

DEMANDS OF LOVE

Song of Solomon

A Devotional Study

SUSAN TANG

DEDICATION

To
All the alumni
(and future students)
of Station of Life:

You were (will be) taught spiritual intimacy and communion.
Now live it.

To the beloved Bride of Jesus Christ everywhere:

May we know that we are great only because we are loved.
We are loved by Him; therefore, at all times
and in every situation,
we are the greatest!

CONTENTS

Dedication	2
Song of Solomon	4
Preface 11	
Principles From Song of Solomon	13
A. For the Single Person	
B. For the Married Person	
C. For Fruitfulness, Effectiveness and Longevity in Ministry	
1. Exclusiveness	
2. Spiritual Intimacy and Communion	
3. God-Consciousness	
The 1st Demand : Rise Up !	65
1. Rise Up to Achieve Our Full Potential in Him	
2. Rise Up and Come Out of All Our Selfish Indulgences	
3. Rise Up and Break Free from All Worldly Conformity	
4. Rise Up and Be a Standard-Bearer	
The 2nd Demand : Come Away !	96
A. Be Separate	
B. Let Go of the Past	
C. Be Willing to Lose It All	
The 3rd Demand : Come With Me !	108
The 4th Demand : Look From The Top !	118
The 5th Demand : Open To Me !	130
The 6th Demand : Return, Return !	140

SONG OF SOLOMON

King Solomon, so the story goes, disguised himself as a lowly shepherd and went to visit his vineyards in the northern part of his kingdom. There he met a beautiful Shulamite woman and fell in love with her.

However, she spurned the king's advances because she was already engaged to a shepherd with whom she was deeply in love. Being apart did not lessen the love of the Shulamite woman for her shepherd. She was absent from him in person but she reminisced about their love relationship all the time.

Over and over again, the Shulamite woman rejected King Solomon and stayed true to her shepherd. In the end, the king gave up and allowed her to be reunited with her shepherd. She had been assailed but was never conquered, in the same way a true lover of Jesus Christ will never be conquered by the world.

Isn't it wonderful of God to use this beautiful story to depict His love relationship with the church? The love between a bride and a bridegroom is the freshest and the sweetest of all love. That is the way our relationship with the Lord is to be _ fresh and sweet all the time. Anything lesser is second class and mediocre. God gave us His best and He deserves the best in return.

DEMANDS OF LOVE will help you obtain a deeper understanding of the Song of Solomon. As the Lord enlightened my mind and enlarged my heart, I have learned much from this book in the Bible. King David often prayed for the enlightenment of his own mind and the enlargement of his own heart so that he could better understand the laws of God. May we do the same.

Make me to understand the way of thy precepts; so shall I talk of thy wondrous works (Psalm 119:27).

Thy hands have made me and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments (Psalm 119:73).

I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart (Psalm 119:32).

Lessons on spiritual communion and spiritual intimacy are taught at Station of Life, a Bible School that requires its students to learn to pray at least an hour daily. The flesh has to be disciplined and “broken-in” so that the spirit can ascend and soar.

“Our bed is green!” shouts the bride. Yes, it is. Our intimacy with the Lord can always grow and deepen.

May you enjoy reading *Demands of Love* as much as I have enjoyed writing it. My prayer is that its message will invade your life. You will never be the same again as you respond and yield to the demands of God.

PREFACE

I remember someone telling me that every time the Song of Solomon was mentioned, her heart would miss a beat.

“The book is so carnal and the language in certain parts is so vulgar. It can stir up in the wrong way,” she said.

Oh, no! To me, the Song of Solomon is one of the most beautiful books on spiritual communion, or spiritual intimacy. Interpretation and perception of truth are always based on the condition of one’s heart. If one’s heart is carnal, one colours everything carnal.

One day, just ten months before the birth of the school, Station of Life, the Lord told me to read the Book of Solomon. Very reluctantly, I obeyed. As I read, I was surprised to find that I could understand it! For the first time in my life, God spoke to me through this book. He even taught me to divide the book into two columns and mark out the dialogue between the bride and the Bridegroom.

He said, “Do you realise that every time the bride speaks, she is full of declarations and every time the Bridegroom speaks, he is full of demands? As your heavenly Bridegroom, I have the right to walk into your life and make demands of you. Will you let Me?” That was the key that unlocked this whole book to me.

The Song of Solomon, then, is about the demands and the declarations of love. I am writing about the demands of the Bridegroom in this book. God willing, I may write on the declarations of the bride at another time.

There are many existing interpretations of this book. I dare not compete with others but will present what is solely my own understanding of this beautiful Song as the Lord has revealed it to me.

The Song of Solomon is to me the most powerful and beautiful book ever written on spiritual intimacy. The ancient Jewish rabbis and the early church fathers called this book "the Holy of Holies". They knew how to enjoy communion and intimacy with God by the hour. Despite their limitations in scientific knowledge and technological advancements, they possessed something which we hardly have today _ passion and power. They had a river of Spirit-life flowing inside them which gave them the ability to turn their world upside down. That inside river was so strong, it overflowed and transformed the spiritual landscape in their day.

Oh, that God would give us such men and women today _ men and women who will transform the spiritual landscape everywhere they go. So many have asked, "Where is this God of Elijah? Why is He not raining fire from heaven?" No, no. We should be asking, "Where are the Elijahs of God? Where are the strong men and women who, like Elijah, are wearing their prophetic and apostolic mantles without fear and compromise?" Give us such people and we will once again see the fire of God coming down.

I believe it will happen. I believe that even now, God is preparing a generation of such men and women to be manifested in the end times. He promised in Malachi 4:5-6 that Elijah would definitely come and restore all things before the great coming of our beloved Bridegroom. There will be a company of people who will be clothed with the spirit of Elijah. These end-time servants of the Lord will cause the fire of revival to rain down from heaven, gathering in the end-time harvest. Oh, may they soon appear, and may we, in the meantime, continue to intercede and pray for

their manifestation.

As you read this beautiful Song, may you be stirred up to love Him the way He loves you _ totally and unreservedly. May you be stirred up to live for Him as He lived for you. He gave you His life; may you give your life to Him in return.

Love has the right to demand. When you love someone, you have the right to demand from that person that which benefits him or her (not you). Parents very often make demands of their children. Because they love their children, they demand that their children behave in certain ways: Eat your vitamins! Be back before dark! Don't talk to strange men!

Likewise, God has the right to make demands of us. The Song of Solomon reveals six urgent demands made by the Bridegroom. If, as the church of Jesus Christ, we do not know how to yield to the demands of our heavenly Bridegroom, we will not make any spiritual advancement. We must allow the Bridegroom to make demands of us.

The apostle Paul could have demands made of him. Notice how often he stated in his epistles that he was a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ by the demand (will, commandment) of God.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope (1 Timothy 1:1).

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 1:1).

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus and to the faithful in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:1).

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother (Colossians 1:1).

He also made similar statements in his epistles to the Corinthians and the Galatians.

Paul had neither special abilities, personal charisma nor a winning appearance. In fact, some people despised him for not having a certain type of ‘image’ as an apostle. They also complained about his “artless” way of speaking and preaching.

His bodily presence is weak, his speech contemptible (2 Corinthians 10:10).

Yet this man turned the world in his day upside down. He did exploits for God. He stood in the five-fold ministry. He taught, preached and wrote besides travelling and planting churches. He did the work of five or six men all put together.

What was the secret of his success? Simply this: **he was a man of whom demands could be made.** He knew how to yield to God the very day He saw Jesus face to face.

And he trembling and astonished said, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6).

No wonder Paul was so greatly used by God.

God must, in His mercy, birth a generation of men and women who will know how to yield to His demands, not merely know how to worship, sing, play musical instruments, preach or perform miracles. There must

be a generation of men and women who must not only be interested in breaking through but in being broken in. When we get broken in, the Holy Spirit can ride upon us forever. The Lord can then make His demands of us.

Getting a breakthrough is easy, getting broken in is not. To get broken in, we have to come to the cross and enter into a transaction with Father God. It is the type of transaction that leaves our will forever in His hands and His will forever. This is hard but this is what living the demands of God is all about.

Someone has said that we do not have strong Christianity today because we do not have imperative Christianity. I certainly agree. The early Christians did not make excuses. They just obeyed. God expects us to obey. He neither suggests nor discusses; He just says, "Do it." That is a strong God, and when we obey, we will be a strong people. We are weak because we do not obey.

For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him (2 Chronicles 16:9).

The Song of Solomon states six demands made by the Bridegroom:

1. RISE UP! (*Song of Solomon 2:10*)
2. COME AWAY! (*Song of Solomon 2:10*)
3. COME WITH ME! (*Song of Solomon 4:8*)
4. LOOK FROM THE TOP! (*Song of Solomon 4:8*)
5. OPEN TO ME! (*Song of Solomon 5:2*)
6. RETURN, RETURN! (*Song of Solomon 6:13*)

My earnest prayer is that you will first read this beautiful book in the Bible _ it is a Love Song that God sings to you. He looks at you and He says, “Thou art fair, my love; there is no spot in thee” (*Song of Solomon 4:7*). You will never know how deeply you have been loved, how valuable and how delightful you are to Him unless you read the Song of Songs.

How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! How much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointment than all spices! (Song of Solomon 4:10).

This Song is also the call of the Bridegroom to His bride to be elevated (*Song of Solomon 4:12*) and exclusive (*Song of Solomon 4:12*). If ever the church of Jesus Christ needs to be elevated and exclusive, it is in times like ours.

Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lion's dens, from the mountains of leopards (Song of Solomon 4:8).

A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed (Song of Solomon 4:12).

Do not make the excuse that the Song of Solomon is beyond your understanding. Read it! Read it in one sitting for continuity; it has only eight short chapters. The Holy Spirit Who has given me understanding and revelation will also enlighten you and make it very personal to you. This beautiful Love Song was written for you, and it reveals your destiny to you. Read it.

PRINCIPLES FROM SONG OF SOLOMON

The Song of Solomon contains principles which we must live by. They are for both single and married believers, for all who desire fruitfulness, effectiveness and longevity in their Christian life and ministry.

A. FOR THE SINGLE PERSON

I am appalled at the number of promiscuous women, both single and married, in our churches today. On one occasion, I was ministering in a Christian women's meeting when the Lord spoke to me about the condition of some of the women there. "Many have violated My sexual laws. Do not deal lightly but speak out and help them into repentance."

When I gave the women the chance to confess their adultery, I did not expect to see so many hands go up! It was shocking. These unfaithful women were all Christians; a few were even in active ministry in their respective churches.

What about the single women in our churches?

There are many who have violated God's sexual laws (and have not gone through proper deliverance) in active ministry today, with their pastors' blessings. Some are young, innocent-looking girls. The repercussions are severe. After a period of good ministry and church growth, havoc will break out in the lives of these single women and in the church. Many pastors do not even know what has hit them. We cannot violate any of God's laws and prosper for long.

Twice in the Song of Solomon, the bride says, "Do not stir up my love feelings" (Song of Solomon 3:5; 8:4). Whenever I minister on the Song,

I take the opportunity to tell the single people in the church what the bride's statement means, and I pray for them.

It is important that singles learn to keep their hearts and not allow simply anyone to stir up their feelings of love or romance before God's timing. Many single women do not know how to do so. They allow either the wrong men or all sorts of men to stir up their hearts, misuse their bodies, walk all over their lives and then walk out, leaving them in shreds.

In the Song of Solomon, women who are easy with men are referred to as "doors" (Song of Solomon 8:9). The brothers of the Shulamite said that if their sister were a "door", not knowing how to keep herself but freely admitting men in and out of her life, they would quickly shut her in ("inclose her with boards of cedar").

Ladies, do not be a door! A door is for the entry and exit of all sorts of people. If your life has been a door, repent, renounce your past and submit to deliverance. Learn, by God's grace, to be a "wall".

This is what the Shulamite said of herself in Song of Solomon 8:10:

I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.

When you are a wall, God can build into your life. Establishing a strong and firm foundation for the wall takes time but only walls can hold the house together; doors cannot.

Walls are erected for privacy, preservation and protection. When a woman says that she is a wall, it means that, firstly, she is well-preserved. Secondly, she is able to contain herself and is thus in full control of any situation. Thirdly, she knows what type of people to admit into her life and what type of people to keep out. This is the way single Christian women should live their lives.

Breasts are always a sign of maturity and femininity. Women are to be strong and substantial (like a wall) in the Lord yet at the same time remain feminine and womanly. I have seen strong and substantial women in the Lord who are very mannish. They talk, walk and preach like a man. I was at a camp where I saw one who even wore a tie! No! No! This is out of God's order. I am thankful that they are strong and substantial but I am not thankful that they are mannish.

The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God (Deuteronomy 22:5).

Everyone needs a model in life. The Shulamite is someone whom single women should emulate. This bride found tremendous favour in the eyes of her Bridegroom because her character bore the qualities of exclusiveness, strength, maturity and femininity. She was a woman whose whole disposition pleased her Bridegroom because she knew how to possess control over herself. Having possession of oneself is the best possession of all.

The Shulamite was assailed by King Solomon but she was never conquered. He came as a relentless hunter and tempter offering wisdom, wealth, majesty and power but over and over again, she rejected him. She refused to let him into her life. What a woman.

Be like this woman, singles, and find favour in the eyes of your heavenly Bridegroom. He will reward you for living as a true Christian woman for Him. Be exclusive by knowing how to control your relationships with the opposite sex. Be strong in the Lord. Be mature and decisive. Above all, be feminine.

It is not easy to remain single-minded and exclusive. I too have had to fight to keep my heart from being stirred up. Sometimes, I literally have had to flee. Fleeing is a tactic in spiritual warfare which Paul, the apostle, taught young Timothy. Singles, if this step is needed, take it. Flee and do not allow your heart to be stirred up by the wrong person.

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness (1 Timothy 6:11).

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Timothy 2:22).

Feelings of love and romance are hard to control when they are ignited. They are explosive! There are many well-meaning folks in our churches today who think that they are doing us a favour by stirring things up for us. No. No. we must always wait for God's leading and timing. If God has not given you a witness in your heart to start a relationship, refuse to be stirred up. If you do not know His timing, you are not ready to start a relationship. You must control your life until the right one comes along.

The wise bride in the Song of Solomon refused to allow anyone to stir up her feelings of love and romance. Even Solomon with all his wisdom and wealth could not move her because she knew that she was betrothed to her shepherd lover. Singles, be like this wise bride and guard your heart. If there is a need to flee, do it. Open your heart only to the right person in God's timing, and it will be beautiful.

B.

FOR THE MARRIED PERSON

Song of Solomon 6:3 contains a very powerful principle that all married couples should live by: “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.” Compare this with Song of Solomon 2:16 which says, “My beloved is mine and I am his.” Many people think that these two verses mean the same thing when, in fact, they are totally different.

Most couples begin their love relationship in a selfish way when they declare, “My beloved is mine, *then* I am his.” This actually means, “You become mine first, then I will become yours. You give first, you apologise first, you make the first move; then I will respond.” This is really selfish love.

As you mature and progress in love, you realise that this selfish love does not work at all. As one waits for the other to make the vital first move, a cold war that lasts for weeks could begin. One wife told me that she waited for her husband to make the first move towards reconciliation. She ended up waiting two full weeks and nothing happened. She finally had to break the ice and apologise first.

“By then,” she said, “the enemy had come in to aggravate the whole situation and our marriage was never the same again. Even my step-daughter was hurt because both of us were doing our talking through her. As the older Christian, I should have acted with more love and taken the first step towards reconciliation whether I was in the right or wrong.”

Yes, yes, yes! In any love relationship, it does not matter who takes the first step. The one who does is always the more mature, the more Christ-like, the more loving and definitely the one who has more spiritual resources. Take the first step towards reconciliation and say, “I am my beloved’s (meaning I become yours first, I give myself to you first, I take the first step) and my beloved is mine.”

C. FOR FRUITFULNESS, EFFECTIVENESS AND LONGEVITY IN MINISTRY

1. Exclusiveness
2. Spiritual Intimacy and Communion
3. God-consciousness

1. Exclusiveness

We cannot read the Song of Solomon without noticing how fruitful and how well-watered the bride was. The Bridegroom described her condition thus:

Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire with spikenard, Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices (Song of Solomon 4:13 & 14).

Concerning her being well-watered, He said:

A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon (Song of Solomon 4:15).

I want my life to be like this. I want it to be forever fruitful and well-watered. We can be, if we are willing to pay the price and be exclusive for Him. The reason why the bride was so fruitful and well-watered was because she knew how to keep herself and guard her life. She was very exclusive, describing herself as a “wall” in Song of Solomon 8:10. The Bridegroom described her as:

A garden inclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed (Song of Solomon 4:12).

The bride opened herself only to the Bridegroom, she existed only for

Him. She made sure that all others were barred from entering into her life.

Exclusiveness is a price that we must pay and a principle that all of us must keep if we want fruitfulness and a river flowing fresh on our inside all the time. We cannot open our lives to all sorts of people.

Jesus was exclusive. He did not open His life to everyone who followed Him, not to the seventy disciples and not even to the twelve. Of the twelve, He chose only three to confide in. And of the three, He allowed only one to lean on His bosom, hearing His heartbeat.

And he took with him Peter and two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me (Matthew 26:37-38).

Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on His breast at supper and said, Lord which is he that betrayeth thee? (John 21:20).

This is an important lesson to learn. We cannot open our lives to just anybody, even though they are Christians, because not everyone has the spiritual capacity to understand spiritual truth or the struggles we need to go through. Also, not everyone has the spiritual maturity to keep his or her mouth shut. This is why Jesus refused to commit Himself to simply anyone.

Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in men (John 2: 23-25).

Nehemiah found it necessary to shut himself off from everyone for a period of time while he carried the burden of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. He became very exclusive and went only with a few men on an inspection tour of Jerusalem at night.

And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.

And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priest, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work (Nehemiah 2:12, 16).

Later on, when he met with severe problems, he had to “consult with himself” before he took action. Leadership can be very lonely, especially when God is using you to birth or do something new. Like Nehemiah, we must know how to keep our mouths shut and not consult anyone before the right timing, for hasty disclosure or consultation with others may bring about an early abortion of your God-given vision. Well meaning friends may both discourage or defile without their realising it.

Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, everyone of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them (Nehemiah 5:7).

I have often wondered why God told the nation of Israel to arm themselves as they passed through the land of their own brethren.

And I commanded you at that time, saying, The LORD your God hath given you this land to possess it: ye shall pass over armed before your brethren the children of Israel, all that are meet for the war (Deuteronomy 3:18).

To arm oneself in the presence of one's enemy is understandable, but to arm oneself in the presence of one's own brother? Well, after being a Christian for so many years, I have realised that even brothers can kill (Cain and Abel), cheat (Jacob and Esau) and hurt and defile (brother Amnon and sister Tamar).

In ministry, we must learn to keep ourselves and not minister to simply anybody and everybody. There are people who are like pigs in life. Jesus called them swine; the Chinese call them "mud." A Chinese proverb says that we must not try to lift up mud because mud can never be lifted up. Those who try will soon become muddied themselves.

Jesus said that swine do not appreciate pearls and if we try to give pearls to them, they will turn around and tear us instead. In Matthew 7:6, Jesus warned us about casting pearls before swine.

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you (Matthew 7:6).

There are many people who want help from us but they are unteachable and are insincere. There are also people who will not be responsible for their own actions and will not do anything for themselves when they come for ministry. They want you to do everything for them, including paying their taxi fares to come for deliverance.

From such people, turn away. We have to stop ministering to them and conserve our strength to help others. Unless they change their attitudes, we should not continue to minister. We can wear ourselves out. More than that, if we get emotionally upset with them or physically exhausted, or if we dry up spiritually, we may pick up some of the unclean spirits when they are being evicted.

In deliverance, we must remember that when a woman has been violated sexually, the process of deliverance and building into her life is always difficult. We have to be very patient.

Jesus Christ gave Mary Magdalene, a woman whom I believe had violated God's sexual laws, a very strong foundation after she was saved and had seven demons evicted from her life. We are told that Mary continued to follow the Lord. I am sure she received continued healing and strong discipline from Him. She reached her potential and never had any more problems with men. She was not flirtatious neither did she have any of her old lifestyle left in her. She was pure and holy, otherwise the Lord would not have had her in His ministry team.

And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children (Matthew 27:55,56).

Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils (Mark 16:9).

When a thorough work is not done on a woman from such a background, the consequences and repercussions will be severe. There are pastors who put such ladies into active ministry without giving them a strong foundation which should include deliverance and inner healing. After a little while, the havoc begins. Good things in the church are aborted and fornication and adultery happen _ the church has been hit by an unclean spirit.

Always remember that building into such lives can only take place after the accumulated "rubbish" and filth of the old life have been removed.

The workmen under Nehemiah shouted out that they could not continue the building process because of much “rubbish.”

There is much rubbish, so that we are not able to build the wall (Nehemiah 4:10).

The uprooting and the “throwing-down” process is a MUST in these violated lives before the process of planting and building can begin. Unfortunately, many of God’s workmen, especially pastors, overlook this. I too have had to learn by trial and error. I had concentrated so much on planting and building into lives that I forgot to uproot and to throw down. A building is never strong if there is still accumulated “rubbish” as its foundation. Shaky foundations are dangerous and only fools build on them.

Some women intercessors who do not have a strong foundation get weird leadings in the realm of the spirit. They begin to intimidate, even control the pastors, and may wreck lives with false dreams and visions. Women in the forefront of ministry who do not have a strong foundation can deviate and later form cultic groups or false religions. It has happened before.

This was why in Old Testament days, God was so drastic in dealing with women who had willingly violated His sexual laws. In Old Testament days, these women had to be put to death! If this is done today, many Christian girls will die because there are many promiscuous Christian girls. God considers sex outside of marriage or the violation of His sexual laws as evil and folly which must be dealt with quickly and thoroughly. He has His reasons for such judgement.

And if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be found for the damsel:

Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you.

If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel. If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city and lie with her;

Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you (Deuteronomy 22:20-24).

When a woman violates God's sexual laws, either voluntary or involuntary (perhaps she was raped), she becomes an entry point for a spirit of lust to demonise her. Because this spirit can be transferred to others, this same woman can be the downfall of many good men even without her knowing it. (Some people can have this spirit transferred from the ancestry line.) Good men can get near her and not understand why they get stirred up sexually. Some pastors hire secretaries with such spirits. That is why they get into trouble.

I once took a girl with such a spirit under my care. She had slept around before but had now turned to the Lord. Three men (one of whom was married) confessed to my associate pastor that they were stirred up sexually whenever they were near her. All three men were in the ministry. The reason was simple: this girl had a spirit of sexual lust that had not been dealt with. The men who came near her picked it up and were stirred

up by this mean spirit. Thank God that these men were open enough to make confessions to my associate pastor and had the matter dealt with.

What I am writing about here may save your marriage. If you, the man, get stirred up by a woman, do not go and sleep with her. Confess this to either your wife (thank God for godly wives who know how to take the authority to break bondages) or to your pastor and have the power of that unclean spirit of lust broken. Many married Christian men have committed adultery because they do not know how to fight off this spirit. Do not give in. It is a mean and lawless enemy that will rob you of everything _ your marriage, children, job, dignity, health, even your soul.

A pastor friend and his wife told me that one day, after ministering to a male prostitute, the pastor was all stirred up sexually and was attacked mentally by all sorts of obscene pictures. Instantly he turned to his wife and they both went into warfare tongues for an hour. They broke the power of that spirit of lust. And that was it. It was over. His mind and body were free again.

Another pastor was not that fortunate. He had been casting out spirits from a girl who had committed incest with her step-father and uncle. Today, this pastor has left his wife and young daughter and is staying with this girl. It is shocking, but true. What had happened? This mean spirit of lust got him because he did not know how to fight and because he did not have a strong river on the inside. Some do not even have a good talking relationship with their wives. Many pastors are dry today and demons love dry places. It is easy for spirits of lust to latch onto us when we are dry and prayerless. This is not God's failure but man's. This is why in the Station of Life, we teach our students to pray for upwards of one hour and not less.

We also teach our students to be exclusive _ do not just go and minister deliverance to simply anyone because not everyone wants to be free.

Roberts Liardon once told a very enlightening but frightening story about how one of his workers came under attack by such spirits. Thank God that because of Roberts' Holy Ghost discernment, this man was not ruined.

Roberts said that God gave him a vision concerning a beautiful "spiritual" girl that his friend was courting. In the vision, he saw a woman's hand with a string attached to her little finger. The other end of the string was attached to the head of his friend. Every time the little finger wiggled, his friend's head would turn! Then Roberts saw another vision in which he saw himself seated behind them in their car and heard their love conversation. The car drew into a motel. He saw both of them going in. By the time they came out, the girl was holding a baby.

Roberts counselled his friend and told him to stay away from this "nice, spiritual" girl because she had a spirit of lust. It was the type of sex demon that specialises in seducing men of God, kills their spiritual gifts and calling, and finishes off their ministry. The friend was furious! He refused to believe him until Roberts told him what he had seen in his vision, how in the spirit he was with them in the backseat of their car that night, heard their conversation and had seen them go into the motel. The man was shocked.

When he begged Roberts to cast out the spirit, Roberts said no. No, because there are some demons that cannot be cast out. When a person's personality and that of the demon have entwined or become one, we cannot cast out the demon. Many young girls and even mature women want to be seductive and lure as many admirers as possible _ they thus love being possessed by such spirits. How then do you expect us to cast the demons out? The demons may go, but the personality of that person

will soon attract the spirits back.

This man was so scared, he ran from the girl and broke off the relationship. This beautiful “spiritual” girl seduced another man of God. Unfortunately, this man did not have a Roberts to warn him. He slept with her and she became pregnant. He was forced to marry her. He lost his testimony, calling and ministry. They later broke off and the girl is now off to seduce another man of God and will try to kill off his calling and ministry too.

The trouble is, many such women are not just outside the church _ they are inside the church as well. Sometimes I get so depressed and even angry when I see them given position and recognition in the churches. Many pastors are spiritually blind to this because they no longer have a strong river running inside them. They must have been drinking from man-made cisterns instead of from the Perennial Fountain.

Amnon, the first son of David was attacked by such a spirit. He took one look at his beautiful sister, Tamar; and that was it. He became so obsessed that he had to have her at once. In the days that followed, Amnon lost weight and turned pale because he could neither eat nor sleep. This is what obsession does to the obsessed.

Obsession is never of God. When a man becomes obsessed with a woman, the devil is just around the corner. Obsession was birthed in the garden of Eden when the devil pointed Eve to the fruit and spoke into her spirit. Eve became so obsessed with the fruit that she disobeyed even God and took it. We all know the story. The misery of the human race began with a woman obsessed with a fruit.

Such was the case of Amnon. He knew what he was doing was wrong, but he could not fight it. He plotted how he could rape his half-sister.

After sleeping with her, he became disgusted and kicked her out.

And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do anything to her...

And when she had brought them unto him to eat, he took hold of her, and said unto her, Come lie with me, my sister.

And she answered him, Nay my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel; do not thou this folly.

And I, whither shall I cause my shame to go? And as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray thee, speak unto the king; for he will not withhold me from thee.

Howbeit he would not hearken unto her voice: but, being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her.

Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her. And Amnon said unto her, Arise, be gone.

And she said unto him, There is no cause: this evil in sending me away is greater than the other that thou didst unto me. But he would not hearken unto her.

Then he called his servant that ministered unto him, and said, Put now this woman out from me, and bolt the door after her (2 Samuel 13:2, 11-17).

When I was ministering in a church in Brunei, a single lady in her 40s became frightened by this story because it fitted right into her situation. She told of how she had always admired a particular church deacon and

had wished to have him for her husband even after he was married. At the funeral of the deacon's wife, she heard 'the Lord' tell her that he was to be her husband now that his wife was gone. She waited three years, she hinted to the man what 'the Lord' had said, but the man did not respond. Instead, he began to court someone else.

She became so obsessed with him that she experienced difficulty breathing. When she came to my travelling companion for ministry, she was delivered from a spirit of lust. This woman had received such a demonic leading and had heard such a voice because she opened herself to it. She had been desperate for a husband and had been looking around for years for a man to turn up. Her driving desires and her lack of understanding of the scriptures made it easy for the enemy to deceive her.

Single ladies must be very careful in the area of hearing from the Lord concerning husbands because they so often hear from the wrong "Lord". Many ladies have fallen prey to lying and deceiving spirits because they have given in to their feelings. When a man or woman becomes self-willed, wanting to hear what he or she desires to hear, wanting to have what he or she desires to have and leaves no room for correction or advice, that person becomes an easy prey for lying spirits. The person is open to deception from the spirit world.

We see this in the life of Ahab, a wicked man who had no real desire for the truth. He did not want to hear what God had to say concerning whether or not he should go into battle. The selfish and wicked condition of his heart brought about the working of lying spirits which possessed the mouths of the prophets of Ahab to lure him into battle.

And the LORD said, Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one spake saying after this manner;

and another saying after that manner:

Then there came out a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will entice him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith?

And he said, I will go out, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the LORD said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do even so (2 Chronicles 18:19-21).

Even Micaiah, the true prophet of God, deliberately prophesied a lie to Ahab because he knew Ahab wanted to hear lies: “Go ahead, have the desire of your heart met, surely you will win the battle and have much spoil.” But Ahab knew that Micaiah was fooling around. He demanded to know the truth and Micaiah finally gave him the truth. Isn’t it strange that a man who knows the truth refuses to walk in it but walks instead according to the condition of his own heart and the lies of the false prophets? We know the ending of the story: Ahab perished in the battle.

It is very true that the condition of one’s heart and the disposition of one’s character colour one’s interpretation of things. Watch your heart!

Many single ladies who are desperate for marriage suddenly meet the man of their dreams and they lose their cool. They usually go into a process of fasting and praying (trying to manipulate God to give them the man?) or they will ask others to pray and agree with them over their “unspoken need.” After a little while, they seem to hear voices or receive signs that this is the right man (or woman for their lives). They may be in euphoria but unfortunately, the nightmare begins for the other person. The other person is relentlessly pursued by letters, personal confrontation, tears, threats, etc. Some ladies try to intimidate the man by claiming visions and signs and manipulate him by prayer _ witchcraft prayer. Watch out,

ladies! And watch out, men!

This is all the working of the flesh, not of God. You can become “chee-sin” (crazy) if you do not jam the brakes and repent of the false leadings. The Scriptures are clear in the area of a man and a woman coming (walking) together. There has to be a mutual attraction that births a mutual agreement. The rule is found in Amos 3:3 and Matthew 18:19.

Can two walk together, except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3).

Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven (Matthew 18:19).

Stop giving the other person a nightmare by your relentless pursuit. When he runs from you, it means that he does not agree to court you and does not want to have anything to do with you.

I know an eligible young pastor who has had six women propose to him. They included two lady pastors and one intercessor, all of whom were older than him, by six to nine years. All six ladies said that they had heard from God, with visions and signs to back up their claims. If this man had been vulnerable and had yielded, he would have had six wives!

We must be solemn and godly in matters like this. Too many marriages have ended up on the rocks because they were cemented, not by true agape love nor by God, but by lust, desperation and signs and wonders from lying spirits.

I am writing from my heart because I want to help single people. I have ministered to many “chee-sin” ladies who have been sadly misled. I have had ladies who, at 46 and 52 years of age, tell me that God spoke to them concerning marriage to young men in their churches who are just 27 and

35! How did the two young men respond? They both fled, not just from the women but also from the church.

Demons of lust are prevalent today, and are responsible for the downfall of many servants of God. If we do not learn how to be discerning and exclusive, we too may fall prey to these mean spirits. People who move in the deliverance ministry must be watchful. Men must build a strong inner life and have a good and open relationship with their wives. Ladies in the deliverance ministry should always minister in teams of twos and threes, making sure that their own lives are solid and clean. They must not have any driving, unfulfilled desires that they cannot expose to the light. Learning to be exclusive (knowing who to minister to or keep away from on a personal level) is important to both men and women ministers.

I want to conclude this section by reminding you that obsession is not from God. Scripture says that he that believeth shall not make haste (Isaiah 28:16). Love has the strength and the enduring power to wait like Jacob. Jacob waited seven years for the woman he loved. Even better still, be a Mary, Martha's sister.

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment (John 12:3).

What we need to understand is that an alabaster box of perfume is only broken over the head of one's bridegroom on the wedding night itself as a preparation for the consummation of the physical relationship between the bride and the groom. It takes a long time for a single girl to save enough money to buy such a costly perfume. Having bought one box, it was unlikely that she could afford to buy another in her lifetime unless her husband dies and she plans to marry again.

When Mary broke her alabaster box of perfume over Jesus, she was actually giving up her right to marry. She was sacrificing all her womanly desires and needs, husband and children. It was her supreme act of worship. No wonder Jesus said that everywhere the gospel is preached, what Mary did will be remembered.

Ladies, the only way to deal with your womanly needs and desires is to lay them down at His altar in a supreme act of worship and sacrifice. There is no other way to deal with it. Do not deny, repress or suppress your desires or you will find yourself in trouble in the days to come. To deny your needs is to be unreal and to deny your humanity. God's power and grace do not touch unreality. He will make us more like Jesus but not less human.

I have never forgotten hearing from someone who called herself an intercessor. Her open confession enlightened me. A woman who always tried to be super-duper spiritual (no lipstick, no nice clothes, no TV, no boyfriends) told me one day that she felt the urge to go to the motel where her married ex-boyfriend was and sleep with him. Just a week ago, she had told me that when she was saved, God had totally removed from her the desire for men and for marriage. Now, one week later, she shocked me with the confession of her sudden urge. One could see she had problems _ she had not changed, she only had her needs repressed, suppressed and denied. This was not spirituality; it was stupidity.

Ladies, be real with your needs. If it hurts to see others getting married, if you get weighed down because of family pressures or by your own needs, come into the presence of the Lord and cry if you must, then worship! Oh, how wonderful it is to worship when it hurts. That was what Job did. Job handled the shock of losing everything by getting on his knees to worship. Worship and lay yourself down on His altar, ask His consuming fire to consume you and all of those needs and negative feelings.

And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:

And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them:

And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

While he was yet speaking; there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:

And behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground and worshipped,

And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly (Job 1:13-22).

Most of us remember the story of Jephthah's daughter who became a "burnt offering" not out of her own free will but out of her father's haste and impulsiveness.

And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands.

Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.

So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD delivered them into his hands.

And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.

And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! Thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.

And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies,

even of the children of Ammon.

And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.

And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains.

And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel,

That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year (Judges 11:30-40).

Jephthah had promised that if God would deliver his enemies into his hands, he would offer the first person who greeted him upon his return home as a burnt offering to God. And who was the first person to greet him after his victory? His own daughter! (This is such a beautiful story, I wish you were here so I could preach it to you.)

When Jephthah was at a loss as to what to do, his own daughter comforted him and told him not to go back on his word. She said she was willing to be that burnt offering but first, she must get in touch with her feelings. She said, ‘Let this thing be done for me; let me alone for two months, that I may go up and down the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.’”

To become a burnt offering meant that she did not give herself in marriage to any man. It does not mean that she was literally offered as a human sacrifice to God, for God abhors such practices.

And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man (Judges 11:39).

How did Jephthah's daughter face her tragic loss and shame? She gave herself time to get in touch with her feelings. I believe that she cried all that she could. She must have had a fight over it way up in the mountains alone with God. To die as an unmarried woman without any children was the ultimate reproach in Old Testament days, yet this young girl received the strength to handle it by doing two things: she got in touch with her own feelings, and she got in touch with God. After the two months, she emerged victorious. She became that burnt offering. If it was going to be a reproach, she had the strength to bear it and live with it victoriously.

In the Old Testament, God had commanded that several types of offerings be given to Him. There was something very special about the burnt offering. It was in a class of its own. With every other type of offering, both God and the worshipper had a share of the offering. But not with the burnt offering: everything was burned to cinders. The worshipper received nothing because every part of the offering was consumed by the fire of the altar. God received everything. It was the ultimate offering (Leviticus 6:8-13).

Do you want to be a burnt offering and give Him everything? Do you want to worship God the way Mary did? I do! I definitely do. It hurt deeply, but I had gotten alone with God. Years ago, I had wrestled with Him and come away with victory. I could not worship this God, Who has loved me so unreservedly, with only my spiritual lingo, gestures, activities or songs. He had come to me and demanded a burnt offering. I had given it to Him as my supreme act of worship and sacrifice, and I am at peace because I know I have not withheld anything from Him.

I also have an inner witness that He will, in these last days, raise up many more single people who will also be willing to give up all, careers, marriage, children, to Him. I am very sure that this will happen. I will not be surprised if God, in His own sovereign will and time, reinstates the brotherhood and sisterhood of single people. I foresee this happening in the end time revival. It will be beautiful when God, and not man, does it.

Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power (Psalm 110:3).

Yes! Yes! In the end times, many will be willing to release everything to Him. Why? Because the revelation of Himself will bring such impact, reality and satisfaction into their beings, they will just want to. They will finally know that Jesus satisfies and brings completion.

Single ladies, do not be ashamed of your womanly needs and desires. One lady missionary friend kept asking me to pray for her so that she could overcome her ‘evil’ desire for a husband, a desire over which, she said, she had no victory. “I can cast out demons and break bondages off people; why can’t I cast this terrible desire out of myself?” she had written.

First and foremost, it is a natural, not an evil, desire. Secondly, it cannot ever be cast out. It has to be expressed, surrendered or given up in worship and sacrificed to God. It then becomes very meaningful as God will then teach us how to have it sublimated in active ministry to Him and to others.

I have taken the time to write on this subject as I want to minister to single ladies and single men. I have been asked to write different books for different needs. I cannot, because it is not easy to write a book. It is my prayer that needs will be met through all that is written here.

Ladies, do watch out and do not be unreal. Ananias and Sapphira were smitten dead, not because they did not give all their money to God, but because they were unreal. They pretended to have given all their money when in fact they had not. They were smitten dead because they were unreal which in Scripture is cited as lying against the Holy Spirit.

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things (Acts 5:1-5).

There are many single ladies who keep denying that they want boyfriends or marriage. "God has totally taken this desire out of my life. I don't have such carnal and worldly needs," they say. Before long, they are caught in fornication or even adultery. I have seen many such sad incidents during my 27 years of pastoral ministry.

In relating the story of Ananias and Sapphira, I am not suggesting that God will smite you dead. I am merely saying that His love and power cannot reach us if we are unreal. How can God move and help us if we do not even admit that the need is there? We are definitely doing both God and ourselves an injustice and giving the devil a foothold.

One of the reasons why some single ladies do not receive what they pray for may be because outwardly they deny with their mouths their need to get married while inwardly in their hearts, they are desperate. In the Christian life, we confess with the mouth what is in the heart. Should there be a disagreement between the heart and the mouth, we will not receive because we are being unreal.

In explaining this principle of exclusiveness, I have taken a lot of time to write on obsession, lying spirits and spirits of lust and unreality. I do this because I know that there are people who need help. There are marriages that can be saved and there are men who must be warned. There are men who have been hit by such spirits and they do not know how to deal with it. There are also ministers who must stay out of the deliverance ministry until they get back into a right and good relationship with their wives. There are also many single ladies and men who must stop intimidating men and women with their witchcraft prayers and visions. Remember God's principle for prayer and marriage is found in Matthew 18:19 and Amos 3:3.

May this portion of the book help you to get free and may you also pass the book on to someone else who needs to be informed.

2. Spiritual Intimacy And Communion

I have been told that nowhere in Scripture can we find Christians casting spirits out of one another. “Once they become Christians, I believe they automatically receive deliverance,” this lady said.

The early Christians did not pick up spirits as easily as we do now because they were serious Christians who had a strong river of Spirit-life running inside them. They believed in spiritual communion and intimacy with God and spent time in serious prayer daily. They were people who knew how to drink long and deep at the Living Fountain. That was why they had no problems with demons.

Unfortunately, most Christians today do not know how to “drink”, and any man who has a “drinking” problem will soon find himself fighting demons. Ministry today is dangerous because the emphasis is all on the outward _ the size of the church, the numbers, the performance, the buildings. Satan will be happy to give us these (and he can) provided he can keep us away from “The Drink”.

For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water (Jeremiah 2:13).

Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again. But whosoever drinketh of this water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life (John 4:53-54).

Intimacy and communion with God are so powerful and vital that when God was cut off from Jesus at the cross, Jesus ejaculated this heart-piercing cry, “I thirst!” I cannot believe that He cried out because of

physical thirst. If He could endure the excruciating pain of the cross, He could endure the physical thirst. When someone is dying in excruciating pain, he has no time to think of a drink. Jesus screamed, "I thirst" not because He was physically thirsty but because He felt a spiritual thirst when the flow of communication and intimacy with His Father was broken.

The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink (Matthew 27:44-48).

Only one other man in the Bible has cried about being thirsty: the lesser David.

My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? (Psalm 42:2).

O GOD, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is (Psalm 63:1).

I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land (Psalm 143:6).

David's cry of thirst was prophetic. It later found its fulfilment in the cry of our Lord Jesus Christ, the greater David. Friends, pastors and especially those who are in the forefront of ministry, knowing when to drink and how to drink of Him is important.

It is mandatory to come into His presence to drink long and deep and to release. I have worked with people who are so critical and full of accusations that they are really thorns in the flesh. If I had not known how to release in the presence of God, I would be a ruined person today and my ministry would have been ransacked _ which is just what the devil wants. There are good ministers of the Lord who are ruined today because they do not know how to release in the presence of God. They allow the accuser of the brethren to use people to sow wrong and hurting words into their spirits and they do not know how to come free. What we do not release will hurt us. Ministries are aborted and lives are ruined.

Friends, solve this “drinking” issue in your life and you will have no problems. Do what the Lord tells us to do: come into His presence and drink of Him _ drink long and drink deep. It is vital for our daily living and our daily serving.

God Himself can teach us how to drink, how to pray and how to commune with Him. The bride says in Song of Solomon 1:16, *Our bed is green*. The bed is always for intimacy and green has always stood for life and growth. What I understand from here is that intimacy with God can be developed and it must grow. As the years go by, we should be praying more, not less. However busy we may be in ministry, intimacy with God must never be neglected or substituted. The more we minister, the more we should pray. Our private life of intimacy with God must always exceed our public world of ministry. When we reverse the order, we get into trouble.

Ministry is only a working out of what God has already worked into our lives.

Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily (Colossians 1:29).

If we do not allow God to work into our lives, then either of three things will result: we will have nothing to work out; we will be copying someone else's working or we will work out of the flesh.

In times of communion and intimacy, God gives us His directives. As we walk accordingly, we can accomplish much in a very short time. Like the disciples, we only need to cast our nets where He tells us to cast them and *voila!* our nets overflow with fish.

And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes (John 21:6).

What is true in the physical realm is also true in the spiritual realm. Conception takes place in times of deep intimacy with the Lord. As we become intimate with Him, we begin to conceive His desires and His burdens. When we become one with Him, these desires and burdens are birthed as visions. There is no other way to conceive a lasting vision. I do not believe in catching a vision; I believe in having visions birthed into one's spirit and soul as one becomes intimate with the Lord.

Those who catch a vision from others easily lose it. Rain and storm will come to test that caught vision and wipe it out. But if we had birthed a vision into our spirits during times of intimacy with the Lord, our visions can never be aborted, come hell or high water.

It is important that we possess a vision as we serve the Lord because that vision will shape our life and our ministry, forming the messages we preach. My own life and ministry are shaped by the vision God gave me 28 years ago when I was a Bible School student.

Roberts Liardon has said that his vision is to build a strong church, a strong Bible school and to go to the nations of the world to produce strong warriors. Look at his life! For those of us who know him, there is no denying that this man's life is shaped, not by man, but by the vision that God had given him. Roberts Liardon started preaching when he was only 14 years old. Today, at 30, he is still preaching, and preaching strong. He is single-minded and consumed with the passion of the Holy Spirit. His life is a sign to the nations that a single young man can remain pure and holy, even in evil and compromising days like ours, when he is consumed by Jesus.

Bill Wilson was 19 years old when God birthed into him the vision to work with children. Today, after 25 years, he is still doing children's work. In fact, his ministry has gained so much strength and anointing that he has been invited to different nations to motivate churches and Christians to engage in child evangelism. Although he faced many difficulties, Bill Wilson's exploits for children were not aborted because the vision had been birthed into his spirit.

My personal vision is three-fold: to plant churches; to help birth a strong generation of men and women who will be standard-bearers and who will love God with an unadulterated love evidenced by personal holiness and a willingness to give up all; and to be a strong pure voice of God in times like these.

What is your vision, pastor? I am not talking about the vision of your church; I am talking about your life. If you do not have a vision, it means that you have not waited in the presence of God for one. If you still do not have one in the days to come, your ministry will go round in circles, because our personal vision affects our ministry.

There are pastors whose visions are birthed by the prophets who come along their way. Since they themselves have not waited long enough in the presence of God to hear from Him, they have to rely on prophets. As a result, their vision changes every few years because different prophets give them different visions! This often confuses their congregations.

No. No. No. This is not the way to minister. The way to minister effectively is first go into the chambers of the Bridegroom for intimacy with Him, then go into the banqueting hall for public ministry. This is what the bride says in Song of Solomon 1: 4 and 2:4. Do not change the order or you will lose out in ministry.

The King hath brought me into his chambers (Song of Solomon 1:4).

He brought me to the banqueting house (Song of Solomon 2:4).

The Indians have a proverb which says, "Do not dance in public without first dancing in private." Good advice. Do not enter into any public ministry without first receiving ministry for yourself in His chambers. Intimacy with God puts a cutting edge into your spiritual discernment and perception.

Anna, the widow who spent much time in spiritual intimacy and fasting in the presence of God in the temple in Jerusalem, could immediately discern and perceive that the baby that nestled in the arms of Mary was the promised Messiah of Israel. Thousands of babies must have been presented to the priest in that temple year in and year out. Anna was able to discern and perceive that that one baby who came in on that special day was the promised Son of God. She was "spot on" in her discernment.

And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore

and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem (Luke 2:36-38).

Nehemiah was raised up by God during some very dark days in Israel to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. It takes someone with a strong prophetic and apostolic anointing to spearhead the rebuilding of the walls, which actually represent the standard of God. Nehemiah's ministry was both prophetic and apostolic _ he laid the foundation and the walls of something that had been broken down _ old Israel. It was a tough job which no ordinary priest could do.

Nehemiah faced hindrances, threats and harassment from a satanic trinity embodied in the persons of Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem, but he triumphed. One major factor that contributed to his triumph was his ability to perceive, both the evil lurking in the hearts of the men who were close to him (*Nehemiah 6:14, 13:7*) and the purposes in the heart and mind of God, even in his darkest hour.

My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophets, that would have put me in fear (Nehemiah 6:14).

And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God (Nehemiah 13:7).

When a string of false prophets arose to intimidate him to stop the work and go into hiding, he rejected their false counsel and prophecies because he could perceive or discern that they were not from God.

Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after

the same manner.

Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand;

Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words.

And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together.

Then I sent unto him, saying, There are so such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.

For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from their work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.

Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee (Nehemiah 6:4-10).

When Nehemiah finally returned to Jerusalem after taking a long leave of absence, he could again perceive that not everything was all right with the priesthood and he went about setting it right. No one had told him, but he perceived with an “inward knowing” of such things from within himself. Inward knowing is birthed through spiritual intimacy with God.

And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled everyone to his field (Nehemiah 13:10).

The enemies of Nehemiah tried all ways and means to hinder his work and ministry, but they could not. Nehemiah prevailed and finished what God wanted him to do. None of his attempts to build was aborted because this man could “put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean” (*Leviticus 10:10*). In other words, Nehemiah had Holy Ghost discernment and perception. This was needed to keep God’s work intact and up to His standard. May we have many more Nehemiahs in our days.

Many today cannot wait to be in the banqueting hall. They want public attention and the limelight. Before long, their ministries are aborted. When we violate this principle of first developing spiritual intimacy with God, we cannot last long in ministry. We get burnt out, stressed out, tired out, or worst of all, we have nothing to say behind the pulpit. Many pastors preach from books and tapes; otherwise, they have nothing to preach. Men who have no messages behind the pulpit tell story after story, then try to cover themselves up by saying, “The Lord did not give me a message.” No. No. The truth is: you did not wait long enough to hear from Him.

Pastors, learn to hear from God yourself. You must hear from Him and not rely on prophets alone. Some prophets, such as in the days of Jeremiah, are not trustworthy and are prophesying vain and deceitful things out of their own hearts (*Jeremiah 23:16*). Instead of helping you to get closer to God and encouraging you to set your mind on things above, these so-called prophets do the exact opposite.

You may come under bondage when you believe in their prophecies because you would have set your heart on what they said. For example, you may find yourself becoming dissatisfied with your house and your car and begin coveting after a bigger house and a more sophisticated car because the prophet had said, “Thus saith the Lord; I will give you a bigger car and a mansion.” Or, you may lust after expensive jewellery and beautiful clothes because the ‘man of God’ prophesied, “God will give you exquisite jewellery and beautiful clothes.” I know of people who have borrowed money to buy expensive articles, believing that God will give them money to pay their creditors.

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Harken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out the mouth of the Lord (Jeremiah 23 :16).

Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart (Jeremiah 14;14).

But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings (Jeremiah 23:22).

Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do not tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness (Jeremiah 23:32).

Do not change your direction just because of what the prophets say. You must confirm every prophecy within your own heart. There are some quacks in the ministry and we should be able to discern them. Hear from God. Hear from God yourself.

The prophet Isaiah lamented that in the end times, seven women will take hold of one man for the purpose of being called by his name so that their reproach of singleness will be removed.

And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach (Isaiah 4:1).

These people are not interested in intimacy. They only want to have their reproach taken away. This is a picture of many Christians today. Like the seven women who only want the reproach of singleness to be taken away, such Christians are interested only in having the reproach of sin with its guilt and condemnation removed. They only want the forgiveness and the love of God. They do not want spiritual discipline and they are not interested in His spiritual bread (“we wear our own apparel”) because they believe they can go to heaven as they are, in their own filthy rags of self and carnality. What a deception.

Let the true bride of Jesus arise and be intimate with Him! Let us learn to build a strong river on the inside. Let us be so one with Him that we can hear His heartbeat. The man and the woman who can hear the heartbeat of the Lord will not be misled or intimidated by the many so-called prophets of today.

We do not have to copy one another’s ministry or be pressurised to perform or produce. On the contrary, we must build a strong river on our inside, so strong that it must overflow and transform the landscape wherever we are. We owe this to a dying world.

Discipline yourself to pray and to worship. If you get sleepy each time you try to get into this spiritual discipline, take authority over the spirit of drowsiness and stupor. Hold ice in your hands, pace up and down your

room, slap your own face but stay awake! Do not give up. Let there be a beginning of your being able to pray one hour in one sitting daily. Then, work on from that hour and stay on longer as the days go by.

As a freshman in Bible School, I used to put my hands on the cold rails along the balcony of the ladies' dormitory in order to stay awake so that I could pray for an hour. The three years I was in Bible School, I met with God every morning at 5 am and every evening at 5 pm.

I remember His presence came down one cold morning and He told me that He would give me an above average ministry. He said that He would give me the ability to “root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant” (*Jeremiah 1:10*). In these 27 years of ministry, after planting 8 churches, birthing a caring home and a Bible school, I have seen God working out in my life and ministry exactly what He had said. The stage for my ministry was actually set in those times of intimacy with God while I was in Bible School.

Bible school students who have so much to catch up with in their studies that they have no time to pray for one or two hours a day had better leave Bible School because they are defeated even before they begin. It's so sad to see so many Bible School students not knowing how to pray or how to fast. It's equally sad to see this in some of their lecturers. Many have doctorates and degrees but they still do not know how to fight in the realm of the spirit. May God send a revival into our Bible Schools all over the world! It must begin there because those are the ‘factories’ that ‘manufacture’ the ‘products’.

Years ago, I came under a very severe physical attack from the enemy. My body broke out in painful sores and boils. I decided to visit the doctor and have my condition checked out as the sores and boils were multiplying very rapidly. The first doctor took one look at me and grimaced. He

refused to touch me and told me to go to a specialist. The specialist hardly dared to touch me. He then told me I had venereal disease! He looked at me and said, “You have syphilis and herpes.” I told him not to treat me and left the clinic.

I refused treatment because I knew that it was a counterfeit disease. The devil can bring counterfeit symptoms of any sickness and disease upon your body. Remember, Pharaoh’s magicians were able to perform the miracles that Moses did but they were only counterfeits (*Exodus 7:10-12*). I had no fear because I had not, and never had, misbehaved morally. I went into warfare prayer and knew that the devil had to lay off my body sooner or later because it was too holy for him to work on for long. In a matter of weeks, my skin cleared up. What would have happened if I had not learned how to fight off spirits?

And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent.

Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.

For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods (Exodus 7:10-12).

During my first eight to ten years in Sabah, I had been very harassed physically, mentally and emotionally. (One particular attack left me, alone and paralysed, for five hours, in the parsonage one afternoon in Tawau.) In all these situations, I kept my presence of mind because I knew that they were all demonic harassments. The attack could not prevail because the enemy had no grounds to hold me. I knew I was in

right standing with God. My times of intimacy and communion with God gave me the strength and faith to see me through those difficult times. Otherwise, I would have been “knocked off” a long time ago.

Pastors, friends, do not substitute your times of intimacy with Him with anything else. One major reason why the Lamb’s people cannot take on the Lamb’s spirit and nature is because they have missed out on intimacy with Him. The Bible clearly teaches that in times of intimacy with Him, we become one spirit with our Lord, just as in the physical realm, the husband and the wife become one flesh.

But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17).

When His spirit joins with our spirit, we not only become one spirit with Him, but we are to also take on His spirit and manifest it. Possessing the Lamb’s spirit means we do not fight back. We take the wrong, we release, relinquish and leave it in the almighty hands of God. We do not fight it out on earth, because records are kept up in heaven, not on earth.

It is rare to see Christians refrain from fighting back. Most of the time, we see Christians challenging and confronting one another like Rambos and Samurais. It is easy and natural to fight back. When someone does not, it shows that the Lamb’s spirit has been deposited and that times of intimacy have taken place between this person and the Lord.

Friends, let it be. Do not fight back. Pastors, let it go. If someone has lied about you cheating on church funds because you bought a new house, let it go. Fighting back will make it worse. If someone had said that you lied about having planted this church or that church, let it go. There is no need to prove whether you have or not. If someone has formed a conspiracy behind your back, which erupted into a mutiny and a subsequent church split, let it go. Lambs do not know how to fight back; they only know

how to die.

Because this generation of Christians does not know how to die to self, church splits, fights, slander, gossip and defilement have resulted. Oh, that we may take on the Lamb's nature and the Lamb's spirit.

Help us, O God, to be intimate with You. Help us not to desire to build mega churches or to cover more mission fields or move into signs and wonders. Help us to stop performing or producing because we want to catch up with others. Just help us to be intimate with everything that is birthed out of intimacy with You. In times to come, You may bring others in, to build upon it, expand it and even do a better job than us, but then You and I will always know who the real father or mother of the work is.

Pastors, take heart. Let it all go if it must. Remember also that we cannot bring anything with us as we enter into eternity. If you must build, build intimacy with Him, for he or she who is in intimacy with Him will always be 'pregnant' with something new!

Yes, yes, yes! Spiritual intimacy with God is vital to longevity and effectiveness in ministry. We have no choice in this matter because we are not given one. We are to be in intimacy and communion with Him before we engage in any active ministry. Remember the bride's declaration that she was first brought into the private chambers of the king before she was brought out into the banqueting hall.

3. God-Consciousness

God-consciousness is another principle which we must not violate in ministry. The bride was forever Bridegroom-conscious. She saw, felt, smelt and heard Him all the time. *A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me...My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire (Song of Solomon 1:13-14).*

Myrrh and camphire are both powerful fragrances which prick the nose. Later on, in chapter 2:8-9, the bride saw, heard and felt the Bridegroom both indoors and outdoors. In fact, she saw him everywhere.

The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills; My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.

The next moment, she sings in 2:14:

O my dove, that art in the clefts behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.

Then she sings in 2:16:

He feedeth among the lilies.

Did you realise that everywhere this lady went, she was conscious of her lover, her Bridegroom? Are you just as conscious of your heavenly Bridegroom?

Bridegroom-consciousness or God-consciousness is especially important when you are in the deliverance ministry. Some workers in the deliverance ministry are so demon-conscious, they can no longer be normal. They have become weird. I do not like being near them because they see, smell, hear and feel demons everywhere. They cannot appreciate a lovely piece of carpet, a painting or a vase without conjecturing a demon hiding inside. If they slip and fall, knock down a cola drink or get a traffic ticket for speeding, it's all the devil's fault. They are so super-spiritual, they can even eat chicken rice and rebuke the devil at the same time, cucumber

seeds flying out of their mouths and into your face!

I have always told people that all I have is the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues. With this experience, the Word of God and by His grace, I have prevailed in 27 years of ministry, pastoring and planting churches, raising up workers, birthing a caring home and a school. I do not visibly shake or jerk with power; neither do I see visions every month nor dream dreams every week. I do not hear voices here and there.

Many, however, act spiritual out of fear and pride. Fearing rejection, they hope that their “put-on” spirituality with its many visions and dreams will earn them some respect and acceptance. Sad to say, most of them are women who live abnormally but give their lives a spiritual tag.

God is not a waster. In the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus commanded that all the remnants of broken bread and fish be gathered and put to good use. He who does not waste food remnants will not waste His power.

There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes, but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten (John 6:9-13).

He does not deposit His power into you so that you can have a good time shaking and jerking. If there really is an anointing, a power within, go out and do something with it. Do not shake or jerk; grab hold of someone who is sick and say, “In Jesus’ Name, be healed!” If it is genuine power from above, healing will flow. Start an intercession group, plant a church

or go to the mission field with all that power _ don't waste it jerking or shaking.

Please do not misunderstand me. I know people who truly jerk or shake when the anointing comes. Some people's hands shake when they minister but these are people whom we know are not putting on an act because they have productive and credible ministries to back up their claims of power.

God does not waste His dreams and visions. If all of your dreams and visions are from above, why haven't you moved anywhere spiritually? Where are the fruits of your ministry? Jesus Christ penetrated into our world and He lived naturally and normally. He was the Son of God Who wanted to live a normal life among us. Why then do some people want to live so abnormally and unnaturally yet call it "spiritual"? The most spiritual people are in fact the most normal and natural. Jesus proved it. We know that demons and the presence of evil exist but there is definitely no need for us to advertise it and give the devil the publicity he craves for. We are to celebrate the presence of the Lord, not that of the devil. Give Jesus the publicity and the devil the boot. If we are always sensing demons, perhaps we ourselves need some ministry of deliverance. There is no reason why we should always be seeing, hearing or smelling them. Like the bride in the Song of Solomon, we should be always seeing, hearing, feeling and smelling the presence of the Bridegroom. Amen.

Even though we may sense an evil presence, the mature among us need only to rebuke it and command it to go without advertising the evil presence and putting fear in everybody else's heart.

Once when ministering in a certain church, I was put in a bedroom where there was a strong demonic presence. As soon as I went in (I hadn't even put my bags down), I felt the presence coming at me. Instantly, I

developed a headache. I shut the door immediately and went into warfare tongues. Although I wanted to call one of my travelling companions to spend the night with me, I didn't. I thought I had better fight through it myself because I may not have a travelling companion the next time.

The next day, while we were in the car, the pastor asked me, "Were you alright last night? Could you sleep? Did anything happen?" I replied that everything was alright. Then he said, "Why did God wake me up at around 4 am and speak these words 'Pastor Susan and the bedroom' into my heart?"

When he said that, I knew the Lord had wanted him to pray for me. He asked me several times if there was something wrong with the bedroom. I did not tell him because there were other people in the van. I did not want to generate fear. The following day, as I boarded a taxi to leave, I told him and thanked him for praying for me.

When I first came to Sabah 15 years ago, I had to fight many spirits. I have never forgotten hearing some of these spirits cry when I was up in an airplane. I did not panic for the Lord told me that they were crying because they were losing their territories to the Kingdom of God. I learnt to build up the sense of God-consciousness both within and around myself wherever I am. In this way, I fear no demons, neither will I misbehave in the dark when there is no human eye on me.

Today, many men and women misbehave in private because they do not have a sense of God-consciousness. There are very few "Josephs" today who flee sin because of their sense of God-consciousness. Joseph knew that God was watching even though he himself could not see Him.

And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; There

is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out (Genesis 39:7-12).

When men and women lose the sense of God-consciousness, they deviate, and deviated some of us have. This is why it is so easy for some people to keep sinning, then carry on as though nothing has happened. This is what angers God. One of God's rebukes given through the prophet Jeremiah to the nation of Israel goes like this: *Were they ashamed when they had committed abominations? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord (Jeremiah 6: 15; 8:12).*

How horribly low Israel had sunk! They were so deep in sin, they did not even know how to blush or be ashamed. They were beyond conviction of sin. As a result, God declared:

Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous. There is none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up: thou hast no healing medicines (Jeremiah 30:12-13).

No healing medicines? What was God saying? That even though He was God, He could not find any healing medicine for a group of people who had deviated so much that they could no longer blush or feel shame for their sins. In other words, God has no healing medicine for those who have no conviction of sin. Therefore He said, "Thy bruise is incurable." Do you mean that even God could not cure the bruises of the nation?

Yes. Does this frighten you? It frightens me. It frightens the daylight out of me when God starts to talk like this: 1. that He has no remedy (2 Chronicles 36:16); 2. that He can give up on people (Romans 1:24, 26, 28); 3. **that He will not even permit prayer to be made on their behalf** (Jeremiah 7:16; 14:11); 4. that He will not answer (1 Samuel 28:6); and 5. that there is no deliverance (Judges 10:13). We know the history of this stiff-necked nation who only wanted the grace of God but refused to live by His discipline. Since they rejected God's discipline and oft repeated plea for repentance, He raised up the Babylonians to deal with them. This nation was so chastised that by the time God was through with them, this is what the nation looked like: *As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch (Amos 3:12).*

Well, that's not much left _ only two legs and a piece of an ear from the whole animal. How many of us want to look like this after God is through with us? That was God's judgement on people who had no conviction of sin _ they could not blush, they did not know how to be ashamed.

I have known cases of so-called anointed worship leaders committing fornication over and over again with no real repentance, only regret. I know of a lady who was staying with somebody's husband and she led the tambourine dance team in her church. I know of pastors who read pornography and commit adultery every few years, of church deacons who visit prostitutes and of yet others who have affairs with their secretaries and then tell them to go for abortions.

All these are people actively serving in church – preaching, teaching, counselling and laying hands on people. This is a tragedy. What type of counsel can they give to others and what type of covering are they spreading over others?

The Station of Life once had as a student, a white South African, who had been a mercenary. He wasted his life through many vices – smoking, drinking, womanizing. He told us the sad story of why he stayed away from church after he was saved.

“When I walked into the church the first Sunday morning after I was saved, I was shocked to find some buddies that I had gone drinking and womanizing with, serving as leaders in that church.”The church today is known as the new Israel and we should learn a lesson from old Israel, God’s chosen one. God shows us that when deviation gives way to hardness of heart and hardness to deception, the person’s salvation is over.

And it came to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven (Deuteronomy 29:19-20).

Many city churches today have programmes that are no longer Jesus or God-centred. Their activities, programmes, seminars, music and songs have crowded Him right out. Although many of these give the people some form of refreshing and uplifting, there is no real lasting change in their lives. Many leave the services as lustful as when they came. Others remain bound by the spirit of covetousness, withholding the wages of their employees for months or owing others and not settling their debts. Or, they may continue to bad-mouth others with their jealous gossiping and slandering. Everyone has a good time at the service with its beautiful music and the anointed prophetic singing, but they leave unchanged.

Those in illicit affairs carry on in them.

Something is terribly wrong with our worship. WHEN OUR SPIRITUAL WORSHIP OF GOD DOES NOT CHANGE OUR MORAL CHARACTER, something is wrong. Watch out! THE HAND OF JUDGEMENT MAY JUST BE AROUND THE CORNER. God-consciousness, God-consciousness. Where is it today in the lives of some believers; where is it in our churches? It is because God-consciousness is missing that sin is so prevalent. No meeting is considered good unless it has brought people into a right standing with God. This, in fact, is the job of a prophet and the purpose of prophetic meetings. People should not just gather to have a good time of worship; they must be brought into a right standing with God. Otherwise, we would have worshipped in vain. God wants us to be in right standing with Him so that judgement will be averted. See how great is the love of God. So many of our prophetic meetings are not doing the job of getting God's people to come back into a right standing with Him.

What some prophetic meetings do is to cause people to become vain and self-elated with the promise of more diamonds, money, apartments, rich friends, new cars, better houses and a greater anointing. A greater anointing to do what? To preach and teach strongly and boldly so that people will repent and get back into a right standing with God? Or prophesy about cars and money and better houses? We have so many prophets today but the standard of God is still lacking.

What is wrong? Many prophets have not done their job. As in the days of Jeremiah, they speak out of covetous hearts and copy words of prophecy from one another (Jeremiah 23:26, 30).

How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart (Jeremiah 23:

26). *Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour (Jeremiah 23:30).* Thank God for the coming of the Apostolic Movement. I believe that apostles or those with a strong apostolic anointing will not fail the Lord. I believe the Apostolic Movement will be a movement of very strong preaching and teaching of the pure unadulterated Word of God.

I believe men and woman who are called to be apostles will possess a very powerful “word” anointing. Like the early apostles, their sole concentration will be the authoritative delivery of the pure Word of God and intercessory prayer (Acts 6:4). *But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*

The early apostles were able to teach and preach the Word with such a sense of authority and anointing that fear, awe, God-consciousness, deep conviction and order came into the lives of those who heard them. They could cause this to happen because God Himself, as never before, was standing by them with signs and wonders in this endtime revival.

The Apostolic Movement will definitely re-establish the standard of God and usher in the great return of our Lover, our Bridegroom, our King, our All in All. The bride cried out in the Song (8:14), *Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or a young hart upon the mountain of spices.* Yes. Yes! Together, we also cry, *Even so, Come, Lord Jesus!* (Revelation 22:20).

The 1st Demand

RISE UP!

In the last eight years, I have heard many prophets call upon both churches and individual Christians to rise up. This is God's message for all of us right now.

Church, it is time to rise up and take our rightful position in the Lord, to repossess all that we have lost through our complacency and disobedience.

Where was the bride and what was she doing when the Bridegroom demanded, "Rise up"? She was seated under an apple tree, enjoying both its fruits and its shade. She was also seated in the banqueting hall enjoying its festivities and the warm embrace of the Bridegroom.

As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me (Song of Solomon 2:3-6).

All this speaks to us of the comfortable spiritual zone that we all get into when we are newly saved. God, in His goodness and for a brief season, allows us the joy of being shaded under the apple tree, the joy of feasting at the banqueting table or being held tightly in His warm embrace. But after a season, it is time to come out of that comfortable spiritual zone, to rise up and to move on. The sad thing is that most Christians refuse to come out of that comfortable zone.

The bride definitely had the ability to rise up; otherwise the Bridegroom would not have demanded it of her. What she lacked was knowledge of the timing. The Bridegroom knew the time, the bride did not. So He told her to rise up and then to “come away” with Him (*Song of Solomon 2:10-13*). She was not aware of when to rise up, but it was alright. He told her. She was not to question, but yield and do as He said. She was to come out of her comfortable spiritual zone quickly and do His bidding. To linger behind and disobey would cost her everything.

It is important for us not to miss our spiritual timing. David fell into sin because he missed his timing. He should not have been where he was then. We are told that it was the time for kings to go to war but David became lazy and lingered behind. He missed his timing.

He became restless (we always experience restlessness when we miss God’s timing) and paced the rooftop of his palace. That was when he saw Bathsheba bathing in the open. Bathsheba had thought that all the men in Israel, including the king, had gone to war.

The primary reason why David fell was this: he missed his timing. He should have gone to war like the rest of the kings and nothing would have happened; there was no Bathsheba in the battlefield.

And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king’s house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself, and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.

And David sent and inquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?

And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her, for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house (2 Samuel 11:1-4).

It is dangerous for us to miss God's timing for our lives. When we do, frustration and restlessness set in. Our churches are full of people who have missed God's timing for their lives. Frustrated and restless, they tell the pastor how to run the church, which mission field to go to or how to preach. They try to live their calling and vision through another person. Let me give you an example.

An elderly Chinese couple had been giving their pastor a hard time by pressuring him to plant a church in India. However, the pastor had no directive from God to do this. The couple were even willing to sell their own house to support the work if only someone would go but no one in that church had the calling.

They subsequently left to become members in another church where they again began pressuring the pastor there to do something about the perishing millions in India.

This couple had missed God's timing for their own lives and they were now trying to live out their calling through the lives of other people. They had been called by God to India when they were young but had refused to do so as they were raising a young family. They had kept postponing their response until, at 68 years of age, they were now both too frail for the mission field. They had not, however, forgotten their call and had been miserable and full of guilt for a great part of their lives. The easiest way for them to get rid of their guilt was to get someone else to go in

their place.

Many who give the pastor problems in the church today have missed God's timing for themselves. Their frustration and restlessness show up through their complaints, the murmuring and the contentions that they stir up in the church. Some should have become pastors, church planters or missionaries but they did not have the courage or the commitment to obey the call. They missed God's timing and settled down to become businessmen, engineers, bankers, teachers, housewives, etc. However, they remain in church and try to live their calling through the pastor by telling him what to do. Contention, frustration and strife always breed in the hearts of those who have missed God's timing.

Sleep should have refreshed David. It did not. He got up from his bed to pace the roof of his palace, and then his eye caught sight of Bathsheba bathing. We all know the rest of the story.

Friends, do not miss God's timing. The Bridegroom has come and He calls out to us to rise up _ we must heed His bidding. Let us rise up before it is too late.

When the Bridegroom tells us to rise up, He is urgently telling us to:

1. Rise up to achieve our full potential in Him
2. Rise up and come out of all our selfish indulgences
3. Rise up and break free from all worldly conformity
4. Rise up and be a standard-bearer

1. RISE UP TO ACHIEVE OUR FULL POTENTIAL IN HIM

The book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus Christ, as our supreme high priest, can save us to the uttermost (*Hebrews 7:25*). This means that He can save us *and* cause us to reach our fullest potential in Him. He is a poor God if He just saves us so that we can all be church members only.

We see the work of this great high priest in the lives of Mary Magdalene, Peter and Paul.

Mary Magdalene, I believe, was a promiscuous woman. She was not just saved, but saved to reach her potential _ she became a preacher. Jesus committed to her the most powerful message of Christianity: “He is risen!” From a promiscuous woman to a preacher _ wow! How many such women are saved to become preachers today? So many are still so full of self-pity, bitterness, lusts and their old lifestyles.

Mary Magdalene also had demons in her. What did Jesus do? He saved her, then cast out seven demons from her. We can be sure that one of them must have been a spirit of lust because she had violated the sexual laws of God by sleeping with many strange men.

After Jesus had dealt with her, Mary Magdalene was never the same again; she was clean and pure. For the rest of her life, she followed Jesus, with no ulterior motives other than to serve Him and be a blessing to Him. She loved the Lord dearly and the Lord loved her dearly; there was neither lust nor any ulterior motive between them.

Men and women saved by our blessed Saviour can love one another dearly and help one another in ministry with no ulterior motives. Sad to say, I find very little of this today. On the other hand, I have come across

many women who usually have an ulterior motive when they help their pastors or other men in ministry: to hook the man!

Mary Magdalene had no such motives neither did she have any “remnants” of her old lifestyle left in her. If she did, Jesus Christ would have discerned it and not allowed her to be a member of His ministry team. It is important for men and women to remain pure when serving the Lord together as a team. If you, as a man or woman, detect anything impure coming from one of your co-workers, stop it by either fleeing or letting your senior pastor know. Remain pure.

The apostle Peter, in the earlier years of his relationship with Jesus, was a double-faced little pebble with a double standard. But he finally reached his potential: he became a mighty evangelist and a solid pillar of the church. The little pebble turned into a rock and was no longer vacillating or double-faced with a double standard.

Today, many who have been saved for umpteen years still remain double-faced with a double standard. They are still shaky and vacillating, little pebbles kicked about by every strange doctrine. Are you like this? It's time that you rise and reach your potential.

The apostle Paul, the proud and self-righteous man who possessed a murderous temper, was saved to reach his potential. It took a lot of suffering but he reached God's potential for his life. Paul at the beginning of his relationship with the Lord, recognised that there was a mark, a potential for him to reach. This is why he was able to write:

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13-14).

From being a waster and a persecutor of the church of Jesus Christ, Paul became a devoted follower and a martyr for the Lord.

Yes, Jesus Christ saved men and women to reach their potential. Have you reached your potential? Or are you still bound by your old lifestyle?

My prayer for you is that God will help you to quickly appropriate the resurrection power of Jesus Christ and come free. Remember that the great source of energy and force that set Jesus free from death and hell and established Him in the highest heaven is at your disposal, for your use to help you in reaching your potential for Him. This great source of energy is at work in you. Be conscious of it and meditate on it.

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand at the heavenly places, Far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all (Ephesians 1:19-23).

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you (Romans 8:11).

The greatest attainment of the bride is her ability to reflect the Bridegroom to the world. The Bible says that when the Bridegroom comes, He will find this Bride outwardly and inwardly looking exactly like Himself.

Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2).

To be like Jesus simply means to be mentally clean, emotionally pure and stable (purity in heart breeds stability), spiritually passionate in our relationship with God, socially kind and loving, and physically detached from things (i.e., not forming any cleaving relationship with the things on earth). This was the way that Jesus lived when He was on earth and this is the way we should live. When He comes for us, His bride, we must be like Him mentally, emotionally, spiritually, socially and physically.

Church, we have the potential to live as Jesus lived! We do not have to be bogged down by unclean mental thoughts or lust after people or things. We do not have to be rude and insensitive just because we are busy. We do not have to be spiritually dried up because of the influence of the world. We do not have to cleave to things as we, like Jesus, have the power to live detached from them whether it is a house, a church you have birthed, an article you have written or a building you have raised up. Whatever it is, the one who loves Jesus must stay physically detached from things.

Once we start cleaving to anything or anyone, we have become what God calls idolatrous. The prophet Jeremiah was given an explicit lesson on how to cleave to the Lord (*Jeremiah 13*). God told him that we are all made to cleave to only one thing: God Himself.

For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the Lord; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory; but they would not hear (Jeremiah 13:11).

When Moses stood in the presence of the new generation of Israelites who would make it into the promised land, he made it known to them that the reason they were still alive and chosen to enter in was because they knew how to cleave to the Lord.

But ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God are alive every one of you this day (Deuteronomy 4:4).

So, rise up to reach your potential in the Bridegroom. Reflect Him wherever you are, home, school, office or workplace.

2. RISE UP AND COME OUT OF ALL OUR SELFISH INDULGENCES

The human nature indulges. We may not like to admit it but we all indulge, be it in golf, wrestling matches on TV, facials, boutiques, etc. If we are not careful, the indulgence may soon become a besetting sin that will immobilise us for effective service.

Much as God loves us, wants to give us His best and use us to the maximum, He cannot do so unless we are willing to rise up from all our indulgences. Like the prodigal son, we must say, “I will arise and go.” Much as this man’s father loved him, he could not and did not descend into the pigpen to get his son. We must remember that much as God loves us, He can only go so far for us and no further.

We see this happening in the life of Moses. God told Moses that He would give him more revelation of Himself but Moses had to climb up to where He was. God would not go down to where Moses was. Moses had to climb up to Him. Had Moses refused to meet this condition, he would not have received more of God. Read the last chapter of Deuteronomy.

We all want more of God, don’t we? But we can never get more of Him if we refuse to rise up and come out of our selfish indulgences. It may be the TV, video games, our favourite sport, hours spent on facials, or cooking, or sewing. If these things take up more of us than time spent in His Presence or with the Bible, we will not be at all sharp and effective in our ministry for Him.

When we serve God, resources are very important. We must have resources on the inside and the only way to build up these resources in our spirit is to spend time worshipping Him from our inward being. Jesus told the Samaritan prostitute, “Worship the Father in spirit and in truth“

(John 4:23-24).

Why? Because she did not have any inner resources and was spiritually bankrupt. When you are spiritually bankrupt, you are thirsty and driven. She was indeed thirsty; so thirsty that she had to go from man to man to try to satisfy that thirst. To such a woman, Jesus said, “Worship the Father in spirit and in truth” i.e. worship Him in your inward being, for this will build resources on your inside and you will no longer thirst.

We cannot worship Him from our inward being when we spend a mere 10-15 minutes a day in fellowship with Him. We need hours, and I mean hours. At the Station of Life, our students are taught to pray for at least an hour daily and to spend hours waiting in His Presence, with the Bible.

In Song of Solomon 8:13, the bride said, “Cause me to hear thy voice.” She realised the need to hear from the Bridegroom. An inability to hear from Him would be detrimental to their relationship and to her life.

Men and women who serve Him but do not hear from Him will sooner or later become ineffective or “knocked off” in their ministry. They will end up walking around in circles with no focus at all in their own life or ministry. We already have many such people today. Just because someone has opened a Bible college does not mean that God wants us to open one too. Just because someone makes ten trips to China a year does not mean that God wants us to do the same. Just because someone has started a kindergarten and is making good money for the church does not mean that God wants us to do so too.

We must not forget what happened to the thousands of Egyptians who tried to cross the Red Sea when God parted the waters for the nation of Israel and the nation of Israel only. The waves that bent backwards for the Israelites bent forward for the Egyptians. We know the story. All of the

Egyptians drowned. That which produces life for one may produce death for another when God is not there. Let us all learn this good lesson.

And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians.

And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily; so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

And the Lord said to Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.

And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea (Exodus 14:21-27).

Notice the bride said, "Cause me to hear thy voice." She means, "Make me, at all costs, to hear from you." If you desperately want to hear from

the Lord, make time for Him to talk to you. Often it is not that God does not speak; the problem is that we cannot discern His voice because we are not used to conversing or communicating with Him. If you have constant contact or communion with someone, you can recognise that person's voice very easily. The trouble with Christians today is that they cannot even recognise the Shepherd's voice. Why? Because they hardly spend time talking and listening to Him.

If hours are needed for building a relationship with Him and learning to hear His voice, we have no time for indulgences. Whatever they are, they just have to go. We have to let them go; otherwise, we cannot have more of God.

Solomon lost out with God because he indulged in various things. Whatever it was that he had, he had them in excess: horses, chariots, gold, silver, servants and even wives. Solomon's indulgences finally turned his heart away from God.

But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites;

Of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods. Solomon clave unto these in love.

And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart.

For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.

For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father.

Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.

And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.

And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice,

And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he kept not that which the Lord commanded.

Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant (1 Kings 11:1-11).

Indulgences are not limited to the physical or tangible; there can also be emotional or mental indulgences. The prophet Samuel was indulging in his grief for Saul when God said, “How long will thou mourn for Saul? (It has been long enough). Fill thine horn with oil and go” (1 Samuel 16:1).

Are you like Moses, for ages going round and round the “mountain” i.e., indulging in a familiar routine and refusing to make the needed changes to move on? In Deuteronomy 1:6-7, we see God reprimanding Moses,

“Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount (aren’t you sick of it, Moses?) Turn you, and take your journey and go.”

I know of many who have indulged in their griefs, failures, disappointments, hurts, fears, etc., and refused to rise up and move on. Still others keep to their old lifestyles, sticking to the familiar and traditional way of doing things, facing dead ends but refusing to change.

God is teaching you to move out now _ it has been long enough! Do not spend the next five to ten years walking round the same circle. Rise up and stop indulging in these things.

3. RISE UP AND BREAK FREE FROM ALL WORLDLY CONFORMITY

God cannot use any man or woman whose mind has not been transformed by the Word. Many Christians today possess a born-again spirit but not a born-again mind. We will be limited in our influence and our witness when we think and talk like the world.

Paul told us in Romans 12 that the human mind can actually be transformed through the process of renewal. The Greek word for “renew” (“anakainosis”) means “renovation”. Renovation involves a pulling down of the old and a putting up of the new. A building that is much renovated will finally be wholly transformed, so much so that we would not be able to recognise it as being the same building.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Romans 12:1-2).

This is what we should do with our minds: renovate it with the Word of God, much prayer and the pulling down of everything that is opposed to what God says. Allow your mind to be so renovated that it is finally transformed to the extent that people would not be able to recognise you as being the same person.

God can do it if we allow Him to. He did this with a man called Jacob. That man was so transformed by God that he became Israel. God gave him a new name because even God acknowledged the change.

And He said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed (Genesis 32:28).

The nation of Israel kept repeating the same sin over and over again because there was no change in the mind of that nation. They were constantly influenced by their neighbours to conform to ungodly ways. One lesson God had wanted them to learn (but which they never did) was to have complete trust in Him, not in their horses, chariots and soldiers and not in help from godless neighbouring countries when beset by their enemies. God wanted the Israelites to trust in Him Who is the invisible God. They did not.

Even today, many of us refuse to trust in Him. Many only feel secure in the visible and the tangible: a good, solid bank account, houses, apartments, a husband and plenty of children.

Do not many Christians today still say to the singles, “If you don’t get married, who is going to take care of you when you are old?” Or they say to the marrieds, “You must have children; otherwise, there will be no one to take care of you when you are old.”

This is why so many single ladies are still not free in their hearts to serve the Lord. Both Christians and non-Christians apply the pressure on them to marry. Many singles have also wrongly associated security and safety with marriage, children and a home. No, no! Security and safety are always found in the Presence of the Lord, not in the tangible or the visible.

The world teaches us to project self, to assert self and to build up our self-image if we want to make it to the top. But Jesus teaches us to die to self! How many percent of the Christians of today have obeyed the Word of

the Lord? The vast majority still do not know how to die to themselves. If we do, we would not have problems with one another within the church and with the people in the world. Christians have conformed to the thinking of the world rather than listened to the Lord.

A pastor once told me, “You are a fool to give up the church you had pioneered without a fight. I would never do it.” I know he will never do it, because he cannot do it. People who live for the tangible will die for the tangible. I want to live for the Lord, the intangible and the invisible; thus, it was easy for me to give up the church and to give it up without a fight. Why must we fight on earth over churches, ministries etc., when we know that records are kept up in heaven? Rewards, too, are given in heaven and not on earth.

Those of us who are in the ministry must learn not to live for the ministry, or for buildings, or for accomplishments, but for the Lord. When we live for the Lord and have no cleaving relationships with anything on earth, it is always easy to give up things. I hate fights because they produce blood, hurt, sweat and ‘corpses.’

Without strife and contention, Isaac willingly gave up the wells which he had dug. He was not the one who had picked a quarrel with anyone; it was his enemies who had initiated the whole thing because they lusted after his wells. Isaac settled the problems by moving away and digging another well and yet another well. What an excellent spirit!

He or she who has a “well-digging” ministry need not fight over a well because he or she can always move on and dig another well somewhere else. It is those who do not have the anointing to dig wells who want to fight and take over someone else’s well.

Friends, we must stop fighting over wells, churches, buildings, money

and people. Move on and dig another well if you have the anointing and if you genuinely have a “well-digging” ministry. Fighting produces corpses and, most likely, you may end up being one. Read Isaac’s story in Genesis 26.

And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham; and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.

And Isaac’s servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water.

And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac’s herdmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek, because they strove with him.

And they digged another well, and strove for that also: And he called the name of it Sitnah.

And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not; and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land (Genesis 26:18-22).

People in the world fight to gain ascendancy over one another. We too fight in the same way. Have we therefore not conformed to the world? Conformity to the world has indeed robbed the church of her power, passion and effectiveness in the Lord. We have dissipated too much of our precious strength by putting it into the wrong areas and by caring for the wrong things.

Thank God that there is such a thing as the dealings of God in our lives.

Thank God that He does not leave us alone. Tenderly or ruthlessly, He deals with us so that we will be jolted out of our foolish worldly conformity and, once again, look to Him as a trusting little child. Friends, let us once again be children to our heavenly Father Who loves us so dearly.

Let us allow Him to deal with us, for His dealings will alter our inward state forever. For this reason, David prayed, “Deal abundantly with me, O God”, and God did so by driving him into adversity. It was this very adversity that drove David to God. This was how he developed depth and matured into a man after God’s own heart.

Let us open our lives to the dealings of God and have Him burn out the dross so that only that which is real gold will remain in us.

4. RISE UP AND BE A STANDARD-BEARER

The greatest cry of the Spirit and the most urgent need today is for us to rise up and be God's standard-bearers. Standard-bearers are people who know that they have not been predestined to be great mountain movers, earth-shaking evangelists, pastors of mega-churches or great prophets or apostles. They only know that they have been predestined to conform to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is to be our standard and our supreme model because He was God's standard-bearer to the world. This was what the apostle Paul taught in Romans. Let us look carefully at these verses:

For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified (i.e., make like Jesus) (Romans 8:29-30).

Conforming to the image of Jesus Christ should be the acme of all teaching on salvation. It is, in fact, the ultimate object of our salvation _ being brought to the heights where we will be like Jesus and be God's standard-bearers. Unfortunately, most of us in church and in ministry have lost sight of this great and ultimate goal. We would rather be a great evangelist, an influential pastor, a mountain-mover, etc., but fail to conform to His image and be a standard-bearer.

God has a standard and He does everything in relationship to His standard. We see from the history of the Jews that for 490 years, from the days of King Solomon to the prophet Jeremiah, Israel departed from the standard of God, but God remained patient. Over and over again, the command to set up His standard was repeated in the book of Jeremiah.

When His people continued to reject His standard, God later gave them over to the standard of their despised enemies, the Babylonians.

Today, God is still crying out for standard-bearers, for men and women who know what the ultimate goal of their salvation is. Without any argument, we know that the goal is to be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. This is something that God had already planned in eternity past; it has been predestined. Isn't this wonderful? We are not predestined to be great evangelists, pastors, teachers, prophets or apostles, etc, we are predestined to be conformed to His image, to be like Jesus!

We have many evangelists, prophets, pastors, etc. but not many are standard-bearers. We see little of the reflection of Jesus in their lives. Mental holiness and emotional purity do not shine through; their mouths and appetites give them away. Spiritual passion is missing and the social graces of being kind, thoughtful and sensitive to the needs of others are not there. Physically, they are attached to things and do not seem to be able to function without the best hotels, their favourite foods, the best cars or their favourite microphone.

Over the past 27 years, I have been host to many, many ministers and I know what I am talking about. It is very painful to watch a minister of the gospel behaving like a Hollywood celebrity. I wonder why God's people love to take on the image of the rich and powerful, which is basically the image of the world. The Bible recognises only one image _ the image of Jesus Christ. In these 27 years of ministry, I have realised that the less reality and the less self-worth a person has on the inside, the more he tries to work on his image on the outside.

This often reminds me of the subtle story that Jotham, the son of Gideon, told of the lust and wickedness of Abimelech.

Abimelech, the son of Gideon's concubine, had lusted to become the head or chieftain of Shechem, just as so many today lust to become the senior pastor or an elder in the church. Not wanting any competition, Abimelech had gone to Ophrah where his seventy brothers were and killed them all. Unfortunately for him, the youngest son, Jotham escaped. One day, out of spite and a desire to expose Abimelech, Jotham stood on top of Mount Gerizim and lifted up his voice to tell this interesting story of the four trees.

And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: not withstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, for he hid himself.

And all the men of Shechem, gathered together; and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem.

And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you (Judges 9: 5-7).

The story that Jotham told went like this: One day, all the trees in the forest came together to elect for themselves a king. They decided to crown the olive tree but unfortunately, Jotham said, the olive tree refused the invitation because it was secure and happy in its sense of self-worth. It knew the purpose for its existence and was perfectly happy being an olive tree; it did not want kingship or headship. The olive tree said of itself, "Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" (Judges 9:9).

Since the olive tree rejected the promotion or the chance to be the head, the choice fell on the fig tree, then on the vine. Surprisingly, both also refused the invitation.

The fig tree said of itself, “Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?” (*Judges 9:11*).

The vine also gave its reason as to why it rejected the offer to be the head or king: “Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?” (*Judges 9:13*).

These majestic trees rejected the opportunity of being the head because they already possessed something precious within themselves. They had their own sense of self-worth and they knew the purpose for their existence. Therefore, they did not lust for anything else.

The principle here is important. Men and women who possess a sense of self-worth, who know that they have the reality of God, who are walking in His perfect will and are perfectly at rest within themselves do not lust for headship in life. They will not fight or scheme to be the senior pastor, the elder, the soloist, the concert director, etc. They are not interested in building an image for themselves. Like the olive tree, the fig tree and the vine, they know their own worth and they are secure where the Lord has placed them.

This is why spiritual intimacy and communion with God are so important, for in intimacy and communion, we are made to realise our sense of worth and security in Him. It is surely those who are nothing in themselves who fight for headship and kingship, (“I must be senior pastor, the main worship leader, the head of this department, etc.”) and who seek to build an image, title or position. It is so true that the fuller the corn stalks, the lower they hang down because the weight of the grain within pulls them

low. Empty stalks are blown away by the wind because they have nothing within to hold them down.

Jotham's story develops. Since the three trees had rejected the opportunity to be king, the rest of the trees had no choice but to turn to the bramble, a worthless dry bush that should be thrown into the fire. The bramble quickly grabbed the opportunity to become the head and even threatened the rest of the trees if it was not made the head or king quickly enough. Shocking, but true.

And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon (Judges 9:15).

The bramble wanted to reign over the rest of the trees because it had neither a sense of self-worth nor a purpose for its existence. This speaks of people with unproductive lives or ministries who want image, title and position. Our churches are full of such people! People with no personal power always lust for image, title and position whereas people with personal power often shun it.

This is why it is not surprising to see people leave a church when they do not get into a leadership position or when they do not get elected again after having held leadership for years.

Abimelech went all the way out to get his own followers, including using bribery (*Judges 9:4*). It is interesting how God turned the situation around in the end. The men who were once for Abimelech later turned against him.

Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech (Judges 9:23).

Read the whole story in Judges chapter 9 and let the fear of God fill your heart. This story taught me a lot of things and caused me to do a lot of soul-searching. The most powerful lesson is this: if I truly possess self-worth in the Lord, if I am really living a productive life and having a productive ministry and yes, if I truly possess the reality of God, then I do not need to covet image, title or position. I need not fight to keep anything or be anything.

The olive tree, the fig tree and the vine have self-worth. They lead very productive lives in themselves and have a sense of purpose for their existence. Thus, they were not interested in building an image _ they rejected the kingship. May you do the same: walk close to God, soak yourself in the Word and develop a powerful sense of observation. You will then increase in your fatness (like the olive tree), grow in your sweetness and good fruit (like the fig tree) and increase in your wine (like the vine).

I was reading about the life of Jacob one day when God showed me something powerful about this man. When he lost all his image, God gave him power _ and not only power, but power and depth. This is what we need today: men and women with power and depth.

After working on Jacob for many years through both tender and hard dealings, God finally presented him before Pharaoh, the epitome of worldly dignity, status and power. By then, Jacob had absolutely no image. Standing before Pharaoh, he could have looked old and Pharaoh asked him how old he was. Jacob replied that he was not very old but that his days had been very difficult; he had suffered much and that was why he looked the way he did.

And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou?

And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage (Genesis 47:8-9).

How did Jacob look when he stood in front of Pharaoh? He was shrunken and weak, grey-haired and wrinkled, partially blind and, worst of all, he could not even walk properly. Protocol requires that one walks properly in the presence of a king – Jacob could not even do that. The world may be ashamed of him, as he limped his way so weakly towards Pharaoh, but not God. Jacob was God's masterpiece. God had taken this very poor piece of self-centred, conniving human material and had wrought an excellent work with it. Now He was ready to present him before Pharaoh.

After a short conversation with Pharaoh, (watch what Jacob did), Jacob stretched out his aged hand probably shrunk and shaking, and blessed Pharaoh, the mighty king of Egypt who had just become his benefactor. Without Pharaoh, Jacob and his entire family would have perished in the famine.

Jacob's act of blessing Pharaoh is shocking because only the greater can bless the lesser (*Hebrews 7:7*). Even though Jacob had no image, no food, no water and had to depend on the mighty Pharaoh for his living, he still knew on the inside of himself that he was the greater. Hallelujah!

Yes, this old man, in all probability with weakened eye sight, and walking with a limp, knew on the inside of himself that, in spite of the way he looked on the outside and in spite of his negative circumstances, he was still greater than the mighty Pharaoh.

Such was also the case with the apostle Paul. We can truly say that here

was another of God's masterpieces. God spent a lot of time working on Paul but it was worth all His effort. What did Paul say about himself and what did he finally become? Hear him declare: "Christ shall be magnified in my body i.e., Jesus is seen blazing through my life" (*Philippians 1:20*) and "we are more than conquerors!" (*Romans 8:37*).

Paul had no worldly image; he just bore the marks and the image of Jesus Christ. He was a standard-bearer. He did not start off immediately as one; he became one as he submitted to the dealings of God in his life. And God dealt with Paul more than with any other man I know of in the New Testament. These dealings left the indelible and precious mark of His Son in Paul's life.

For I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus (Galatians 6:17).

Like Paul, Jacob had been dealt with by the Almighty God. They were very painful dealings, so painful that they took a physical toll on him. He lacked image but Jacob had the power and the depth of the knowledge of God. That was why he was not easily intimidated by Pharaoh, his benefactor, and all the splendour and riches of Egypt.

Men and women who have been dealt with by God and who possess His power and depth are not easily intimidated by the world or by anyone, including rich or powerful Pharaohs. Deep inside, they know that they are the greater even though they do not possess an outward image.

Many people in ministry today work on their image but unfortunately, do not possess power and have no depth. Let us be a Jacob with power and depth on the inside rather than merely possess a false image on the outside, for there are evil days ahead of us and we will be put through the test.

The ministry today is full of image-makers who focus their lives on

building gigantic, sophisticated complexes, halls, etc., for their churches. They purchase expensive “toys” for their churches and give the excuse that God must have the best. They must catch up with the world by buying the most expensive computers, latest machines, sound systems, chairs, carpets, etc. If all these are purchased with money inherited from their grandparents, it is perfectly all right but no, most of the time, it is church money. I believe that God would rather have us spend the money to feed the poor, give to missions or plant churches.

I once visited a pastor in his office. Pointing to his table and chair, he said, “These are made of rosewood. The chair costs five hundred dollars and the table costs about eight hundred dollars. Both items are imported.”

They were, of course, paid for by his church. And how large was his church? It had less than thirty members, half of them poor tribal people. What was the young pastor doing? Trying to build an image.

I am sure that there are many others out there doing the same thing. Stop building an image. If you must build one, build the image of Jesus Christ for this is the only image that the Bible allows.

Yes, there has been deviation in our Christian beliefs. Like the nation of Israel, we do not want to depart from the living God, but find it so hard to live up to His standard. So, what do we do? We lower His standard and we deviate. We do not want to deny Him, so we dethrone Him. Ask yourself whether this is true. Many of us have done this in our hearts and it has definitely shown in our lifestyles.

All the telltale signs are in our churches: the way many Christian women dress and misbehave in the presence of men; the abounding cases of fornication and adultery involving even pastors with their secretaries; the way some men behave themselves during the worship services

_constantly driven to look at their watches, fidgeting with their hand phones, eager to catch up with the news on the stock market. All these show that many of us have deviated. Our hearts are not even in the service or in the worship of God on a Sunday morning.

There is not much difference between such worshippers and those in the nation of Israel during the days of Amos. In those days, the people who worshipped at the temple of God were all the time saying:

When will the new moon be gone that we may sell corn? And the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? (Amos 8:5).

These people were in the temple worshipping God, but see what was going on in their minds! No wonder God rejected their worship and all their religious activities. There was no “heart” in them.

Oh, how we need standard-bearers today. Praise God, they will come with the birth of the Apostolic Movement. God will raise up a breed of strong and bold preachers right across this nation and all over the world to proclaim His unadulterated Word. There will be no compromise, for apostolic preaching is preaching with no compromise. Apostolic preaching will lead us right back into the basics of the pure Word of God.

It will discover the secret sins and the iniquities of the people. They will shake and tremble when the pure Word of God is proclaimed with sharpness and power to reveal sin and deception. I saw this happen as I once watched an apostle preach and I believe that it will happen more and more in the days to come with the rise of the Apostolic Movement.

Let us rise up to be standard-bearers! It is not a hard thing, seeing that God has given us His power. I had earlier written about the excellency,

the supremacy and the all-consuming power that He has given to us. Let us not lose sight of what this power can do.

Our hearts may be carnal and wormish, our natural faculties all dislocated, our temperaments cold and hard, our nature may be languid and our spirit defiled, but when we are willing to open ourselves to His great consuming resurrection power, to this energy, this force, it will come into our lives to totally vivify, purify, sanctify and transform us. Amen.

Deviate not from the teaching of Romans 8 which says that we are predestined to be conformed to His image and to be His standard-bearers. Rise up, Church, rise up, for this is your true destiny! Yes, your true destiny is to rise up and be the standard-bearers of our great King. Do not be an image-maker, for he who loves God is a standard-bearer, but he who loves the world is an image-maker.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world (1 John 2:15-16).

The 2nd Demand

COME AWAY!

- A. Be Separate
- B. Let Go of the Past
- C. Be Willing to Lose It All

A. BE SEPARATE

The Bridegroom has His reason as to why this “coming away” is so important in the development of His relationship with the bride. He knows that she could never truly go His way if she does not learn to first “come away” as He had commanded.

If there is no separation from the familiar relationships or things which tie us down, if there is no letting go of all the painful and hurtful experiences of the past, if we are not willing to lose everything in order to gain Him, we cannot go the way of the Bridegroom. We cannot soar with Him to the heavenly heights to which He has called us.

The way of the Bridegroom is not easy. It involves “leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills” (*Song of Solomon 2:8*).

The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills (Song of Solomon 2:8).

It also involves scaling over mountain tops and going into lions’ dens and the mountain of leopards.

Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards (Song of Solomon 4:8).

When I came to Sabah 15 years ago, I did not know that I would be led into lions' dens and the mountains of leopards. There were demons to fight, principalities and territorial spirits to reckon with. I had graduated from a good Bible School but unfortunately, I had not been taught how to fight demons. It was like being drafted into an army that taught you everything except how to fight your enemy. It is indeed a miracle so many of us survive in ministry.

Yes, it is dangerous to soar into the heavenlies, to scale the mountain tops, to leap over mountains and skip over hills and to go into lions' dens and the mountains of leopards _ that is why the Bridegroom demands that we be unencumbered and unentangled. I am so thankful that God in His mercy has kept me away from marriage _ my vision and my calling demand that I be free from entanglements, especially because I am determined to go all the way with the Bridegroom.

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (2 Timothy 2:4).

To “come away” involves a separation; a coming away from all that is familiar to us, whether they are things or people. It is interesting to know that every time God wants to do a thorough work in us or when He wants us to do a thorough work for Him, He wants us separated.

We see this in the life of Abraham. God had to separate him from all that was familiar to him before He could use him for Himself. The demands which God made of Abraham are recorded in Genesis chapter 12.

Get thee out of thy country, get thee out from thy kindred, get thee out

from thy father's house (Genesis 12:1).

See how strong the language of God is. See how strong His demands were: "Get thee out, get thee out and get thee out." It sounds as if God is saying, "Get out, get out and get out!" That is God. His language is always strong and, at times, even provocative.

One of the major reasons why people cannot rise and get hold of the deeper things of God is that they are too well cloistered within their family surroundings. Many students at the Station of Life have told me, "There is absolutely no way I can fast in my own home. My parents will make noise when I do not eat." Or, "My wife nags and calls me a fanatic when I fast and pray for more than an hour."

Personally speaking, there is no way I can be where I am today spiritually if God had not brought me to Sabah. He had to separate me, shut me off from everybody, so that I would not be influenced by wrong people or wrong teaching. He needed to do a thorough work in me. Those were lonely years when I had no one but God to turn to.

The same thing had happened to Jacob. Twice, God came to Jacob to make him aware of Himself when he was separated from all that was familiar to him. The first time, Jacob was in Haran running away from his brother who wanted to kill him. That night, God came to him in a dream (*Genesis 28*). The second time, he was at Jabbok. The Scriptures say, "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him (*Genesis 32:24*).

God waited until Jacob was alone before He dealt with him (wrestled with him) and gave him the greatest experience in his life, an experience that transformed him from "Jacob" to "Israel." It was an experience and a transformation so great that even God Himself acknowledged the

change in Jacob by giving him a new name.

Why are you so afraid of being alone? Why are you so afraid of solitude? It is when we are alone that we hear His voice and receive His directives. The night hours have always been very important to me because most of His directives have come to me in the silence of the night.

To come away from all that is familiar to us can be quite frightening and traumatic. The human nature shuns it but it is the price that we must pay if we want to go the way of the Bridegroom. A certain amount of pain can be involved when we uproot ourselves from the familiar, the regular and the routine in order to walk on new ground. Our sense of self-preservation has to be set aside and we must learn to trust Him implicitly if we want a deeper work of grace to be done in our lives.

A little boy camping with his father on a mountain top one night turned to his father and asked, “Daddy, how come God is so real in this place? I can feel Him here, but not at home.” His wise father laughed and replied, “Tommy, God seems more real up here because you are more aware of Him. You have nothing to distract you since you have left the things you know behind.”

Back home, Tommy had difficulty feeling God because there were too many distractions. How could he become God-conscious when his friends, football, TV, video games, the computer, his school programmes and other activities demanded his attention?

B. LET GO OF THE PAST

To come away certainly means having to let go. There is so much that we must let go if we want to go the way of the Bridegroom. We need to let go of the good and the bad, all past successes and all the failures. The apostle Paul summed it all up in this declaration:

...this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind... I press toward the mark... (Philippians 3:13,14).

How can we go the way of the Bridegroom and serve the Lord if we do not let go of the past? This is especially important for those of us in active and full-time ministry because the ministry is a battlefield. Many who have been wounded in the ministry find it hard to forgive and to release. They just cannot let go.

Ministering to mankind, Jesus Christ Himself experienced the ultimate pain, rejection, humiliation and hurt, culminating at the cross where He was crucified in open shame. Three days after the trauma of His crucifixion, two of his disciples were still talking about the horrors of the experience. They were running away from the place of bad memories (Jerusalem) and were journeying to Emmaus when Jesus suddenly appeared to them (*Luke 24:13-19*).

“What are you talking about?” Jesus inquired. They seized the opportunity to tell Jesus of the horrible story of His own sufferings and crucifixion. They then asked, “Haven’t you heard these things?”

Instantly, Jesus replied, “What things?” Imagine Jesus making such a reply. It meant that He had forgotten all about it, He had let it all go, He had released the past. Hallelujah! Jesus was willing and able to let it all go. He was willing to release the past and move on.

What a happy day it is when a man or a woman is able to let go. May the Lord help you to understand and release the past. Let it all go so that you can go the way of the Bridegroom. God wants us free of all hurts and bitterness because we cannot minister out of a hurting or bitter heart.

Years ago, God raised up a lady, with whom I was rather close. She had a genuine ministry of deliverance and healing. It was really powerful and sometimes awesome as I watched her minister. Unfortunately, as the years went by, her ministry was hindered in its influence and power because she could not let go of the past. She was ministering out of a hurting heart and always getting into trouble with people because of the things that she would say. She often counselled younger women to stay away from men because, she said, singlehood is wonderful. However, singlehood is only wonderful when God wants you to be single.

In the past, her life had been messed up by a man who had promised to marry her but when it came time for the wedding, he pulled out, not once but six times. Eventually, he left. Her life was torn to shreds. By God's grace, she was born again and later developed a very powerful deliverance and healing ministry. However, she did not go far and she could not soar high enough because she was still nursing a deep hurt and she was ministering out of that hurting heart. Her own hurtful experiences became her main point of reference every time she counselled women or men. We cannot be effective if we do not let go of the past, especially when it is painful or bitter.

C. BE WILLING TO LOSE IT ALL

Jesus made it very clear in Mark 8:34, 35 that the criteria for following Him is to deny self, take up the cross and be devoted to Him with no private agenda for self. If we understand this divine summons to deny all, we will have no problem fulfilling the divine demand that we “come away.”

It is not difficult to realize that the accomplishments, the success, honour and blessings of Abraham rested on the fact that he was willing to lose it all, to give up all, including his one and only son in his old age.

Gandhi was a man with a passion for the teachings of Jesus Christ but unfortunately, he did not become a Christian. He could not because he realized that the white people who came to India to preach Jesus did not live like Him. He was himself so convicted by the teachings of Christ that he decided to put them into practice.

He renounced everything and vowed that he would fight his enemies with love and not violence. For years, he walked the streets of India and begged for food. He turned his left cheek to his enemies when he was slapped on the right. Most of the time, he looked tired and worn out. He owned nothing but by the time he died, millions thronged his funeral. The rich and the popular, the mighty and the renowned, dignitaries, kings and queens came from all over the world.

What was the secret to Gandhi’s success and popularity? He was willing to lose it all.

Wasn’t this true of our Lord? He was willing to lose it all, including His own life. He literally denied all, becoming poor so that we might be rich.

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich,

yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).

In the end, He gained back everything, with interest.

He was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing (Revelation 5:12).

All these came only after He had been willing to be slain, willing to lose even His right to live. Yes, our Lord's supremacy and glory rest on this basis: He was willing to lose it all.

Throughout the centuries, men and women have tried all ways and means to obtain power and riches _ fighting, cheating, manipulating, etc. God teaches us that the way to power and riches is through being willing to lose.

Are you willing to lose it all? Whether you like it or not, able or not able, the demand of the Bridegroom is sounding out loud and clear, "Come away! Come away from it all!" If you do not yield to this demand, you will never **SOAR**; you will never have the joy of feeding on the heritage of Jacob in high places.

Jesus taught us that the kingdom of heaven is likened to a merchant who, when he finally found a pearl of great worth, was willing to sell all that he had so that he could purchase that one pearl.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it (Matthew 13:45-46).

We Christians have found that one pearl of great worth. Are we now willing to sell all that we have, willing to lose it all, to give up all,

including marriage, career and children (if He so requires) in order to gain this Pearl of great worth? It would have been utter foolishness for the merchant to merely rejoice over that great pearl, wanting to possess it yet not willing to sell all that he had in order to raise the money to buy it. Many Christians are like this. They know they have found it _ Jesus, our Pearl of great value _ yet they are not willing to lose it all for Him. To be indecisive is the worst situation to be in.

I remember spending the three years in Bible School pleading with God, every morning at 5 am, to release me from full-time ministry. I had no desire for full-time ministry as my ambition was to be a fashion designer or an interior decorator. Every evening at 5 pm, I would plead with God to change me if He would not release me from ministry so that I could serve Him with a free heart and mind and not be indecisive.

I knew that if I were to serve Him, there would be no turning back. I also knew that what I do for Him must be done not only with my whole heart but also with my kidneys, liver, intestines, etc. If I were to serve Him, I wanted to do so with passion, intensity and the totality of my being. I would not serve Him and keep one eye open for a husband or daydream of a family of my own. No. No. To be divided in this way would not do for me.

Many ladies in ministry today are divided. They are unproductive because the ministries that they are in right now are just something to hold them up temporarily while they wait for Mr Right to pop up. I have raised up lady workers and I have had many different ladies working under me all these years. I have come to one conclusion: it is easier to raise up men than ladies!

The world trusts in its knowledge, scientific advancements, doctorates and degrees in education. I am afraid that this has also affected many

in ministry. We go after degrees and doctorates but do not know what faith and prayer are anymore. We have become mentally swollen and spiritually shrunken. Today, instead of doing what the apostle Paul did, willing to lose everything for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, we can be tempted to do the exact opposite. If a balance could be struck, it would be beautiful. It is not easy to find someone who can pursue his studies and still find time to spend in the presence of God (but thank God we do have such people).

I remember the kind gesture of Professor John Williams some years ago. He told me that every year, his institute in New York confers an honorary doctorate on people who are truly worthy recipients. One such recipient had been Charles Doss who had composed the popular song, "He is my everything." The professor invited me to Kenya in September of that year for the conferment of a doctorate in recognition of my works and accomplishments. I remember praying about it and instantly hearing an answer from the Lord.

"Everything that has happened in your life and ministry is just a result of the demonstration of the power of My Spirit." That was all. I was not told to go or not to go _ I was told only the truth of why I had succeeded _ it was a demonstration of His Spirit's power. Now, how could I go and be conferred with a doctorate if all that I had done had nothing to do with me?

I couldn't, I shouldn't and I didn't. The next morning, I thanked the professor, told him that I was deeply honoured but I would not be going to Kenya for the conferment. That should have settled the matter.

Unfortunately, a few weeks later, my carnal self played up and said, "It was a fool's decision to reject the doctorate. The blessing and reward of the Lord came and you did not even know how to enjoy it."

I decided to call up a friend and shared this with him. He told me, “Walk far away from it, Susan. Be happy that you have been honoured but lay down that doctorate. Come away from it _ be willing to lose it. You don’t need it to prove anything. Jesus in you is all-sufficient. You made the right choice in letting it go.”

A lady with her own doctorate told me, “You should have gone for it. Times are changing. When you go overseas for ministry, people will not listen to you if you do not have a doctorate.”

How sad. Not for me, but for them. If people will only come and hear me because I have a doctorate, they are the wrong group of people for me. I have no intention of ministering to such people. I want to minister to those whose hearts are in the right place, wanting more of God. I do not want to waste time speaking to anyone whose sense of value lies not in the things of the Spirit but in a degree or a doctorate.

More than one person has asked me whether I regret losing that doctorate. Definitely not! I have not missed anything. My ministry is just as fruitful and effective. The doctorate would never have made my ministry effective but it would have affected me if I had taken it up _ it would have made me vain.

Please do not get me wrong. I am not against doctorates and degrees or the conferment of titles. I am merely saying that we must know where and how to draw the line. Study is good and every minister should be doing his own on-going study of the Word. Only watch out that you do not study until your head swells and your spirit shrinks, until you see a demon in the face but call it a “complex” or a bad habit and do not know how to deal with it.

“Look from the top,” says the Bridegroom to His bride. Yes, look from

the top and let us get God's perspective on the whole picture. What does He say?

Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgement and righteousness, in the earth: for these things I delight, saith the Lord (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

Yes, may God soon raise up a generation of men and women right across this nation who will be willing to lose it all, whatever it may be. May they be standard-bearers who will both understand and know the Lord: that God is a God who relishes the exercising of lovingkindness, judgement and righteousness.

The 3rd Demand

COME WITH ME!

The third cry and demand of the Bridegroom is actually a demand for relationship. It is followed by the fourth demand, “Look from the top.” It is only when we have a relationship with the Bridegroom that we can look at things from the top, from His perspective and His viewpoint. In fact, these two demands come together in the same verse:

Come with me...look from the top (Song of Solomon 4:8).

God wants a relationship. He wants to be related to us, not to our works, ministries, churches, programmes, music or activities. God wants to be related to us and He wants us to be related to Him. We can actually go through life in church and not be related to God. That is why a person cannot and does not change for the whole lifetime that he or she is in church.

When God brought the nation of Israel out of the land of Egypt, He wanted them to know something very important concerning their salvation. As far as Israel was concerned, they saw their salvation only in terms of coming out of one place and going into another: leaving Egypt, the land of bondage and going to Canaan, the land of freedom.

BUT THIS WAS NOT THE WAY GOD SAW IT. GOD SAW THEIR SALVATION NOT AS COMING OUT OF ONE PLACE AND GOING INTO ANOTHER BUT AS COMING OUT OF ONE PLACE, THE PLACE OF BONDAGE, AND GOING INTO HIMSELF.

He had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt for only one reason: **FOR HIMSELF.** He spoke vividly of this:

Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel (Exodus 19:4-6).

Notice that the words “unto myself” appear three times in these verses. What is God trying to say? He is saying, “ I want you, I want you, I want you!” Amen.

What a tremendous privilege! How high and lofty a destiny. It is more than tongue can tell that God would go through so much just to bring this group of people out of Egypt for Himself. However, because Israel as a nation did not and could not see this, they did not know how to appreciate and hold onto their high calling.

It is the same today. Many of us who are saved think that we are saved only to go to heaven. We see our salvation as coming out of the world and going into heaven _ out of one place and going to another. NO. NO. NO. You will miss it all if you look at your salvation like this. You will never be able to truly live up to your true destiny if this is the way you look at your salvation.

**WE ARE SAVED, NOT FOR HEAVEN; WE ARE SAVED FOR HIM.
AND WE GO TO HEAVEN BECAUSE HE WANTS US WITH HIM!**

When Jesus comes, He is not interested in just getting you into heaven, His priority is to get you FOR HIMSELF. Let us read John 14:3:

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

The book of Titus tells us the same thing, exhorting us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts and live soberly, righteously and godly NOT FOR THE SAKE OF GOING TO HEAVEN BUT FOR HIM. Christ's purpose in redeeming and purifying us is not to prepare us for heaven _ IT IS FOR HIMSELF! How wonderful!

Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify UNTO HIMSELF a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Titus 2:14).

This is why the bride cries out:

His desire is toward me (Song of Solomon 7:10).

More than once, the bride cries, "I am His," "He is mine" and "His desire is toward me." Friend, do you know that His desire is toward you and that you are the object of His love? In salvation, He came for you. Out of the many millions, the Holy Spirit came to work in your heart and to reconcile you to Him because He wanted you!

If He has chosen you out of so many millions of people FOR A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM, my prayer for you is that you will, from this day forward, look at your salvation like this: THAT GOD, OUT OF SO MANY MILLIONS, HAS CHOSEN YOU FOR HIMSELF BECAUSE HE WANTS A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU.

He does not want you to have a relationship with the church, the pastor, the mission field, the ministry, the activities, etc. before Him. He wants you to relate to Him first, then these other things will fall into their own proper order.

In these 27 years of ministry, everything that I have done in my life, the pastoring, the pioneering and the birthing of things, I have always done

out of a love relationship with Him. There was no way that I could have carried on if I did not have a love relationship with Him.

I had been so bold as to come to Sabah alone 15 years ago because He had directed me to. I dared to brave it all alone, pioneering, pastoring, struggling with hardly any money, in ill health and not wanting people to know, because of my love relationship with Him, not because of money, fame or any other ulterior motive.

My relationship with Him was my staying power, the only thing that kept my head up high in all the trying times and situations all through the years of ministry and service. This is why one's personal relationship with the Lord should come first, before anything else because it is relationship that begets reality.

It is only when we have that closeness of relationship that we can see things as God sees them. For those of us who are in the ministry, it is important that we see things as God sees them. It is of utmost importance that we see things from God's perspective. That is why the demand immediately after this one is the demand to "look from the top."

Remember that Jesus Christ penetrated into this world and did what He did out of a love relationship with the Father. The early Christians did what they did out of a relationship with God. Relationship is the essence of all reality. When there is no relationship with Him, there is no reality.

This is why it is so hard and almost impossible to carry on when reality is gone. Samson could not carry on. Balaam could not. Judas Iscariot could not. King Solomon, the wisest king that ever lived, could not. No wonder that all throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon declared that everything was vanity and meaningless. He did so because he had lost the reality.

When Israel stopped relating to God but continued in their worship of Him, everything they did became abhorrent and nauseous to God. Why? Because their worship without God could no longer change the heart of that nation. Thus, Israel worshipped God but remained unchanged. The book of Amos gives a clear picture of what this nation looked like spiritually and morally. She was full of spiritual worship and activity but empty of all upright moral character and behaviour.

The following verses give a detailed picture of Israel's spiritual activities:

I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols (Amos 5:21-23).

The next verses give us a detailed picture of the moral character of this pathetic nation, which worshipped God but did not relate to Him.

Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes; That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name: And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god (Amos 2: 6-8).

But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not (Amos 2:12).

For they knew not to do right, saith the LORD, who store up violence and

robbery in their palaces (Amos 3:10).

Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink (Amos 4:1).

Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat; ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine from them. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right (Amos 5:11, 12).

Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat? (Amos 8:4-6).

Judging from these verses, I am sure you realise by now that it is possible for someone to be deeply involved in spiritual activities, programmes etc. and yet totally miss God! It is frightening, but true.

Even Amaziah the priest in those days, thought that the people were great. Only God knew the true picture. He had to send Amos, a cowman from a place call Tekoa, to rebuke Israel. Amaziah the priest, typical of the modern day pastor who lacks spiritual discernment, was furious with Amos (*Amos 7:10-13*).

How could you rebuke this great group of worshippers, Amos? Don't you know that they are the best in the whole country with the latest musical instruments and sound system? On the contrary. I believe that any group

who worships God so well but remains unchanged in its moral character has to be rebuked because they have missed God in their worship. They have lost out on their relationship with Him.

How we need a modern day Amos to help us see into the situation that exists in so many of our churches today. When Amos arrived at the temple in Bethel, the centre of all this great worship, his message and prophecy were very short but poignant and frightening. Six times, God called His people to return to a relationship. Three times, He told them to seek Him. This culminated in the following verses:

Seek ye Me and ye shall live: But seek not Bethel nor enter into Gilgal and pass not to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to naught. Seek the Lord, and ye shall live... Seek Him that maketh the seven stars and Orion (Amos 5: 4-6, 8).

What was God trying to say? Simply this: He was telling Israel straight to the face that they must relate to Him. They must have a living relationship with Him and not with their temple (“seek not Bethel”) or with their religious activities (“enter not into Gilgal”) or with their religious worship or tradition (“pass not to Beersheba”).

These things in themselves do not change human lives. It is God Who changes human lives through these things. Without God, the temple, the religious or spiritual worship and activities are all worthless.

I grew up watching my very religious uncle, the pastor’s right hand man who went to church five to six times a week, misbehave in his private life. He was a wife-beater. I remember hiding behind the kitchen door with my younger brother when I was only 8 years old, calling for help because I saw my uncle hit his wife so hard that blood splashed all over.

How could a man go to church five to six times a week and still beat

his wife regularly? Simple. My uncle was related only to the religious activities in his church; he was never related to God. If he had been, he would have known how to love his wife, not beat her up.

Even today, people love relating to the church, the pastor, the spiritual activities and the programmes rather than relating to God. Why? Because relating to these things is not costly and it gives them a sense of security. Unfortunately, it is a false sense of security.

On the other hand, relating to God is costly. Having a living relationship with God requires change in my life i.e. I must change in order to have a relationship with God, and to change is costly. To change is painful. To change means that self has to die, and self does not want to die. God has made it very clear to us that there is no way we can walk with Him if we do not change. Yes, *we* have to change, not God.

Can two walk together except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3).

Jesus said the same thing when He told the crowds:

Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself (die to self or change), and take up his cross and follow me (Mark 8:34).

In short, let me just say this: there can be no living relationship with God if we are not willing to change. The call for change rings out all through the prophetic books of the Old Testament as well as of the New Testament. Friends, if you are not willing to change, you cannot have a living relationship with God, and when you do not have a relationship with Him, you have no reality. It is difficult to carry on either in daily Christian living or in ministry when the reality is not there. Christians misbehave in private because they have lost the reality.

The Bridegroom wants a relationship, a relationship, a relationship! He

demands it. He calls out to you and He says, “Come with Me, not with the church activities or with the church programmes or with your church friends _ with Me!”

When He appears, you can be sure that only those who are related to Him will be taken to be with Him. Isn't it shocking that people who have prophesied, performed miracles, signs and wonders will hear Him say, “I never knew you.” (I never had a relationship with you.) Well, the Bible says that it is possible to be involved or related to a signs and wonders ministry without relating to God! Sad, but true. Let us heed the Bridegroom's demand for a relationship right now, and allow that relationship to bring changes into our lives.

Yes, Lord, we will come with You no matter how costly it is. Just call out to us and, we bid You, keep calling until we do Your bidding. And as we relate to You, change us. Our flesh may scream and fight You all along the way, but in Your faithfulness, do not let us alone. Keep working in us until You have “perfecteth that which concerneth us.” Amen.

The 4th Demand

LOOK FROM THE TOP!

Having perspective in Christian life is vital. The child of God must be able to see things as God sees them. When the Bridegroom demands that the bride “look from the top,” He is telling the bride to see the way He sees, to have His perspective in life.

There is no way we can do this unless we are elevated by Him because perspective depends on elevation. This is why He first demands that we be related to Him (“come with Me”) before He demands that we “look from the top.” (Relationship before perspective).

Many Christians cannot forget their past disappointments and hurts because they do not have God’s perspective of these experiences. They look at their entire experience from merely their own perspective or viewpoint instead of allowing God to elevate them to His perspective or to look from eternity’s viewpoint. I tell you, everything looks very, very small and insignificant from God’s perspective.

I remember being called into a home one evening to settle a family squabble. When I arrived at the house, I found the husband seated in a corner with wet eyes. As I sat and listened to him, I found myself agreeing with everything he said and I immediately sided with him. I became very angry at the wrongs that his wife and his mother had done to him.

When I began to talk with his wife, I realised that the wife was more right than he was and I found myself agreeing with her instead. Later on, I spoke with the man’s mother in the kitchen and I came to the conclusion that both the husband and the wife were wrong, the old lady was right! I was glad I did not have to talk to a fourth person that day. I had heard

three different versions of a story given from three perspectives and I was confused. Each person was telling me a story from his or her own perspective and thus, each one had a “right side” to it. I had a problem concluding who was right and who was wrong.

We can be sure that God does not have such a problem. He looks at everything from His perspective and He demands that we do the same. “Hey, look from the top,” He says.

God wants us to come away from the lowlands of mud and self and soar with Him high into the heavens. He wants us to ride upon the high places of the earth and feed on the heritage of Jacob.

Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it (Isaiah 58:14).

God knows that if He can get us into an elevated position, He can get us to have a whole new perspective of things in life. If I stand at the foot of a mountain, there is no way that I can see the whole mountain. In fact, I will be intimidated by its size because my weak eyes are not able to properly size up its length and its breadth. All I get to see of the mountain is just a part of it.

But if I get into an aeroplane...aha, everything will look so different. The aeroplane elevates me and when I look down at the mountain, I can see the whole mountain. In fact, what had looked so big and intimidating before now looks so small and insignificant. The big, intimidating mountain now looks tiny.

What happened? How did a big mountain become a tiny dot? Well, nothing happened to the mountain, but something happened to me _ I got elevated, and it changed my perspective.

We see this happening often in the life of King David. He would become depressed and fearful because of his enemies and other problems. Then he would get into the presence of God to pray and seek help. By the time he finished praying, his whole perspective of the situation would have changed. Instead of complaining, he would start to praise. Fear had given way to faith! Why? Because through prayer and communion. God had elevated him and he was able to see the situation as God saw it. Everything which had been so big before now seemed so small.

No wonder Jesus said that if our eye is not single (if our perspective is not right), our whole body will be filled with darkness and we will walk round in circles. Many today are walking around in circles because their eyes (their perspective in life) have been darkened by grief, unforgiveness, bitterness and hurts.

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! (Matthew 6:22-23).

I need to share a personal testimony here. About two years ago, a church member, a lovely lady of 46, was battered to death right in front of our church here in Lahad Datu. Lahad Datu and Semporna in Sabah are regarded as pirate strongholds and unsafe places to work in. We have been burglarized many times but we refuse to give in to fear. We continue to pray for safety.

This time, the thieves went too far. The lady had come to church to pick up her daughter who was practising her music. No one knows exactly what happened. It is believed that she shouted when she saw a group of men trying to steal the church van. One of them caught her and hit her over and over again on the head with an iron rod. She sat down in a pool

of blood on the front porch of the church and died a few hours later in hospital.

I had a hard time when I heard the news that she had succumbed to her wounds and died. The news came to me at about 4 am. I did not go back to sleep but spent the time waiting in the presence of God, not just to cry, but also to query and complain. I waited for about two hours, then I heard Him ask me, "Why are you making so much fuss just because I decided to take one of my loved ones home?" Immediately, I responded, "But it's a tragedy! The whole thing is so horrible and it is meaningless that a good person should die in such a bloody way."

The Lord responded, "So was the cross. From man's perspective, it is horrible and meaningless but not from Mine. I took her because she had a glimpse of eternity and she did not want to return."

I was stunned at what was spoken into my spirit. It was so loud and clear that I knew it was God. The words filled me with calmness, peace and rest. Now I had an answer to give to the others, especially to the husband grieving over the tragic loss. God had given His perspective into the whole horrible situation and had brought peace and rest into my hurting heart.

The rest of this story was even more beautiful. The nurse who had stitched the dear sister up told us that before lapsing into a coma and slipping into eternity, she had kept saying that she saw lights and Jesus.

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 for all of 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 is able to say:

It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes (Psalm 119:71).

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.

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 45:5).

So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God (Genesis 45:8).

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 purpose” (*Romans 8:28*).

Do you love the Lord? Are you called by Him into salvation, sanctification and glorification? Yes. Yes. If so ALL things, 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 paint brush 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 paint brush, dipped it into some colours 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 due to the artist’s creativity and ingenuity. I stood speechless and amazed. Hajah 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 Hajah was _ a master artist, a hero!

Well, God is just the same. He can take the ugly black blob of your hurt, disappointment, loss or shame and turn it 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 be entwined with our good experiences and the goodness and love of God in order for things to work out for our good.

God knows how to work it all out for us. He even knows how to turn the bad and evil into good. Here is what Joseph said:

Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive (Genesis 50:20).

The Bridegroom demands a relationship before He calls for viewing 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 spiritual people and carnal people looks at things so differently.

One of the most powerful declarations of the bride is found in Song of Solomon 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 north wind is a terrible wind, a cold blustering gale that comes with so much force that it is likened 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 on the many who will pick it up. So blow, wind, blow!

The bride also issued an order for the sound wind to blow into her garden. This is the wind that comes with much heat, causing the fruits to ripen faster.

Both winds, the bride says, are needed for her garden, so she freely lets them come. After the winds have done their devastating work, she invites her Bridegroom to come into her garden to enjoy the pleasant fruits. Praise God, she still has pleasant fruits left even after the two terrible winds have 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 this 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 Solomon 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.

Oh, how we need to soar, how we need to be elevated by God's Spirit so that we can see things as God would have us see them. If we can do this, life will take on a different meaning. So many of our sorrows will indeed be turned into joy and many more Christians will be living differently today. They will not be wallowing in self-pity, grief, bitterness or anger over past negative experiences. They would have moved on a long time ago.

Some of these are single people, especially single Christian women struggling with their singlehood. Some are offended at God for not sending them a man to marry. Others break the rule by marrying non-Christians and become miserable. Yet others are sorely tempted to sin daily.

Years ago, God gave me His perspective of singlehood. To be able to regard singlehood as God would have me regard it is fantastic. I love it. As I communed with Him, He spoke to me from the life of Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus.

Mary gave up her right to marry, her womanly needs and her desires to the Lord as her supreme act of worship. (I have already discussed this in an earlier chapter.) She did not deny or suppress her needs; she surrendered and released them to Jesus in a supreme act of worship. She willingly lay herself on the altar and became a "burnt offering."

Like Mary, I consider my singlehood and celibacy as my supreme act of worship and sacrifice to Him, my eternal Bridegroom. I have laid myself and all my womanly needs on His altar as a burnt offering. His fire has come down and consumed me. Like Elijah's fire, it has done a thorough and wonderful work in my life.

Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the

wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench (1 Kings 18:38).

Wow! What a fierce and consuming fire! This is what it did in my life. It consumed me. I have no problems with personal holiness because I carry no garbage in my mind. I cannot because the Holy Spirit burns garbage. Amen!

And when all the people saw it, they fell on their face: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God (1 Kings 18:39).

There is no need to fantasize or be deluged by wild dreams or imaginations. There is no need to wallow in self-pity, depression or jealousy of others who have married. There is no need to flirt or misbehave around men. As I said, the Holy Spirit will burn up all these once we are willing to lay ourselves on God's altar.

Not only is there God's consuming fire from above but there is also the resurrection power of Jesus Christ at work within us. So, we have two types of power and two types of anointing _ one from above and one from within to give us guaranteed victory. The problem with most people is that they only passively believe; they do not actively appropriate this great resurrection power. There is a difference between passively believing and actively appropriating _ the difference is between failure and success. Passive believers fail, active appropriators succeed.

We are told in the book of Ephesians that this great force and energy (which is actually the blessed Spirit of God Himself) was exerted upon the dead body of Jesus Christ and it brought Him back to life. Actually, it went deeper than that. This power actually penetrated into hell to bring Jesus out.

Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the

lower parts of the earth? (Ephesians 4:9).

This power rocketed Jesus into the highest heaven, tore down every satanic entity and put them all under His feet. Wow! I get dizzy just writing about this power because it is great beyond my understanding.

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you (Romans 8:11).

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power; Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Ephesians 1:18-23).

This power brought about the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus Christ and also the declension of the whole satanic regime. God was truly at His greatest not in creation but in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now we are told the good part that should make all of us jump with joy. We are told that this power is made available to us. IT IS FOR OUR USE IF WE CAN BELIEVE.

“The exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe.” An inability to tap into His power shows a lack of belief in it. To those who say they believe yet do not find this power actively working in their lives,

there is only one answer: they are either not dead yet or they are not dead enough yet. Resurrection power can only work and be set “active” only when death has taken place. If there has been no death, what is there to resurrect?

Jesus Christ would never have experienced resurrection power if He had not fully died. He died, was buried and even descended into the lower parts of the earth before resurrection came. Amen. This power works for me because I have willingly died to my needs. Mental holiness and emotional purity have thus become possible in my life. It should be possible in all of our lives.

Singles, if you want to experience this power, totally abandon yourselves to God and die to these needs; then, personal holiness will not be a problem. You will have strength, you will not misbehave in the dark nor will you fight a losing battle over your womanly needs and physical appetites.

The 5th Demand

OPEN TO ME!

What a call and what a demand now comes from the Bridegroom to the bride. We often use this demand, “Open to Me” on the non-Christian in evangelism, telling him to open the door of his heart to the Lord. Are you surprised to see the Bridegroom making such a demand of the bride? The bride’s near-failure to respond to this demand almost cost her her life. She was wounded, smitten and shamed.

The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me (Song of Solomon 5:7).

She was left lovesick, feeling a void and a vacuum so vast and deep inside her that she kept crying out for food.

Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love (Song of Solomon 2:5).

I have often, in my most intimate moments with the Lord, heard Him make this demand upon my life. It is a demand for more of me, a demand to enter into areas of my life which are still closed to Him.

You see, our lives are like a house with many rooms. We can have the Lord enter into the house (our lives) and visit all the rooms yet bar Him from just one. Then we hear Him knocking and calling out to us, “Open to Me! Open to Me!” He knocks and knocks and continually pleads like a lover, “Open to Me! Open to Me!”

I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my

head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night (Song of Solomon 5:2).

When a man or a woman submits every area of his or her life to the Lord except his or her finance, we have a very fine man or woman of God but, unfortunately, he or she is very stingy. Or, a man may submit his social life to God but withhold his domestic life from Him. Thus we have a man who is a good church member, a good brother in the Lord, a good citizen and a good employer but a third-class husband or father who shouts at his wife and children unreasonably.

All this is so common. I have seen so much of this as a pastor. Such a person is called a “half-baked cake” or “a cake not turned.” We made such pancakes when I was a freshman in Bible college. All the students who tried them spat them out. A half-baked cake or a cake not turned is unpalatable; it has to be spat out.

This is God’s language, and God’s language is always strong. God rebuked the nation of Ephraim for turning only one side of its life to Him and withholding from Him the other side. In other words, Ephraim was one thing on one side and another thing on the other, like a cake burnt black at the bottom but raw dough at the top. Such a cake is not fit for eating.

A half-baked cake is an apt image for a person who is full of inconsistencies. There is good behaviour on one side and bad behaviour on the other. Such a person gets spat out of God’s mouth.

Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not (Hosea 7:8-9).

A person who opens one area of his or her life to the Lord but withholds another is indeed a cake not turned. He or she has two faces to show _ a good one in public and a bad one in private.

The Christian life is one in which every area and every aspect of our lives must be submitted to His Lordship. Therefore, one cannot be just a good church member, one also has to be a good father and mother, husband or wife, son or daughter, son-in-law or daughter-in-law, housemate or neighbour. If you are a man, you cannot only be a good leader to the people in church. What you are in private to your wife, your children, parents, in-laws and neighbours is also of vital importance.

I have pastored for 27 years and I have heard many sad stories. One lady sobbed uncontrollably in my office and told me that her pastor should have never chosen her husband to be on the church board.

“He always thinks that he is alright and more spiritual than me and that I must do what he says. I was ill with high fever last night and I said no to his sexual advances. Do you know what he did? He went to the back of the house and brought in an axe. He took hold of my neck and threatened me. This morning, he called me a bitch.”

Shocking, isn't it? This is the typical story of a man who has submitted his social and church life to the Lord but not his private (or his sexual) life, to the Lord. Thus, he behaves so well in church that both his pastor and the church members voted him into leadership but his wife knows him to be a different man.

In fact, our churches are full of half-baked people _ half-baked members and half-baked pastors. One pastor's wife stood at the back of the church listening to her husband preach on how to be loving to your wife. She gestured me with angry eyes and said, “He's talking rubbish. He doesn't

live it at home.” Then she left.

At a place where four churches had gathered together, I spoke about a man who called his wife “honey” and “darling” in public but “stupid” and “donkey-brain” at home. An elderly man, a leader in his church, abruptly lowered his head and turned red-faced. He was doing exactly that. People with secret sins know it.

God also said that grey hair was appearing all over Ephraim and that his strength was being devoured. Grey hair is a sign of ageing and weakness. Ephraim was not only half-baked, he was also becoming very weak. Strength was seeping out. This is what our secret sins do to us; they slowly weaken us.

Half-baked cakes or people who will not open every area of their lives to the Lord will eventually lose spiritual strength, vitality and, worst of all, reality. When the reality of the Bridegroom has gone, bondage can become stronger. The process of being smitten, wounded and shamed may be around the corner.

Our secret sins with guilt and condemnation shut us off from the reality of the Bridegroom. It is not so much that He leaves us as that we shut him off by living in secrets sins. Surely it is better for us to expose and confess them and get help sooner rather than later when the sins come into full bloom. When they reach full bloom, the consequences may be too much for us to bear.

The most pathetic cry or declaration of the bride is found in Song of Solomon 5:8. After the Bridegroom has withdrawn His presence, she cries out, “I am sick of love.” It is the cry of an emptied soul: emptied of reality, love and the reason to carry on. The Bridegroom has left.

In earlier verses, the bride had said that her lover had requested entry into

her life. She had denied Him. He had patiently waited but she still refused to let Him in. Her apathy and indifference drove Him away. When she finally realized what she had done, she took the initiative to look for Him but was wounded, smitten and shamed in the process.

I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me (Song of Solomon 5:6-7).

Coming back to God is always difficult after one has taken a big fall. I think about many who have risen so spiritually high. All of a sudden, we hear of their having misbehaved in private and it shocks, hurts and discourages us. I was myself very discouraged when I heard of one particular man of God misbehaving morally. I was very much hurt because I had always admired him and had stocked up his tapes. For months, I did not have any desire to carry on because of the shock. Thank God I recovered.

I believe that sin did not just suddenly appear in this man's life _ it was a slow build-up of many, many times of private misbehaviour. All that time, I am sure God had called out to this brother, "Open to Me! Open to Me that area of your life which is so tainted and blemished. Child, do not carry on, do not misbehave anymore in private but let Me deal with it. Let Me arrest the cancer and tear it out."

Well, like the bride who denied entry to her lover, this brother denied the request of the Lord. Then, wham! He was caught and the process of wounding, smiting and shaming began. The Lord seems to have withdrawn Himself from him.

O, I do not ever want this to happen to me. I would rather build a strong inner life than a strong empire for God. Friends, my heart calls out to you. I pray for you especially if you are in the forefront of spiritual leadership. I pray that you will open every area of your life to God and have Him check all the appetites of your body.

If you consistently misbehave, you hurt those who are under your covering and leadership. You will become an umbrella with holes and those sheltered by you will not be protected from the sun or the rain. Instead of being a blessing, you have become a curse to them. This is why leaders in important positions must resign or be removed if they have a moral “hole” in their lives and can no longer offer the proper covering or shelter. Whoever thinks of using an umbrella with holes or coming under a roof that leaks?

If I know that the one covering me, to whom I turn for counsel, is privately consistently misbehaving, I must come out from that covering and stop taking counsel from him. I cannot pretend that I do not know or wish it will go away. If I continue to take counsel from him and remain under his covering, I am being rebellious to God and I am encouraging sin. God has issued a strong rebuke about such a covering:

Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin (Isaiah 30:1).

We are not children anymore in the understanding of spiritual warfare. WHEN ONE SINS IN THE PHYSICAL REALM, SOMETHING HAPPENS IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM. Right of entry is given to the devil to attack us or those sheltered by us. When a pastor misbehaves consistently, he can pass the spirit of lust onto his congregation just like a father or mother gives entry to the spirit of lust and the children are

affected. This is why it is so vital that we must each possess a strong relationship with God and know how to break it off.

Deliverance and protection come to only those who are in relationship with Him. Psalm 91 tells us this very clearly: relationship is required for continual protection and deliverance from the Lord.

Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation ... Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name (Psalm 91:9, 14).

One of the most powerful prayers of King David is found in Psalm 19:12, “Cleanse thou me from secrets sins (faults).”

David was a much admired man both in his own kingdom and among other nations. He held the offices of king, prophet and psalmist, yet he knew there were secret sins or faults within his own life. That was why he cried out to God for cleansing. Seen through the eyes of men, David was admired and emulated, but not when he stood before God. He knew he could never get away with it.

Reading his psalms gives us an inkling of what David’s secret faults were:

Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously (Psalm 119:29).

Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness (Psalm 119:36).

Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way (Psalm 119:37).

Very often in his psalms, David prayed for deliverance from three things: vanity, greed and lying lips. Are these also your problem areas? Remember that if you have a character flaw or a secret sin, it will not just disappear. As the years go by or when you become weaker in the Lord or are under stress, the flaw or crack will show.

David's vanity manifested itself when he came into a position of power. He wanted to number the fighting men of Israel, to see if he had the largest army in the world. This angered God because every time David had won a war, it had not been because of a big army but because God had fought for him.

David paid a terrible price for his act of vanity and utter foolishness. By the time God's judgement was over, 70,000 men lay dead in Israel. David had wanted to boast in the numbers of his fighting men but God, in just one day, reduced their strength by 70,000. David's army shrunk! The story is found in 2 Samuel chapter 24.

David's vanity reminds me of pastors who boast of the size of their congregation. "Oh, my church has grown so fast, it has outnumbered yours even though we started later." Be careful, God may reduce it. I have heard of how big churches have been reduced to a quarter of its original size within a week through a church split. A group had followed the youth pastor or the associate pastor out. So pastors, do not be vain.

David's greed and lying were exposed in his relationship with Bathsheba. It is almost impossible to imagine that the man who wrote such lines as, "O God, let me not wander away from your commandments" and "O how I love thy law. It is my meditation all the day" (*Psalms 119:10, 97*) could be guilty of such blatant sins. What David did to Bathsheba and Uriah was horrifying. The root causes were David's secret or hidden sins of greed (having its roots in lust) and lying.

No wonder that in his repentant psalm, David prayed and prayed, “Search me O God and try me O God.” David in his repentance was willing to open up every area of his life to the searching eyes of God. Unfortunately, it was a little late because by then, so many people had suffered at his hands, at the manifestation of his sins of greed (lust) and lying.

What about you? Are you still holding some areas of your life away from God? Have you manifested your lust by being flirtatious and amorous? People may call you flirtatious but God and you yourself know that it is lust. You dare not commit fornication or adultery because you know the moral laws of God, so you allow it to come out in another form _ by being flirtatious.

Are you manifesting your greed by always borrowing things from others and not returning them so that you can keep on using their things without paying for them? Are you always telling people that you live by faith or you have no money so that people would give to you? Others may be blind to your greed and lies, but not God. He knows.

Friends, let us not burn “strange fire” before God (*Leviticus 10:1-2*). We cannot be so excellent in public and so ill in private. God discovers this in no time. He has not smitten us like He did Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron, because He is merciful. Remember our secret sins will find us out and oh, when they do, there will be much suffering, not just in our own lives but also in the lives of others.

Open every area, every aspect of your life to the grace and the power of God. Go for deliverance and have those spirits cast out if you know that it is a spirit in control. Be humble and keep away from strategic spiritual responsibilities or positions in church if you know you are still not free.

If you have an urge to molest little children, do not work with children. If

you have homosexual or lesbianistic tendencies, do not sleep on the same bed with another man or woman or even share the same room, if possible. If you have a tendency to steal, do not be a treasurer! If you have sexual lusts, do not counsel women.

Do not lay hands and pray for people. Safeguard yourself until you have obtained full deliverance. Remember the power, that great force, energy and spirit that took Jesus Christ out of the lower parts of the earth, established Him in the highest heaven and tore down all satanic powers to put them under His feet is on your side! Appropriate this power, for God's grace will not save us if it cannot keep us victorious and free.

We do not have to fail. We fail only when we do not know the truth of the Scriptures or the power of God. This is what Jesus said:

You do err (fail), not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God (Matthew 22:29).

So open up to Him. He has been waiting a long time to get into those closed areas of your life. Do not shut Him out for if He withdraws and you lose the reality, you will be the one who will suffer the consequences of being smitten, wounded and shamed. Others who have shut Him out and continue to indulge in their secret sins have found this to be true. Do not go the way they did. You may never make your way back again to fruitfulness and greatness. Open to Him now. Now is the time. Do not miss the timing.

The 6th Demand

RETURN, RETURN!

The last demand the Bridegroom makes of His bride is repeated four times.

Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return (Song of Solomon 6:13).

I was teaching on this last demand at the Station of Life when a pastor (an ordained minister of 16 years) broke down and wept. He knew he had strayed. He knew that in spite of all the outward spiritual motions and lingo, he was empty on the inside. He knew that the reality had gone and, like Samson, he was only shaking the flesh. It is painful to keep going and going when the reality on the inside is no longer there.

Samson could not go on. Neither could Solomon, who is believed to have written the book of Ecclesiastes when he had lost the reality. That was why he kept saying throughout the book that everything was vain and meaningless. The man who became king and had everything his heart desired, in excess, declared that all was vanity. Yes, everything including life itself is vanity (worthless gain) when the reality of God is not there.

The programmes, the activities, the preaching and even some remnant of your old anointing may be there, but the reality is not. Why? Because the relationship has gone, broken either through sin or sheer negligence.

Many in the ministry today know what I am talking about. They are sustained only by the programmes and the activities in their churches. Every time they have to preach, they grab a commentary and refer to books and tapes because they cannot hear directly from God. Neither can they prevail in prayer, fast regularly, or sit down with the Bible for

hours.

It is important for us to know that spiritual communion cannot be sustained without reading and meditating on the Word of God because God basically speaks to us from the Word. One major reason why King David had such a depth in his knowledge of God was because he spent time meditating on His Word.

I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways (Psalm 119:15).

Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes (Psalm 119:23).

O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day (Psalm 119:97).

We can get a little inspiration from others but we cannot afford to preach from books and tapes every week. Pastors who do this regularly are saying one thing about themselves: they cannot hear directly from God. We need to hear from the throne and speak as one having heard from above. This was the lifestyle of Jesus. He spoke and taught as one who had heard from the Father.

For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him (John 3:34).

Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things (John 8:28).

Most people in ministry today do not have time to hear from above because they are driven, driven to perform, to produce, to compete, to compare and to catch up. They think that they are in some sort of

electronic, motor vehicle or cosmetic company and must outshine the rest and catch up with the sales!

The true bride of Jesus Christ will never be lured away from the Bridegroom by the world. But too often, she has been lured away so subtly by the works of the vineyard, by the works of the ministry. The bride in the Song of Solomon went to the garden of nuts to see how the fruits were doing and, before she knew it, found herself driven to work in the vineyard. She was getting more and more involved and further and further away from her lover. He had to come and call for her to return *four* times. This shows that she was not within hearing range. Like so many of us, we serve and we labour so much that we cannot even hear the voice of God when He comes calling for us. This is how the bride put it:

I went into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded. Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib (Song of Solomon 6:11-12).

The chariots of Amminadib were noted for their speed. Often, these chariots went so fast, they would even lose the charioteer. Can you imagine a chariot without a charioteer? It will be running blindly and it is only a matter of time before it crashes.

The devil can get us into such a position, so involved in the works of the vineyard, so driven by the works of the ministry that we leave the Lord far behind. We cannot even hear Him when He calls out to us. Imagine, He has to keep calling. And by the time we come to Him, what are we like? A company of two armies (a divided army) even though we had started off as an army with banners (a united, victorious army).

Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as

the sun, and terrible as an army with banners? (Song of Solomon 6: 10).

Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies (Song of Solomon 6:13).

How terrible. A divided army is a dangerous army. This is a vivid picture of a man or woman who is so driven in ministry that he or she is inwardly divided or disintegrated by internal conflict, restlessness, strife and contention.

Anyone in the ministry can be driven. It is indeed not easy to balance your time when there is so much to do: committee meetings, counselling, baptisms, marriages, funerals, visitation, preaching and teaching; church buildings, outreaches and organising the church calendar. Then there is the family: the wife, the children, your in-laws, leaking pipes, the faulty car and ...! We can indeed be driven. We can promise ourselves a hundred times that we will pray an hour and not do it. When we do get down to do it, we fall asleep after ten minutes.

It may help you by telling you where your priority should be. At the end of the day, all the Bridegroom wants is to look at us. Yes, to look at us, not at our works or our performance. He cried out to the bride with a deep sense of urgency.

Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return that we may look upon thee (Song of Solomon 6: 13).

Yes, look upon thee, not look upon thy works! Not look upon thy performance nor thy doings. Your works and your performance may all be great, but I do not want to look at them, I want to look at you. You have done a lot, but what have you become? What are you like? The company

of two armies? You are so full of internal conflict and strife, guilt, anger, insecurity, gossip, self-righteousness, vindictiveness and hardness. I cannot bear to see you like this.

O My child, it hurts Me deeply to see you in this condition. I want to use you further to build for Me and I desire to use you to the maximum, but I cannot. I cannot because, like David, you have become a man of war _ you are raging and fighting on the inside and I cannot use a man of war to build for Me, for in due time, they may tear down everything that they have built up through the strife in their hearts.

We all know that David wanted very much to build a temple for God but God forbade him. Why? Because David was a man of war. David had fought and David had killed. David had blood on his hands and God does not want such a man to build for Him. The spiritual principle is so clear that I do not have to elaborate much on this.

Men and women who have become “two armies” on the inside, always fighting, competing, comparing and killing in their hearts, full of strife and contention must not build for God. Whatever they set up will eventually come down. It was only after warfare in the kingdom had ended and peace and quietness prevailed that God allowed the process of building to start.

And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of Lord my God: But the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about; for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house

for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever (1 Chronicles 22: 7-10).

Yes, we must come free of the bloodshed, the striving, the conflicts, the fighting, the competing, the insecurities and the raging on the inside of us before we can build for God. Otherwise, we may tear down everything that we ourselves have set up, for according to our inward state shall be our outward world. If there are conflicts and fighting on the inside, there will also be conflicts and fighting on the outside.

Yes, My child, you started off looking like the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners but now look at you! You are clouded, darkened and divided.

Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners? (Song of Solomon 6: 10).

There was a time when I looked like that too: clouded, darkened and divided because I had so much to do. God did not drive me, I drove myself and I allowed the enemy to. He had come in so subtly, I just kept going and going and going. Times of intimacy and communion with God were aborted to make time for more work and planning. I was glad God caught me in time to change me. The apostle Paul cautioned us about being able to do great things and in the end, becoming nothing in ourselves (*1 Corinthians 13*).

I want to say again that ministry is only a working out of what God has worked into our lives (*Colossians 1:20*). For example, if God has worked 2 kilos into me and I produce 4 kilos, it means that the other 2 kilos are all flesh and my own sweat with no anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily (Colossians 1:29).

In the Old Testament, God did not permit the priest who ministered in His presence to wear any material other than linen. Why? Because linen is light and does not retain heat; therefore, it does not produce sweat on the body of the priest while he goes about his holy duties. Sweat is symbolic of our own efforts and works of the flesh. Many of us have become too “sweaty” in ministry today. Sweat stinks; it is not fragrant in the presence of the Lord.

I have been there. I know. Birthing the five churches and their outreaches in Sabah, raising up workers and planting the caring homes besides the regular administrative and pastoral work of a pastor almost cost me my life. I was doing it the wrong way (the busy way, the “I-cannot-get-away” way).

Yes, the work was done but with a lot of “stinking sweat.” I was wearing wool instead of linen as I served. Anger and frustration built up and I had no time for personal spiritual communion by the hour in God’s presence. I was spending about 15-20 minutes in prayer daily. That was all.

Then it happened. When the “evil day” came (*Ephesians 6:13*), I almost lost balance. The enemy came in to attack me physically, emotionally, mentally. There were problems in the church and problems in my own home. For months, I fought the satanic assault. One way of fighting was to change my garment of ministry, to learn that ministry was what God did through me, not what I did for Him

I established hours of strong spiritual communion and in communion, I found three things happening to me: I was elevated to a place where I could see things from God’s perspective; I was refined and was able

to break a lot of curses and “liabilities” which I inherited from my ancestors (that had affected my ministry); and I experienced changes in my innermost being.

I built up a strong vertical relationship and reality of the spirit world became very poignant and potent. I heard His voice distinctly many times and was able to pick up things in the lives of people which helped me to create relationships. So much heartache results because ministers, out of the lack of discernment, trust in the wrong people.

Pastors, RELATIONSHIP (NOT MINISTRY, WORK OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS) IS THE ESSENCE OF REALITY. If ministry, accomplishments or work bring reality and fulfilment, many of the ministers who have built “empires” would not have turned to the world, to illicit sex, etc. for fulfillment. Why do they get into such excesses? Unreality drove them to it. It is sad that a minister can sometimes do so much for God, yet in the midst of it all, God has never been real to that person. In fact; it is possible that there may never have been a relationship between God and such a minister in the first place.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matthew 7:22,23).

I have always been wary of these two verses because I had always believed that Scripture must always be comforting. Then I realised that there are some scriptures that are terribly upsetting, unnerving and are able to scare the daylights out of us.

May God also change your garments of ministry. May He help you to know that ministry is just an overflow of your relationship with Him. It

is what He can do through you and for you that matters. May you rest in Him, hear from Him distinctly, then move in His Spirit. So much more could be done, and done with no sweat. There will be no frustration, rage, contention, competition, insecurity, if we will only move by His voice.

Crises and problems, perhaps even betrayal or treachery from your most trusted leader, are good ways to bring us back into a relationship with Him and to hear His voice once more. In fact, this was the way that God dealt with the nation of Israel. He applied pressure but the nation was too hardened to hear Him.

And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. And also I have withholden the rain from you, when they were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord (Amos 4:6-11).

Notice how many times the words “yet hath ye not returned unto Me” are repeated. He wants the nation to return to Him _ not to the temple, to the spiritual activities or programmes but to Him. We need to remember over

and over again and again that we matter to Him. Our relationship with Him is more vital than all our works and labour. Our labour and works cannot and should not keep us away from Him.

For all of us who are in ministry, Jesus invites us to learn from Him how to handle that burden. He has told us that His yoke is easy and His burden is light and, as a result, we will find rest for our soul. Ease, lightness and rest in our soul are good indicators of whether we are carrying His burden or our own. For any Christian and especially for one in the ministry, the greatest place to arrive at is the place of rest in the soul.

We need to heed His demand, we need to return. We need to come back to the centre of the cross instead of just wanting to live at its circumference. Circumference living does not provide reality and it is very hard to carry on when the reality has gone.

It is easy to fight, to conspire how to take someone else's church, to start a mutiny and cause a split, and to bad mouth people but it is hard to live like Jesus lived, to be led like a lamb to the slaughter. I totally believe that men and women who possess the reality on the inside have the resources to die to self and not fight back. It is those who have lost the reality who would fight and devour and even drag issues into the secular courts.

An army with banners is an all-victorious army. We started off as a victorious army; let us stay that way until the Lord returns. When He does, He wants to find us being like Him.

Heed His call, friends. Let us return to Him. Let us put relationship with Him above our works and our ministry. He is calling us to return to Him because He wants to take a good look at us. Let us heed His love call.