

How To Be G.R.E.A.T. 1

How to Be G.R.E.A.T.

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Introduction

All of God's children are capable of greatness. In fact, it's one of His promises.

Daniel 7:27

Then the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom and all rulers will worship and obey Him.

With discernment we could determine that this scripture is referring to the new earth that is on the way!

Isaiah 65:17

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.

This book is to prepare you for greatness and the acquisition of your portion in the new earth.

Cultivate all the personal qualities listed in this book. Reading this scripture from the book of Daniel in the context of how it was written, we see that in the new earth everything is given to us His holy people, “greatness, power, sovereignty”, and so on.

I truly believe that in God’s sovereign will, God desires to equip us with all that it takes to be great. If all kingdoms, power, and dominion are to be given to us, we should be capable of maintaining this authority and wise enough to align with God’s own greatness.

Greatness is a culmination of specific attributes all combined in one. All the attributes and personal qualities listed in this book are interdependent upon each other, and the foundational concepts of listed qualities overlap.

I have included blank lined sections throughout this book. These strategically placed sections are designed to help you

reflect and challenge yourself. Please use these areas as directed and be honest with yourself.

The intention of this book is to guide and develop you to greatness. The lessons I learned through my life experiences were learned only because the Lord opened my eyes, as I asked Him to. Everything else, is what God directed me to write about, and to Him be the glory. Thank HIM for this book.

Let you become GREAT.

Let you become all these things, in Jesus' name!

Chapter 1 – Generous

Be Generous.

One-word, full sentence. Give.

(This chapter might be the most gentle so enjoy it while it lasts.)

What is the first thing you think of when you are prompted to “give” to someone? More than likely the immediate thought is picturing yourself handing someone a material gift, and sometimes that type of gift is a major blessing. But there are many different things you can offer to another person; you can give your time, energy, love, resources, knowledge, and more.

We might not always be able to, or required to give much, but do what you can. Speak this out loud: I break any and all forms of selfishness in my life, in Jesus’ name!

Proverbs 11:24

One gives freely and grows all the richer. Another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.

Deuteronomy 15:11

For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore, I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy, and to the poor in your land.'

Matthew 6:2-4

Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others... so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret, will reward you.

Although in the new earth there will be no poverty, ***the righteous give generously*** (Psalm 37:21).

The Greatest Danger: Your Personal Greed or Ambitions

Some of us hold so tightly to what provides a false sense of security or fulfillment. I think we all can relate to the idea of wanting personal wealth, and self sacrifice tends to jeopardize what we think we have. Sometimes God will bless us with an abundance not so that we CAN give to others, but because we are SUPPOSED to give it to others. Meaning our wealth doesn't always belong to us.

When you hold tightly to your personal dreams, desires, and possessions without surrendering it all to God and allowing Him to lead you, you are walking away from God.

Psalm 37:4

Delight yourself in the Lord and He will grant you the desires of your heart.

I think one of the most disheartening passages in the bible is ***Matthew 19:21-22:***

Jesus told him, “If you want to be perfect, go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” But when the young man heard this, he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

What’s so unfortunate about this passage is that this young man had a literal encounter and verbal exchange with God incarnate, but he chose money. Now consider this: we could replace money in this scripture with; status, friendships, or personal belongings. If our priority isn’t to follow God’s specific assignment and instructions for our lives, what we’ve placed before God has become an idol.

The saddest part of this is not that he chose money, but that his money would never truly satisfy him. We were created to enjoy God’s being, to love and be loved by Him, to fulfill the specific destiny and purpose He has for us. NOTHING else will satisfy the longing in your soul other than fulfilling God’s specific purpose for YOU. I believe this is one of the greatest truths we might ever learn as followers of Christ.

What might be even more unfortunate is that God in His sovereignty already knows who will and who will not follow Him.

Romans 8:29

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son...

Romans 9:21

Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

The narrow path (Matthew 7:13-14) is excruciating, it WILL hurt! But despite the pain, you WILL be satisfied. It's a paradox but it's the most beautiful paradox there is.

A lot of the time we chase material wealth, status, reputation, and good times. God desires to give us what satisfies our soul, sometimes this will include happy memories but sometimes God will give us what seems like an impossible task, one that we did not expect, one that requires us to leave

everything and everyone behind in obedience. Life with God, surrendered to his purpose, is more satisfying than immediate fulfillment of our dreams and desires.

I believe the scripture that says God gives us the desires of our heart (Psalm 37:4) is twofold. He creates us to desire things that He plans to give us, the perfect formula for the satisfaction of our soul's existence. When we choose God, our deepest desires come to pass. But when instant gratification rules over our thought processes, and we forfeit what truly satisfies for what we think we desire, we're left empty, crushed, and the gates of hell have every right to destroy us. Unless God has mercy.

You might be wondering, "what does this have to do with being generous, or generosity?" Well, we have to give ourselves to God as He gave Himself to us. This is the foundation of our faith. We can't do anything if we are not ready to give ourselves entirely first to God, and then to others.

Generosity makes you memorable.

Some time ago, I visited a postal service company and I needed to print some documents, as I did not have a printer. I was told that there was a fee to open the document and then another fee to print. In my opinion, the fee was unreasonable, so I decided to try elsewhere.

As my daughter and I were leaving the storefront, a young man offered to pay the fee and pay for my printing. He shared that he would like to pay for my printing and that it was not a burden for him to cover it. The simple fact that someone would make the decision to help me and make my life that much easier, brought joy to an otherwise stressful situation.

I was unemployed at the time, and him helping me with what might seem insignificant to others, was a blessing to me.

In my life, I would say I have experienced and been blessed by others' generosity, but a lot of the time I am faced with and recognize this "me-first" attitude in a lot of people.

So, when someone went out of their way and offered to help me, in a small sense it restored my belief that there are people who do care. I hope that we can follow the example of people who decide to help those who might or might not obviously be in need.

We all need at least one person to give to us. Sometimes life can wear us down and make us feel drained, sad, or God forbid, hopeless. Sometimes we just need a hug, a ride home, or a listening ear to talk to about our problems.

Not saying that we need to take the place of someone's chauffeur or therapist, but it significantly can change our lives to add one more person we can count on. Can one person solve all our problems? No. But I do feel bad for people who don't have much of a support system.

Make yourself available to people in need. How much sweeter life would be if more people took from each other less, and decided to give more!

I feel it would be most responsible of me to also add that when you give, don't expect gratitude. I do genuinely believe that "you reap what you sow", however the inevitable blessing that comes with being a generous person isn't always immediate.

Proverbs 11:25

The generous man is a source of blessing and shall be prosperous and enriched. Whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.

Galatians 6:8 & 9

the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Colossians 3:23 & 24

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as if working for the Lord, not for human masters. Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Generosity can restore hope.

I used to work at a nonprofit here in San Diego, and one of our primary functions providing free meals to at risk children. I remember a day when I was working in an office, we got a phone call from a woman who had heard about our meal distribution program and was looking to pick up meals for her children.

She had called about a specific meal site and unfortunately that site had closed for the day, as they had run out of meals. She seemed a little frustrated and she asked if there were any other meal distribution sites that were still where she could pick up food from. During this time, we had drive-through meal pick up options and she was inquiring if there were any that were still open. She was very persistent.

I let her know that they had all ended for the day, and that she might have to revisit that site earlier the following day so she could access the meals before they run out.

She kept asking if there were any other sites that I knew of and unfortunately, there were not. Eventually, she asked to speak to someone who had ‘more information’ or to the manager. At this point I was annoyed as she had become frustrated with me. I, however, maintained my composure and put her on hold as I took the phone to my manager. When I found my manager, I briefly explained what the call was about before handing her the phone.

Now my manager is one of the most patient, optimistic, and self-sacrificing people that I’ve ever known. She offered the woman on the phone leftover prepackaged meals that we had at our warehouse. She shared that if the woman was willing to drive to us, she would be more than welcome to the leftover meals.

Of course, this was unusual that someone would be so persistent about the meals. We almost never got calls from parents inquiring about where the meals are, and our warehouse is off limits to the public. So, I was surprised that she offered this to the woman.

Later on I was heading on my way out for the day, and I saw when the woman arrived. I later found out that the reason why she needed a location where she could drive-through and pick up meals was because she had a toddler in the back seat that was hooked up to a machine; tubing coming out of his nose and mouth. He had cancer and needed assistance to survive.

My manager wasn't obligated to allow this woman to come to our warehouse for meals. And if she didn't have such a generous heart, she would have possibly just told the woman that she needed to wait until tomorrow and revisit another site.

My manager shared with me that after she gave the woman meals, she gave the woman a hug, and the woman just

started breaking down in tears. Thanking my manager for her kindness and generosity. She shared that she is struggling to have hope, wondering why she has so little support.

Needless to say, she is probably overwhelmed by the anxiety of not knowing if her child will live, not having the resources to provide for all their needs. She could be stressed out because she is raising two children, one of them having a terminal illness.

In that moment, I know that my manager helped restore hope in this woman's life and in her heart. I truly believe that God was showing me that a small act of generosity can change someone's life. My manager didn't give much; she allowed the mother to have access, she listened to her, and gave her an encouraging word.

It cost her nothing, but in that moment, it made the biggest difference.

Let us allow ourselves to be used by God by cultivating a generous heart.

I do understand that at times, we might feel so exhausted and worn by life that we see ourselves being presented with the opportunity to give, but we don't have the strength.

Give yourself a break. I'm not saying that you have to be perfect; never tired, never discouraged. God knows what you're going through. Just do your best. If you can push yourself, do. But if you feel that you can't pray for yourself.

Personal Reflection Exercise

Grab a pencil or pen and write your responses below

1. Has anyone ever gone out of their way to gift you, or help you in a time of need; time, energy, or resources?

2. How did it impact your life, how you felt, or what you thought?

Personal Challenge

1. Have you ever noticed someone in need, someone you could have safely and easily helped, but decided not to?

2. Thinking back on it now, how do you feel about the decision you made? (Observe your thoughts and feelings, then compare them to the word of God.)

What ways do you feel you need to change your heart into alignment with how God desires us to live? Take your time.

3. List three areas in your personality that you would like to grow in, to assist in you becoming more generous (ex. Maturity, understanding, selflessness, patience):

A.

B.

C.

Chapter 2 – Reliable/ Responsible

At first when writing this chapter, I wondered which quality was more important; responsible or reliable. I felt that being reliable also included being responsible. I believe these qualities compete with each other in terms of moral value and importance.

There have been so many times I was disappointed by someone who said they would do something and then never did!

Of course, sometimes our plans fail, and things happen in life that shift our ability to fulfill obligations we commit to. But you've got to do your best to keep your word! You've got to be reliable.

Reliability builds your legacy

Proverbs 11:3

The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.

What's so interesting about proverbs 11:3, is that it indicates that being unfaithful or unreliable has the potential to destroy a person!

Let's say you get hired for your dream job or are given a much longed for opportunity in your chosen career path. You've been wanting and praying for this opportunity, and it is finally granted to you.

Unfortunately, you are unreliable. When you were hired, you agreed to be on time, to fulfill your duties, to treat others fairly, and to be honest.

But you were late, irreverent, your work was sloppy, you were lazy, and you mistreated your coworkers. Could you honestly say that you would be surprised if you were fired?

Unfaithfulness and duplicity will bring you to ruin!

Although I do believe that in the new earth, status and reputation in this earth is not so important; its more so about who you become and the inner man that aligns you with greatness. If you become great in this earth, you are more capable of maintaining authority and power in the new one.

You can't lead anyone if you are unreliable! Dealing with unreliable people removes our ability to trust what will happen in the future. Of course, most of us, unless given some sort of prophetic knowledge, have no idea what will come our way in the future.

We associate reliability with integrity, strong morals, truthfulness, and honorability or respect.

Rebellion: Stolen Oil

I want to share a story that happened to me and I essentially believe God was doing what He could to bring me to repentance. The main reason I share this story is because if I look back at those few years of my early twenties I knew God had been leading me to His purpose for my life, to my future

spouse, and so much more. But I was so wounded, angry, and traumatized from earlier events that I knowingly rebelled and tried to live life MY way.

If you are ever tempted to or have done the same thing you will find that who you were created to be, and where you end up, will always be at odds, to say the least! If God doesn't lead you there, you are not in His purpose and are living in rebellion; you are going the wrong way.

I remember I was about twenty years old, and I was living in sin, in a relationship that was abusive. I was depressed and living life recklessly. I was homeless, jobless, and had virtually no family support.

I'm definitely not proud of this part of my life, but I feel that I have to relay what God showed me and how He rebuked me.

At this time in my life, I had dreadlocks, it's kind of funny to think about it now but it's true. I kept them moisturized by pouring different types of oil in them.

One day, I decided to walk into a local grocery store, I had no money and so I decided to steal oil. I walked through the aisles and found what I was looking for.

As I was reviewing my options, I sensed the Holy Spirit say, “You can’t crucify Christ twice”.

I knew that He was prompting me to turn around and not follow through with the premeditated theft. But I disregarded His prompting.

God had mercy on me even in this because I had my puppy Infinity with me, and if I had been caught and arrested, she would have been taken away. That would have been the last time I saw her.

So in my rebellion, I stole the oil and went on my way. I was showing contempt for my salvation, and I later realized that I had offended God greatly. I won't disclose exactly everything I did that week. But as a believer, I knew what I was doing, and I knew it was wrong.

A few days later, it was valentine’s day, and I was with my boyfriend at the time spending the afternoon at his friend’s

house; we were eating, hanging out, etc. Long story short, my boyfriend and I got into an argument, things escalated, and I ended up in jail that evening. Now I hadn't committed any crimes in that moment, in fact my arrest was really because of something trivial.

I won't say what because I'd rather focus on what I believe God was showing me.

Later the next day, my mother bailed me out. However, during my arrest, my boyfriend kept my puppy. When I got out, I was furious and demanded that he give her back to me.

In his cruelty, he held her hostage until I "changed my attitude". I was shocked, terrified, and afraid that I would never see her again, as I loved her very much.

I eventually calmed down and promised that I loved him and missed him. I did love him, but mostly at that point I was traumatized. I just wanted my puppy back; I said whatever I thought would work.

I did get her back that day, but I realized that my boyfriend had a very sadistic side when he felt that I was powerless and afraid. I already knew he was violent, but this definitely changed

things. Essentially, I was forced back into the relationship and was afraid to leave or have any kind of disagreement with him.

The next day, I got a hold of his phone and decided to look through his text messages. I saw that while I was in jail on valentine's day, he had messaged an ex-girlfriend of his, and was asking to meet up with her.

I was upset, I felt betrayed, afraid, and so I took my puppy and left. Once he realized that I was gone, he began to threaten me over the phone and told me that by the end of the evening, I was going to end up back in jail.

Towards the evening, his tone changed, and he began to plead with me, that if I would just meet up with him, that he would let me walk away if I wanted to, and that would be the end of it.

Believing him, I decided to meet up and bring him his belongings. Summarizing how things went, we started arguing, I tried to get away from him, he tackled me, wrestled my phone out of my hands, and called the police on me.

When the police arrived, I told them what happened and to my surprise I was placed under arrest a second time. I was absolutely stunned. I was in shock for a good half hour at least. When I was placed in handcuffs, I looked at my boyfriend's face, and saw the coldest, most heartless expression staring back at me.

I was placed in the back of the squad car alone and what was so significant about this moment was that the radio was on and Tim McGraw's 'Humble and Kind' was playing. I heard the lyrics, "Don't steal, don't cheat, don't lie. I know you've got mountains to climb but always stay humble and kind".

I sat in the car alone, hearing the entire song, feeling like God himself was comforting yet reprimanding me. It's a moment I won't ever forget.

During that second arrest, my mother was unable to bail me out and I spent three days in a jail cell alone.

A family member kept my dog safe while I was incarcerated.

God had warned me that I was doing something outside of redemption. In my many sins that week, I tried to re-crucify

Christ. Instead, I was the one who went to jail twice. I love the correction of God, as the emptiness of living in sin is the saddest existence.

There's no greater longing than the indefinable thirst for God's attention.

We try to fill this never-ending need in us with friendships/relationships, accomplishments, love, and approval, etc. and we always feel empty when what we receive isn't from God. Wandering in a continuous state of discontent and emptiness.

We were designed to desire specifically what God created us to acquire or experience but a lot of the time without spending time with God we might never consciously know what that is. When we resist pursuing God its almost like inactive rebellion, what compels us to do something other than pray, worship, or read the Bible?

A couple years before I entered this relationship, I actually had a prophetic nightmare, warning me not divert from the path I was on, but I had surrounded myself with people who didn't truly know God, and I was easily led astray. I knew that I had a

purpose that I was responsible for and that God was calling me, but I was inexperienced, impatient, and angry.

In the near future I plan to write a book about my Domestic Violence testimony and experience called “Getting Out Alive”.

But back to my original point.

I find it ironic that oil is a representation or symbol of salvation, anointing, a physical point of contact for The Holy Spirit, and more. When we knowingly walk into sin, showing contempt for our salvation, we too are stealing oil.

Now one thing I think we need to acknowledge is that although God is merciful and He in His great love, sent Jesus to reconcile us to Himself; as mentioned, we cannot crucify Jesus twice. In some situations, God will hold us responsible for our wrongdoing, as I was.

Let’s be honest with ourselves. We know that as humans, we are deeply flawed and our battle against our fleshly desires and ambitions will be lifelong. This will result in us making

mistakes that could have detrimental effects on our lives, and we must be willing and mature enough to recognize our faults and change indefinitely.

God in His sovereignty has already taken all the mistakes you've made or will make into account, and it isn't too late to get back on the specific path He has for you. But God's purpose for you is a narrow path and I'll explore that with you more later on.

Let's talk about David.

Responsibility and David: The Price of Iniquity

Now at the beginning of David's life he started off so well, we remember that in 1 Samuel 13:14 was chosen to be king; "The Lord has sought for a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be commander over His people."

But after David's dealing with Uriah and Bathsheba (where he indirectly orders the death of Uriah in order to cover the adultery committed with Uriah's wife Bathsheba), we see in 2 Samuel 12:1-14 the prophet Nathan came to visit him and said to him, this...

“There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had exceedingly many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him.

And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.”

David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the Lord lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity.”

Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I

delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more!

Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have *despised* Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.'

Thus says the Lord: 'Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.'

So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord."

And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die."

We can only assume that David broke God's heart in a sense as the analogy Nathan used regarding the poor man and

his ewe lamb. Imagine such a terrible thing happening; a rich man takes the poor man's beloved animal friend, slaughtered it, and cooked it for a stranger because he didn't want to use one from his own flock.

Yes, David was remorseful but essentially God's perfect judgement was that feeling guilty or regretful, wasn't enough. Now yes, David's punishment was severe but so was his transgression. In verse 10 it says that David *despised God* and in other translations it says he showed *contempt for God*. Contempt can be defined as *disregard* or someone being beneath consideration. Let us never do something so terrible, in Jesus' name.

When we really think about what David did, he tried to cover up his wrongdoing with more wrongdoing, and the damage done made way for a heavy and costly judgement. 'The sword would never depart from his house and he would never have a year without war being waged against him. My God, work out your salvation with fear and trembling because you do not want a judgement like David's!

When you think about it, any time we sin, we make ourselves an idol, taking the place of God in our hearts. The first commandment and law God set over His people; to have no other god before Him. It is the most important of all the commandments!

On a side note, if we view sin this way, since we were born into sin, we could never even get past the first commandment before we needed Christ!

As a king chosen by God to lead God's people, David had a responsibility to be righteous and not deal treacherously with the people God entrusted to him. God, speaking through Nathan, told him that He would have given David even more if it all wasn't enough. I believe that essentially, He was telling David that He would have done anything to satisfy David. Can you imagine? If you have a heart after God's, He has the desire to satisfy you and meet your personal needs and without hesitation! I pray in Jesus' name that you have a heart like God's!

And although God is great in mercy and slow to anger, we can't play games with God and show disdain for our salvation. In fact, the bible says...

Philippians 2:12-13

...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Romans 2:6

God “will repay each person according to what they have done.”

Pride and Self Idolization

Many of us are guilty of being prideful, whether of our accomplishments, our appearance, or our abilities and so on. The fact is, you cannot work out your salvation with fear and trembling and be full of pride. We as human beings in need of salvation, really have nothing to be proud of.

We all have the responsibility to humbly contain the glory of our salvation.

Proverbs 16:15

“The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished

Humble yourself before God does, and remain in good standing with the Creator of all things. David is a great example on how we as God’s royal priesthood are held responsible for our actions and how severe our punishment can be if we show disregard for our salvation and make idols of ourselves.

People always remember how Christ has made us pure and holy before the Lord but they forget that in Romans, Paul tells us that we will also be repaid for our actions.

Working out our salvation with fear and trembling means doing everything we can to live righteously in any situation.

2 Corinthians 3:18,

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Personal Reflection Exercise

1. Are you guilty of being prideful? Do you see yourself as better than other people or find yourself looking down at others from a place of judgement? Be completely honest.

2. Since God knows our hearts and our thoughts, how do you think God feels about your inner dialogue? No wishful thinking here.

Personal Challenge

1. I want you to go the next three days trying to think like Jesus. Wherever you go for the next three days, make an effort to keep

him on your mind at all times. Pray, asking him to dwell in your thoughts to show you the contents of your heart.

Use the rest of this page to reflect on moments where your thoughts were prideful or judgmental of others.

Chapter 3 - ENDURANCE

Dry White. A poem by Alexandria Rice

**Long tears.
They dry white...
They boil up.
They bleed out.**

**Rolling down, landing quietly.
I wipe them from the table.
And yet they travel still. Farther.
Farther and farther away.**

**My breathe cleaves from me.
I extend my hand, reaching out for air...**

**I wrote these words a thousand years ago, and a thousand
years from now, I wrote them still.**

In so many ways we can develop physical endurance through exercise, manual labor, etc. There are other ways we can develop endurance through long-term studying, training, and other kinds of projects that require time, patience, and energy.

When it comes to endurance, you truly must consider the depth of humanity. We were created in the image of God! Our endurance knows no limit when we draw our strength from our creator.

However, when it comes to emotional and spiritual endurance, I believe truly that the only way to reach the next level, so to speak, is to undergo or experience some sort of major hardship or trial.

One thing that I briefly want to mention is that it takes a level of integrity and character to truly endure. Because what a lot of people do when they experience major life challenges is, they will blame other people for their struggle, complain, or completely give up.

There are a variety of factors that need to be in order for a person to make the decision to endure. And the willpower of the person that is required to endure must be immovable and as solid as possible.

At this point I feel like it would be the most helpful for me to share with you an experience I had during one of the most difficult seasons of my life.

To provide a little bit of background to this story, I will share that my daughter and I lost our housing and had become homeless.

I won't share all the details that led up to this life situation. However, I will share that having experienced chronic homelessness most of my childhood and young adult life, one of my biggest fears as a mother was that my daughter would grow up the same way. I had a great responsibility to provide the best possible life for her.

At this point in my life, I had successfully made it out of a terrifying abusive relationship and my greatest desire was to

protect my daughter from the hardships that I faced my entire life.

During this season, I had felt like a complete failure, and I dreaded the idea that my daughter would grow up the way that I did. I was afraid that I would never be able to escape the cycle of poverty and instability.

Her sparkling eyes

The story that I am about to share happened about halfway into that season. We had been homeless for about two months. I used all our cash aid to pay for hotel rooms. I used vouchers provided by the county. We had a family from our church host my daughter and I at their home for about two weeks but it was short lived. We virtually had no friends or family who were willing to help us at this time. I had no idea how things would work out for us, as I was unemployed and anxious.

On a side note, hearing a story and living the story are two entirely different things, some people might imagine an easy way out of that situation like finding a job, finding a place to rent to you. But it wasn't so easy, and it never really is.

At this point, I was pleading with God that He would help us find housing, and that my daughter would never have to know what it was like sleeping in a car, tent, or homeless shelter.

One day, I had an appointment around eight in the morning at a local welfare office to arrange for an extended hotel stay for two more weeks. We had already been staying at this hotel for over a month, and If I did not make it to this appointment, we would have had nowhere to go other than an emergency shelter.

So that morning I got ready and had my daughter's stroller in one hand my daughter in my other arm, and because this hotel had no functioning elevator, I had to carry my daughter and the stroller down the main stairway.

I was feeling very stressed because of the pressure I was under, realizing the importance of this appointment, I had this sense of urgency that was like a heavy weight on my shoulders.

But while I was walking down the stairs, I lost my footing and with my daughter in my arms holding the stroller I fell down the stairs about six or seven steps. I essentially landed on the bottom step on the lower part of my shin, and my knees on ground level. My daughter was still in my arms and had not been injured in any way. I cried out in pain and had to sit down. I was already so vulnerable and feeling helpless. I was desperate to get to this appointment but couldn't get up.

The hotel management heard me fall down the stairs and came to see if I was ok, however I had an appointment to get to. So, I gathered our belongings, forced myself to get up. I put my daughter in the stroller and made my way to the bus stop.

At this point I felt so discouraged, I was in pain, and felt defeated. Making it to this appointment was the most important

thing to me, so I forced myself to keep going and getting to this appointment was the only thing I cared about.

I sat at the bus stop crying, stressed, and trying mournfully to hold on to my sanity. I sat waiting for a bus that I had ridden so many other times before, I was familiar with the route. I was mostly on time, so that was one thing I wasn't worried about. I got on the bus, And I was doing my best to calm myself after the shock of falling down the stairs. My shin starting to blue and throb from the trauma.

As the bus continued down the street, I realized it began to turn a turn that I was not expecting, and I pulled the cord realizing that it was going in the wrong direction! It didn't stop as we got onto the freeway, I was completely bewildered by what was happening. Apparently, the bus route had changed since the last time I rode it, and realizing this, I was devastated.

I felt terror as we drove farther and farther away from the direction of where I needed to go.

Unfortunately, there were no nearby stops so when I pulled the cord, it continued driving until we reached a completely different part of the city. At this point I was panicking because I realized that I would be very late to our appointment, and that the current two-week voucher that we had would expire that night.

I asked in my heart, "what are we going to do?" I didn't have money to pay for any nights at that hotel, my family didn't have any money to help me, nor did I have any friends or relatives that were willing to provide us with a place to stay. And the next appointment I would get would probably be days from now, and by then my daughter and I would be in a shelter.

So, I rode the bus back to the original place where I needed to be, I eventually made it to the case manager's office. And I had a complete meltdown there in the waiting room. My emotions were running so high. I was so upset, they called security to sit with me until they could figure out how to assist.

Eventually, someone came out to assure me that I could have an emergency meeting with my case manager the following morning. As it turned out, I had one more day to that current

hotel voucher, and the hotel Staff coordinated with my case managers to keep us there at the hotel.

At that point, I felt such relief as I could rely on that hotel room for another two weeks, and as of then, we did not have to go to a shelter. To this day, years later, as a memory of that season, I still have a 3 by 3" inch patch of scar tissue on my left shin, just above my ankle. It reminds me of how painful it can be to endure.

God eventually delivered us through that season. But whenever I visit that scar, I think of that day and how alone I felt.

I would look into the sparkling eyes of my daughter and fight with all my strength to ensure that she didn't have to suffer the way I did. To protect her from the sorrow and trauma that I knew so well.

I plead with you that if you are going through some sort of hardship, that you do not give up. That you fight with all your might and endure, until you make it to the other side.

I wish I could say that this was the hardest day that I experienced during that season, but it wasn't. But it's another story for another book.

But I will celebrate because I tell you, God did bring us through. We did find housing, and my daughter never went inside one homeless shelter, never slept one night in a car or tent. I cried out to the Lord and He *did* deliver me from all my fears.

It was so interesting as through this season, there were people who could have helped us. But for some reason I believe that God had hardened their hearts towards us. I truly believe that God was teaching me how to rely on him and how He would provide.

It was a really scary experience, but I will say that He had set in place everything we needed before we got there. I just didn't know it.

Looking back at how God provided every step of that journey, I can only weep with the deepest gratitude. I am so grateful to have experienced this, so that I could encourage you.

Sometimes for us to be obedient to God's guidance, we must endure opposition. From time to time the opposition is our own self! God has plans and promises for each of us individually, and more than likely at some point you will be in a season where you are required to endure, and be obedient in faith.

Mostly endurance is a struggle because of the thoughts we battle in our own minds. Let's look at Joseph in the book of Genesis.

Endurance and Obeying God: Joseph's promise

Joseph understood God's sovereignty when he'd finally made it to pharaoh's palace and realized that all the hardship he

had endured, led to the manifestation of his prophetic dreams which were in fact clues to God's promises for his life.

When his brothers finally came to Egypt during the famine the pharaoh dreamt about, and he disclosed his identity to them, and explained...

Genesis 45:3

“And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.”

Verse 8

“So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God.”

It's easier to understand God's plan in hindsight. It's much more difficult to understand why we endure so many trials, especially when we feel that we are suffering alone.

Joseph amongst others, are exceptional examples of endurance, and faithfulness. If you have not already, read or reread Joseph's story in the book of Genesis.

I'm confident that during some of your lowest moments the story of Joseph, and how God used him will encourage you.

One thing that will make you great is to forgive others when they turn their backs on you in your time of suffering. I remember anger and disgust towards everyone who refused to help us.

But looking at Joseph's example we can see that sometimes, God's plan for us is so magnanimous but it would only come to pass if we *did* suffer.

If people had housed us during that season, this chapter would be entirely different. I might not even be writing this book at all!

Please do your best to endure with joy and allow God to do His will.

2 Timothy 2:3

You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Daniel 4:17

...The Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives then to anyone He wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people.

That promise is so profound!

Joseph was sold by his own brothers into slavery and oppression, he became ***the lowliest of people***. His brothers were jealous of him, hated him, and wanted to kill him. Some of them didn't care about what would happen to him, or what effect his disappearance had on their father.

No matter what happened to him, God was with Joseph the entire time, knew exactly where he was. In fact, Joseph realized that God curated the entire experience!

What's so fascinating about Joseph's story is how if he hadn't suffered alone, gifted and betrayed, many if not all of

God's people would have starved to death during that seven-year famine.

You and your experiences are completely unique, and even if we consider ourselves “the lowliest of people”, God can set us over kingdoms here on earth. The story of Joseph is a perfect example of this promise, but it did require Joseph to endure a profound amount of suffering in the beginning of his story.

One thing that I've learned about struggle and endurance is that, yes, we must listen to the Holy Spirit guiding us in what decisions to make, which way to go, and so on. But we have no real control over the outcome of any exact situation or decision we make.

We have to let go. Life is a lot easier when we relinquish what tiny bit of control we think we have and allow ourselves to rest in the Lord. Life can be so tiring and draining when we are in a constant state of fear of the future. During seasons where God is calling us to endure, we also need moments of rest, and we can't do this without letting go.

Flexibility

Remaining emotionally pliable will allow you to endure with ease! Endurance requires the ability to accept the changes and detours in life without remaining in a place where we are not meant to stay stuck in.

How will you adjust to unexpected obstacles that you might face?

Endurance enables you to separate yourself from temporary emotions and decide to either overcome or reroute and choose a different course entirely.

Endurance is a characteristic of an emotionally mature person. Realize that emotions change, but the results of our decisions usually do not.

Gratitude helps us endure

A lot of our pain surrounding life situations or past wounds has a lot to do with our inability to be grateful. I'm not saying gratitude heals all wounds, but it does have the ability to restore our joy.

If you happen to feel that you need more joy in your life, are in a season where you are being called to endure hardship, or struggle with depression, please pray this prayer with me.

I recommend reading it first to prepare your heart, and then pray along when ready.

Lord,

I come before you in Jesus' name. I need your joy. I need joy when I have none, I need joy in this struggle as I do my best to endure. Harken my ears to the Holy Spirit. Lord, please draw me closer and allow me to know your will for my life, so I can pray according to it.

Please give me wisdom. Please fill my heart with gratitude so that I can enjoy this life you've blessed me with. Show me how to practice gratitude, I need to humble myself and learn, so that I don't suffer in despair as I have been.

Please surround me with good friends who are assigned to my purpose, and who I in turn, can help. Please forgive me for moments when I don't/ didn't trust that you would work out everything for my good. Show me how to love you.

Thank you for your endless mercy,

Amen.

Imagine that you are running towards a door that is slowly closing and you are running as fast as you can, but the closer you get, the narrower the entry way becomes.

You miraculously make it through the door, and you made it by the hem of your pants!

Life struggles won't always happen this way but, as I said, endurance is a state of mind. You can't give up just moments before the cavalry arrives! You can't give up before the finish line.

Life struggle presents us with the opportunity to build our emotional and spiritual endurance. We won't always know what

God's plan is for us, and when it seems like our lives will be an endless struggle that never ends, we must ask God for strength, joy, and gratitude. Let us win this race.

I know that you might or might not be in a season where you are being called to endure, but at some point, you will. And you've got to be ready.

Personal Reflections

Grab that pen!

1. Have you ever experienced a season where you were made to endure a situation you felt was too great for you to bear? How do/ did you feel about it?

2. What was/ is the most difficult part of this season? Don't diminish your struggle or heartache, be completely vulnerable here.

3. Did/ is the situation turning out the way you hoped? Explain how or how not.

4. How have you grown or what have you learned about it? List three lessons you've learned or ways that you've grown (or both).

Personal Challenge

1. In what ways can you build your endurance more easily? Or how can you apply the advice listed in this chapter to endure with more ease?

List three ways.

When it rains. A poem by Alexandria Rice

When it rains...

**Each drop of water disrupts the surface of the ground...
and each particle of dirt or dust is lifted into the air...**

**As the seconds pass, hundreds of miniscule droplets make
themselves known...**

“Here I am”, they say.

**Slowly but surely, I grow more vulnerable to the elements.
I'm cold, exposed to the harsh biting wind.**

**The smell of ancient dust fills the air like an invisible cloud.
I can't escape it.**

**I breathe in its unfavorable aroma, yet the regeneration of life
is dependent on this disruption...**

I yield to its rendering. I endure.

Chapter 4 - Accountability

Sometimes God won't allow you to step into your calling until He confronts your previously unaddressed sin!

God and your calling: God almost kills Moses

One of the most well-known people in the bible is Moses. We know God had a seriously profound plan for his life. I was reading Exodus, and I came across a few scriptures that not only caught my attention, but they confused me exponentially.

I'll share them here with you. To give you context, Moses had already met with God at the burning bush. He received his mission to go and retrieve the children of God who were suffering in slavery down in Egypt.

This is what happened along the way.

Exodus 4:24 – 26

On the way to Egypt, at a place where Moses and his family had stopped for the night, the Lord confronted him and was about to kill him.

But Moses' wife, Zipporah, took a flint knife and circumcised her son, and took the foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it saying, "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me".

After that, the Lord left Moses alone.

After reading this I had so many questions.

Why would God want to kill Moses, especially after giving him such an important mission?

What did Zipporah circumcising their son, have to do with anything?

And why did God leave Moses alone once she did?

So of course, I did some research, and I began to search for the interpretation of these scriptures.

Let's start in Genesis 17:10-14 where God had established a covenant with Moses' ancestor, Abraham.

Genesis 17:10-14

This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised.

You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you.

Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.

Now we can infer that God up until this point, Moses had broken the covenant, as his son was uncircumcised.

What's so interesting is that despite this sin, God still had a huge plan for Moses' life. Despite this, God knew that Moses would have to be held accountable, and made to follow the

rules of His covenant in order to lead and judge the people of Israel righteously.

As a leader, he could not be a hypocrite and actively judge others according to the statutes set by God, if he actively transgressed by not circumcising his son.

God in His great love and mercy has a way of pushing you into purpose. Never think that the sufferings you endure are for no reason.

Now instead of cutting Moses off, as decreed in His covenant, God afflicted Moses nearly to the point of death. God in his power, could have chosen *anyone* to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, but he chose Moses specifically.

God put Moses in a position where he *had* to follow the guidelines of His covenant.

God might have a major plan and purpose for your life, but He won't let you enter it without addressing sin that has gone uncorrected or rectified.

One more thing about Moses' rise to leadership was that he also endured opposition, and plenty of it! After he had killed the Egyptian, in Exodus 2:14, he was mocked by his own people. They asked him, "...who made you ruler and judge"?

What I find to be ironic is that he became just that, their judge. But this took time. You might be mocked, laughed at, or doubted. Either way God has a plan for your life, and it doesn't matter who doubts you or your ability to accomplish great things.

If God be for you, then who can be against you?

Let's have a moment here where you share what you have learned so far. What chapters, stories, or lessons have stood out to you the most? Have you decided to change in any way? If so, how?

[illegible]

The Greatest Danger: Your Personal Enslavement

We will be held accountable for fulfilling our purpose or not! Some have passed on and there was grace for them if they didn't hear this and of course God in His great mercy makes many attempts at guiding us to the right path, however if you have heard this message, you know now.

You can no longer say that you didn't know that you had the chance to seek until you found the right path.

Your greatest danger is more than likely the false fulfillment of your greatest desire. As I said earlier in this book, “When you hold tightly to your personal dreams and desires without surrendering it all to God and allowing Him to lead you and take you there, you are walking **away** from God. When you pursue the fulfillment of your personal dreams and desires on your own, God will never bless that path. On the wrong path, who you were created to be, and where you end up, will always be at odds! If God doesn't lead you there, you are not in His purpose and are living in rebellion; you are going the wrong way.”

Chapter 5 – Trustworthy

You might not agree with some of the things I say in this chapter and so I pray that you would remain open. For the most part in life, we learn about how trusting God is the essence of faith. In no way do I intend to argue that truth. In fact, trusting God is a major discipline that we all need to grow.

But we might not ever hear the question of whether God can trust ***you***.

Now let's consider how in the book of Mark it is written:

Mark 4:34

In fact, in his public ministry, he never taught without using parables; but afterward when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them.

Mark 4:11

You are permitted to understand the secrets of the kingdom of God. But I use parables for everything I say to outsiders...otherwise they will turn to me and be forgiven.

Imagine a man who travels, healing people, performing miracles, amazing the masses, but nobody understands what he's saying!

After reading these two passages in Mark, we might wonder, *'why would Jesus only disclose the meanings of his parables to his disciples? Why wouldn't he want everyone to turn to him and be forgiven?'*

John 2:23-25

...Many people put their trust in Him when they saw the powerful works He did. But Jesus did not trust them because He knew all men... He knew what was in man.

What IS that Narrow Path: The Valley of Death's Shadow

Separation is one of God's greatest gifts. I think a lot of the time people consider the narrow path living a life of righteousness, and it is! Following the scriptures and living according to the wisdom of the word is the greatest path to ever take in life.

What's interesting though is that most church organizations have fallen into man-made structures, just like the Pharisees. Most of the time this is unintentional. However, because of man's fallen nature, we neglect to separate ourselves periodically to truly become intimate with God, our souls drift away quietly. We easily fall into the respect of man, and the desire to please or gain approval, respect, and popularity.

Sometimes we become so amazed by how God uses another person and because we haven't experienced God's power for ourselves, we lean on someone else's anointing and

consult with them instead of God Himself. No human could ever help you and grow you like your Creator.

It's normal for human nature to desire to submit to a higher authority. We were created to love and surrender to The Most High. However, we always assign spiritual authority to another person. And I am not saying that we should not respect our pastors, however they are not our Savior.

There is only ONE path for you, any other path is the path to destruction, there is only one purpose for your life, and I implore you to find out what that is.

You are fearfully and wonderfully made, you were not made for a general purpose, you were created with giftings and experiences specific to your purpose.

Imagine walking a tight rope, this rope is the narrow path. I command your flesh and mind in Jesus name to sustain the reader and to come under the authority of Jesus; I say do not be a stumbling block or hindrance to their purpose. HalleluYah!

God could be speaking to us individually, but He might only be speaking to us, individually. He is calling you to something that He is calling You to, He needs YOU to hear Him, personally. And if you have surrendered all your personal will to another human being, to what they think of you, what they say about you, you have made *them* your God.

Command your eyes and ears to hear Him for yourself! Humbly ask the Father to call you and to reveal Himself to you personally. Ask it calmly and in full awareness of your faults and shortcomings, this is humility.

What IS Humility

I feel that most people have the most depressing idea of what humility is and if you don't have a clear understanding of what humility is, your entire path will be off course!

Humility is not low self-esteem.

If you are willing, I implore you to give The Most High complete control over your life.

Your secret code with God

I remember when I was a kid, I had established a secret code; a set of symbols and numbers. I would use this code to write secret messages to my best friend, that only she could discern. It was fun.

God desires to establish a secret code with you! A specific language that only you and He can speak. He knows your heart, your experiences and desire to show you His mighty wonders. He's inviting you, and you either will or won't enter into a personal covenant with Him.

What is a personal covenant? It's an individualized agreement made by your personal spirit, on behalf of your soul.

As God's elect, we are predestined to enter into a specifically designed covenant with Him. Collectively, all of our God-given individualized covenants align with His sovereign will for humanity; aligned with His grand design.

And although we have John 3:16 ‘He gave his only son so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life’, it doesn’t say that he intended to save the *entire* world. It says that he **loved** the world, not that he was going to save everyone.

This is yet another reason why working out your salvation with fear and trembling is necessary.

Jesus won’t reveal his wisdom if he can't trust you!

You can say the words and try to claim salvation, but in all honesty, God knows what’s in your heart.

People love the idea of being saved. Who wouldn’t want to be forgiven for all their wrongdoing? Of course, there are a lot of people who don’t and won’t ever care if they are or not. My point is this;

Does Jesus trust you?

Maybe you won't steal when you’re surrounded by people, but will you when nobody’s looking?

If you accidentally walk out of a store with merchandise, do you take it back?

If you're at a store and notice that the cashier, while reviewing your purchases, forgot to scan a certain item, do you point it out to them?

If your friend steals, do you rebuke them?

Your heart is in everything.

If you want to live righteously, why? Is religion fun? Or do you know the Most High one on one?

One heart wants to honor God because they love and fear Him and His rebuke.

The other heart follows the rules so that they make it into Heaven.

Which heart do you think is like God?

Which do you think is truly submitted to Him?

Proverbs 3:3-4

**Let not mercy and truth forsake thee, bind them about thy neck;
write them upon the table of thine heart: so shalt thou find favor
and good understanding in the sight of God and man.**

Epilogue

I personally don't have much to say as I felt it was an act of obedience writing this book. I was in prayer asking God to reveal His will for my life to me so I could pray according to it. I felt that I heard a small voice say, "*Write the book*". And over the years, as I have grown in the Lord, I hear Him say, "help prepare them for the New Earth".

Father, we come before you in the name of your perfect Son Jesus. Lord, what should I pray for Your Bride? That She obey and worship you as I do. I pray that She becomes more than great. I pray that She becomes like You.

I pray in Jesus' name that you equip Your Body, your beautiful Bride with joy, self-discipline, patience, and Your true likeness, as She was created for You.

I ask Father, that You open the deepest parts of Her heart and allow your Word, and these lessons to take place and grow. I pray that We learn to fear and love you the way we should.

Lord, in your sovereignty and wonder, do all that You desire to with this book. You are mighty, beautiful, and more than wonderful, in Jesus' name amen.