

# **LIFE PRINCIPLES**

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## 1. RELATIONSHIP

Tonight we begin a new series called life principles. After we learned about the things in the kingdom of God and various principles, we need to understand some life principles because life principles sometimes are not taught in schools. Sometimes all we have is knowledge and skill and then we don't know how to relate to people. We don't know how to form friendship and relationship. So realize that every one of us has life principles. Life principles are the foundation of our life. They guide us whether in ministry or profession. They are the undercurrents of our decision-making. Without life principles we can not succeed in life. If we apply the right life principles we will be able to achieve prosperity, success in the full measure that God wants His people to have. So we need to understand what some of these life principles are.

The first life principle that I consider important is relationship. See when we all partake of the Lord's Supper in a church service, usually the minister will stand up and read from I Cor. 11 and talk about how on the night the Lord Jesus was betrayed, He took the bread and He broke it and said, 'Take this for this is My body which is broken' and the He took the cup after supper saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Drink this as often as you do in remembrance of Me.' So in the bread and in the fruit of the wine, we realize that there is a revelation of Jesus Christ in our Lord's Supper. But one thing we forget is that Christianity is not only a revelation of God. There are three realms of revelation.

One of them, I will call it an exposure. Before Jesus Christ came in the New Testament, a lot of the Old Testament saints did not know that their problems were caused by the devil. Even Job did not realize his problems were caused by the devil. We read the book of Job; we will notice that it was the devil behind it all the time. But not for one moment did Job realize that it was the devil. So we have in the New Testament when Jesus came, He reveals that there is a devil that is causing a lot of problems. In fact we will use right word: Jesus came to expose the works of the devil. Suddenly we realize that there is a devil. Jesus exposed his works. When Jesus came on the scene, He casts out devil. He came in I John 3:8 to destroy the works of the devil. It is also a revelation of spirit realm of the devil. But the other aspect of revelation that we want to consider tonight is that Christianity opens our eyes or grants us a revelation of our fellowmen where we would learn to love one another as Jesus had commanded us.

Now the commandment of Jesus to love one another as He loves us includes extending that love to those who do not know Him. He talks about loving our enemies in the Beatitudes that is the Sermon on the Mount. So tonight we want to see one life principle, how relationships are vitally important for us to develop our spiritual office, to develop our spiritual gifts for our prayers to be answered and also for all other areas. One of the tactics of the devil in these last days is to destroy families, break down homes and cause anguish among family members. But Jesus came to unite. He came to bring love into the home. You will be surprised that as society progresses, as civilization goes into technology and science, one of the most vital things that we need to bring is morality and a strong family foundation. Without that society will collapse. It's the responsibility of the church to establish strong homes.

Relationship is so important in the bible. In fact we must not forget that Jesus Christ did not only die for our sins. He came to restore us to God and to each other. The

cross is both vertical and horizontal. He came to restore us to God and once we are restored to God, we are to be restored to one another. That's Jesus' goal. John the apostle understood the revelation. He said that if we walk in the light, which means that we are restored with God, then we have fellowship with one another. See restoration with God brings restoration to one another. Sometimes if we are not balanced, we stress just on restoration with God and we neglect the emphasis on the restoration with fellowman. When we talk about loving one another, when Jesus says, love thy neighbor as thyself, many of us will ask this question: Who is my neighbor? Not just the one who sits next to you but also the one you wake up every morning and see. It's easier to love somebody whom you see once in a while because you don't see his or her weak points. But it's another thing to love those whom you see every day. Sometimes when you talk about loving our neighbor, some of us prefer to love our neighbor further down the road than the one staying in the same house. Neighbor is the people who are right with you.

Genesis 37, we want to see how the life of Joseph was. In the life of Joseph, he did not come from a good family relationship although he was very loved by the father. In Genesis 37:2 "This is the history of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors."

It tells us here that there were two problems in the family. No. 1 the father showed favoritism. Now that was not of God. That was in the flesh. He loved Joseph because Joseph was born from the wife whom he intended to marry. In that family, we have this family problem where one child is loved more than the others. In you have only one child, there is no problem but if you have two or three children, it's vitally important that you love all equally. Otherwise you will be creating problems in your family. Later on you will reap what you sow. Part of the problem was Jacob.

Secondly, Joseph did not realize the value of right relationship. Joseph did not realize the importance of the relationship. You see he was the one who was loved most. He would just absorb all the carnal affection like a sponge and possibly became a spoilt brat. You may never have thought of Joseph as a spoilt brat but he possibly was. I mean he was the father's favorite. Every time he needs anything, his father would just give it to him. But for the others, it's different. Imagine growing up in a family like that. Joseph took advantage of that. His brothers were older than him, so his brothers went out to take care of the farm and take care of the animals and Joseph would just be the reporter. He was his father's secret spy, so he would go and see his brothers and then he would look around. The bible tells us he always came back and brought a bad report. He always talks about all the horrible things they did. All the wrong things they did. Joseph had a relationship with the father but he did not see the importance of developing a relationship with his brothers. One day he would pay a price for that.

So in that kind of atmosphere, the gift of God operates in his life. He had two dreams and of all the things his dream exalted him more. You see his brothers already didn't like him. His brothers looked at him from the corner of their eyes. They didn't like him at all. He had no good relationship with his brothers and so his brothers are always eyeing him. Every time he comes around, they just didn't like him. One day, he had the gift of God operating in his life and he had this dream. The first thing he

did, he ran to his brothers and said, "I had a dream." The same guy who talked bad about them, he said, in this dream, "All of you bowed down to me." That's just like putting a matchstick on petrol. They were already angry with him. Their hearts were harboring unforgiveness and anger and resentment at him. They already resented the way the father treated him above the others. Now on top of that Joseph brought a bad report about them. Besides that, here comes the dream. That dream says, every one is going to bow down to him. They exploded. There is no way his dream is going to be accepted by them.

Here we learn a lesson that when we have the gift of God in our lives, we must not neglect relationships. There are many who have gifts but they neglect their relationships. No matter how good your gifts are, if you don't have a good relationship, there will be no place for you to function in your gifts. See relationships and gifts must flow together. Relationship provides the room for your gifts to function in. Even if you have the best gift for healing, the best gift of prophesy and it's a genuine gift from God but you have a bad mouth, everybody knows you have a bad mouth, you have a flaw in your character and you have a bad relationship with everybody, with every church, with every person, there is going to be no place for you to function in the gift at all.

It's important for us to understand that in the bible the development of gifts come through an atmosphere of relationship. No relationship no development. That's the price we have to pay. To relate to people means that we have to change. Nobody can relate to another person properly without some sort of give and take. We must be prepared to change. Not just be the way we want to be. We should be what God wants us to be. In this situation we want to see how in the bible especially in the New Testament that the forming of relationship is very important to the Lord Jesus Christ and also very important to the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes we could be very successful in our own field. For example, you could pass with flying colors all the way through your academic life and graduated from the university with honors and you come up in the professional life. You reach the top of the ladder and everything is well with your skill and knowledge. And yet you don't know how to make friends. You could be earning tons of money but still don't know how to make friends. You were not taught how to make friends. We are not taught how to relate to one another. This is where the church comes in.

There are many people who get away with the way they behave because of their qualification but they don't get away long. Which is why in our church we always encourage the people to go to home fellowship because the church is big and we can not get to know everybody. For example in a meeting like this, you meet each other but you only know some people, you don't know many others. So all you get to do in a meeting like this or even in a church is to say, I love you with the love of the Lord. That's all. Your love last for about five seconds and that's all you do. In church, most of the time you say hi and then bye. Not much time to build a relationship. You may think in your mind, "I can be a Christian by just going to this seminar and that seminar." I mean our society is such that you could live in a flat all alone by yourself. All paid by yourself. You support yourself. You could go to a meeting all alone and there you attend the meeting. Receive God's Word. Get everything you want. Buy the books, buy the tapes and then drive home. Listen the tapes and read the books at home. A lone ranger and nobody knows you except a very few close friends. In fact

all those close friends don't really know you either because you are very secluded. Even though you may be the most qualified person yet you have never known the art of making friends. You know you missed one of the most beautiful things in life to know other people. The most precious creature on earth is the soul of human beings. So that's your life. That's not good enough. You need to form relationship with a fellowship or a group. Attach yourself to that. Now if you are looking for a perfect church, you will never find it. There's no perfect church on this earth. If you are looking then keep looking.

We have to form relationship with people. That means those relationships that we formed will have to be in a small group. If the church that you attend is large you need to get into a fellowship where you learn to fellowship with one another. There are many reasons. Let me give an illustration of what will happen if you live that kind of life. Lone ranger without Tonto, bachelor boy. This is what will happen. One day you fell in love and you want to get married. Supposing you are in my church. We give you a list of all the things to do; what to get, what to do and all those kind of things. Then we give you the responsibility of selecting your altar boy, your flower girl, your bridesmaid, your best man and all those things. Because it's your wedding, we want you to learn some organization. We put the responsibility on the bridegroom. Supposing the only people in the church you know are those you say hi and bye. This time is your happy occasion and we want to rejoice with you. There are very few people to rejoice with you. You are desperate now; at the end you have to go to the church looking for flower girls and altar boys. You see this kid and say, 'Come! Be my flower girl.' That kid takes one look at you and say, 'This uncle I don't know him.' And you try to approach people but nobody seems to know you. We could even take your name and pin it up on the notice board and write: Tan Ah Tee is getting married. Everybody looks at the notice board and says who is this Tan Ah Tee? Only one person knows you. So on your wedding day, you sent out your invitation cards to every Tom, Dick and Harry in the church. Everybody received a card and says who is this Tan Ah Tee? I don't know him. Is he related to Tan Ah Kow? Then you want to rejoice and on your wedding day you look around, the only people are your uncles and your aunties and no one else. It's a lonely life. When you want to rejoice there is nobody to rejoice with you. And then when something sad happens; for example Tan Ah Tee's grandma died. Nobody calls him up. Isn't it very sad? He could be the highest qualified person but has not learned to develop friendship with people. Supposing you got to know people and you are in fellowship. Something happens, whether good or bad, happy or sad. When something happen, we always tell the people, we want to rejoice with you. The bible says, rejoice with those who rejoice. When something sad we want to weep with you. But if nobody knows you how can we weep with you? When you look at the papers, if a sad thing happens and it's spread in the papers, or somebody you know, you will cry. But a lot of things are happening and its reported in the papers and you look at it, all those people are strangers. So you don't feel for them. But the moment you know somebody there, you began to feel for him or her. Why, because there is a relationship. So in the same way, we realize that relationship is important. We need to set close relationship and there is a price to pay. We need to know principles of relationship that the bible teaches us. I just want to highlight a few in the bible.

In Acts 12 we see here that when Peter was released from the prison, he went to a house. In chapter 12:12 "So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of

Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.” Now as we read, it is interesting to see how Peter was released from prison and how the angel came, a prayer that was going on and so forth. But tonight we are interested to find out whose house because I know what it is to open your house to make it a public place. Mary the mother of John Mark opened the house and allowed the home to be used as a prayer meeting. I don’t know whether it was a regular thing but I suspect as I read the scripture that it was a regular thing. They specially held it in Mary’s house, which was quite frequently used. One of the things that we lose as we get civilized is our closeness with our neighbors. You noticed it. It’s different from the village. Everybody in the village knows you but not everybody in the flats knows you. In fact you may not even know the name of the person who stay next door to you. Isn’t it very funny? The more civilized you go the thicker the wall. Christianity does not teach us that. It teaches relationship. Love relationship.

Here in Acts 12 as we look at Mary’s house that was used. We may read one sentence and think praise God it was used. If anyone who have opened their homes, whether to a minister, a foreigner or someone to stay with you, you would know what is involved. I know because I have taken guests around and they stayed with me before. First of all your privacy is invaded. Then your time is gone. And then sometimes you have to entertain them in the sense that you got to take them out for meals since they stay with you. I am sure they expected to be fed. You don’t just put them in a room, let them eat and you just look. Sometimes there is something special and you may want to take them out. You may want to take them to a nice restaurant. You take them there and sometimes you don’t expect them to order expensive food like lobster. When that happens you are saying in your heart that one week of your salary is gone. He/she is eating my one-week meal. I want you to know that it cost dollars and cents when you entertain somebody. For anyone who has opened their homes in a home fellowship in the house, you would know at the end of all the wonderful singing, wonderful prayers and everybody say good bye and leave, you go and look at the kitchen - there is pile of work to be done. It’s a sacrifice to welcome people into your home in order to develop relationship with people. You see, its one thing to know each other in a public place but another thing to go into another person’s home because you get to know the person more. When you visit a person’ home straight away you know the person’s taste. You know whether that person has an expensive taste or reasonable taste. Or whether that person is just a survival kid. You sat on a sofa and it fell apart. So you know a person more definitely when you take a person to your home. You know a person more and there is a price to pay.

The reason I am sharing this is because people as they grow sometimes they have a fear of relationship. To love is to be willing to be rejected and to be hurt so that’s the price you have to pay as you reach out. I will encourage each one of you to develop relationships. It is not enough to come and hear the Word and then go because part of Christianity and growing is developing strong relationships with others. Otherwise we have no opportunity to keep Jesus’ commandment, which says, “A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another as I have loved you.”

One of the key developments in the New Testament is the opening of homes for prayer and fellowship. When John Mark’s mother opened her home, John Mark’s mother Mary would have less time for John. Not that she would neglect him but there’s less time. Your time is occupied. I mean there’s people always coming for

counseling, coming and going for prayer meetings and so forth. I mean there's sacrifice involved. But out of the atmosphere John was brought up, he saw people pray, he heard people talking about the Lord and he must have seen the Lord answered the prayers and he grew up in that home. That is where we want to show. It is either the home atmosphere or the relationship that brought forth leaders or that John Mark's mother was a leader already and then she opened her home. But I want you to know that is the first. Most of the time we think that when a person is a leader in the church, then that person must open the home. We got it backwards. I Tim. 3 says one of the qualifications of a bishop is that he must be hospitable. That's before he assumes leadership and not after. As I study the Word, I began to read that it is the openness of people to others. You see, not a single one of us could say that we grew up to be where we are by ourselves. Surely along the way, there are people who have helped you or people who had encouraged you, perhaps a home atmosphere, a fellowship or close friend.

I remembered a few incidents in my life that I would never forget where along the way in ministry there were the right people providing the right thing that bring forth your gifts in your life and the relationship that they were willing to have with you. I remembered the first time I went into the seminary, I was taken aback by some of the other seminarians. See I was new in a lot of things that were going on in the ministry. I thought that in the ministry everybody is very holy but I found out it was not quite so. I came from a freethinker and non-Christian background. When in the seminary, I will never forget the dear Baptist pastor who encouraged me. I was underage but he encouraged me and I will never forget him. He took extra efforts to write all those letters and invited me to stay with him. He gave me a good impression. He encouraged me and placed me in a position where my gifts could be developed. I remembered those people. I remembered when I first entered the seminary, I never thought that I would ever faced persecution from fellow Christians. I expected to receive misunderstanding and persecution from outside and I was ready for that. But suddenly while I was there, the arrow came from there. I was just eighteen and first time in the seminary. First thing I did was, there was one senior student who was there, and now he is in Singapore, so I called him and he was such a dear brother. I was saying, "I want to go home. I could stand if the persecution was from outside but I could not stand it when it's from inside. I was not expecting this." Tears were running down my eyes and I said, "I want to go home." I was down in the administration area and he was up in the dorm. So over the intercom, he said, "You just come up. I want to talk with you." So I walked all the way up, he opened the door. The first thing he did was he gave me a hug then he prayed. He held me in his arms and prayed. I felt very good because I have never been hugged before. I was brought up in a typical Chinese way and I have never heard my parents say, "I love you." In a typical Chinese upbringing, they never hug you. But you know they love you. They never tell you but you are supposed to know that. I felt good and after that I was encouraged and I stayed back. What would have happened if that brother did not have a relationship with me and encourage me?

I remembered when I first started the ministry in Penang, Malaysia. I was fresh and young in the faith, young in the Lord, just come from the Baptist church and we launched into this missionary society. I remembered how difficult it was and at times when we went out people invited us to eat. We did not want to go because we were not sure whether we have to pay or not. I remembered clearly one time when I was

sitting at a coffee shop that sells noodles, they were ordering everything and everyone was just sitting there fellowshiping. They asked if I have ordered anything, I said, "I will just have a drink." Actually I wanted some food. I remembered times like this when you only have enough bus fare to go home but not enough to come back. We started in faith at that level. There were less than ten of us. There were always these two dear sisters; they are both in the ministry today. One was a kindergarten teacher; you know she does not earn much. Another was a nurse. I rented one room and on the ground floor of a three-storey house, once in a while I would see the five dollars note on the door. I was wondering who dropped it there. One day, when I heard the five dollars drop, see when you need finances you are hearing it all the time, I quickly went near the door and peeped out and saw this kindergarten teacher walking away. I never forget the relationship that people has chosen.

There are three levels of relationship in Jesus' life. There is Jesus and the three disciples, Peter, James and John. Secondly, there is Jesus and the twelve disciples. Thirdly, there is Jesus and the crowds. Let's be realistic. We can not know everybody personally because we have only one body and we are unipresent not omnipresent. If we are omnipresent we could know everybody intimately. But we are only unipresent, so we are limited to our circle. Everybody should have their Peter, James and John. Everybody should have their field of relationship. The marvel of this is through time, I remembered these were the two sisters that used to support me. It reminds me of Jesus and the women who supported Him in Luke 8. These were the dear sisters who faithfully supported and through time they went into the ministry and by the time my ministry was more established, I started supporting them. Many were the times when I received letters from them sharing with me that the support came just on time. Sometimes I sat there and marvel at the grace of God. Once they have helped me and now I am in a position to help them and I am still helping them. I will not stop until Jesus comes because I won't forget the good things people have done. I learnt to be grateful because of relationship. Imagine what will happen if there were no people who are willing to take the extra trouble to know you better and form closer relationship with you. There will be no development. It's so important for us to remember this. It's not enough to have you, your family and your dog. You need to extend your hand outward and pay the price to relate.

There were many people in the bible and you noticed one particular thing about them. Most of those leaders mentioned are people who have made sacrifices and opened their homes. They are specially mentioned by name at the end of it, like Priscilla and Aquila in I Cor. Paul writes on how Aquila and Priscilla had a meeting in their homes. To the Romans he wrote at the ending, he talked about how Gaius was opening his house there. So we realized that there are these special things. Paul had special relationship with some people too who used to follow him and have established relationship with him.

Relationships are important. In fact in Acts 9, Paul was born again, but the people did not accept him. In verse 26, "And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple." Paul was rejected. But a man called Barnabas, he took time and effort, you see in order to get to know people we have to spend time. There's no short cut for this. We have to sit and spend time with the people. Barnabas took Saul aside, talked with him, understood him and brought him to the apostles. So Paul met the apostles

and they began to relate together. The story ends in Acts 9 after Paul was sent to his hometown and you never hear of Paul again in chapter 10. In fact for a period of nearly nine years, you never hear of Paul again. By the time you hear of Paul in Acts 11, which is already about nine years later. There was one relationship that Paul had formed with Barnabas. So one day Barnabas was called to minister in Antioch in Acts 11:24 “For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.” Then it says, “Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Paul.” Nine years later Barnabas sought Saul. Why, because Barnabas remembered Saul. They had formed a relationship and out of that relationship grew a ministry and a gift of God.

Don't underestimate the power of relationship. Jesus died on the cross of Calvary so that your relationship with your husband, your relationship with your wife, your relationship with your brothers and sisters, your relationship with your loved ones, your relationship with the church people, your relationship with every one, whether they are Christian or non Christian, that your relationship with them may be right. He went to the cross for that. Not just to give us a theological doctrine to believe but Jesus has died on the cross that He may unite God to man and man to man.

So here Barnabas went for Saul. He took Saul to the open door. Just because of one man, Paul's ministry had an opening. We have a bible school and we train people in the ministry. We have special sessions, special courses. During the special sessions, we analyze every lecture that had gone on and answer any questions. There are different types of lecturers we invited, so we analyze any areas that have not covered in the course. During the special sessions, we also share with them the experiences of the ministry and all those things that you go through. One of the things that you will learn, especially if your new ministry is coming up, you are called to fivefold ministry is that relationship that plays about 90% of your ministry being established. Your own gifts plays only 10%. Of course relationship alone will not establish you if you don't have the gift. If your gift is not there, people put you in a position to function, you can not function. But it's the relationship that open door.

We have many ministers from our church that are traveling. Some are in prophetic ministry. Some are evangelists and some are teachers. They travel all over the world. One of them is in Australia at the moment. I always tell them this: if you want open doors, it's important to establish relationship. For example, let me illustrate from the ministry side. When a place opens to you, you are an evangelist and you enter into a church and you minister. After you leave the church, don't just treat it as an organization, remember the people inside. Remember the pastor there. When you leave the place, don't forget to keep in touch with them. Because when you keep in touch with them, you keep on the relationship. See you are not just interested to be part of the program and then finish and run off. You are interested to be a friend to them. When you leave a place, remember to send a letter to them so that you keep an open door to them. So when that happens, supposing you are an evangelist, then when one door opens, many other doors start opening. It will always remain open. But if you don't know how to keep the doors open, every time you have only one door because you go through that door, the moment you leave, that door is slammed and they don't want you back again. Then you pray for another door to open. You go to that door, when you finished all your work, then you kick the dust off your feet and run off. You always have only one door. But when you have a door open and you

maintain a relationship, once they know you, anytime when they have a need of an evangelist they may call you again. So when one door is opened, it remains open. So in the first year, you have only five doors, then you maintain that five doors. If every year you have five doors opened, then in two years you have ten doors. But if all the time you are only working on one door, after two years you still have only one door.

In the secular realm we use different word for that. For example, when you open your business, you are not just interested in selling your products. You are interested in establishing your clients. For example, if you open a sundry shop, you are interested not just with a one-time purchase because yours is a sundry shop; you want to establish a constant flow, so that when one client comes in, you have a relationship with that client. After you have won the client over, the client will know you. He/she will tell people, there is Joe's shop there, I always buy things from that shop because he is good to me. You see, there's an establishment. But suppose Joe is a couldn't care less guy, so you come into the shop to buy something. He just sits on the chair there. No service, nothing. All he is interested is the money. When you come in, he wonders how much money you will use to buy his goods. He is what I call a penny wise, pound-foolish guy. If all you want to buy is a five cents box of matches, Joe is not interested. He wants more profit than that. So he ignores you. But he forgot that once you like to buy things from that shop, even if you just buy a five cents box of matches this time but you may buy other things next time.

I remembered a university student who one time went to buy food from a canteen. Being a university student and still studying, every cent counts. So when he went to the canteen and bought food, he got the wrong change and it's just the difference of twenty or thirty cents. He insisted that he had it but the owner said; you are wrong, I am right. Because of this he never went back to the canteen again all because of the difference of twenty or thirty cents. There was a bad relationship. What the canteen owner forgot was that the student represents about three meals a day. Three hundreds and sixty days a year and he had three more years of university. How much if it times three. How much business he is losing. It's thousands of dollars involved. But all the owner could see was the twenty or thirty cents. You are not just interested in what is there; you are looking further than that. That's what relationship does. You never know the importance of establishing good relationship. Which is what I always tell people. If ever you have to leave any place, you leave the church, and then if you are launching out to something, make sure that the relationships are good and well established. Usually those who had trouble with relationship they will run. Remember this, we are not saying every place is perfect. The perfection or imperfection of a place is not a measure. But remember your heart and your relationship must be right because somewhere along the line you may need that relationship. Not only that, further down the line in the eternity we have to meet that fellow in heaven. So we might as well have a good relationship now.

It's surprising that many times even pastors, especially if they are successful, they are not interested in relationship with others. I mean it is an easy thing if you have a large church to be self-dependent. You have to be any part of any association because you are large enough. Sometimes we forget that no man is an island. We are not called to build our kingdom. We are called to establish the body of Christ. So it's important for us to take note of this. Many times you noticed this, when you call for a pastor's fellowship, pastors from the huge churches are not interested. The pastors from the

smaller churches will come. One day, the smaller one grows big, they also say bye bye. When God look down from heaven, He sees we all are like kids. We are not growing. We forget that we are not in this or in that just to see what we can get out of it, but we are in it because God placed us in it. We have an eternal responsibility to the whole body of Christ. The only reason that I am down here, I am taking the time to come here, getting away from my family and sacrificing the time for here is because I believe in the body of Christ and believe in doing God's will. That's nothing else in the world that can bring me. It's because we see the importance of our responsibility in the body of Christ, of building the body of Christ. That's the vision we all must have.

There are two areas we need to learn for our primary relationship. In a family, why are there relationships? Because relationship helps us to understand: No.1 authority. No.2 love. If you don't understand authority you will never be successful. Only those who understand authority, how to obey authority will be the people who will know how to use authority.

Lets look at Matthew 24. Why relationship? Because of two things. Relationship helps us to understand the two most important things that God wants us to have. Remember that all of us are like little bricks in God's house. As a little brick in God's house, you formed part of the temple of God. You have to know who is on your left and who is on your right, who is below you and who is above you. To know your position as a brick, unless you are all loose bricks in the pile; but if you have been taken by God and placed in your part in the kingdom, whether the eye, the hand or the ear, we must find our place in the body and know where we stand. One of the hardest things for a person to learn because of sin nature is obedience and submission to authority. One of the keys to bringing up children is this: you would seek to break the child's will into a submissive child without breaking the child's spirit. That's difficult.

John Wesley's mother had a small little writing about bringing up children. It's quite a rare book today. I don't think that it is still in print. She wrote about bringing up children. She brought up John Wesley. She was so skillful at bringing up children that John Wesley asked her to write something about bringing up kids. This was what she said: The moment a child is born, one of the first things you should seek to do is to break the child's will. Why, because the children do not want to yield. Sin nature is such that we partake of Adam's nature and we are rebellious." So she said the first thing is to break the child's will without breaking the spirit. There are two extreme on that. On one extreme is where the child runs wild and rebellious. You could look at children and see whether their will has been broken or not. If the children's will has not been broken, the father says 'come here'; the child will say, 'no, I don't want'. You will know this kid's will has not been broken. They do not understand authority. This is very important because authority is learned in the home. If you don't learn authority in the home, you will never be obedient in society. It is a fact that a tremendous high percentage of criminals are criminals because they are breaking authority and breaking the laws in society. It's due to their broken homes. Sometimes they come from good homes, but the good homes sometimes don't teach authority.

God Himself places among the Ten Commandments this commandment, Thou shall honor thy father and mother. Among the Ten Commandments, you wonder why God put that in; because it's in the home that we learn to yield our will. Then we learn to yield our will to God. Then we become obedient citizens. We become a blessing to

the society. But people who do not understand authority in the home become rebellious in society. They don't understand how to respect their father, their mother, and their loved ones. They will never respect authority outside. If you don't believe me, you can take this principle and do a research on that. You will find out that the people who do wrong things outside are because at home they have not learned authority. Their wills have not been broken to submit to authority. It's one of the hardest things for a person to submit his/her will to another authority. But if you learn to do that when you are small then you will be able to do it when you have grown up. Everyone has authority over them; every one of us has to answer to an authority. In various areas we have to yield to different authorities here and there. All has a responsibility and accountability to somebody. If we do not understand authority we will not be able to use authority correctly. On one extreme, there are children who are rebellious and whose wills have not been broken and they are not submissive. On the other extreme, where some children are just being abused, the parents are not really parents. I mean they are Pharaohs and need Moses to come. So they will beat their children and pressurized them. They not only break the child's will, they break the child's spirit as well. You look at those children, even though the children looked very quiet, don't make noise, don't run around, they also don't smile. They are in fear. They will grow up as people who are unproductive, uncreative, with a great inferiority complex. So that's being abused. We don't want that. We don't want that side either. We want to be balanced.

In Matthew 24, there is a story of a servant, verses 45-51, "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begin to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Now notice what the evil servant did. The evil servant apparently did not learn authority. You can tell it here. See the moment the master goes off and delays his coming; the true nature of the servant comes up. At first the master is around and he was just like a mouse. I mean he looks very obedient. But his obedience to authority when the master was around was superficial. It was not from his nature. His nature was evil and rebellious. His obedience is as a mouse. But when the master leaves he turns out to be as rat. All the evils in him came out. He took authority and look at what he did with his authority. He beat the other servants. That's an abuse of the authority. He went beyond what he should do. His very nature is evil. So you notice here he began to sit and drink with the drunkards. Darkness attracts to darkness. He was drawn to all these people. He began to waste. He did not appreciate what he had. He wasted everything. That is a servant who has not served with his heart. His heart was evil. There was no training in him. The other servant was called the faithful and wise. He says, when the master goes off, the servant still obey. See the test of your children's training is when your children are left alone at home, what will they do? If you had trained them up properly like the bible says, Train the child up in the way of the Lord, when he grows up he will not depart from man, the child will obey you. Perhaps you were on this angle here, you were tyrant in your home, and so your

children looked very obedient but all are superficial. It's like the little kid who was sitting in the church and was making a lot of noise, standing on the pew and shouting and screaming away. The mother says, "Sit down." The child says, "No." The mother says, "If you don't sit down, I will whack you." So he sits down. Then he tells his mother, I am still standing on the inside. See they didn't win the obedience.

The bible says, obedience is better than sacrifice. One of the hardest things for us to learn when we first start off in life is to learn obedience and submission to authority. It's very difficult for people to submit if they don't do it in their home. Now it's easy to submit if someone is better, more intelligent, more talented, and cleverer than you. But if you think you are better, smarter, more talented, you will find it more difficult to submit. But yet Jesus set the example and showed us that the right way is to submit onto all things that are right. In the Gospel of Luke chapter 2, Jesus went to Jerusalem when He was twelve years old. Verse 46, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. His mother came, in verse 48 "So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, 'Son, why have You done this to us?'" Now Jesus was perfect. Even though He was twelve years old, He was as much Son of God as He was when He was thirty-three. Jesus Christ was perfectly man and perfectly God. Jesus was sinless. Jesus was perfect. You can see how smart He was. He was sitting with the doctors of the law and He was asking questions and also answering them. What a tremendous mind He has! What wisdom He has! While He was sitting in the temple asking and answering questions and learning all these things, here comes the mother. You know when the mummy can not find the kid for three days, how she could feel. Here comes the mother, now Mary, if she was a typical woman, she would not have said, O dear, we have been looking for you for three days, come now lets go. No, if she were a typical woman, she would have said those words differently. The most marvelous thing was that the Lord Jesus who was smarter than the mother, smarter than Joseph, the bible says here in Luke 2:51 "Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them." If the mummy told Him to wash the dishes, He would say yes. He was smarter than them yet He could submit. That teaches us a lesson.

It's most important for us to let fruit in our life to take time to grow. There is a time and a season for every thing. Sometimes you think that you may know more than another person who is above you in authority. It doesn't mean that you understand and rebel and topple the person. That's wrong. If so, just be faithful, that's God's key. Be faithful and in due time God will grant that your gift will make room for you. But the thing is that people think it comes very fast. No, your gift will make room for you through a period of time for that gift to be shown and manifested and recognized. But the gift will make room. Most of the time because we have not learnt submission, we are impatient. I mean you know, if we were in Jesus' position, here you are called to be apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher, five calls, you will be sitting in your house, shaking your legs and wondering when you can get out of this authority. That's what most people are. Jesus with five offices, some of us, all we have is just the gift of healing and perhaps your elder or your pastor says, "Don't do this at this moment." You say, "He doesn't know what he is saying." See, there is something wrong here. If you go and lay hands on the sick, I am not sure whether it works. People can rebel against authority and then suddenly go and function in their gift. Something is wrong. How can we on one hand running down this and running down

that. So it's important for us to realize that your gift will make room for you. It did not say, you would make room for you. See, most of the time we are trying to make room for our own gift. Perhaps you have the gift of prophecy and you find that is not the time. I understand the things that are going on. I understand the realism that is there. That's where on the pastor's side there must be understanding and on the congregation there must be understanding as well. There will be a percentage that has to find their place, find their fellowship, and find the church, etc but generally if we all understand the ways of the Lord and let the gifts of God find their place. Like water finding its own level, then there will be very little strife. We just let growth come forth. So most of the time we are making room for ourselves. We have a gift and then we say, when can I do this. I can imagine as if the Lord Jesus Christ was all the time when He was twelve years old, He is always telling the Father, when, come on, I am dying to go out. By faith and patience we shall bear much fruit. So we realize that on one side, understanding authority is where you don't make room for yourself, you die to self.

In fact there are four levels in progression of wisdom. The first level starts with fearing the Lord and obeying. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The first mark is obedience. The first step into the wisdom of God is learning to obey God. Learning to obey His Word. Learning to submit to authority. Now submission includes not only physical submission but it includes an attitude of submission. It includes also what I call submission of your mouth. In the bible if you say that you submit and then you go behind and say something else, that's not submission. That's conspiracy. That's one thing we have to learn not only within the church but also within society as a whole. We teach our people that it's wrong to speak evil of rulers of your nation. It's in the bible. It's common for the people in the stalls to do it. I am sure every country is the same. You have people out there criticize that, criticize this. We Christians should not join them. We are different and we don't do that but we pray. See submission, a lot of people out there don't understand submission because they don't read the bible. Bible's submission is these areas. If you pay your taxes and you grumble, you are not submitting very well.

The bible says, render taxes to whom taxes are due. Render honor where honor is due. If you submit and grumble is not bible's submission. It's only physical show of submission. Paul himself recognized it. Acts 23, when the Sanhedrin council captured him, remember that the Sanhedrin council in the New Testament had both legal authority to a certain extent under the Romans Empire as well as religious authority. So in Acts 23:2 "And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth." Paul was also quite short-fused sometimes. So Paul scolded him and said, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall." That is one time you see Paul was a little bit not quite perfect. "For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?" Now Paul's principle was right. But there is another principle involved. Another guy standing next to Paul said, who was not Paul's friend. He was one of Paul's captors. "Verse 4, "And those who stood by said, 'Do you revile God's high priest?'" Then in verse 5, "Then Paul said, 'I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest;'" and then he quoted a scripture against himself. He said the bible says, you shall not speak evil of the ruler of your people.

Now it's important for us to understand this fact because in our church we teach the people the same thing. At one time in our country there was this thing going on and among a group of lawyers they wanted to do this; to go on strike and all this sort of thing. A member of my church, we have a whole group of lawyers, we got all kinds of profession in our church. She was one of the top lawyers and she asked me, "What do you think? We all are going to wear this armband." I told her this; I said from the scripture, as far as the scripture is concerned, we do not advocate this type of means. Whether we agree or disagree with whatever is done it is not right for us to use carnal means and carnal methods. So I said, "Even though you may be the odd guy out don't join. Why, because Christians must be different. I know in your heart and mind you may say, 'Then we will be most easily bullied.'"

Listen carefully, Jesus yielded and won because it's God's power. Jesus said, 'blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.' See the power is of God and not of man. So we need to understand the submission includes our mouth, our attitude and our action. So the next time you submit to a law, to a rule, whether in an organization, in a group, in the society, to your nation's laws, remember this, your submission must be three fold. If you really want to flow along with God, it must be three fold. The bible even goes as far as to say, though God appoints the laws and the rulers. It's in the book of Romans. So understand this fact and start to apply in your home. You can see the relationship now. If in the home, you don't learn to submit, you could see teenagers growing up, they may do something in front of their parents and another thing behind them. Then they may backbite and badmouth their parents. You watch those teenagers when they grow up as adults, they will do the same to other organization and other groups. Because we learn authority in the home, that's why we need relationship in the home. The relationship at home is usually the husband and wife. Let me just add this little bit here.

There are two most important things for wives to know about husband and two most important things for husbands to know about wife.

No.1 is to respect the husband. Included in respect is the word submission that is in the bible is never run down your husband in front of others. Never speak evil of your husband in front of others. So if you are a submissive wife, I did not say that you couldn't disagree privately or discuss privately. What you do privately in your discussion time is different. But in front of others you do not badmouth. You submit in the flesh. You submit in your attitude. You submit with your mouth. If you want to win your husband, this is one important thing you must remember. To respect. You know what is respect? To give honor. That is let him be the he-man. What involved in that is, you see there is no greater encourager for the husband than the wife. The husband may be the top executive and his boss may say he has done a good job. But there is nothing like his own wife saying you are a great man. Most ladies because they know their husbands' weak points find it very hard to say that. You could tell how long a couple has married by the way they walk. If they came together in the car, but either the husband comes in first or the wife comes in first and it's about ten feet's between them. Then they have been married quite long, possibly about five to ten years. If they are fresh couples they will come in together. The kids will also be with them. They changed through time as they get to know each other. You notice in the supermarket sometimes the wife in front and the husband at the back trailing. In the street, the husband leading, the wife trailing. During their first three months of

marriage, it was different. Yes dear, be careful dear. So we realize that in the home it's important for the wife to say good things about the husband to encourage him. I read one very touching story of how one guy got bankrupted. Every creditor was after him. Everything was after him. The only person who believes in him still is the wife. That story was written in one of the business magazine. It was the wife who encouraged the husband to get back on his feet. He finally got everything back and re-established himself and became what I call a success story today. It's the words of the wife that hurts the man most. So ladies, you got the power you don't know of.

No.2 to the man your physical appearance is still important. You could tell many times ladies neglect that. Before married they dress very well. When you get up in the morning, you are there at the dressing table. Your husband is still waiting for his breakfast downstairs. He says, dear, when is my breakfast coming. You say, wait dear; I have to look beautiful for you. It takes about three hours. Most ladies tend to neglect that, especially in Asia. You look at them, before they marry; they dress well to please the man. After married all different. They will say, after all he knows me already. They don't take care of their appearance at all. Near my office, there was this lady selling drinks. One day she got married. You could literally see it; before she got married, she was well dressed. Her hair was well combed even though she was serving drinks. After she got married, you could see her clothes all crumbled, her hair was not well combed. I did not know what happened until one day my wife talked to her and found out that she got married. Most women don't realize that. They are not as concerned to be prim and proper anymore.

For the man, the two most important things for the woman are: Man and woman doesn't think the same way. On her anniversary, you may buy her a refrigerator or a microwave. She is still not happy because she prefers the flowers. To the man's economic mind, a microwave and a refrigerator equal many flowers. But to the lady's mind, one flower is worth a thousand microwaves, especially from her beloved. See we are thinking on a different wavelength. Man don't ever forget this, that to ladies your little notes of love, your little gift even if its inexpensive, the little flowers that you continue to bring home means more to her than a house. That's no.1. Don't ever forget it. Most people after they were married for five to ten years, the flowers are reduced according to the years. Ladies are sentimental by nature. They love these things. They still look for the knight in the shining Armour. Second most important thing to the woman is that ladies want you to lead. They want you to lead in small things and in big things. They like you to do things for them. Be the leader and lead the way.

I remembered when I was entering into Australia, filling up all these cards and declaring the things. Usually my family travel with me and I fill all the cards for my family. Then I will give my wife to sign. I saw another couple, a French couple, an Indian French man and a French lady. The French man filled his own card and gave his wife the other card. The wife was carrying the baby and trying to fill the card. The wife said, "Please help me to declare." I heard the French man said, "You declare yourself. It's yours." I saw the frustration on the wife's face. These are the small things in life that mean big things. Ladies wants you to lead the way. They don't go for man who is little mice. They are ladies; they want you to lead in all things.

In the home we learn authority. In the home we learn acceptance. It's funny how when people are not accepted in their home and don't feel loved. Unless they get it

somewhere they will never be whole the rest of their life. They will keep trying to prove themselves and get accepted because every one of us wants to be loved. We were all born with a vacuum in our heart asking for love. That love in a perfect home was supposed to be received. But sometimes we don't receive that in our homes. As a result, we go through life with a vacuum of rejection. So the rejection is in our life all the time. The funny thing is that because you are rejected you can never accept others. People who relate to others easily accept others because they have been accepted. They have felt accepted. So because of the rejection that is in their life, they never felt a parent love, when they are thrust out into society, with their working colleagues, they are very withdrawn and fearful. Why, because they fear more rejection. Sometimes when people have the wrong type of love for them, its lust and not love, they think that is acceptance and they fall into the pit of immorality. Why, all the time they are not looking for lust. They were looking for love and acceptance. So people are drawn into wrong things. Why do people succumb to peer pressure? Why do young people succumb to wrong influence and bad elements in society and go for drugs and all the wrong activities? It is because they want to be like their friends and want to be accepted.

Even grown-ups have their own peer pressure. Even grown-ups do strange things, just to be among others. For example, when you travel among executives in the plane. If you are traveling in a business class, they will ask you whether you want wine, champagne, or coffee. You look around; all those businessmen are drinking wine. You say wine please. That's adult peer pressure. Why should we do that? We should just say, orange juice please. Why couldn't we stand? We are insecure. The home is supposed to be the place to bring security to us. There is no security unless you know you have been loved. If that is lacking in your life, there will be insecurity the rest of your life. An insecure person will never have secure relationship. A secure person is in advantage because the person can build correct relationship. People who are insecure get into all kinds of wrong relationship, either oppressive or domineering type of relationship. All these wrong relationships are because in the home security is not provided for. Thank God in Ephesians I it tells us that God has accepted us as the beloved. Thank God that whatever kind of home you come from, whatever brokenness that you have; God can bring the acceptance in. But if you observe this in the development of a person, I have got a series on wisdom that talks a little bit on this, that if people get accepted in the area which I call small little recognition, something happens to them in their life and they become achievers in society.

I grew up in a home that was typically Chinese. We don't express our love. Actually there was a vacuum of love. I don't blame my parents because they themselves did not receive love. But in that kind of home, we never hug and we never express our love as a family together. So I grew up in that kind of life. It took me a long time to overcome that. In the first four years of my ministry, I had to struggle with these two things that I am teaching tonight, authority and love. Because I never understood how to yield to authority for I was never trained properly in the way of the Lord. There were times in the early days of ministry when I will get into problems with the elders. Basically I was still a teenager, so I would have the knowledge in the bible. I would have zeal. I would have the gift of God. There would always be an elder sitting on the board saying, "I don't think the church is ready for this yet." Here am I on fire for the Lord. Lets have a prayer meeting for revival. I am not sure if it's acceptable yet. Lets ask the AGM about this. So I had a problem with that. This is what I found later I

couldn't stand it. I left and I went to another place far away to a different church. Guess what happened? There was another elder there who didn't know the other elder, who had not communicated and this one was the chairman and he said, "I am not sure what the church thinks about prayer meetings. I am not sure about your overnight prayer meeting." I found out that you could never run away from problems because if you run away from one situation, you will run into another. If you don't overcome it, you will be going round and round the wilderness. You go to the next place, you face the same thing again. Until you look up to heaven and say, "God, what's happening? Why am I stuck on this?" And God will say, "Overcome it."

I learned to overcome. I learned to overcome and I learned to work with elderly people. The day I overcome that, I felt something grew in me. All the time there was some need to grow that didn't grow. Today I have more elderly people working together. Usually in any project, I always put the older people with the younger people because I observed older people have more caution. It is good to have them because sometimes they have made mistakes in their youth that the young ones have not made yet. So the young man want to do those things and the elder say, "Don't go that way. I have gone there before. Nothing is there." So this can avoid making some mistakes. We always have elderly people but then we need the young men because the young men are willing to do new things. Why, they are just starting here, nothing much to lose. So they are more vibrant. More daring and you need those people there. We always try to have a mixture of both. The young has nothing to lose and they are willing to risk more. So you need a combination of both. I have learnt to work with both old and young. It's a good combination. So that was my problem. I found it hard to relate. In the end I had to overcome. Today even those who are much older than me, who are my elders, I could tap them on the shoulder. That's a respect. Like Paul says, "To those who are older treat like your father. To those who are older women, treat like your mother. To those that are younger than you, treat like your brothers and sisters." And there is a way to do it. I know some pastors who don't know how to treat their elderly folks. They talk to them, "Hi, you over there. That guy is over sixty years old." Don't talk to old man like that. Why, I suspect that pastor in his own home did not learn how to respect. See it's all from the home. When we learn to talk and learn to relate, it's going to go a long way. Let me repeat 90% of your ministry is relationship.

All the time there was the vacuum for love. It was slowly that God began to deal in my life and began to show me the revelation of the Father heart of God that I was healed on the inside. That was when I began to see things changing. I began to feel secure. Then I become secured in ministry. See you will no more like the insecure evangelist or insecure pastor or insecure church member because basically you are secured in the Lord. You know where you stand. If you were insecure you are opposite in two ways. You either trying to prove to everybody something or you are so afraid to launch forth and both are wrong. If you are secured in God you will be willing to do exactly what God tells you to do. If God didn't tell you wouldn't do. You are completely obedient because you are secured. You don't have anything to prove and you are not out to prove anything. You are only out to obey God. You are not out to please anybody. You are not out to prove anything. You are only interested to do what you feel is the right thing to do. It is when we over do, trying to prove ourselves then we become like king Saul in the bible.

King Saul did not learn authority. King Saul had an image problem. When Samuel chose him and met him, king Saul said, "I am the least of my father's tribe and my father's house. My father's house is the least." He had great insecurity. Something was wrong in his upbringing. When they were going to install him as king in I Samuel, everybody was ready but king Saul was hiding. See that tells you there is something wrong in him. If you put someone in authority in your church that has some flaw in that area, you are going to see problems later. King Saul when he was placed as a king, it was not very long before he started doing things that he should not do. All that is in the bible. He sacrificed when he should not. He was told to kill the Amalekites and wipe out everything but he kept the goats and the sheep and the cattle. Why did he do that? It's all started in himself. No wonder in the bible, when you qualify church elder, the most important qualification, do you notice in all the qualifications it never mentioned about gifts? Gifts are important in its function but it mentioned qualities. All those qualities are based on relationship. Do you notice it says; have good reputation in the church and in the world? It mentioned in the qualification of bishops, elders and deacons then it mentioned also their home. Because there is where it starts.

Tonight God wants to deal with right relationship in our home. I sense in my spirit that there are a lot of areas in our lives that need to be dealt with. Because its not dealt with, some of you are wondering why are you struggling in the church here. If you examine your life, in your family you didn't have a right relationship. It begins in your home. I am saying it's going to be easy. At least now we know and have a goal to work at that. Almost every person who has a right home relationship, pastors you can test that out, you check all the members in your church; you will notice every one has good homes. But every one who has a problem in any place, in any fellowship, in any church, you check it out. In their home they have problems. It starts in the home. If you want to be leader and to be used by God in your gifts, it starts in the home right where you are. God will start there.

## 2. UNDERSTANDING PATIENCE

Last week we concentrate more on teaching. I have been busy this week, working on my science book. This past month my wife told me I was like a mad scientist. I have completed a book on theory in atomic physics. That is a postulates about four or five new things that could explain the recent superconductor have been discovered and announced on May 11, 1987 in the Time Magazine. So we are working towards that. Thank God that by His grace that the mind of Christ helps us to understand some of these things that have been happening. I was completing the final part of the theory and I was getting all these experiments that has been documented in the science magazine to verify the theory. So Friday was our overnight prayer and after overnight prayer, Saturday morning I went back home, all the things were still running in my mind. Explanation for the atom and the neutron and all those things. Basically science today is quite complete in explaining electron and neutron and proton, so they have no problem about the electron shell. But what happens between proton and the neutron is still quite a mystery. Still what we called a standard model and theory of atomic physics that is not completed yet because they are still looking for certain articles. They are still working on that and in the States they are going to build a seven or eight billion-dollar accelerator just to try to get all these things out. So the Lord began to give me understanding and revelation in that area so we can put it all down and work it out with mathematics. One of the things He explained and predicted was what I call sub-neutron shell. It's never been heard of or mentioned. I did some calculations and tabulated all the shells then I tested it out with one of the experiments and that was among the science book to verify it. I realized that modernization is science. So I went back on Saturday and still working on that. My mind started flowing and I tabulated the whole thing. In the afternoon I took a nap and before I go for a nap I prayed and spend time with God in worship. The moment I wake up from my nap, the Lord gave me thought and told me to go back among the many huge books that I have. About half of my library is filled with science books, the other quarter is computer books and the rest are the Christian books. So when I got up the Lord told me to look into that and this is what it was. You see they know that water is H<sub>2</sub>O and hydrogen has three isotopes. For the water there is supposed to be two hydrogen items and one-oxygen items. According to theory, there are supposed to be 90 degree in position the two items but in experiment they have always found that it was 104 degree. So I took the theory and I managed to formulate and did some calculations. Based on my calculation I should be 103.5-degree angle, so I put everything down, copyrighted it and then sent it. That is what I was working for the past week but I have not forgotten to spend time with the Lord. I just share this testimony to show that Christianity is not a one-track thing that we are so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good. I mean that if we have Jesus in our heart, we should be the best engineers, the best accountants, and the best businessmen on this planet earth. We should have God helping us to do the practical thing this life. Here we have what we call life principles or principles on which we based our life.

Last week we talked about how important building relationship are in our life. Tonight we want to talk especially of the importance of developing patience. If you have faith without patience, you may not get the result. Patience is an important twin. A twin force that work with faith. Patience is related to the development of our character. The more mature you are the more understanding you become. The more merciful you become the more patient you are. One of the characteristics of God that

the bible tabulates is that God is longsuffering. So that tells us about His great patience. In fact the word longsuffering in the Hebrew carries a meaning of slow to ruffle. He doesn't get angry or upset easily. Longsuffering demonstrates not only patience but also character.

You wouldn't think much of a person who loses his/her temper often and you begin to lose your respect for that person. People who are impatient with others is a reflection of not only the lack of fruit of patience but is a total reflection of their character. People who are impatient are like little kids. Kids are impatient. Patience is not something that we are born with; it's something that we have to grow in God with Christ. As we grow in the years we grow to be more patience. If you ever had kids travel with you and you start driving to another town for four or five hours, the kids say when are we going to reach. Every fifteen minutes they will ask you when are we going to reach. When you reach the place, they will start playing around at that place and just as you check in everything, the kids will say when are we going home. Kids don't have patience. But as we grow in life we develop patience. Patience is not something that comes automatically. It has to be learned. It has to be acquired and we have to be trained in that. The thing that we want to show is that patience is related to our character. The more character we have, the more patience we have with others. It's a life principle that we need to have. For in heaven God measures not just our works but He measures our character. Of course He will reward us for the work we do but God is also interested in how much we have changed to be like Him and how our characters have been formed and renewed to be like Christ.

Lets look at Romans 5:3 it says, "And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

Now in verse 3, the word tribulation we understand to be trials and tribulations. The word perseverance, whatever your translation is, the Greek word is actually 'hupomone' which is one of the Greek words for patience. The word 'hupomone' has been translated patience in Hebrew but here is what we want to see in Romans 5. 'Hupomone' produces character. If that's the order that Paul is talking about, therefore the only way we can develop the character of Christ is to have great patience. If we do not learn patience, we will not develop the character of Christ. One leads to the other. You may say, well I know about patience. But if you will check your life, you notice that even though we grow up to be adults, we get impatient in many things. When you are launching a project, you are impatient to finish it. When you do this you are impatient. Everything we do we are impatient. Your heart gets stress. Your body goes to type A personality. Why? We don't have to get upset. Upset people are impatient people. Bad tempered people are impatient people. You could go on and on. The basic fault is their impatient.

So patience is a great virtue in our life. We are going to see later how that only when we walk in patience can we walk in God's perfect will. Without patience we will never be willing to follow after God. But only when we develop that kind of character of patience we will follow with God. At one time Kenneth Hagin was talking to Jesus in a vision. In one of his tapes, he said Jesus made this statement to him. Jesus said, 'I do not mind, you know if you are a little bit slow, but don't walk in front of Me.' The Lord told him that I would rather that you be a little bit slow than running in front of

Me blocking the way. Of course we are to walk with the Lord, hand in hand, side-by-side, that's the best. Some of us we have to get confirmation about four times. You say, Lord is that You? Yes, Lord please one more time. Yes. We are very slow at moving in the things of the Lord. Some of us before the Lord say anything; we are already out there. Before He gives instruction, we are already out there working hard. As we get injured, faced difficulties, then we say, Lord, what's happening? Why are you not protecting us? What's wrong, Lord? I am supposed to get protection here. Then the Lord says, 'I am not there. I am here. Come back!' So we are walking too fast ahead of the Lord. We need to learn patience so that we could walk with the Lord.

I could imagine the Lord Jesus Christ. He loves us so much, it says God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not die but have everlasting life. Then Jesus love us so much that He yielded Himself and came down to live on earth that filled with sins, filled with everything that He did not like. I could imagine that it was great patience for Him to wait until He was thirty to start His ministry. It's not easy waiting for that long thirty years. You tell a young person eager to serve the Lord, come on why not we go into the missionary field. Where are we going? So eager to serve the Lord, full of zeal, on fire, but if you are not careful; the fire may burn you up too. We call that wild fire. Some people have the scriptures misinterpreted, it says the Lord makes its ministers flaming fire. Some people are not just flaming fire, they are furnaces, explosion all over the place.

It was tremendous for Jesus to wait. If you think about Jesus' patience, think about God the Father's patience. He waited nearly thousand years, if you go by bible chronological time before He send His Son. Gal. 4:4 "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son." Can you imagine God waited so long? There we are human beings, He was grieved, and He loves us; it is not that He does not love us. But there is a time and purpose for all things. There is a time and season for all things. We must learn to flow with God's season. If you plant a durian tree, you don't harvest the durian until about five years. So it takes time. You don't just plant it and straight away after one year say I don't know why this durian tree never bear fruits. Of course it won't. It needs its regular period to produce.

Even the book of Psalms tells us, Psalms 1:1-3 "blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season."

There are time and season of God. If we get ahead of God's time and season, we are will be in trouble. Sometimes its not just us who get into trouble, sincere people can make you get ahead too. I remember when I was new in the ministry; there was something that happened. You see I was quite new in the ministry, so when I began ministering in the gifts, that was possibly in 1979, 1980, ten years ago. I started ministering among the interdenominational group. So I was based in Penang. We went down to Kuala Lumpur to minister. Then we functioned in the gifts and all those elderly folks who were leaders there said, "We haven't seen local people do that before." They began to take me to this meeting and that meeting. What can a young boy do? I just followed them. But as I looked back now, I realized that I was exposed too fast. They should have been more matured and exposed me less. You know why? My character had not developed to the extent of having the ability to deal with the

situation I was trusted into. I was still a green apple not ripe for harvest. Nothing wrong with the apple, it's just too green. So we need to realize that. As I looked back I realized if I had learned about character and learn about how to deal with people, how to relate with people, how to speak to people and how to be very diplomatic with people which you learn as you grow in life, I would possibly be more easily accepted. Why, because in those days, I don't speak like I speak today. My preaching was something like Praise God, if you hear me; you think it's a fire and brimstone preacher. I have grown mellow through the years. I was impatient. I mean everybody else is backslidden. Lets go on with God. You watch TV, you are backslidden - repent. That was the guy I was. As I looked back I realized I was exposed too fast. Out of good heart and sincerity, people may expose you and open doors for you. God didn't open but man opened. So when you are new in the ministry every opened door is God's door. So you jump into every opened door. Thank God today I realized it's different. The most important thing is to do what God wants you to do. Thank God for sincere people who like to promote you and do things for you. At the same time there are others who would like to push you back. There are all kinds of people. Some will push fast but some, when you want to go there, they are blocking you, like they were the guardians of the faith. There will be people who say, we have never done this before. We have been here for fifty years; it has never been done that way. God has appointed us guardians of the faith. They will never allow any progression of the spirit to go on. So there are all kinds of people. But most of all we got to sense God in our spirit and flow with Him.

I could have been traveling here and traveling there. I have enough invitations to fill up for years if I accept every one of them. Sincere people say, "come, God told you to come. God told me to tell you to come. We have prayed and fasted and we are quite sure that God said it." Of course I would just put it on my shelf and prayed about it. God what do you think about this. Usually God said, well I did not but they forgot about the timing. It's important for us to realize that we ourselves can get out of season in God and be at the wrong season, wrong place, and wrong time. Sincere people, friends, families, partners, loved ones can also sincerely and lovingly get you off the edge without intention to do that. As I examine it, I realized this. It's like any outward expansion must be equal to the inward expansion. So if the extent of your ministry and open doors or of your church or of any areas starts moving bigger and bigger but your personality, your character does not grow, something will give along the way. Either because there's not enough extension inside, outside is expanding and inside is expanding only 1cm in the spirit realm. So the outside is expanding in the spirit realm 1 meter. Before long the external pressure would be greater than the internal capacity to take it and you will be so crushed. So on one side you have the big bang, and on the other side you have a big crush. That is the end of the universe. So we realized that we have to expand inside. Each time when there is an outward expansion like going to mission in certain places that are wide open, then I checked in my spirit. I said, God, I don't sense that I am ready for that. I checked with the Lord. Is it the inward expansion, my character, and my ability able to do that which I have said many times. Like for example, other side principles like fame, we have to be steward of fame because when you become famous, one sentence from your life can affect millions of lives. You can become a stumbling block or a blessing. So the higher we grow in life and the more we become a leader to people, we should be very careful with our words, and in what we do to make sure that we would help people

and not hinder people. We encourage people and not discourage people. It can only happen if the character develops.

Now you understand why I emphasize on life principles. Lets take the business for example. If your business begins to grow from one million to ten millions dollars but your character that was able to handle only one million dollars did not grow fast enough to handle ten millions dollars, then somewhere along the way, either your business will give way or you will give way. So if you are not able to handle that kind of money and all these sides' things happen, either you get crushed or all these things start breaking off. Why, because your staff grow. When your business grows, your staff also grows. So your character was only able to handle five staffs and as a top executive in your tiny little company, calling yourself CEO and chairman over five staffs. One of them was your wife. The other two were your son and daughter. So you actually have only one employee. With that you start expanding. Because to run a ten millions dollars business is different from running a one million dollars business. You need more organizations, more expansions, and more things to do. Your character does not grow but your business grows. So suddenly the five of you got to handle so much things. I tell you, after two weeks of handling that all of you have a new hairstyle. You grow inside until you have the ability to handle ten staffs. But now you employed fifty staffs, what happens? You will always have problems with the other forty staffs, because your ability is to handle ten not fifty. So you can see how important it is. What we talking about is life principles. If we don't have it inside, you can never have it outside. God always deals with the inside first before He deals with the outside. For example, for a church to grow, if you take a pastor who can handle only three hundred people and put the pastor in a church that has a thousand people. His ability can only handle three hundreds. What's going to happen? Somehow, somewhere, by hook or by crook it happens. The congregation dwindle to three hundreds and it stabilized there. Inward expansion equal to outward expansion. The opposite, if you take a person who could handle one thousand people and put that person in a place that has only three hundred people. You know what will happen. The congregation will grow and grow until one thousand people and it will not grow anymore until the person grows on the inside.

There is no outside growth until there is an inside growth whether in business or in a ministry. We need to understand these are life principles. That is why the bible of all things emphasizes character development. It's good to speak in tongues, have the gifts of the Holy Spirit operate in different areas but there must be character development in our life. Of all the things that you study about character development, patience is an important virtue that we need to understand.

Lets look at Hebrew 6:12 "That you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

You noticed here faith and patience inherit the promises. Then in verse 15, "And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise." None of us are going to obtain bible's promises until we learned patience. What the bible is saying is what we are describing a bit more mathematically. See the bible is saying when he had endured patiently. What does the first part say? The first part is actually saying when he had developed, based on Romans 5 that we had read just now, that patience develop character. Patience produces character. Now here it says patience produces and he endured. In other words, what is happening to Abraham? Abraham grew on the inside.

He developed on the inside. He grew and expanded on the inside. That is what he is saying here. When we had patiently endured then the second part came - the outward expansion. It says he obtained the promises. So never look for the outside until you have the inside. The outside will come. He obtained the promises. It came as he desired and all the wonderful promises of God.

Some of us have vision. Some of us God tells us mighty things that you will be involved with in these last days. But remember visions remain visions until that vision grows in you first. The outward vision for it to take place needs the crystallization of that same vision. Not just in the power area but in the Greek the verse in Hebrew 6 that we have just read in verse 12 and in verse 15 is a different Greek word. It's the word 'makrothumia'. It also means patience. So what we learn tonight, there are two Greek words for patience not one. The first one we have mentioned was found in Romans 5 and is also the same word found in James chapter 1, where it says have patience. That is 'hupomone'. In James 1:3-4 "knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" or the Greek says 'hupomone'. "But let 'hupomone' have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." So here in James one he is using the word 'hupomone'. Hebrew 6 he is using the word 'makrothumia'. What does these two words mean? They both mean patience, endurance but there are two characteristics of patience. One is what I call 'hupomone'. The word 'hupo' talks about not over and etc. But the word 'mone' is the same Greek word as 'meno'. The same Greek word that Jesus used in John 15:5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in Him. The word abide is 'meno'. 'Meno' in Me and I in you and you will bear much fruit. So the word patience is 'hupomone'. So is a deliberation from the word abide. You could translate 'hupomone' as continually abiding. Jesus speaks about 'hupomone' as a tree, as a plant and that gives us a picture of Psalms 1:3 'Hupomone' existing as a plant. Constantly, in season continually, timing to the season, great patience, endurance. The other picture of patience is 'makrothumia'. What is 'thumia'? 'Thumia' in the Greek is hot, heat and fire where we get the English word thermoflask. So the word 'thumia' means heat, hot, fire burning. So on the other side is a picture of fire, of heat and warm and the other side is the picture of plant.

Now patience has both characteristics because there are two possible extreme developments. Some people are patient but their patience lack zeal. They look very patient and very slow to move. Not because they are patient but it's because they lack zeal. It's what I call a one-sided development of patience. It's just like a bird with one wing. You know what the bird does. All it has is its left wing. No matter how hard the bird flaps it will only go clockwise. That's the only direction possible. Some people have the other development of patience where the zeal is there. What type of patience is that? It is like this, when difficulty comes, the person overcome it and still continues on. It is this kind of patience like what I call a terror of a bulldog. The bulldog bites you and won't let go. So you kick the bulldog, the bulldog just shake itself and hold even tighter. It has great patience. It bites tighter. So you grab a stick next to you and you are still beating the bulldog and the right side of the bulldog is already blue black but the bulldog is still holding on to that. That is the funny kind of character the bulldog has. That is why Hagin says have the bulldog faith. So I add on to say have bulldog faith but not bulldog face. It seems some bulldogs are trained as killers and you could take a knife and cut off the other half of the body, the other half will still be sticking on your leg. I will say that's tremendous abiding unto death. As

you look at people like that, they got great patience. They are knocked down and they got up again. It's just like children's toy. You punch and it comes up again. So they develop in this area. But this area deals only with zeal. There are some areas that you are not supposed to enter. So actually what will happen is they enter and cross what I call the illegal line. So they enter by hook and by crook and it's illegal because it is out of time. So they get knocked down, they get injured. They are hospitalized for three days. Come back again on the clutches and say, come on lets go. Get knocked down again. You will say this guy has real patience. Lets look in perspective, there are something that happen that should not be happening. There's zeal here, tremendous heat. That's the other type of patience we need to have.

In the bible in the New Testament talks about both development of patience. Moses is a typical example. During the first part of his life he was over here. Moses his first forty years is here. I mean he knew God called him. God chose him. Acts 7 in Stephen's teaching it tells us the story of Moses. Verse 22-25, "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds. Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand." Verse 25 is important; it's a New Testament revelation. It's not recorded in the Old Testament but in the New Testament. He supposed that in doing that his brethren would have understood that God will deliver them through his hand. But they did not understand. So there's Moses full of wisdom and full of mighty deeds. According to the writings of Josephus a Jewish historical scholar, it talks about Moses before he came to know the Lord in Egypt during those times of mighty deeds and trained by Egyptian. He was a mighty warrior and a mighty orator. He went in and out among Pharaoh's army. Tremendous leader. He has charisma and he was a natural leader. So one day as he was walking among his people, he knew he had a call of God in his life to deliver his people. So every time he goes inspecting. Forty years is a long time. So one day it came into his heart to visit his brethren and he was going to play the judge. I mean he was high and mighty. When he saw the Israelites being bullied, the Egyptian Moses rose up like a bulldog, he looked around and saw nobody. He quickly dug a hole, threw this guy in and buried him. That was Moses. He had zeal but he was ahead of God's timing. He had the right goal but the wrong method and the wrong time.

Moses went into detention class. For forty years he went inside there. What was he doing? The bible says, he ran away from Pharaoh and went into the bad part of the wilderness. He hid in the bad part of the wilderness and met Jethro on the first day when he went into the wilderness. They had some adventure too. He sat by the well dressed like an Egyptian and people thought that he was an Egyptian. Sitting by the well there comes these girls taking water. Other people drove the girls away but Moses stood up and helped them. Moses fell in love with one of those girls. He married Jethro's daughter and bore the children. He is now satisfied. He had given up his high and mighty things of prestige and position and has gone to be an ordinary shepherd in the bad part of the wilderness. When God met him in Exodus, he had already given up his goal. He had no interest. He was happy with his children. Happy with where he was. It's good life. He might not have the city things that Pharaoh has. Don't have all those things there but it's a good life. It's a reasonable life to live. He could live happily ever after. So during his next forty years Moses have shifted gear

and came to this side. He had great patience but his patience didn't want to move. He actually gave up. So when God says, 'Moses,' Moses says, 'No, not me Lord.' He had great patience. Earlier on he wants to go when he was the Moses this side. He was on fire. But now this Moses here, you say, 'come on Moses and you push him.' But he says, 'No, one step forward, two steps backward. Push him again, three steps forward, six steps backward. It's patience waiting on God's timing. Now actually he has lost his zeal or he has lost his vision. Forty years in the wilderness he was emptied out until he was nothing.

What God showed Moses was a revelation. You see that patience over there was a fire. That patience there represents a plant. When He brought Moses to His last forty years, He showed him a burning bush. For the first time in the book of Exodus chapter two and three the burning bush was burning. He was taking care of the sheep. He may have noticed the bush burning and say maybe is the sun reflection, so he ignored it. But continually it keeps happening. Let me go and have a look. In fact it tells us that he didn't know what it was. He actually went there to have a look. As he drew near to see why, lets see Exodus 3 his purpose of going near the bush. It says in verse 2-3, "And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of the bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then Moses said, 'I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn.' He was not thinking about his vision, his calling, I mean going back to Israel was the last thing on his mind. He has his work as a shepherd. So when he saw the bush burning, his purpose for going there was I wonder why it never burned out. According to my calculation it should have burnt out by now but this bush is still burning. I wonder why it did not burn away. As he goes near the burning bush, suddenly out of the bush, the Angel of the Lord was there. Of course he can not see the Angel. He saw the bush burning. The Angle on behalf of God said, 'Moses'. When Moses came near and the bush talked to him, his sarong nearly drops. Never seen that before. If Moses was like us, before we walk close to the Lord, we will tremble. The bush continued talking. Lets see what the bush says, in Exodus 3:4 it says "Moses, Moses! And Moses said, 'Here I am.' Then the bush said, 'Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet.'" So he took off his sandals and then finally the bush identifies the source. It says in verse 6, "I am the God of your Father – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God." Moses was so afraid he hid in another bush. God has to call Moses back. It tells us God gave him all those instructions and Moses starts talking to God in verse 11, "But Moses said to God, 'Who am I.'" This is a different Moses. The old Moses this side was saying 'I am who is who, I am who.' Now the Moses that was on that side after forty years in the wilderness said, 'who am I?' That side 'I am who'. This side says, ' who am I?' Then the Lord remove the who. He said I am and You are the You are. No more questions about who is who. So God identified Himself in verse 14, "And God said to Moses, 'I am who I Am.' Now he combined both sides. This side says, 'who am I', that side says, 'I am who.' So God said, 'I am who I am.' At the center of the who, one side says I am and the other side says I am. You can not be anything except what God want you to be because the 'who' who dwells in us is Him Jesus of Nazareth.

Paul says, it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. The same story of Moses is repeated in many lives. Paul once upon a time says I am who brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. He was top of his class. He says in Galatians, he was the best

among all his contemporaries. I am who. Later Paul realized on this side. When he was persecuted, when he had no place to God, then he said 'who am I Lord'. In Arabia he has to discover himself again. He went to Arabia and Damascus for three years. He has to find himself again. All his theology has to be rearranged until the revelation of God come. To all of us as to Moses and as to Paul as to all of us until we realize God is 'I am who I am'. So we are who wants to be who we are.

Moses had that revelation of God. Finally we can see here that Moses told God in chapter 4:

1 "They will not believe me or listen to my voice." God says in verse 2, "What is that in your hand? He said, 'A rod.' God says, 'cast it on the ground.' So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent." In verse 3, it tells us that Moses disappeared. Moses fled. God had to get him back. What was God doing? God says, in verse 4 "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail." But God I am a shepherd. I know about snake. We never catch snakes by the tail. God says, 'do it, because I am who I am.' Yes Lord, You are who You are. I will do it because You are who You are.' And picked up the snake by the tail and that snake turned into a rod. But something happened that day. Finally when Moses obeyed God, it tells us in verse 17, God says, "You shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs." God specially give him the authorization of that rod in his life. In verse 20, "Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt."

Don't forget this phrase in verse 20, Moses took the rod of God, that same rod he had used for forty years was now the rod of God because he met I am who I am. God is speaking to our hearts even tonight. Some of us develop that side - 'makrothumia'. Some of us on this side - 'hupomone'. We all need that burning bush experience in our life. We need to know that all our righteousness is as filthy rags. Our position, our wealth, our education, everything that is valued in human society in God's sight is nothing. We need to have the right perspective. Because if we don't we may end up using those things to serve God instead of using those things to yield to God. That's a different thing all together. And on the other side we must not fall into the extreme of losing our hope even if you have no hope. You must get back to God. The most important thing is the revelation of God in our life. To develop that kind patience that comes from God.

'Hupomone' is the patience develops through the Word. 'Makrothumia' is the patience that develops in the Spirit. So one hand you have the Word, on the other hand you have the Spirit. Sometimes if you have the Word but the Spirit is not blowing yet, you got to wait. Sometimes you have the Spirit but you don't have the Word to back it up yet, you got to wait. Great is the wisdom of those who will love to move with both the Word and the Spirit because if you only have the Word you will dry up. If you have the Spirit you will blow up. But if you have both Word and the Spirit you will grow up. That's what God wants us to do - to have the Word and the Spirit. Lets examine our lives, our character in Him. Be in line with the Word and in the Spirit. There is something the Word says, but the Spirit did not instruct to launch it. Something the Spirit says but you don't have the Word backing your way. Patience in His time all things shall be done.

### 3. THE LOVE OF GOD

I Corinthians 13:4-8 “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bear all things, believes all things, hope all things, endures all things. Love never fails.”

Tonight we are going to look at the Love of God and we are looking at life principles. Last week we talked about patience and it's important for us to have patience. Another ingredient that we need to have in life is what I call love. Love in the bible and in God is not exactly what the world conceived to be love. A lot of times when people talk about love, they are not talking about love. They are talking about lust, which has selfishness involved. The love of God is completely different. As we look at love the way God meant it to be, God's kind of love, the Greek word 'agape' is a sacrificial love. It's a love that will cost something. In the world when people say they love each other, they may not be willing to pay the price or they may not be willing to die for each other or sacrifice for each other. Although in parental love, we see parents sacrificing for their kids and that is a small illustration of what God's love can be. But the true essence of love involves a sacrifice. Love is not doing something that is convenient. In the bible love means giving of our best. Sometimes people say they love each other, they don't actually give their best. But in the bible when we talk about love, love give the best and then love has a cost. In sacrifice there is a cost involved. Love would want to see the best that I given all these things.

In order to understand love, we need to look at God's love, Jesus' love and the love of our Father. The one from whom love flows. Many people have the impression of God that God is a God of judgment. He is always waiting there to seek what wrong you have done and waiting to weigh whether you are good or you are bad. It has a wrong impression of what God actually is like. God is a God of love. He has a tremendous compassion for humanity. So lets look in the bible to try to understand God's love as expressed here in the bible by Paul. We need to look at some scriptures in Romans 8, look at the extent of His love.

In verses 37-39, “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depths, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

That is how great His love is. So great that there is nothing that can separate us from His love.

Romans 5:8 “But demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

A lot of times when we talk about love, our love is conditional. It is conditioned by the quality of that person. Most of the time when somebody likes another person or when he or she loves another person in a natural, they will love that person because of something they see nice in the person. Or something they like about the person. Something good about the person then only they are able to love. That's not God's love. God's love is unconditional. That kind of love we just described is conditional.

It's conditioned upon a person being good. A person being lovable or likable. Having something that you could admire or that you could really take delight in. But the bible says in Romans 5:8, while we were still sinners. While there is nothing lovable about us. There is nothing good in us. We were sinners in God. In Romans 5 it says God loved us and He sent His only Son to die on the cross for us. In fact the bible even tells us something stronger here. In verse 10, "When we were enemies of God", when we were separated from God. Doing things that were disobedient to God. God extended His love towards us. That's what we call unconditional love. We need to practice in our life this kind of love in our life. That's a tremendous life principle we need. For most of the time when you hear parents bringing up children or a loved one talking, you could hear that their love is conditional. A parent will tell the children if you do good then I will love you. That's not God's love. We do not want them to do bad but they must know that if they did badly we don't approve of the evil that they do. But we still love them. That would have been totally different. So God's love is unconditional. There is nothing that you could earn that love because He does not ask for any condition. He loves us because of who He is. The bible declares that God is love. His love comes from the depths of His very being. It is dependant upon His nature and not upon the one receiving. Human love is dependant upon the one receiving. If we were able to renew our mind and let our love grow to the level of God's love, we would be able to far more things than we have been able to do because of His nature, because of His being that love that He has inside wants to be expressed. You could give without loving but you can not love without giving.

Paul himself makes that statement in I Cor. 13:3 it tells us that you could give without loving. Verse 3 "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing."

He says that love is sacrificial. You can not love without being sacrificial and giving. Yet you could be giving and not loving. They are not the same thing. It is interesting that it says here you could take everything that you have of your possession and you could give them all away and if you don't have love, the bible says, there is no profit. There is no gain. If you study very carefully, of course if you sell everything you have and you give to somebody else, somebody else did profit. But he is talking about the one giving. There is no profit in us. Our nature has not been changed. So we could give without loving but could never love without giving. Without wanting to sacrifice of our being. So there is Almighty God above looks down upon His planet earth and here we are living our own selfish life. The root of sin is self. The word 'SIN', if you take away the S, take away the N, you have the I in the middle. All sins arise from selfishness and from a selfish nature. The sin nature. Only when that sin nature dies and when that sin nature is removed by that Christ life we can not fully understand the love of God.

Now sometimes a person says I love you with the love of the Lord. We are not sure whether it's the love of the Lord because sometimes people have motives behind. If you have lived long enough, you will realize that not everyone who says alleluia is a believer. I know you read the scripture where it says not everyone who says Lord, Lord, know the Lord Jesus Christ. But there is other things like not everyone who says alleluia, alleluia is necessary a believer. They could just mouth it. Only recently I was talking to a minister and his wife. I love to help ministers and pastors in the ministry. They knew me for about ten years. The Lord has finally led our path to cross

each other. They were just beginning to want to move into a new realm of ministry. They knew all the past. All those up and down and everything that had happened. They have been to some of the places where I have pastured. As they sat in my office, we fellowshiped and they were talking about seeing whether there is a place in our church where we could employ them or help them.

So I told them this, I said, I know what it was like when you are just starting off. I know what it is like when everyone persecutes you. You are just a reject. I said these early years have not been easy. Through times there had been easy time and there had been hard time. The cycle goes on. I said now the ministry is successful and I find that a lot of people coming who want to be friends and whom last time were not friends. Sometimes you feel frustrated because when nobody knows you, they would say watch out for that guy. False prophet. I was so frustrated. Frustrated because I teach something from the bible and they said wrong teaching. But a foreigner would come and teach the same thing and they said good. It's like local durian doesn't taste as good. See there is something wrong in the kind of make up that we are in our church if that is the way it is. So those are trying times that we went through. Then I told them I am very careful now because I know who are my friends. I know they are those who are just being diplomatic. I know who are my friends because those who have been through the thick and through the thin. They have proven themselves. You see a minister friend was sitting in my office, when times were difficult they were not around. They will keep a distance from me. So I said, those who work closely with me, they must prove themselves. Not when it is easy but it is when it's tough that you hang on. Many times when you start having success, people will come and say, o brother, we have been with you all the way. You wonder where they were. When you need encouragement they were not there. That's very sad.

We need to really learn to love with the love of God. We need to learn to love a person, not because of what the person did. That's very difficult. Most of the time people have bitterness, hatred and unforgiveness because of what a person did. Think about that. All of us came into this world from the womb that taught us to hate. Who taught us to have enemies. A baby does not have enemies. How come when we live to forty, fifty we got lots of enemies. Where did we get all that? We realized that all of us came in the same way. Here as we began to grow up in life, we sometimes began to let bitterness and unforgiveness come into our heart without allowing God's love to touch our hearts. Why do people have bitterness and unforgiveness because of what somebody did to them? Unforgiveness, bitterness, resentments or anything that is in our hearts shows that God's love has not been established in our hearts. It's not possible to have the love of God and unforgiveness at the same time. Why? The love of God is unconditional. Forgiveness is not placing condition. Unforgiveness is placing condition. Because that person did that, I am not going to forgive. That is our love and acceptance. It's based on somebody else's action.

All those aspects that we know as part and parcel of human life fall short of the love of God that He desires for us to operate in. The love that He wants us to operate is unconditional. That's the love of God which says while we were still sinners He died for us. While we were enemies He died for us. In fact when the Lord Jesus Christ died, everyone of His disciple forsook Him. Sometimes when we think about the Lord Jesus we only think about the six hours He died on the cross. But we forgot one thing that Jesus coming into the world for suffering. Coming to live with us in the mud of

life. In the mud, the death and the clay of life. He is perfection, Jesus Almighty God, Word of God, perfect in holiness, perfect in righteousness, perfect in every way, coming down to live among imperfect men and women for thirty years. He bore up with all that. For thirty years He lived among sinful men. We may not appreciate the fact because we know sin from our past. But Jesus had never known a single sin. Sin to Him was horrible yet He lived among sinners for thirty years, lived with people with sinful thoughts, sinful words, sinful actions all around Him. That's suffering for Him. He ministered for thirty years. I would consider the time when He went to the cross as the climax and not the only time He suffered. He suffered through out His thirty-three years on this earth. He suffered in the presence of sin. He can't tolerate it. But the climax of God came when He went on trial. We want to see how His love for us was without condition.

In the book of Matthew 26, as His last days came during His ministry, in Matthew 26:36-39 "Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, 'Sit here while I go and pray over there.' And He took with Him Peter and two sons of Zebedee and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me. He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, 'O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Your will.'"

Now this is one of the greatest climaxes in Jesus' ministry. The cross started here in His prayer. Why should the Lord Jesus be struggling? Holding the cup before the Father and saying, 'Father, if it be Your will, let this cup pass from Me.' Why is there a struggle? He knew that He would be raised from the dead in three days time. He even prophesied that to His disciples in Matthew 16, He says that the Son of Man will be betrayed and He will be delivered to the gentiles and they will crucify Him. After three days He will be resurrected from the dead. He knew He would be resurrected from the dead. That was not the problem but as He took that cup in His hand, that cup represented the cup of sin. Love does not mean doing what you like. Love means doing what God like and God's will. This is the beauty of God's love. There was no beauty in anyone of us. We were all sinners. There was no beauty in men. We were called enemies of God yet Jesus Christ held the cup that represents our situation, deliverance from sin. He is going to become sin for us. Why did He struggle? He prayed three times and this is very unusual of Him. He said, 'Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.' Why the struggle? He knew He was going to be resurrected in three days time when He died. If you know that when you are killed you are going to be raised after three days, you won't be bothered about being killed. Jesus knew it but there was something else.

As He held that cup in His hands, that cup represented sin that He is going to partake upon Himself. That was the struggle. He knew no sin. He has never told a lie in His life. He has never committed any sin. Not in His thoughts, not in His words, not in His actions. Now He was going to take sin upon Himself. That cup represented the sins of the world that He is going to take upon Himself. The death on the cross. Him becoming sin. So there was a tremendous struggle in His life. He was not afraid of physical pain. There were many other people who had died on the cross before Jesus. Crucifixion was a normal execution process of the Romans Empire. Many others have been crucified before Him and after Him. During the Roman Empire, it was a normal

execution process. So Jesus was not afraid of the physical pain but it's one thing that He has never ever tasted in His entire life. He never knew sin. His struggle was the struggle to take sin. I mean He is so holy. Sin to Him is awful. His struggle was to take sin upon Him. Something that turns His entire being against what He wants. That was His struggle when He was praying. He never wanted sin but every time He looked at that cup, He saw you and I. That cup of salvation for us. Every time He looks at it, it represents all of creation that has fallen into sin. Finally love won. He loves us so much that He would take that cup and drink it. Love has stickability. When you love you love to the end. What a lot of people call love that is temporary. It has never been God's love. When you love, you love right to the end. He saw all of us there and He took that cup and drank it. He was determined to become sin for you and I. When He went back into prayer to see all His disciples, everyone of His disciple was sleeping; there was no one who encouraged Him. When the Lord took the cross He had to take it alone. Now Jesus has a cross for each one of our life in the sense of His will but His yoke will be easy and His burden will be light. One of the most difficult things for a person to do is to die to selfishness. Jesus Christ when He had prayed, the moment He finished Judas led all the soldiers to Him. When all the soldiers came, they took him but just before they took him, His disciples tried to fight and Jesus asked them to put away the sword.

Matthew 26:53 "Or do you think that I can not now pray to the Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?"

In the Old Testament, one angel could slay a whole army. He had at His disposal twelve legions if He wanted to. The Lord spoke and said, put away the sword. It tells us something. When they took Jesus, they tied Him up and led Him to Caiaphas the high priest. He was not there because He couldn't help it. He was there because He wanted to be. It's a different thing to take someone who don't have the power and do what you want with that person. It's another thing to take the Lord Jesus Christ who has the power to be free and chose not to be free. So they took Him and they brought Him to Caiaphas who has a false trial on Him. Brought false witnesses. Finally delivered Him to the gentiles who hung Him on the cross. While He was hanging on the cross, all those who were His accusers came. Look up at the cross where He was hung and said, come down if You are the Son of God.' I want you to know He had twelve legions of angels but love kept Him there. It was not the nail that hung Him to the cross. It was His love. While all these people were mocking Him down at the cross, it certainly didn't make His suffering easy. He had one word to pray for them. He says, 'Father, forgive them for they do not know what they have done.' How could He do it?

The only response of a perfect person is love. Jesus was perfect. That means that whenever anyone of your words, actions or deeds are not responding in love, it is not just the circumstances that are imperfect, it is you who are imperfect. When we are not able to love, it does not just show the difficulty of the people who we find difficult to love, it shows a flaw in our life. That is our imperfection. Jesus because He is perfect, the only response is love. The only thing that flows out from Him was love. When He was on the cross, one of those things that He did was to pray for His people. When He was carrying the cross up the hill and all the women were crying, He said, weep not for Me but for yourself. All the selfishness of Jesus Christ was not there. Love has stickability. It endures forever. Jesus love was so great that even after all

those things that they had done to Him; the only thing that came out of His love was pure love. His love was unconditional.

Even in His most difficult situation, when the Father has turned His face away from Him because of sin that was placed on His life for us. Our sins were placed on Him and when the depths of His spirit cried out, My God, My God why have You forsaken Me, yet He hung on to the cross because He loves us. Love is unconditional. The degree and ability of our love should not depend on circumstances or the actions of the person. The degree of our ability to love depends on how transformed our nature is into God's nature. We are talking about love over here.

To help you to appreciate, let me look at the opposite side. One of the enemies of man is fear. Hebrew 2:14-15 says that he has destroyed him that has the power of death, that is, the devil and releases those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. The weapon of the devil is fear. When we have fear, we become crippled inside. We can look at people who are crippled physically and have compassion for them. But let me tell you there is a crippling in the soul that is far worse than the physical handicap. It is being crippled by fear. If I were to ask you what is the opposite of fear, most of you answer will be faith. One with faith can only come about when love has come. There is no true faith without love. See when love is there faith comes. It says in the bible in I John, perfect love cast out fear. The force that can cancel and eject fear is the force of love. Love in bible is the principle opposite of fear. That is why love can cast out fear. A person who is not secure in love is a fearful person. When we are not loved and we are not accepted and we don't feel accepted by God we are fearful. Sometimes when we do not know God, we look for the acceptance somewhere else. When there is acceptance given here and there we feel secured. But when it does not we are lost. There is only one true security that is God's love. God's love is powerful, it's life changing and unconditional. Love will win in the end.

Why must we love? Look at it this way. The only way that God can transform and change all things has to be by love and by good. For example, if somebody did something wrong to you and you responded an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. So you give it back. Supposing that you win. You have become a greater evil. If a dog barks at you and you bark back. You won. You just become a bigger dog. That is why Jesus has to come and He said, 'Love your enemy', overcome evil with good, overcome evil with love, don't give hate for hate, when hate comes give love. When evil comes let love flow out. Whatever comes let love flow out. Because when love wins, it is a complete win. In doing that you yourself become better. When you do good, when you do well, when you love and you win with love, the whole picture is complete because love triumph. We are not talking about a weak love. We are talking about a strong love that will never let go. God so loved the world that He never gives up us. From the day Adam and Eve fell, His eye was on us. He never gives up. There were many times that we gave Him up. The story of mankind in the bible, men give up God many times but God never give up us.

I want to encourage you in the power of love. It is not weak it's strong. Love can do tremendous things that no other weapon can do. Nothing in the world can be like love. I mean think about criminals who are locked up in prison. Drug addicts and outlaws, they are behind bars. Why, because we want them to change. We try to rehabilitate them. We want them to change and be a blessing to the society. But somehow

something within them is so crooked up that every time they are released they will do more evil. Then you drag them back and put them behind bars again. That keeps on and on. We tried everything we can to change them, to change the evil into good but there is only one source and power that is when that hardened criminal meets the love of God. No prison bars could change them like the love of God. When the love of God comes into a hardened criminal, when God win us over with His love, suddenly what was impossible for man became possible with God. We met many of them who changed and became good. Some of them, they say they keep on doing evil but when they met love, love conquered them and they changed on the inside because love never fails.

We need to develop the quality of love like God. When you have placed your love on an object or on a person in God's way, nothing would shake you from that until you draw them into the fullness of that. We give up too easily. Our love can not last long. Parents don't give up on your children even though you see your kids this way and that way. Remember this, if your love have been conditioned they will never change. They will only change when your love becomes unconditional where you don't dish out your love because of something in them. You bring it out because your nature is like God's nature then a powerful force will flow when we operate in love. It's life changing. So Jesus took sin on the cross, and He poured His love for us. From the cross of Calvary flows a river of love. Anyone who says they meet Jesus is Lord and Savior and really meet Him face to face will be like Him.

I think of a person in the bible by the name of Paul. He made a very strange statement in Col.1. A very strange statement. If you don't look carefully, theologically it looks wrong. Col. 1:24 "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ for the sake of His body which is the church." Here is a theological statement that we have to understand carefully. It says he is fulfilling up in his flesh what is lacking in the affliction of Christ. Correct theology says that everything has been completed in Christ. That's true. Everything has been completed. Who can add to what Jesus had done? Nothing. Jesus had done everything. But Paul says a statement here. We have to take it in the context, he is not talking about this but rather he is saying, now that he has met the Lord Jesus Christ the same demands are on his life. He now has to go out and love others the way Jesus loves. Christians, we forget that the top commandment from Jesus is love one another as I have loved you. So Paul knows that anyone who meets the Lord Jesus will have to go out and give love.

God's love has a heavy price. To love with God's love may mean you got to lay down your life. To love with God's love you got to sacrifice your time, your talent, your finances and everything. To love with God's love, you can not love without giving. The same Paul who wrote that statement, let me read some of the things he went through because of love. Remember this love has a free choice. The reason God gave us a free choice is so that we could have respond to Him in love. Where there is no free choice, there is no love.

Paul in II Cor. 11:23-28 "Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool – I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prison more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of

robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and in thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness – besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.”

Why should Paul go through all these things? He is one of the most educated man in his days. Brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. He could have lived a comfortable life. Besides that he was a skillful tent maker. He could have opened his own business and be successful. Why should he do all these things, because he tells us the love of Christ constrains me. We are not talking about cheap love. We are talking about priceless, expensive, costly love that God wants us to have. Christians, if we are not prepared to love outside our convenience, we are not talking about God’s love. God’s love pommels us. We are willing to inconvenient ourselves, sacrifice in order to love others. God’s love is sacrificial. Paul did all these things because he loves. The marvelous thing is this, like Jesus, at anytime throughout all these things that he went through, he could have stopped, given up and went back to his comfortable life. He was never forced to do it. God never forced him. He had a free choice. That’s true love. If you have to be forced into a situation where you have to face somebody until you love, that’s not the way. It’s when even though it pains us we would still go on and reach out and love. Sometimes when you reach out and love, your hands get cut off. What to do? Jesus said, give the other cheek. So you give the other hand. It gets cut off too. So give your leg. It’s cut off too. Give the other one. That’s God’s love. We conquered by love. Not with the weapons of the flesh, the power of love is what Christians want to bring to the world. Life changing love. God’s kind of love. Same with Jesus. Same with the apostle Paul. Let me close by mentioning something about this love.

Romans 8:32 we are talking about God our Father, He who did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us. John 3:16 says “For God so loved the world.” I want you to see the pattern and the key. When God love us, it cost Him His Son. You think it was easy to see the Lord Jesus come down and die. It was not. The Father had to turn His face away from the Lord when He became sin because He loves us. He didn’t spare His Son, even when the Lord Jesus Christ was hanging on the cross saying, my God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me. I tell you, everything within the Father heart of God want to come down and take His Son and pull Him up again. But love has stickability. He turned His face even though His heart bled. He was bleeding with love. He said, He will hold on. No wonder even the sky was dark. It was about twelve noon and it was dark as night. The whole universe stopped for a moment of time when Jesus died on the cross. All the angels stopped their singing. Why there is such silence in heaven, because the Lamb of God, the only begotten of the Father is being slain on the altar of the earth. I want you to see that it cost God to love. It cost Jesus to love. It cost Paul to love. We call ourselves the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Are we truly His disciples? Or do we worship a different God? The God of convenience.

What we are saying is this, because there is an imperfect world, it calls upon Christians to exercise a higher greater supreme measure of love than we have ever exercise. All the love that we thought was love when it was compared with the love of Jesus to the love of God the Father, we find that ours is one tiny atom in the ocean and it’s time that we change. It’s time that we return to God our love and understand that

when the Lord Jesus was with His disciples around the table, and when He says; love one another as I have loved you. He meant that is not going to be easy. There will be the cross that we carry in order to love. We have and that an interesting thing, the free choice to say I don't want to do it. When you can choose to say I still want it and then the love of God will flow through our lives. And we began to transform all those around us.

Let me tell you this, the hardest people on this earth can be touched by love. When nothing else can touch the love of God can. I don't care if you say that is your boss who is nasty to you, or is your office colleague, it's because we have not exercised the level of love God wants us to exercise. We give up easily. But when we begin to really live the type of love God wants us to live in our office, in the places where we are, we would be able to change for the better those who are around us. So that everyone who meet us, even the soldier who was guarding the Lord Jesus at the cross, he looked up and he said, 'truly this is the Son of God.' There was not one bitter word that came from the Lord. There were many others, Stephen when he died in Acts 7, as they were taking stones to throw on him, there was not one word of bitterness. Some of us have not been tested to death but all kinds of foul things come out of our mouth. Stephen was onto death and the only thing that came out was Lord do not lay this charge on them. He was saying I forgive them. You forgive them. That the love of God that we are talking about here. Remember John 17, Jesus says, 'I pray that they may love one another as I have loved them and that they may know that You love them as much as You love Me. The same love that You love Me is Jesus praying that they may know that You love them with. Today God loves all of us. If there were anything you think that God would give to Jesus He would give to you because God loves you as much as He loves Jesus. I used to think that God loves Jesus more than all of us but John 17; you read carefully, He says, He loves us as much as He loves the Lord. Anything that He would never deny Jesus He will never deny to us.

## 4. THE POWER OF JOY

We are looking at life principle and things we would consider important for us to function in or know. Last week we looked at love and how we need to walk in love and build love relationship with each and every one of those whom we meet. Tonight we want to see another important life principle, which we shall call joy. It may not look so important. It may look simple but that's what God's presence is filled with. One of the things that man lost when Adam and Eve fell into sin in Genesis 3 was joy. They didn't become sick yet, but they died spiritually the moment they sinned. Of course we know that all sickness and death came from that point onwards. But one of the first things that they lost the moment they sinned was joy. So God was pronouncing His judgment over their lives for their sins.

In Genesis 3 and consider some of the judgments that He pronounced over their lives. In verse 16, "To the woman He said: I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children, your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. Then to Adam, the Lord said: Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken, for dust you are and to dust you shall return."

Now that curse on Adam talked about misery and the hardness that will come upon his life. So we see here in Genesis 3 that man lost the joy. Now the world today looks for happiness. There is a difference between happiness and joy. Joy include happiness but happiness does not necessarily include joy. You see happiness depends on circumstances. Happiness is when everything outwardly looks good and is pleasing in your sight. You have everything you wanted. The outward sight. Happiness relates to the physical world. Joy relates to both the physical world and the spiritual world. That is why joy flows from the inside. Joy is something inside us, which is from the spirit. Man lost that joy when he fell in the Garden of Eden. One of the final things that God removes we all know is death. When the new heaven and the new earth are brought forth at the recreation of the planet earth, God is going to remove death. But the book of Revelation chapter 21 expressly mentioned something that is common in our experience that He is going to remove. Rev.21 and see why we call it a life principle because it is important and it's a word started in Genesis and what is going to be completed in the book of Revelation. We have the beginning and the end.

Rev. 21:3-4 "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, they shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Now immediately after death was sorrow. In the same way, immediately after spiritual death came was sorrow. The moment death is completely removed both spiritual and physical sorrow is also removed. Sorrow, crying and tear are still a part of life today. Could you imagine in the Garden of Eden there was no such thing as tear? It was joy, joy, joy. There was no sorrow. In the book of Psalms 16:11 it says that in His presence is fullness of joy. There is no sorrow at all in heaven. Completely none. In the Garden of Eden, when God created it, it was perfect. No pain, no death, no sorrow, there was no thorns either. When Adam went out and picked a rose for

Eve, there was no thorns on the rose. What a lovely rose. If Adam were a Malaysian, he would have gone to the durian tree and the durian tree would not have any thorns. All the fruit trees were in the Garden of Eden. So in heaven, there may still be a durian tree but it doesn't have thorns. I am not sure whether it has the same smell but there were no thorns. No sorrow, no pain, nothing of this sort. Crying and sorrow became a part of the life that we know today after Adam and Eve fell into sin. You see what about now, that we are born again. We have come to know the Lord Jesus. Sorry to say as long as there is imperfection in the world, sorrow and travail in the spirit and tears are still part of this life until the new heaven and the new earth is completed to be what God wants it to be. Tears and sorrows are still a part of a Christian life.

The bible in the New Testament says, weep with those who weep. So obviously this is a part of the Christian life. Although in Romans 14:17 "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." So you see the kingdom of God consist of that joy in the Holy Spirit. Yet other passages talk about weep with those who weep. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Paul in II Cor. tells us that he wrote to them in the previous letter – I Corinthians with tears. What are those tears for? Apparently the church is not perfected yet. As long as the earth is not perfected yet, there will always be tears. That will be part and parcel of travail in the spirit, prayers and the perfection of things. One day all those things are going to be removed when the new heaven and the new earth in Rev. 21 comes. However this is where we need to take note of, sorrow and crying is not the main part of the Christian life where we will cause suffering involved or prayer involved because there is still imperfection in the world.

The normal Christian life should be joyful. In other words, there will be no such things as saying; God is going to put a prayer burden on your life, such a prayer burden, the weight of the whole world. You are interceding for the world like Paul says in Gal. 4:19 travailing. There is no problem with travailing but God is not going to depend on you alone to save the world. He has many others and so He is not going to put the prayer burden all on you. You have to spend your prayer burden for forty years praying through. I mean if you spend your time forty years praying through and you got no time for other things. God is not so cruel. What He does is only to give you a prayer burden and you pray through and then He will let you get back the kingdom of God, His righteousness, peace and joy. He will let you live and enjoy life as He created it to be enjoyed. Then after sometime, He gives you the work to do again, the prayers to perfect the world. To be a part of the prayer force of God. Intercede for this earth. He is not going to put it on you for life. So you are a walking prayer burden. We don't tell by the length of your face. If that is so the longer the better. One preacher says, some Christians look like they have been baptized in vinegar.

Sorrow, prayer burden, tear and cry are still a part and parcel of this life. When we cry is a release for us. We sow in tears so that we will reap in joy. So there is still a sowing in tears that will be. I do not want to give the impression that we are completely redeemed from crying. There is no such thing. The only redemption is when perfection comes. However, we want to be very clear to understand the word, that the normal Christian life must be full of joy. Joy signifies the norm. Prayer burden signifies the special. So this should be the normal Christian life where we are living. Here is the road of life. As we are walking the road of life, there should be joy,

joy, joy. Once in a while you have some burdens, some areas where you sow in tears and then you go aside and weep before the Lord. After that you are not supposed to remain there. You see some people have this impression that to be holy is to be long face. So they will even have at the back of their mind what a holy face look like. That is not a holy face. That is a bulldog face. No doubt we can receive all those burden from God and weep and cry. Believe me, I have cried before. I know what is to cry until you have no more tears to cry. I have gone through hard times before. It was not easy for the ministry to come forth. It's a hard time and you cry until you have no more tears to cry. I know what it is like. But the Lord showed me we are not to remain there. The reason I say this is because many times some Christians they experience grief in their life, sorrow or even intercessory burden. They get into it and they don't know how to come back to the normal Christian life. As a result of that the grief binds itself to them.

Godly sorrow profits us, but the sorrow of the world will get you into bondage. It's sad that sometimes when a sad event happen in life, maybe you lose your loved one or somebody you love much passed away or something that grieves you, hurts you and you allow that grief and that hurt to be attached to you. Can you imagine those things could have happened five years ago or ten years ago, you got a bright future to live, it's sad if you allow something in your past to affect the rest of your future. It's sad, some people when they lost their loved one, yes, we sympathize with them, but we should never live in the past nor should we let the past continue to disturb our present and then destroy our future. We should learn to get out of it and get back to the normal. The normal Christian life is a happy Christian life. The normal Christian life is a joy filled Christian life. When we have the joy of the Lord, we have strength to live.

One of the things I noticed about the apostle Paul, after last week we read about all those things he went through, because of love he chose to enter into it. Let me tell you because of joy he could last till the end of it. We enter because of love. For God so loved the world He gave, so Jesus came but the only force and strength that will sustain us in life is joy. Nehemiah 8:10 "The joy of the Lord is your strength." If you lose your joy you lose your strength. If you lose your joy you lose your health. Before Adam and Eve lost their health and sickness, they lost their joy. Because we lose our joy, we lose our wealth. We can not keep it. I am going to show you from the Word, if Satan can't steal your joy, he can't steal your life. If Satan can't steal your joy, he can't steal your goods. If Satan can't steal your joy, he can't steal your health. It is important for us to learn to preserve joy.

When I look at Paul's life, I will say it's marvelous. How did he get through all those things that we read last week? Three times he was stoned, several times shipwrecked and beaten in the back forty times minus one. His back looks like a tiger's stripe. How did he continue to live? Most Christians, they have half a stripe they backslide. This poor guy is so strong. Where did he get his strength? So let us look at II Cor. and see where he got his strength. II Cor.12, see the type of Christianity that we tend to produce if we do not give correct teaching is going to be a weak Christianity. The moment little trouble comes, Christians backslide. The moment a few wrong words are shared to them or criticism comes; all kinds of things will come out of their lives. A little pressure pressed on them they give up. That is not the kind of Christians that

God wants. God wants loving, peaceful and joy filled Christians who could be contribution to this life. Jesus said we are the salt of the earth.

II Cor.12, we will have the impression when we read Paul's epistle. We all know Paul by his writings and if we could try to visualize Paul, let me tell you that every Christian who visualize Paul as a very serious looking old man. One who walks like a headmaster, stick on his hand. When we read carefully what Paul was like, Paul was a joyful person. Without that joy he could not had endured all these things that he shared about, he could not have gone through and survived. No my friend, you need the special joy for that strength to come. Now all those things he named in chapter 11 that we read last week, we look at II Cor.12, he is still talking about the same subject because in chapter 11 he introduced what he went through and how he was beaten with rod in verse 25 and all kinds of things happening to him. Then he went on and he continued on, how, in verse 33 he was let down in a basket and all the difficulties that came upon his life. Yet in looking at all those things, he says in chapter 12:10 "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

We like some of that strength that Paul has. Because he recognized and here is Paul's statement. He went through all those things named in chapter 11 where in verse 24, from the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked. He has been through all kinds of things. Through all those things he was weak but there was strength flowing from him. The divine strength. Because if the devil can't steal your joy he can't steal your strength. If the devil steals your joy you are finished. Strength will ebb away. But if the devil can not steal your joy he can not steal your strength. Paul did not allow the devil to steal his joy. He kept his joy. He rejoiced.

There is one more scripture to confirm this. The words we read last week in Colossians 1:24 "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you."

What a statement he made. Very few Christians can say that. The average Christian will say I thank God I can endure the suffering. God showed me the difference between suffering and enduring. Before we look at that. Lets clarify a few things. The sufferings of Jesus Christ and the sufferings for Christ and in Christ and persecution received in Christ were not persecutions because of the mistakes we make. Sometimes people break the law, do wrong things and then afterwards they reap what the sow, then they say I am suffering for Jesus. That is not suffering for Jesus. That is suffering for your mistakes. The suffering for Jesus is not the suffering for breaking the law. Not the suffering for disobedience. Not the suffering for doing the wrong things. Those sufferings are not suffering for Jesus. Those are sufferings for yourself and for the mistakes you make. A lot of Christians are claiming the worst generally. I mean they do wrong thing then they get caught and they say, please pray for me, I am suffering for Jesus. That is not suffering for Jesus. We are going to pray for you that you realize what you have done and repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. So lets differentiate between the suffering for Jesus and suffering for yourself.

The suffering for Jesus is when you have not done anything wrong. You have not sinned against any person. You have not sinned against any laws. You are innocent. When you are innocent and righteous before God and before man and yet there are evil people in the world who still do evil things to you. That is where you really suffer

for Jesus. The suffering for Jesus is when you are doing the right thing, when you are doing good, not evil and you are seeking to do your best to obey the Lord Jesus and glorify Jesus and you suffer for that. That is suffering for Jesus. When I first began to taste this part of the gospel called suffering for Jesus, I mean it's nice to taste all the various parts like forgiveness, healing, prosperity and all other areas. But a lot of people are claiming prosperity when forgetting that Jesus said, you shall receive a hundred fold with persecution. He said it in one sentence in Mark 10. So let's not forget the other part of the gospel that talks about suffering. We need to teach Christians what truly is a Christian suffering and what is not so that we would be balanced. People thought that the faith message is all prosperity and wealth. The faith message will teach you to balance. Balance in the spirit, balance in the soul and balance in the body. Balance with God's Word. So we have here to understand suffering.

I did not understand what is involved until when in the early days of ministry, you get persecuted for things that you never do and people say that you did this and you did that when you didn't do it. Only last year they managed to clarify some accusations that were against me. In the early days of ministry when my ministry was coming up, because we teach a strong faith message, people started spreading rumors that we tell people to throw away their glasses, etc. We never taught such things. There were those who are closed with us who still wear thick glasses. I don't know who started those rumors and I found out that a foreign speaker had come and he had told people to do that. Then the very next week I came to preach in that place, not knowing what went on before, I only preached believe in God, have faith in God. So it was so closely associated and it looked like I was the one. For five years I was guilty until proven innocent. Only last year or so, a group of those businessmen came and we had a meeting in the hotel. They said they like to find out my side of the story. I said good. This is the first time I ever been asked to tell my side of the story. So we sat down and I shared with them what actually happened on our side. I said, there would possibly be some mistakes we made but not that kind. After they heard our side of the story, they reported this side over there and finally the whole thing was clarified. We got a few witnesses who say I was not the one who told them to throw the glasses. It was the guy before me. As I was going through some of these things, I remembered it was heavy. I cried until I have no more tears to cry. It was during one of those times, when I was weeping before the Lord, weeping in His presence saying, why, why Lord. One of our favorite phrases when we are in trouble. The Lord told me, 'This is in His words you suffer.' At first I thought just endure but the Lord said, 'No, overcome it.' I said, Lord, isn't endurance overcoming. The Lord said, 'No, endurance is only endurance. To overcome you need to rejoice.' And I said, Lord, how to rejoice? I had to make myself rejoice. I had to find it inside my spirit. How to rejoice? The Lord began to show me how in His Word, it was a part of His command. Then I began to understand the difference between an overcomer and being an endurer.

We have a lot of endurers. But the blessing in the book of Revelation to all the churches is to him who overcomes. And I said, Lord, I want to learn to overcome not just endure. Enduring is not overcoming. This is not managing but barely get along. The Lord said, 'No, that is not the way to walk, not the way to overcome.' And He began to show to me the gospel of Luke chapter 6. Let me tell you, any difficulties or any crisis that you face, the first thing that you are tempted to lose is your joy. It's not anything else; the first thing you are tempted to lose is your joy. If you watch life

circumstances, the moment thing confronts you; the first thing you are tempted to loose is your joy.

Luke 6 says in verse 22, “Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out you name as evil, for the Son of Man’s sake.” Verse 23, “Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven. For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.”

So there it was and the Lord showed me these words. The Lord said, ‘rejoice.’ You don’t feel like rejoicing but the Lord said, ‘rejoice.’ The Lord is not asking us when the persecution and suffering come, just endure. No, the Lord is saying rejoice. Believe me, I learned to rejoice when I don’t feel like rejoicing. There were many times in Paul’s life and in the natural it would be difficult to rejoice. It would be difficult to rejoice if they beat you on the back with sticks. But that’s the kind of Christianity that they have in the bible. People who do not lose their joy is the life principle that people must be trained in. Far too many Christians are weaklings. Anything happens the joy leaves the window and go. That’s not the type of Christianity that we have. We have the strong, rejoicing Christians who will spread the joy of the Lord. We do that not only on Christmas day. On December 25 we wish you a merry Christmas and on the 26<sup>th</sup> all hangover. It’s everyday. The joy must fill us three hundreds and sixty-five days a year. The joy must be in our life. As I began to look at Paul’s life, the Lord began to say Paul was not the only one. Every one of My disciples was like that. And I began to really examine the Word.

Acts 5, I want you to see the attitude that they have were so different. What wonderful Christians they were. That’s the attitude that we want to teach. The attitude of Christians must be like the bible in Acts 5 the apostles where signs and wonders have taken place. I have lived and have good relationship and have been face to face in fellowship with men and women of God. Top men and women of God. International famous men and women of God. Let me tell you, I find that very few still have what they had in the book of Acts. As far as quality of character as well as power in ministry, the power in ministry we see here and there rising forth but it is the quality of character that we are talking about. That is what we want to produce to teaching the Word, quality, character Christians. I have met men and women of God, so called among the best the world has produced who are alive today. They are not quite like those joy filled Christians. Sometimes some of my associates, I gave them the job of taking care of those men of God who come through, they almost got stumbled. They said, man of God behaved like that, so fearful. This and that. I said, not everyone wants to have the character of Jesus. But almost everybody wants to have the power of Jesus. Yet Jesus wants us to have both His character and His power.

Now here the apostles in Acts 5, it says here after they were persecuted and things happened. Once you understand the past teaching you would have been removed from your life, eye for an eye. Tooth for a tooth. That would have been eradicated because now you would respond with love. If everybody go eye for eye, tooth for tooth, everybody would be toothless. Acts 5:40, now here the apostles themselves, they just brought healing to that man and they agreed with him that is Gamaliel. When they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that hey should not speak in the name of Jesus and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council and I want you to see what they do. Rejoicing. They were rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. What a different brand of Christianity

we had. What strong character they had. We need to have that kind of character. We need to learn to rejoice in all circumstances.

The average Christians if verse 40 had taken place, and I heard it took place one time. They would go forty and they start cursing. They would say God send fire. I said, Lord, what kind of prayer is this. Are they Christians or not. The problem is that they are because they close their prayer in Jesus name. This is not what Peter and John did. They responded with love and they rejoiced. They rejoiced in God. They praise God. Paul was not the only one. Here we have the apostles rejoicing in God. See if Satan can not steal our joy, he can not steal our strength. No matter how difficult the crisis, the circumstances you faced, if you learn to rejoice in the Lord again I say rejoice, you will find strength to overcome all circumstances.

Secondly if Satan can not steal your joy, he can not steal your goods.

In the book of Proverbs 15:15 it says, "All the days of the afflicted are evil but he who is of a merry heart has a continual feast." See when we have the joy of the Lord we have a continual feast. A feast represents provision. That's not the only place. In the bible God told the Israelites in Deut. 28, after pronouncing all the blessing from verse one to verse 14 and then all the curses from verse 15 to verse 45, He summarizes and tells them in Deut. 28:45 "Moreover all these curses shall come upon you and pursue and overtake you, until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you. And they shall be upon you for a sign and a wonder, and on your descendants forever." Why? He gives a reason in verse 47, "Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you."

Now the Lord plainly says because they didn't serve Him with joy and gladness of heart. Because they lose their joy they will lose their goods. You see they have all the goods, He says for the abundance of things, all these abundance that they have, the blessing of God. You know how we human are; we tend to forget. We tend to be ungrateful. We tend to forget all the good things that we have. We tend to forget all the wonderful things that the Lord has blessed us with. In the time when these blessings are there we easily take them for granted. We take people for granted. We take God's blessing for granted. Because we do not rejoice, you see every time we rejoice and give thanks we are saying, God, we haven't forgotten You. When you stop thanking God for your pay cheque because it's normal. When you stop thanking God for your health. When we stop thanking God for all the houses that you have. For the cars that you have. For the provisions that you have. For the job that you have. When you stop thanking God and when you forgot to rejoice, you lose your joy. You are in a position where the devil can attack you. So the devil can not steal your joy, he can not steal your goods. Before he steals your goods, he steals your joy. So don't let him steal your joy. Your joy is your buffer zone. It protects you from being attacked by the devil. For the abundance of things if we rejoice and give thanks, we bless His name. We worship Him.

We rejoice again we say rejoice. When we have the tremendous joy we have not forgotten our God.

When we remember our God we will have a continual feast.

It's so important that Paul when he talks about offering; he says God loves a cheerful giver.

The Greek word for cheerful also mean hilarious. God loves a hilarious giver. Think about that. People do not realize it. When they take their offering and put it into the offering bad as the worship, it's not only the amount and the percentage that you give that determines the return. The other determination is the condition of your heart. See if your heart is joyful it will cause a greater multiplication of your seed. That is why Paul is saying in II Cor. 9 that God loves a cheerful giver. One who is full of joy and then the devil can not steal your blessings. Blessings are supposed to come back to you. He can not steal.

If you are a cucumber giver and you give with a long face and all the grumbling, you don't realize it; Satan starts stealing your blessing that is supposed to return to you because you have no joy. If God has blessed you or on its way to bless you, whichever position you are in, do not let the devil steal your joy. Joy must be a part of our Christian life.

Do you notice that a normal relationship must be joyful? If your home is a good Christian home, it should be filled with joy. Do you notice what happen every time you discipline your children, joy leaves the window. It's still in the heart but I mean the experience of it. After the kids had done something wrong and you discipline them, perhaps you give them one whack of the cane. Tears flow from their eyes. They are not going to cry and laugh straight away. Every time my kids are disciplined, the whole atmosphere in the house is very serious. You hardly can smile in the thick cloud of seriousness. I always know that is not the normal relationship in the home. You can not build a home with that kind of seriousness or that kind of joyless atmosphere. There must be joy. Usually when that happens, when everyone is quiet, and the only place that is very quiet is the graveyard, I always try to restore the relationship by trying to bring joy back. I let them settle down first. After a while when I guess it's about time then I would try to come near and tell funny story to make them laugh. The moment everyone laughs they look at your face. No more seriousness and the relationship is restored. That is when the kids can come near you and say, daddy or mommy I got this problem and I have got that problem.

The reason why teenager feel estranged from parents when they grow up is because of the lack of joyfulness. You are the commander in your home. You make your home a boot camp. Home is not a boot camp. Home is a place of love. You can make mistake and be forgiven. It is a place to grow. We are not perfect parents. Some people run their home like real commander in chief. The parents are so serious, all the time that the children grow up without joy. Watch it, when they become teenagers, if they could escape, they will escape. Why, because they can laugh and have fun with their friends but not with you. Kids must look at the home and say my home is fun. Some people think that the eleventh commandment is thou shall not have fun. God didn't put the eleventh commandment there. He wants us to rejoice. The kids should be able to say my home is where I laugh and cry and have fun. The reason why teenager starts leaving their home is because they look at their home, they look at their father and mother always quarreling, always fighting and scolding each other. But with their friends, they go fishing, they laugh, they rejoice. No wonder they like their friends

more than their home. It should never be that way. When the children grow to teenagers they should still feel close to their parents. They should still be able to share their problems so that they could build strong family in God. The reason is lack of joy in the home.

Even in the church administration or in an organization, if you are an employer and you have many staffs. If your relationship with your staffs is such as you could not sort of have some humor and joy then something is wrong in your working relationship.

Some Christians think that just because they are Christians, they could cheat. They go to the office, they were supposed to work eight hours and they spend two hours doing devotion. Praying for two hours and they actually work for six hours. They rob their employer two hours. They write it off and say, after all I am praying. But no, if we are good Christians and we work for employer, whether the employer is Christian or non-Christian, we should give them the amount of hours that we are being paid for. If it is eight hours, give the full eight hours. Do your devotion outside your office time. Work is work; we should learn to build our devotional life with God.

For example, a pastor, if you are working with your elders, you notice the day you can not laugh together with them is the day you start having relationship problem. As long as you could laugh together and rejoice together, whatever happens we are still all right. We have committee meeting and usually the whole group of them come. So one time we were having the meeting, one of my elders came late. We had settled an issue. All discussed and settled. So one of the leaders and he happened to be one of those who ask a lot of questions. So he asked an old question we have already settled. Then one of the leaders stood up and said, "Why didn't you come earlier," and before long those two were exchanging strong words. They lost their joy. I saw that if we don't restore joy, we are going to have a bad meeting. That kind of atmosphere is not conducive for church committee meeting. You want to have teamwork; the basic thing of working together is to have good relationship with one another. Together we do the work. Let it be any kind of work, we need to have joy involved. When the two of them were firing each other with machine guns and cannonballs, every one in the meeting was very quiet and serious. There I was the chairman, I said, Lord, what shall we do? The Lord gave me an idea. Let's all stand and sing I love you with the love of the Lord and we are one in the bond of love. We sang this many rounds. In fact we sang it until I felt the joy restored. In fact the moment I said that, they did actually like what I did. While the two were firing away their cannon, the moment when I said, let us sing 'we are one in the bond of love', everyone burst out laughing. The moment they laughed, the atmosphere was back to normal. After we sang both of them became very quiet. They were usually the noisiest and most outspoken men but at that moment they were really like church mice. After the meeting, both of them came to each other and apologized to each other. See the key is to have the joy back.

Sometimes you husband and wife rub shoulder with each other; usually you don't want to see each other. So the relationship is not restored. Don't let the sun go down with your anger until joy comes back. You notice both of you could be very serious, then something very funny happens and both of you laugh. Suddenly it's restored. See when joy comes back, the relationship is restored.

Joy is important to relationship. Any person whom you can not laugh and weep together with, you are not really close. In your working relationship, to really be able to work together, you have to laugh together and weep together. If you can not do that, you are not close enough to work there. You are still stranger. There are people we get to know and we can get close and we can have working relationship. The oil that pours through is the oil of joy that restore it. So if Satan can not steal our joy, he can not steal our strength. If Satan can not steal our joy, he can not steal our goods and he can not steal our relationships. If Satan can not steal our joy, he can not steal our health. Proverbs 17:22 "A merry heart does good like medicine." See if Satan can not steal your joy, he can not steal your health. If you watch your life carefully, usually in a world that we live in is very stressful. The people who are older and live longer are more healthy. They are merry and they have joy.

I wrote to the Encyclopedia Britannica for an article that I saw on laughter as the medicine and it came back with scientific research. I took a bit of it into my book on health. They scientifically analyze and saw that when a person laughs; there are chemical release in their body that causes their body to be more immune to sickness and affliction. This confirmed the bible. So you realize it is good to rejoice. It is good to have joy. It's healthier and we need to keep our joy so that we don't loose our health. For a merry heart do good like a medicine.

## 5. THE STRUGGLES OF LIFE

I Samuel 4, we read the story of a crisis that took place in Israel. Tonight we are going to look at the struggle of life. In other words, the areas where every one of us will have to struggle with it are in regards to the principles of this life. One of those areas we have to struggle with is what we call principles and methods and many other areas. But we realize that in life there is such a thing as principles. We all discover the principles of life and then as Christians we discover them in the bible and live as faithful. The grace of God that God bestowed, following His Word and bible. As much as we know now, there are natural principles and there are spiritual principles. We need to operate our lives based on principles. Without principles we can not live our lives in orderly manner. Now the principles of life that we have touched on in various areas have been major areas that we do not develop in our lives and we will continually have problems. So here is the time when we see in I Samuel 4, when Israel was having a crisis. Now these principles that we draw from the bible apply to all areas of life. As we all grow in life, we all begin to struggle to move into various aspects of life. As we struggle in those areas, one of the first struggles that we have is to develop those principles and then to apply those methods.

Lets divide them clearly before we look at the word and do some definitions. A principle is a truth that is for us based in the scripture and that is true to all aspects of life and when applied will bear its good fruit. It's rewarding. Methods are divided from principles. Without principles the methods may be wrong. Principles come first then methods. Sometimes through the passage of time a method continues but the principle is forgotten. Then the next group tries to keep the method without the principle and they are going to face problems. Now there are four major areas that we will reckon a person who struggle in life to reach out into. As we keep faithfully applying the principles of God and the principles of life, God Himself guarantee success in our life. Success depends upon our faithfulness to God's principles. It is not just how we begin but it is how we end. As we faithfully apply the principles of God, God leads us into the full realm of that area.

I Samuel 4, see one of the first major areas that faced in God. Here is the crisis. Joshua had died long ago. This is a different generation. They do not know Joshua at all. In fact it was at a low point in Israel. It was one of the nation's lowest points because the bible tells us in chapter 3 that there was no open revelation that seems to be not many prophets around. If they were, many would have retired or died. So in I Samuel it tells us the drab and deadly picture but thanks be to God that there is always hope in God. There is always the word that you lean on. In I Samuel 3 we notice here that there was no open revelation in verse one. It says that the word of the Lord was rare. There were very few people who heard the word. They had a form of godliness. They still continue all their Old Testament commandments where Moses asked them to keep the ordinances and the ceremonies as much as they knew how. But something was happening. Even the priests were corrupted in verse one. We all know the background story of Eli and his family. Eli was a high priest. So that was a very low point in that nation. Moreover the Philistines in the land had risen up to dominate the Israelites. So there was continual war. And here in chapter 4 is the background. A major war occurred within the Philistines and the Israelites.

So let's read the story here in verse 2, "then the Philistines put themselves in battle array against Israel. And when they joined battle, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men of the army in the field."

That was a disaster, so all the Israelites came together in verse 3 and they consulted with one another. Here was the conclusion in verse 3, "When the people had come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, 'Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord from Shiloh to us, that when it comes among us it may save us from the hand of our enemies.'"

Now here is what the Israelites say: they did not live in the time of Joshua. Those who lived in the time of Joshua had died long ago. After Joshua came all those judges in the book of Judges. This was toward the close of the Judges time. Samuel was among the last judges that God raised up in Israel. So they remembered the past. They remembered how they used to carry the ark and they have victory. How they carried the ark and they marched round Jericho. How they carried the ark and they would cross into the land of Canaan and cross Jordan. I mean the ark was the symbol of success and victory and power. Now here was a suggestion. After the disaster, they said, let us bring the ark. It was a good suggestion. They remembered how they succeeded in the past. In other words, they remembered the methods that were used. So somebody went all the way to Shiloh where the ark was. When the ark came into the camp where all the people were down and discouraged, deadly and depressed and suppressed and oppressed and really pressed down and at very low point. When the ark came, everyone of them revived. They rejoiced, so great was the joy.

In verse 5, "When the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted so loudly that the earth shook." They rejoiced. They had a religious ceremony. I mean there was such thing as rejoicing. There was such joy. Everybody's heart was encouraged again. They remembered the method. Joshua did it that way. I mean they had success in the past. They remembered their forefathers. They remembered the method. So they received a method that had been used before. In fact the ark was lying forgotten in Shiloh. But in a time of crisis they remembered the method. That usually happens to many Christians who are not deep in the Word. In a time of crisis they remember the methods, but methods without principle. This will never work. It would be just doing it on the outside without understanding on the inside. Part of the training for a person is not just imparting a method or formula but it is imparting an understanding of how the formula or how the method came about. So here is where there is a struggle in their life. A crisis in their life. When there is no principle but there is a method, there could be an outward rejoicing, there could be an outward celebration, there could be an outward goal and in all these areas but remember it is not based on the outward. It is based on the inward. Unless God changes on the inside, we can not change the outside.

Here in chapter 4, all the Philistines heard that shout and they are the one who got scared.

They panicked. In fact the Philistines remembered all the stories of the past of Moses and Joshua. They remembered all these things. All the Philistines were afraid but something happened. When the battle took place, the Israelites lost the ark. From disaster they went to complete total loss. I mean a disaster is not enough. Now they don't even have the ark. Fat Eli, one of the fattest men in the bible, was sitting at the

gate waiting and his heart was afraid what may happen to the ark. When he heard that the ark was gone, he also was gone. He fell down, broke his neck and he died.

So in this first instance, we see how that in modern life today, as we face it in the struggle of life, one of the things people forget to differentiate is the difference between principle and method. Methods are based on principles but methods without principles are empty. For example, sometime people hear or follow certain methods, perhaps certain way that a man of God minister. The man of God could be using a certain way, a certain style of speaking which is all methodology.

Or a person's personality flowing out, the way he expresses his understanding and principles. When they copy everything exactly, the only difference is they didn't get the results. A man of God could be ministering in a crusade or some other meetings, saying by the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ and he continues all kinds of commands, so that little disciple who just sat under that person ministry, go back to their own fellowship and on Sunday he goes by the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit and because they have heard a lot about Kathryn Khulman, they stretch the word Holy Spirit longer, thinking the longer they stretch, the more powerful. I mean Kathryn Khulman when she called the Holy Spirit it was that long but that was the method they adapted. Something copied without understanding how the method came about. There is a reason for that method. Like for example, one evangelist during a certain time in a crusade, just after he finished his message, he would take out his handkerchief to wipe his sweat. People say that's when the anointing came. So people who began to follow that person began to have handkerchief before they do any other things. At a certain time when they are preaching they also wipe their sweat. The only difference is there is only sweat without anointing. Actually the evangelist did that not because of the anointing, it was a signal for the ushers to get ready.

So there are reasons behind certain things. Sometimes when we have forgotten a principle or sometimes the principle is forgotten through the years and we just revive the method it is going to be very disastrous. Take another example, sometimes when we have a good meeting or on a Sunday, in the meeting everybody danced unto the Lord and next Sunday there was a tremendous anointing, healing anointing, powerful anointing then the following Sunday they will try to stir up the dancing again. They thought they have found the key: dance equal anointing. So they would dance every time. Everybody get into a certain pattern. So they would dance and really sweat it out. It was not a church. It was an aerobic center. At the end of the time, they found that the only oil that came out was the human oil. You see they try to use a method to get the anointing. Every method has a principle behind it. The principle behind that was not so much because of the dancing. The principle behind it was the people had released themselves to the Lord. They had openly worshipped the Lord. Now that could be expressed in different ways. Dancing was a method and a way by which that principle was released. Now there is a principle in the anointing flowing whenever people are able to release themselves to the Lord in whatever manner. It's easier for the anointing to flow. That is a principle but the method may not be just one. There are many methods but one principle. The application of that principle can be different in each place and in each time but the principle remain the same. Methods change but the principles remain.

So here in I Samuel 4, as they struggle with the method without the principle they had failure. That applies also in the business world and in the ministry realm. In the full

time Christian ministry, sometimes people hear a testimony and that person says, he/she gave the car away or sold out the house. He/she gave away and then the Lord blessed him or her with another new car. So when they hear those testimonies, they go back and they did the same thing. The next two weeks they end up in a welfare home. They see a method. Every time you hear a testimony, remember to pick up the principle from the method. Then you could change the method and still apply the same principle. When you hear a testimony of somebody got baptized in the Spirit in his bathroom, then the person began to have a revelation. His friend was also a seeker. First thing he knows what to phone his friend. He said, Hi, I have got the baptism in the Spirit. The other guy said, I want to come over now. How do I receive? First step, get into my bathroom. Step two, turn on the shower. Step three, alleluia. So the person with his full clothes on, in the shower singing alleluia until his voice croaked. He turns around to his friend and say, how long did it take you? I have been soaking here for two hours. I haven't received it yet. The problem is that they have the method but they did not understand the principle. See the principle behind the shower in the baptism in the Spirit is that possibly the person was relaxed and less tense. Perhaps that's the only time he ever relaxed. The other time he was very tense. The principle behind it is that the person must not have all these distractions. Just relax and hang loose with the Lord. But when he was in the church, he was very tensed. Someone said let loose but he couldn't. How they minister in the baptism in the Spirit. One person says let loose, another person says hang on, the Lord is coming. Hang loose or hang on, which one. Very complicated. This is how Christians are ministered sometimes.

I have watched people ministered in the baptism in the Spirit and I see that there are many methods. I know one evangelist that lay hands on people. They will say, "Say alleluia." I won't use that method but I won't run others down in using that. But the only thing I say is that, some Christians think that is the only way to receive. See what has happened. They have confused a principle and the method. The understanding behind this is, perhaps when the person says alleluia that person is more relax and can let go. That method helps the person but that is a method not a principle. There are others who use different methods. When they lay hands, they not only help you to speak in tongues but they shake the tongues out of you. Another evangelist I met, when they baptize people in the Spirit, they say, "Say after me." The person will say in tongues, say something like 'ku lah ba'. What is happening to Christendom? What kind of ministers are we producing? That is why sometimes when we go to bible school, we learn methods and we learn principles but if you don't divide the two it's dangerous. We have to divide between principles and methods.

For example, we have a lot of teaching coming from America, from England and some other places. Remember right here in Asia, we can absorb the principles, change the methods at times. We don't have to do things the same way. We could have the same principles if and when the principle comes from the written Word, but when the application came we have to hear the Holy Spirit to determine the method, which we will see in life, that all these things keep happening in life all the time. You hear it in the financial realm or every other realm. We have to differentiate that methods without principles are total and complete failure. If there are no principles might as well don't do it. A principle comes first before the method. So here in I Samuel 4 you see failure. That is why some Christians struggle. They don't know the principles of life. All the learning, all the time in life is just methods. They forget to dig into the

method to seek out the principles behind the method. Sometimes a method is taught without the principle. We have to seek out the principle behind the method so that we could adapt it. That is one of the struggles that people have in life. Why do some people struggle? Why do some ministers struggle to come out in ministry? They are taking methods wholesale without checking out the principles. If they would find the principle, discover it, understand it and change and adapt the methods, they will begin to take off. But those that just take the methods without the principles, it's always a struggle in every area.

It could be in a business world, perhaps a successful businessman share his testimony and share how he does things. Then we copy the methods wholesale. Just like church growth. It's very common in cell groups, the key that they hold. Keys are supposed to be principles not methods. If you do a survey of Christianity all over the world, you will find that in certain countries, home fellowships are developed differently from the way they are in Korea. There is nothing wrong with cell group but what happen when it comes over to Asia? Every pastor, Tom, Dick and Harry starts his own home cells. It's a different thing in Korea; the home cells are all evangelistic. But here home cells are prison cells. You will hear things like this, 'don't go to that home cell. Is that an official home cell? No it's not. That's not mine. This is the real home cell. The opposite home cells are started to hold on to the flock.' The key is not just the method but the principle behind it. There are some methods that are definitely ordained by God. Like home fellowship. But differentiate it between methods and the principles. See what is actually behind the home fellowship. Don't just copy the whole method. Otherwise you will be struggle in your church copying methods without principles. The principle behind it is this, personal ministry. What is the purpose of home cell? It is to break down into smaller groups. It's a place where you analyze the principle behind it. In a small group there are more personal ministry. People's talent and gift are tapped because they could handle smaller groups. It is a place where people could function. So if you could apply those same principles with different methods, you will still have the same success. So lets understand that all methods are based on principles. Everything we hear has a mixture of method and principle and we must differentiate between principle and method.

The second struggle that people have is in I Samuel 13, talking about the struggle of life. There are four areas in regard to principle and method. Here is a different incident. Saul has now become king. Samuel has gone into retirement and became an intercessor. He was still a prophet and a priest but he has sort of surrendered his ministry as a judge and given it to Saul who will function in his kingly anointing. I Samuel 13, again the Philistines were giving troubles.

In verse 5 –7 “The Philistines gathered together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousands horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the seashore in multitude. And they came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth Aven. When the men of Israel saw that they were in danger (for the people were distressed), then the people hid in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in holes and in pits. And some of the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.”

He was a leader over a pact of frightened men. Here is another disaster in crisis. It's in time of crisis that our principles are tested. Without the crisis we may not know whether you are a man or woman of principle. When you are given the opportunity

and you are tested then we know. Joseph was tested by Potiphar's wife. There was nobody around and Joseph had the opportunity to commit sin but he was a man of principle. He said, 'I shall be a person of principle because people of principle succeed in life.' That is what we want to produce. There is a principle that we hang on to. It does not matter in Joseph's life whether he was framed up and then he was thrown into prison and accused of something that he did not do. That was the story of Joseph. I mean Potiphar's wife had him thrown into prison when she could not bring him to commit a fleshly sin. Remember as long as you hold fast to correct principles, the Lord is with you. If the Lord is with you, who can be against you? It's important to do right. Right in our heart. Right in our mouth and right in our actions.

Now in I Samuel 13, here is a tremendous crisis. Saul was waiting for seven for Samuel in verse 8, "but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattered from him. So Saul said, 'Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me.' And he offered the burnt offering."

Then Samuel came and Saul went out to meet him that he might greet him. Now here Saul did the right thing in the sense that he understood he needed to sacrifice. But there were also wrong in what he did. The wrong that he did was again a similar principle to I Samuel 4. Every time before Israelites went out to battle, they will always offer to God a sacrifice before they went off. So Saul knew the method, he knew what must be done and he knew what ought to be done. In I Samuel 4, you have no principle. The people didn't follow God. Nobody was really after the Word of God. Nobody was following the bible. The Word was rare in those days. When the crisis came they just took a method and followed. Now here in Saul's time is slightly different. They have a certain measure. They had Samuel. Samuel was a mighty prophet and a mighty priest. He was a mighty judge before he turns the area of being a judge over to Saul. So there were a lot of spiritual activities. The people had seen the Lord. The people had seen lots of things. Now they were in an area where there was another crisis and this time Saul did it. He performed the offering but he was moved by the wrong principle. Then you realize here that the method must be applied by the right person. So you have three things flowing together now. You have principle, you have method and you have the person.

Saul was the wrong person to apply the right method and he had the wrong motivation involved. He knew he had to do it but it's all religious. He did it just to get away so that he could quickly fight. He did not do it meaningfully showing dependence on God. So there is something that is not fully right.

Lets read I Samuel 13, when Samuel asked Saul why did you do it? In verse 14, he says, "But now your kingdom shall not continue." I want you to see Saul answer in verse 11-12, 'When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash.'" Verse 12, therefore I felt compelled but that was wrong. That was the duty and the responsibility of a priest not a king. So he had the right thing in the sacrifice but it was the wrong person. Of course, he didn't fully understand the principle behind it. That was not just a religious ceremony and then get on with the fight. You can not just do it because the people are running away. If I do it too slow there will be nobody else and by the time I go and fight there will be nobody else. See he didn't understand that there was just a ceremony before they fight. That was really seeking God. That burnt offering was to seek God's blessing, God's approval, and

God's victory before they go forth. Sometimes the struggles that we have in our life is because the principles, the methods and the people involved were not correctly tied up.

In I Chron. We are talking about why some people are struggling and what they are doing. Now natural knowledge also operates. For example, you could go to the best school, you could be trained to be an engineer but if all you learned were just methods not principles, when you come out you could not invent new inventions and apply to things. You are just like someone who does the maintaining of engineering. You would not be at the forefront to apply what you have learned and go further and deeper into the field you are supposed to be an expert. To advise even further and further. Make use of everything in the past and learn everything but keep moving forward. In any field you realize you got to learn. Learn as much as you can but differentiate between the methods and principles. That will help us to avoid the struggles of life.

In I Chron. 13:1, even a man like David, one who love God, who is a worshipper of God needs to learn the difference between principle and method an person. Until he could coordinate all these three areas he would face failure in his life. In verse 1, "David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader." Now David had a plan. He wanted to bring the ark from Kirjath Jearim where it is into Jerusalem, which he had built. At that time he was already ruler over the whole nation of Israel. So David made a decision and got all the people.

In verse 2 it says, "It seems good to you, and if it is of the Lord our God, let us send out our brethren everywhere who are left in all the land of Israel, and with them to the priests and Levites who are in their cities and their common lands, that they may gather together to us, and let us bring the ark of our God back to us."

Now that was good. It was a good desire but as all of us know that there is sometimes a struggle between good intention and the means to carry it. Now that is repeated in the many lives over and over again. There are a lot of people with good intentions but because they use the wrong means, so they are out and down. Our society today should not have Robin Hoods. There is no such thing. If you do the right thing using the wrong method, it is wrong. Robin Hood must go to jail. See the bible shows us that it is wrong even if it is a right method. If it is a right principle, a right desire and you apply the wrong method, it is wrong. A right principle must be applied to the right method before its right. Now David brought all those people together from all over the place.

In verse 7, 'so they carried the ark of God on a new cart from the house of Abinadab, and Uzza and Ahio drove the ark.'

If you notice from I Samuel 6 and chapter 7 verse 1 that the ark when it came back from the Philistine was still in Abinadab's house. It has not moved. In other words, no one seemed to be interested in the ark. For all those years in Saul' life, that is at least over forty years because the ark came back in I Samuel 6 and that was before Saul's reign. Saul reigned forty years. So that tells you one whole generation passed by before they brought the ark because in David's time it was in his first year. He reigned seven years over Judah and then thirty-three years over the whole of Israel. Now this

happened after the whole of Israel came. So you add another seven years. That will be at least forty-seven years that the ark had been left in Abinadab's house.

Remember how the ark came to Abinadab's house? That is in I Samuel 6, the Philistines who could not stand the ark, they made a cart drawn by oxen and the cart took the ark back. That was the Philistines' method. Here in I Chron. 13 in verse 6 it says when they wanted to bring the ark, in verse 7 they made a new cart. That was not an Israelite method. It had been done before. All you have to do is to read I Samuel 6, by the Philistines; the ark had actually traveled on a cart before. Perhaps that was the story that was circulating for forty-seven years. Now when David turned has come to bring the ark, it was the most logical thing to make a new cart. After all by that time in those days they also had technological improvement. Before that the priests had to carry. So now we will use our new cart but there was symbolism that they could not remove.

So while the ark was in the cart, Uzza and Ahio, as they were carrying and driving the cart, Ahio and Uzza and everyone were singing and dancing. Now look at it, right principle, wrong method and everybody were singing and dancing and rejoicing before the Lord. In verse 9, as the ark on the cart driven by Uzza and Ahio were traveling, they must have come to a bumpy road, on that bumpy road the ark bumped, so did Uzza and Ahio. Uzza put his hands to hold the ark. He had a good intention. He meant well. He didn't want God's ark to fall down but something was wrong. The method. All the singing and the dancing stopped for a moment. There was suddenly a deep silence in the middle of their rejoicing. Uzza died.

In verse 11, David was upset at God. If David were like one of us, David would have said to God, God I don't want to talk to you again. But some of us in a crisis, we struggle in life, we applied what we thought was God's method or God's principle. Our heart was right and we applied it. We react against God. Sometimes we look for a scapegoat. Usually the pastor is a good one to be blamed.

In the early days of the ministry, it was dangerous because you get blamed for a lot of things because you don't have enough people who know you well enough. I remembered being young and just willing to help and so what happened was, we were in the traveling ministry, and we tried to minister to all the various churches in the early days. We have not started any church in Kuala Lumpur yet. So we have a lot of people who called us up for prayer. Usually by the time they call you they have called others, which at that time we didn't know. Usually by the time they call you, the sick person was already about to go home. So here we are young in the ministry, willing to pray with anybody. In fact when you begin in a ministry, you have very few places to preach and very few places to go to. So what do you do? You go to every door that opened. I remembered one thing. We were just there and I was not the only one praying. There were others also praying. There was a top businessman who was praying. He was a Full Gospel man. After prayer we left and the next week the person died. If the person lives we may never hear again. The person will say praise God. But when the person die, they will say because so and so came and pray. There were four of us but I was the one picked out. I was the one blamed. At that time I don't have any reputation. I was not rich in the world. It's harder to blame those people but it's easy to blame the guy who is just coming up. I realize you can't help it. Sometimes people struggle in life and they want an outlet. God bless their hearts. Sometimes people are frustrated and they find room to throw frustration in.

Any pastor who has been counseling knows that the biggest key is to keep quiet and listen and then pray. It helps the people because it's their outlet. There are many professions that are difficult. One of the most difficult is letting people pour their problems. If you work in a supermarket the worst place to be in is the complaint department. All the other department you could see people are smiling but complaint department is different. When the customers come, they are angry. They are about to throw their cooker at you. It's not an easy department to be. There are certain places where it's harder where people throw their frustration at you. So there are struggles in life.

Now David has gone through his struggles. Moses also went through his struggles. In fact every one of us have our struggles with methods and with principles. We try a method but it didn't work. So what do we do? We got to examine it very carefully; there are more things behind than just that. In the same way, Moses, if you remember the story of how God first sent him. The first time God sent him, he thought that there is instant result. Finally when Pharaoh made the Israelites work harder, the bible tells us in the book of Exodus, Moses came back and he scolded God. It's amazing how God can take it.

Look at Moses' complaint on Exodus 5:22, "Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people?"

Think who he is. Arrogance. I am amazed God didn't strike him. I mean he already knew who God was. He asked God, 'God, why did you make all these troubles.' He actually blamed God. Next thing he says he blamed God for sending him. Verse 22-23, "Why is it you have sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to his people; neither have You delivered Your people at all." In other words, he is coming to God and complaining. That was not prayer. I know what God did. God said, Michael could you direct him to the complaint department. Here David he got angry with God but he knew there is no point getting angry with God. So David was very upset that he left he ark where it was. The whole ceremony has to be canceled. Can you imagine, there were thousands of people and whole ceremony has to be cancelled. But at the end of it David finally found himself. He began to search and he realized it has nothing to do with God.

We all go through a stage when we were young Christians or new Christians. We could easily blame God for the first thing that come or happen but we grow out of it like little children. Now my personal attitude is never blame God because there are times when we don't fully understand. There are many situations we don't fully understand. He is never responsible for our failures and our lack of success. The answer always lies with us in regard to our lives. In His patience He teaches us and slowly we gather and discover but here is where the failures were. David failed in two points. He was right in one point. He was right in his principle but he was wrong in his method and in line with the person that was used. Instead of the priests driving the cart, the priests were supposed to carry the cart.

Finally in chapter 15, verse 2, some time past, David now has cooled down. In verse 1 David had built houses for himself. He prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it. Some time has passed by, David had learned. He had done some soul searching. In verse 2 David said, "No one may carry the ark of God but the Levites, for the Lord has chosen them to carry the ark of God to minister before Him

forever.” And the wonderful story that we hear in I Chron.15, it says that David finally has the right method. He has the right principle. He has the right people doing it. Finally David was able to do what he was not able to do. I want you to know why he made that choice. What made him make that choice? If you read carefully in II Samuel, it gives us a clue. What made David changed his mind and bring the ark in, the bible gives us a clue here. In II Samuel 6:12, I want you to see what made David changed his mind to bring the ark in. He had done some soul searching. He knew where his mistake was.

In verse 12, “Now it was told King David, saying, ‘The Lord has blessed the house of Obed-Edom.’”

Who was Obed-Edom? Obed-Edom was the house, which they left the ark when the ceremony was cancelled. So David in his anger stopped the whole ceremony and left the ark at the nearest house. It happened to be the house of Obed-Edom. I mean so clever of David. Somebody died and David said, Obed-Edom you keep the ark. Obed-Edom did not have much choice. I wonder what was on Obed-Edom’s mind when he accepted it. In fact his heart must be thinking it’s dangerous. He must have given instruction to his wife, please shift everything out of the room because they want to put the ark there. I don’t know how to tell you. Somebody died and now we have to take this dangerous ark. Haven’t they heard about what happened to the Philistines? All these things were happening. Finally the ark was there in Obed-Edom’s house. They may have put the ark in a certain place. Everybody, when he comes home, he will ask his wife, anything dangerous happen. But strangely, something was happening. Obed-Edom owns much cattle and sheep. He may have a farm. Something strange began to happen. Obed-Edom cows prospered for quite a long time, maybe one year, maybe two years or maybe three years. All his cows were multiplying all the time. All his sheep and all his oxen are multiplying. I mean they are prospering. When Obed-Edom comes to his harvest, his harvest field was always the best. So finally Obed-Edom tell his wife and says, do you think it could be that dangerous ark?

Finally they realized it’s because of the ark that they are blessed. Somehow during that time they concluded that it was because of that ark. This time they really love the ark. Finally they all realized that it was a blessing. Words started spreading. Everybody, the whole town started saying, hi Obed-Edom. His cows and every other thing are different from others. News came to David. David started thinking, God still working. This was what made David change his mind. He heard the blessing.

We want to encourage you with the blessings in the principle of life. Somewhere, some place in some corner of this earth, in this place or else where, there are God’s people who love the Word. Who apply its principles, who apply the formula and apply the method. Right heart, right method, right people and right attitude and it works and in this bible that we are talking about. There are many Christians who still struggle today. Struggle to apply in their business, struggle to apply in the ministry, struggle to apply in the church, and struggle to apply to every failure that you hear about. There could be ten successes that you don’t hear about. You could talk about so and so tried this and it failed. But there are many others somewhere; there are many Obed-Edom who begin to taste the blessing of God.

So David finally said, get me the ark. David realized something that we all will realize. No matter how you struggle, it’s no use getting angry with God. God made

this world and He can do without us but we can not do without Him. No point fighting with the One who created us. It's better to yield and follow His ways. So the order came. David must have sent somebody to Obed-Edom and said king David commanded that his ark be taken away from this house. I tell you, that day, Obed-Edom and his whole family nearly fainted. They have come to love this strange looking ark, which they had received reluctantly. But now they have come to love this ark and they can't do without it. I mean although it had its danger but they had come to realize that God's presence was there. I could see while the whole of Israel was celebrating in Chron.15, all of Israel was rejoicing and dancing and David, if you read the bible, he was dancing like a mad man. He was so happy that he didn't take care of his dress properly, that's in the bible, and I didn't make up the story. II Samuel 6, in those days, the men don't wear trousers, they wear skirts. I mean he danced and danced until his shirt flew all over the place. His wife was angry. Everybody was dancing but you could see there was one family where their tears were just rolling down from the eyes. That is Obed-Edom. They have come to love God's presence.

I have found out long ago that the only way to have God's presence is right principle, right method and right people. No short cut for this. You could have the method but you don't have the right principle there is no God. It's better to be a gatekeeper in God's house, a day in God's house, is better than thousand days.

My friends, the most important thing in the principles of life is that Jesus is God with us. How can you fail in His presence? Even though at times you felt like Joseph in the prison. Discarded, thrown away, nobody knows you. The question is not where you are, what you are going through and not how difficult the task you face, but it is God with us, it's His presence in your life. Obed-Edom love God's presence so much that although the scholars don't fully agree, but Obed-Edom could possibly be the one mentioned in I Chronicle where he has come to love God's presence so much that in I Chronicle 16:37-38 "So he left Asaph and his brothers there before the ark of the covenant of the Lord to minister before the ark regularly, as every day's work required. Look at verse 38, "and Obed-Edom with his sixty-eight brethren, including Obed-Edom the son of Jeduthun, and Hosah, to be gatekeepers."

I don't know how long the ark was with Obed-Edom. Obed-Edom has come to realize that the ark means everything. When the ark left, he left with the ark to serve the ark. Obed-Edom has come to realize that he can still have the presence of God. He may not have it in his house anymore, but he has come to love that strange looking ark. So that when it was taken and when David was organizing the worship around the ark, Obed-Edom will be the first to say: "King David, I can't live without the ark. I have become so attached to the ark. I know the Lord's presence is there and I want to be there." He was one of the worshippers. That will help us to realize that we would hunger, to know that whatever we are struggling in our lives, God is not at fault but examine our principles, examine our methods and examine where we are in God.