sugar-coated words. We like to think God is putting cushions all around us so that we will be prevented from the blows of life. No, no, no! The scriptures are very clear about what the love of God will do to us. It will certainly not allow us to remain the same; therefore the rod, the scourge, the fire and the flood are introduced. And oh, how we hate it, hate it and hate it!

Not long ago I read the story of a famous gangster who was put on death row. This man had done almost every wicked thing under the sun and deserved the death penalty. When his aged mother came to visit him in jail, he refused to see her but instead penned her these few words, "I hate you. If you had loved me, you would have corrected me and not allowed me to remain the same. I grew up not knowing what was wrong or what was right because you left me alone!" This man then spat on the letter and gave it to his mother!

Sigh. How terrible if God were to leave us alone! We will end up, not in jail but in hell! In the eyes of men, Esau seemed to be God's favourite because he seemed to be trouble-free - he was left alone. Yes, he was left alone because God did not want to have anything to do with him. One of the worst things in life is to be left alone by God! (Malachi 1:3). As for Jacob, he had to bear the brunt of life's storms because God loved him and wanted to work into his life. Of course we know that many of the storms in his life came about because of his own rotten character. Jacob had to reap what he sowed. Laban and his own sons cheated him because he himself had sown the seeds of deception by cheating his own brother and his aged father. Cheating is bad but to cheat one's own brother and father is beyond bad - no wonder even God called him a worm! He suffered pain for twenty years under the hands of Laban because he had first inflicted much pain on his brother Esau. Esau lived with the pain of loss, revenge and unforgiveness for twenty years. How terrible! Yes, because God's love reverberates upon the axis of His holiness and because God loves with discernment and judgment, He has to discipline us. He knows that we must often experience pain and adversity before we learn. King David confessed that it was through pain and affliction that he learned not to go astray.

Psalm 119:67, 71

“Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now I have kept thy word: It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.”

C. The *enduring* love of God

The apostle Paul said it all when he told us that nothing could ever separate us from the love of Father God. He went on to name these things: death, life, angels, principalities, powers, the present, the future nor any creature (Romans 8:38-39). However, there is one thing that has the power to separate us from God’s love, and that is we, ourselves.

This was what happened to King Saul and the nation of Israel. They became tired of God and His discipline and through the hardening of their hearts cut themselves off from His love and His workings. King Saul and King David both sinned blatantly against God but how is it that one was restored and the other perished? What is the difference between these two men? King Saul hardened under the workings and the dealings of God ... but King David did not. When a hurting God left them both and refused to talk to them after they had sinned against Him, Saul stopped crying out to God and instead consulted a witch. David was different - he was ‘thick-skinned’ and he was violent in taking hold of God. He refused to let God go! He kept crying to God and for God - he never left God alone. He pursued God and pursued God with his endless cries, tears, sighings, groanings and pleadings and God returned!

Yes, God’s love is enduring. It is tough fiber. It is authentic. It is not made in Hollywood where it is all romance and sentimentalism. God’s

love is not wooed by dimly-lit candles, expensive diamonds, exclusive perfume, good food and flowers, but it is wooed by our contrite spirit and our broken hearts that will never cease to cry out to Him and for Him. It was His enduring love that forgave David and totally wiped off his awful sin of adultery and murder. It was His enduring love for David that caused Him to restore to David everything that he had lost through sin. Yes, because His love is enduring, therefore He must say, "Behold I kill and I make alive!" His enduring love will never kill us. He will resurrect us! I pray we will never get weary of His dealings and His workings in our lives.

O God, help us. Help us never to tire of Your workings in our lives. We confess we are, at times. This is so because we do not want to change. We want to fuel our self will and this must be so ugly and abhorrent to you. Animate us by Thy spirit, then govern us by Your principles for without Your imparted grace and Spirit we do not know how to respond. Thank You for loving us, for including us in Your great plans and purposes and for not leaving us alone. We don 't ever want to be left alone by You.

**A FINAL WORD:
YOU HAVE A DESTINY AND YOU
MUST LOOK AT THINGS FROM GOD'S
PERSPECTIVE!**

Ladies, you have now come to the end of this book. Have you been ministered to? **Do you now realize that every redeemed life is important and indispensable to God because God has His own plans and purposes wrapped up in your lives?** We all know the power of inheritance. Some inherit property, some inherit cash while others may inherit jewellery or cars. **The scriptures tell us that God has His inheritance in His saints; in other words, you and I are God's inheritance! Are not human lives precious?**

Deuteronomy 32:9

*For the LORD's portion is his people;
Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.*

Psalms 94:14

*For the LORD will not cast off his people,
neither will he forsake his inheritance.*

Yes. Yes. In God's eyes, even lepers are important to Him and He has a destiny for them too! Remember how He saved the nation of Israel (from a bitter famine during the days of Elisha) through four lepers? The devil always wanted to annihilate the nation of Israel because he knew that the Messiah would come from this nation. The famine was just one of his attempts but God knew exactly how to save and protect His people. He used four dirty, outcast lepers! Who would ever have guessed that even

lepers could be used by God! They were rejected and despised by men but God picked them up and placed them in destiny's path! They saved an entire nation through their courage, wit and selflessness. These four lepers were thrown out of the city by their people and they were waiting to die of starvation. The mighty Syrian army had besieged Jerusalem and as a result there was no food. Thank God, the lepers could still think! They decided to sneak over to the enemy's camps to steal some food instead of just waiting to die. As they trudged towards the enemy's camps, God magnified the sound of their footsteps so that their footsteps sounded like the footsteps of a mighty approaching army! The Syrians took fright and fled their camps leaving everything behind. When the four lepers arrived, they were shocked - there was so much food, garments, jewellery etc.

These men had no bitterness in their hearts towards those people in the city who had thrown them out to die! They returned to their city and told the people of the great spoils they had gotten from the enemy's camps. As a result, this entire nation, God's chosen nation through which the Saviour was to come, was saved! God used even lepers, who had been thrown out of the city to fulfill His plans and purposes. Had it not been for these men (we would have probably looked down on them with disgust), this nation might have perished in the famine and we may not have a Saviour! No wonder Paul said that God's wisdom is far beyond human understanding and searching. You will find this amazing story in 2 Kings chapter 7.

Another person I would like to draw your attention to is the widow of Zidon. This woman actually reached her destiny but I doubt she knew it! God used this nameless widow to save His strategic vessel, the great prophet Elijah. If it were not for this widow, Elijah would have died, either from starvation or at the hands of King Ahab who had been hunting

relentlessly for him. If Elijah had died, God's plans and purposes for His nation at that time would definitely have been obstructed. Even as God prepared Elijah, His strategic vessel, through which He wanted to stop the apostasy of His people, He also had to prepare this simple vessel - a widow - to feed His prophet and to protect him from Ahab.

The widow certainly had not had an easy life. She had lost her husband, (possibly she suffered from a lot of ridicule as widows did in those days). She had to bring up her son all by herself and then she had to go through a famine. Now, worst of all, God sent her an extra mouth to feed! Elijah could have been a great, great eater! He went on long fasts and people who do so often have big appetites after days of fasting! Did this simple woman rise to the occasion and do what God wanted her to do? Yes. She certainly did! She fed and hid Elijah as long as Elijah needed it. May we know that even as God prepared the strong and mighty, the important and the strategic people to do His work, HE ALSO NEEDS YOU. Yes, YOU, the housewife, the widow, the single mother, the divorcee, the single woman, the grandmother, the maid, the orphan, etc ... Please read the story of this widow in 1 Kings chapter 17 and let God's Word warm your heart.

What about the mother of the little boy whose lunch Jesus used to feed thousands of people? This mother did not realize that such a wonderful miracle could come out of that simple meal she had prepared for her son. She was a mother and had played her role so well. With deep loving care she prepared a lunch basket for her son and God saw it! He used that little boy's lunch basket, prepared by a loving, responsible and insightful mother who did not want her son to go hungry, to save thousands of people from hunger. Indeed, this mother was the indirect

'link' to the miracle. If it had not been for her involvement that day, that little boy would not have had a lunch basket (consisting of five simple buns and two small fishes) to offer Jesus. Yes, both mother and son were co-labourers together with Jesus in feeding the great crowd. A mother's loving devotion to her son did not go unnoticed by God. He used it to get a miracle going.

Whatever God has called you into and wherever He has placed you, serve, do your work, play your role in an excellent spirit with eternity in view. This is what the apostle meant when he told Christians to give their best in their service. "Whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. And whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:17,23).

Let me remind you that God knows about our lives. Do not get weary of Him or of His dealings. Do not degenerate into the place of Israel who said in Isaiah 40:27: "My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God." For everyone who thinks like this, God has His reply: Isaiah 40:28-29, 31. "Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. HE GIVETH POWER TO THE FAINT; And to them that have no might He increaseth strength... **they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.**"

Let me now share with you an excerpt from my book, **THE DEMANDS OF LOVE**. The following paragraphs are taken from the chapter, LOOK FROM THE TOP, pages 106 to 109. Yes, the correct way to deal with disappointments and hurts is to deal with them from God's perspective. I have had my share of painful experiences and I want to say that although I did not

welcome them, they were necessary to my spiritual growth and development in the Lord. They were God's special dealings in my life. I have often told my students in the School that saints like Jacob, Joseph, Moses and David did not go through any inner healing or deliverance from their past hurts - they just learned to die to self. And see how well they turned out. They became great channels of blessings, not sour plums. These men had the right perspective to all their hurtful experiences. They may have abhorred the hurts but they accepted them as part of God's dealings in their lives. This is why David was able to say: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted: that I might learn Thy statutes" (Psalm 119: 17).

Joseph was able to look his treacherous brothers straight in the eye and tell them not to hate themselves for doing him ill because he believed that the ill done to him was simply part of God's dealings in his life.

Genesis 45:5

"Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life "

Genesis 45:8

"So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God "

How wonderfully said! Joseph suffered much because of what his own brothers did to him but he saw God in the picture. Because he had the right perspective, he was able to forgive and move on to fruitfulness and usefulness. The degree to which Joseph suffered may be seen in the naming of his first son, Manasseh, meaning, “I have forgotten.” I believe that it was not easy for him to forget and totally erase the past but he had been able to do it by the time his first son was born. Joseph named his second son Ephraim, meaning “fruitful”. Yes, we must first totally forget (and forgive); then, and only then, will we become fruitful.

Having God’s perspective into these things is important. The next five or ten years of your life will depend on how well you have forgotten and forgiven. See God in the picture and believe that although the experiences have humiliated you, hurt you, shamed you and caused you to lose everything, they will and can turn out for your good because God is in control. The Bible says that “ ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purposes” (Romans 8:28).

Do you love the Lord? Are you called by Him into salvation, sanctification and glorification? Yes. Yes. If so, even bad and evil things can work out for your good. God will see to it but we must not give in to any bitterness and unforgiveness. If we do, every good thing that God has in store for us will be aborted.

When I was 12 years old, I spoilt a beautiful painting that had been laid out to dry in my classroom verandah. I accidentally knocked over my wet paintbrush and it fell right on top of the painting, leaving an ugly blob of colour. When the owner, a talented artist named Hajah, saw it,

she quickly grabbed her own paintbrush, dipped it into some paint and began to paint over the offending spot. Soon, the ugly blob was turned into a beautiful cloud. It blended so well with the rest of the picture, all because of the artist's creativity and ingenuity. I stood speechless and amazed. Hajjah had saved the day and saved me from being scolded by the art teacher who had chosen that particular painting for an exhibition. What a specialist Hajjah was - a master artist, a hero!

Well, God is just the same. He can take the ugly black blobs of your hurt, disappointment, loss or shame and turn them into something beautiful to bless you. Each negative experience taken by itself is not much of a blessing but the Bible says that all things work together (mingle together, fuse together) in order to produce the good. The bad with the good, the good with the bad, all mingled and fused together like coloured threads woven into a beautiful pattern of gold, green, black, purple and blue. Just as the threads must be woven together, so must our bad experiences and the goodness and the love of God, in order for things to work out for our good. "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save people alive" (Genesis 50:20). The Bridegroom demands a relationship before He calls us to view from the right perspective. When we have a close, cleaving relationship with the Bridegroom, we can see from a much better perspective than others. Without a relationship with Him, we cannot have the right perspective into things. This is why a spiritual person looks at things so differently from a carnal person. One of the most powerful declarations of the bride is found in Song of Songs 4:16: "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits. "

The force of a north wind is linked to a northern tornado. Farmers dread this northern monster. When it blows into your garden, you may not have much of it left. Yet the bride invited the north wind to come and blow into her garden, her life. She was neither afraid of the consequences nor of the devastation. She affirmed that the only thing the north wind could do was to cause the fragrance of her garden to flow out.

Yes, north wind, blow if you must in all your might and ferocity but as my fruits lie dashed to the ground, their fragrance will be released for all to enjoy. It will invigorate, it will stimulate, it will refresh and even bring a healing effect to the many who will pick it up. So blow, north wind, blow! The bride also issued an order for the south wind to blow into her garden. This is the wind that comes with much heat, causing the fruit to ripen faster. Both winds, the bride says, are needed for her garden, so she freely lets them come. After the winds had done their devastating work, she invited her bridegroom to come into her garden to enjoy the pleasant fruits. Praise God, she still had pleasant fruits left even after the two strong winds had blown through her garden. Isn't this amazing? The Lamb's bride is always undefeatable and invincible and so should you and I be - we are the Bride. Let us live up to our high and lofty calling. We can face cold and hot blasting winds, have them blow into our lives, work us over, and still produce pleasant fruits, so pleasant that when the Bridegroom walks in and tastes them, He is totally overwhelmed with delight. So delighted is He that He invites His friends into this amazing garden to share His joy. "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk; eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved" (Song of Songs 5:1).

Adopt God's perspective in everything in life: hurts, disappointments, losses, tragedies, failures, or even successes, blessings or prosperity. Look at them from the top. It is His demand that we do so.

‘Make me a captive, Lord
And then I shall be free.
Force me (through Your dealings) to render up my
sword
And I shall conqueror be
I sink in life’s alarms
When by myself I stand;
Imprison me within Thine arms
And strong shall be my hand.’

George Matheson.