

Reflect On Your Experience!

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Father, we thank You, Father, for this day. Thank You, Lord. Thank You, Father. Thank You. Thank You. Just not want to take any meeting for granted, O Lord. Father, we know, Father, eternity, Lord, is at stake, O Lord, at every meeting of ours. You are serious about Your bride. Father, You said, O Lord through Apostle Paul that You were jealous with godly jealousy over the Corinthian Church when he said, "I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you blameless and spotless to the one whom we have been espoused to." O Lord, this evening, Father, I pray, Lord, that You would, cleanse us and wash us by the water of Your Word so that You can present Yourself a bride that is spotless and blameless. And every one of us who are here oh Lord will have the inclination and the desire to be part of the bride Father. Perfecting holiness and cleansing ourselves from every filthiness of the flesh and of the Spirit in the fear of the Lord. Therefore, I pray father that You would anoint, O Lord, the speaking and the hearing of the Word from this end to that end so that we not only have receptive ears but willing hearts to obey. We thank You and we praise You. In Jesus' mighty Name we pray, Amen.

One of the things when I was teaching at the University, we used to have several courses. And especially in the first year, we used to have one of the most difficult courses for the engineering students. In fact, you will understand that when you come to the university, the first year is the toughest of all the years; you come from intermediate where everything is spoon-fed where the difficult problem is for the teacher and the easier problems are for the student. And then, you come to the university level, everything changes. And the freshmen year is the killer year of all. Intense culture change for so many students I have seen in my brief career as an academician. I have seen as a teacher, as a lecturer, I saw that so many students really find it difficult to shift from school and plus one, plus two setting to university setting. So, first year is called the Freshman year, and the second year is called the Sophomore, from which we get the word 'moron'. Basically, they are still figuring it out, you see. They are still able to adjust themselves to the whole thing because the culture shock is tremendous. There is a shift in the level of teaching is incredible and the first thing I tell my students when I come to the class, is prepare them for the rest of the year. You know what? You come to the university, the easier thing is for the professor and the difficult things is for the student. That's what I used to tell them, you know. And that used to prepare some of them. I just want to ensure that we are not taking things lightly. And one of the things when you observe when you are a teacher, I mean, we used to have intense course, engineering course. I don't want to name the course. We used to have theory class. We have 28 classes in a particular semester. And then, in parallel, we have lab. So, whatever you learn in your theory, you apply it in the lab and the difficulty of every experiment in the lab just keeps on increasing. The complexity increases and by the time you come to the third or the fourth experiment, you have a circuit board and you have wires going all over the place. And these guys are going through a manual. We have an experiment manual to as to how to go about the whole process. But you know, every IC that they connect the wires that they connect. They go crazy. And most of the time, they don't get the results. So, they lift up their hand. I keep going around to see how they are doing. So, they lift up their hand and say, "Sir, sir, sir." And I go to them and say, "What has happened?" (their response) "Sir, I did everything right sir, and I am not getting the result." I mean, that's a very common reply. "Everything I did was right, and I am not getting the result." Then, you know, I used to sit with him and troubleshoot. I used to have an army of TA's with me in a huge class of 125 students in a particular class. So, we have an army of TA's and everybody used to trouble shooting used to sit with these guys because they are new to the whole thing. And then, you know one IC is connected the other way around and then, and I used to say, "You connected the other way." "Oh! sir I didn't see that." And they connected properly and then, the result would come out. I mean, their claim is that everything is right; then, why is it not coming? You see, that is the common. They have this objection. I saw that and over a period of time, as a lecturer, you see where things go wrong, and you are able to troubleshoot.

Recently, I was reading a book by man of God. And that book I came across a quotation by a statistician from Harvard university. His name is W. Edwards Deming. Most of you, I am sure, would have not heard of him. But don't worry. He made a very powerful statement so profound when I thought about this I just remembered the class. This statement and that's what he says, "Every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets." Okay? Every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets. In other words, if I apply in scenario of a student; they say, "Sir, I am not getting the result. I am getting some other result." I tell them, "You have the perfect system to get the wrong result." See? And the fact of the matter is – every system is... By the way, many managers use this terminology in management. Every system they say; when you go to any organization, "Why am I not getting the results?" Hundred percent of the time you have a system which is absolutely

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perfectly designed to give you the result you are getting. No brainer. You have to trouble shoot and most of the time, managers brain storm. And see, you know what? We have a system, 100 percent and we can't do patch work. Remember? When I don't know many of you don't know the software terminologies. When Microsoft opened, you used to release its service pack 1, service pack 2. Patches, they used to call it patches. Right? Patch 1, patch 2; in order to make their operating system workable, they used to do patch work. And ultimately, people got frustrated with windows machine and chuck them out. And Mac became famous. You see that? You know what happened in the market? You need to understand every system is perfectly designed to the results it is producing. From this, I can draw three obvious inferences from this statement is that. To get a desired result, I need to have an appropriate system. You got it? So, every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets. In other words, to get a desired result, I need to have an appropriate system. Second inference – the problem is not with the result. Okay? No brainier. The problem is with the system. You got that? Understand? You see that? You see? I read this quotation in one man of God's book. His name is Dallas Willard. Profound statement, "So, you are not getting the results in spite of what you are doing; you are getting the results because of what you are doing." Got that? Got it?

If you turn to the Bible, Bible says the same thing in other words. Gospel according to *Matthew 7*. Look at what He says in *verses 17-18*,

Matthews 7:17-18

¹⁷*Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.* (And then He says I hope you understood. So, He puts it in a negative way, He says) ¹⁸*A good tree cannot produce a bad fruit and can a bad tree cannot produce a good fruit.*

So, again, you know it. If you want to troubleshoot any problem, what we want to do is what we call is a root-cause analysis. All managerial people in software sectors know it – RCA – In those terms. We need to do root-cause analysis. What is going on here? So, that is the reason why the definition of insanity in managerial terms is to do the same thing again and again and expecting a different result. You can't do it. You can't expect a different result when you have the same kind of a system. You need to do something. You need to be troubleshooting to understand where the system is going wrong. There is an Old Testament teacher who talks about this, who prophesied during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Remember? The good hand of the Lord was on Nehemiah and then, he came and started building the temple along with Ezra. We have two levels of *Exodus*, from Babylon to Jerusalem to rebuild Jerusalem. One during the time of Ezra and other during the time of Nehemiah. And then, during the time of Nehemiah, a bunch of guys from Babylon; they come back from Babylon to Jerusalem. They are absolutely stirred up. They want to rebuild Jerusalem because when they come back. They have this favour with authorities. And they start to build the temple and then, you have opposition. And you need to expect opposition whenever you are doing the work of God. So, they found opposition. And they had this intense opposition from a bunch of guys. These guys were of mixed multitudes; they said, "We also want to build the temple along with you." They said, "No, no, no. You are not going to be a part of building temple building process. We alone will build the temple," and they absolutely got upset. They wrote a letter back to the king saying that these people who came back from Babylon they are doing all sorts of halla gulla here. So, something to stop the temple. And then, what happens? Letter is sent from the king, decree is passed that they should stop building the temple and that is when you see this in *Ezra 4:24*,

Ezra: 4:24

²⁴*Thus the work of the house of God that is at Jerusalem is (stopped) ceased, and it was discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.*

For 16 years, the House was stopped from being built. 16 years; remember that? I mean, if you look at this in the New Testament context, you will see that once the Church started growing, there was opposition for sure and Peter was put in prison. And then, John and Peter were reprimanded by the Sanhedrin saying that, "You are not going to preach in the name of Jesus." But they did not stop this when the opposition came. They went back; they started praying. When they started praying, the whole place started to be moved and were filled with the Holy Spirit; and they went back and started building the temple again. So, you need to understand. If God has begun a work, we never stop it. We built it in spite of opposition. And opposition has to be expected. It says in *2 Timothy 3:20*. You don't have to turn there. It says that, "*All who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus (can you complete?) will suffer persecution.*" It is not that may suffer persecution. They *will* suffer persecution. There will be opposition to work of God. And you have to expect that in your own lives. So, it is naïve

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Christians who think everything is going to be hanky dory once they start building. Expect opposition and prepare yourself for that.

So, what happens during that time? When the house of God stops. Two prophets are raised by God. Remember Haggai and Zechariah? Love these here. Two guys you know. Two prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the son of Iddo. Prophecy to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of God of Israel who was over them. *Then Jerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozada, rose up and began to build the house of God.*

Two prophets, Zechariah, yes and Haggai. Zechariah was the younger guy. Haggai was the older guy. Zechariah was a man of vision. Okay? Visions. You will see *Book of Zechariah* full of visions. Full of visions. Visions of this man and that man. Joshua before the throne of God with filthy garments. Man of vision. Young Zechariah – man of vision. So many people, young people, hopefully, with visions and dreams in your own life. And you should have one. Hopefully, a God-given dream.

And then, on the other hand, you have an old Prophet Haggai. Remember what we learnt on Sunday? One of the things we need to understand from old people is that old people have is what we call as experience. You see Haggai and Zechariah? Zechariah was this bombastic guy full of vision full of vision and then, Haggai on the other hand. If you read his prophecies, no vision at all. What he has is practical godly counsel. And I believe Zechariahs have to grow in an environment of Haggai's. What we don't have in Church is we don't have balance in Church. We either have people with vision but no proper practical applications into their day to day lives or we have practical people without vision. But a Church, a New Testament Church, is a Church which has both – vision on one side and people with experience who have gone through rigor in life where they have experienced pain after suffering, gone through all kinds of up's and downs, had godly character established in their lives who will be able to mentor Zechariahs. And I see that and really this is my heart. This is close to my own heart. Let there be a Church in GTC where we have Zechariahs under the authorities of Haggai's. Very difficult. One vision people have they go bonkers. They just go crazy. Never come under the authority of Haggai's. Haggais, you know, are people with experience, practical counsel who are able to see through entire problem and able to give you exactly precise and concise counsel as to what has to be done at that particular situation. And to that prophet, I want to look at today. This guy is looking at the results. And he is saying, "Boss, the results that you are getting is because of the system that you have."

Look at what he has to say in *Haggai* 1:5 onwards. Going through the excerpts of Haggai.

Haggai 1:5-7

⁵Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: (what is that?) Consider your ways. ⁶You have sown much and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.

I mean, I think there will be at least 10% in this audience who has this kind of experience. I am sure. Or let me put that in our terms. In GTC terms. You are coming to Bible study after Bible study listening to preaching after preaching, teaching after teaching. When you see your life, no victory. And you are saying, "Lord, I am listening to all these messages, the input seems to be okay but the results. What's going on with my results?" And He says,

⁷"Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways.

You see. Very important. In Christendom, especially with God, it is not the results that matters, how you get the results matters most. And I will tell you something, a professor who is trained can know exactly whether a guy knows the procedure or not. I will tell you my example from my experience. A guy is given a problem, he starts solving it. He knows the answer but does not know the procedure. Okay? Because he knows somewhere he saw the problem and he knows left hand side is equal to right hand side. You know what I am saying. He does all kinds of juggard (fix) and finally says, "I got the result." Therefore, he assumes because of the amount of mathematics he has put on the paper, but the professor will get somehow confused and he will say, "Arrey. this fellow knows the answer." And therefore, he says, left hand side is equal to right hand side. Hence proved. The professor looks at the whole thing and says, "Haha, you can't fool me." (Strikes across papers). Gone zero. And then, you'll come. "Sir, left hand side is equal to right hand side." Okay, you want to argue with me, right? Come to my class after. Because 125 students, right? You can't fight with everybody. Everybody will have an

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objection. They are always comparing with how many marks the other fellow got. And he is totally embarrassed because he got several marks less than his friends. He is fighting every tooth and nail for his marks. So, he comes and says, then I say, "Okay, fine. sit with me. If your procedure is correct. I will give you hundred. If your procedure is wrong, I will give you zero. Please meet me at 5:30 if you are okay with these terms." 5:30, 5:45, 6, 6:30, 7:00, that fellow has not come. You know exactly what the problem it. Because you got fooled. See, that's exactly the reason – you can't fool God. God sees though every situation. And then, you can say sir, "God, I got this." Okay? I am not looking at your result. I am looking at the way you produce that result. That is important.

And I am telling you – this is a problem in many people's lives. Because to change the system from the root cause level is going to be a painful process and they don't want to do it. Unfortunately, you can't fool with God. That is what He tells Jeremiah, you know what? "I am sending you as prophet first to root out to pull down everything. Then, I will build and then, I will plant. That is going to be a painful exercise to many people because they have already built on wrong foundations. *Consider your ways.*" That's the reason it says in *Psalms 9*, "*If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?*" Therefore, Paul says in *1 Corinthians 3:8*,

1 Corinthians 3:8, 14

⁸He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. (Okay so you worked a lot) **⁹For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, (you are) God's building.**

Okay; everyone will receive according to their works according to their labor. So, you labored a lot. And he says, "According to grace of God which was given to me as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation and other builds on it and let everyone take heed." Finish this. How he builds on it? Very important. And I am telling you honestly – if you are a young man and a young person here, you want your life to be fruitful come under the authority of Haggais who can show, pin point in your life practically and say, "Boss, look at the way you are building." You know what happens? It takes lot of humility to accept your errors especially for people in IIT. I know because I deal with the creamy layer of the society. You know we have the creamy layer. They all think they are Albert Einstein's. I said you know. I call them Alberts first. I say, "You are all Alberts; you are still not Einsteins, okay?" They all think they are Albert Einstein's. You need to have a guy who is not afraid to speak the truth. Speak the truth in love. To point out those errors in your lives. To show out the building. Are you? It's going to be a painful exercise by the way. But only then you will have a fruit that will last. You see. That is the reason it says, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Word will not pass away. And he who does the will of God will also not pass away." You see that. In other words, if you have a system. You know the system is absolutely robust if it stands the test of time. If it does not consider your ways. Okay? So, each one's worth. It says, *each one's worth will become clear on that day because it will be revealed by fire.* That day is going to be the day of so many surprises to many, many people. Better to have surprises today than have surprises later on in your life.

¹⁴If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.

It is not according to your works alone it is how you do your works. And that is the reason why He tells, to the Church, "*I know your works, but you have lost your first love.*" There is no love in it. The way you are doing your work, there is no delight no devotion. There is absolutely no overflow of worship and praise and you are building something based upon wrong foundations. And He says, "Sorry, I am not going to accept that."

1 John 2:17

¹⁷And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

How many of you want to abide forever? I hope so. And let me tell you something honestly though. But only a remnant. That is a sad reality. *Luke's Gospel 13* will say, "Lord, many people will be saved strived to enter through the narrow gate." Because the narrow gate is tough, my dear brothers. Who wants to listen to a correction and advise? Hardly any people. And it is a tremendous burden for me to see young people not coming under authority. It's amazing. I see it in my own family sometimes. Extension. Absolutely don't want to come under authority. It's not that they are not a sheep without a shepherd. It's a sheep who do not want a shepherd. It's a different category altogether. You see? That is the reason why Moses uses this prayer;

Exodus 33:13

³ Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people."

"Therefore, show me Your ways, Lord. Teach me Your ways." That is why it says in *Psalm 103*; "He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts to the children of Israel." Ways of God. Boy, that is a different thing altogether you know. The ways of God. We were doing Bible study for our young children and young ones and we are going through all beatitudes and at the end of beatitudes Abigail was saying, "Momma, this is all ulta (reversed)." Kingdom of God is completely ulta. This is exactly true when you look at it from your perspective it is ulta. But Kingdom of God says, if you want, that is the reason why all these people in *Acts*, "When they went to preach the gospel," they said. These people who have turned the world, what? Upside down. They were not turning the world upside down. They were turning the world right side up. They were actually putting the foundations right. And showing people how to honor God. Glorify His name. *All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.* That's *Romans* chapter 3:23.

So, we need to do a root cause analysis. Consider your lives we are in the tenth year. Year of Judging ourselves. It is finishing by the way. It is ending. Let this year not pass by without judging our own lives and our own hearts. And looking at our results and be absolutely candid about it. And asking people show me where I have gone wrong. You have the desire in you? If you have the desire this message is for you. For me, speaking to myself, I said, "Lord, give me this desire, give this desire. Lord, it doesn't matter how wicked I am shown, Lord. Show me. It doesn't matter through whom You speak. I want to know because I want to set my lives in order." Because this year is the year of destiny. Several people if you believe. If you believe. Otherwise, it's going to be just another year. 10th year is going to be like the 11th year, like the 9th year, like the 8th year. 11th year is not going to be any different from the 10th year. Believe me. As you believe as unto your faith, so will be done to you. So, don't take anything lightly.

Abraham believed in God. And it was credited to him as, when he believed in God, God said to him, He showed him. "Come here Abraham, look at the stars, like the stars your descendants will be." You know what Scripture says, he who. You know what the original Hebrew is? He said Amen. He said Amen. Abraham this is how your descendants are, amen. They are counted as righteousness. And I see the GTC group. Every time I see Amen. I say, Lord do they really mean what they are saying amen to? I mean it's a very common word in the Christian jargon. Amen. Really? You know what you are saying on that day? You see. So, let us do a root cause analysis first. God is want not to complete that thing which He did not initiate. Be very clear my dear brothers and sisters. That what God has started in your life has been initiated by God. I mean this is been coming to us in several ways in the leadership. And it is a burden in all our hearts. Lord did you start this in my life? If God has not started it, He is not obligated to end it and if you initiate it. Out of your own pride or your own ego. You know what He is going to do? He is going to destroy it. That's exactly what Babylon is. Babylon is a result of something which was initiated by man, not by God.

Genesis 11:1-2

¹ Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. ² And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar

That is where Babylon was built by the way. Years later, this is the start of Babylon in *Genesis 11* and it is going to end in *Revelations 19*, if I am right. Babylon is going to be a part of all of us. And I am telling you honestly, you can be sitting in any Church and you could be building Babylon; it doesn't matter how good the doctrine is. What it says,

Genesis 11:2-4

² As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. ³ They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. (And then, what happens?) ⁴ Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

And you see that spirit working in these last days. The whole world, they all have one language – everybody uses WhatsApp, everybody uses Twitter, everybody uses Facebook. It's one language. Everybody has a same hairstyle, everybody uses Facetime to comb their hair because no longer mirrors anymore – Facetime. Everybody is speaking the

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same language from Anakapalli to Amaravati to America, to Ameerpet to America – the trajectory, everybody has a same language.

And you know what God says? He looks down and He says, “I didn’t start this.”

Genesis 11:8

⁸So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city.

So, in other words, if God has not started anything in your life, it will not stand. You will just have to wait for some time. It will just crumble. The cracks will show. Any system you built, as an engineer, you know it right? How do you know that, Ah! Hyderabad Metro is a real robust system? Wait, for another 10-15 years. Then, the cracks will show. You see. Then, you will know what kind of a steel was used. Then, you know how many people took bribe. That exactly what happened to CWG (Common Wealth Games) games, right? One bridge fell; then, scams came out. And the government was overthrown. You see, that’s exactly you just have to wait for some time and the cracks will begin to show.

Somebody said, “How do you identify, sheep and wolves?” Wait till dinner time, okay? Because a lot of people have their wolves in sheep’s clothing. Till dinner time, you wait. Then, the exact nature of the wolf will show. They all want biryani. You see that? Time will show whether the systems that you have built are robust or not. Otherwise, you know it. Okay? So, the Lord scattered them and they stopped building the city. So, what are the things that we learn from this whole thing? If you want to build something, first thing that we need to know is that: is that initiated by God? Look at this in *Ezra 1:5*. Who are these people, who built Jerusalem?

Ezra 1:5

⁵Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem.

You see, who are these people who build Jerusalem? These are the people whose spirits God had stirred. It was a burden which was placed. It was unshakeable burden in their hearts. And they said this is what, God wants us to build and they went. in spite of all the opposition they went and they found favor. That’s the reason why Jesus says, “No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Expect the spirit draws them, no one can come to God. Salvation is absolutely an initiation of God. It is not by us. We don’t come to God by our own selves, we don’t build anything by our own selves. He has to initiate everything in our lives.

John 6:44

⁴⁴“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.

The businesses that you start, the careers that you have chosen for yourselves. Isn’t it interesting the careers that the first brothers chose? One person chose to be a farmer and another person chose to be a shepherd. I mean I found it, everything is there in *Genesis*. The kind of career paths people choose. One chose a career path that will give him time with God. And, the other person chose a path to work on something that which God has already cursed. And then he says Lord, ‘Bless my work’ and He says ‘How can I bless something which I have cursed.’ Be very sure; that the families, the households that you’re building. The partners that you are choosing.

I was telling Jacinth in the morning. I was hearing one man of God- Zac Poonen I was hearing and he was saying how girls get fooled? Good, godly girls; How do they get fooled? One handsome guy comes in, along their path in an office or in a workplace or in a university. And he says, “Such a beautiful girl.” He doesn’t say in those ways but he uses all kinds of terminologies to convey this point. Such a beautiful girl, “I wonder how you didn’t become Miss India,” in other words. How did you miss, being Miss India? In a very flattery language. You don’t feel it’s flattery and already one guard is down. And then, you will say, he will also say, “You are so kind-hearted. You got beauty, you got character.” Again, one guard is gone. And then, he will say, “You are also very brilliant. You got beauty, you got brains too.” Third guard, fourth guard is gone and then, you will say, “Right from my childhood, nobody accepted me, everybody rejected me.” And because he has already put in the seed that you are very compassionate person, you have to.... Ayo ayo so sad! And then, your heart will melt. Then he will put the killer punch, “Will you please marry me and not reject me?” Gone.

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Start something based upon your emotions, based upon some kind of flattery and then, you say, “Lord, I think this is from the Lord. Lord says, “No, I didn’t initiate that person. That was the devil. First of all, I will not say that you are very beautiful. I will say all kinds of good things to you but I will say I am a Father, I will say you exactly what you need to hear. I will not say, ‘Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of all? And you are the fairest! No, no My word is a mirror; I am going to show you exactly the way you are. I am not going to flatter you.” Be very careful the relationships that you start. The careers that you chose, everything be sure; that it is initiated by God and not by you. Okay? First thing.

Second, *Haggai 1:2*,

Haggai 1:2-5

² This is what the LORD Almighty says: “These people say, ‘The time has not yet come to rebuild the LORD’s house.’ (The time, the Lord’s house has to be built.) ³ Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: ⁴ “Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?” ⁵ Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways.

You see that how it comes? Consider your ways? In other words, where are you spending your time? I don’t always, most of the times, I don’t agree with Rick Warren but this time, I do have to agree. I mean, he paraphrased – where your treasure is, there your heart is. And we know that life is equal to time and time equal to life. You remember that equation? Several Sundays back, we heard that message where you have to give something, you need to give time and time is essential your life. And this is what he has to say, very interesting statement: “Where your time is, there your heart is.” True. You know something that I always look at in believers. I mean, I am just observing my own life and I am just doing some empirical studies in the kind of examples that are surrounding me, in my Church circle, I’m not naming them; I’m not pointing out to anybody. I’m just looking at my life and I’m looking at some people when they make certain choices – career choices or whatever kind of choices they want to do, where are they factoring God in the whole process? I want to see that. Where are they factoring Church and fellowship? Where are they factoring time to learn the Word and to give themselves more and more opportunities so that they may be exposed to the authentic Word of God. I want to know to look at those kinds of people. I want to see. I look at the kind of patterns and the changes that is happening to their lives and you know what? It’s obvious; it’s not a brainer that you don’t spend time with God. It doesn’t matter how spiritual you think you are. You don’t prioritize your time around God, around fellowship, around doctrine. It’s only a matter of time things will fall in your life. I want to see that and I find very few people.

I look at my own life, I’m not boasting, I used to get opportunities to go out of city and whenever I used to get them, I remember, when I got an opportunity to go to Pune in a huge company, I don’t want to name that company and I had a call with the US guy, a telephonic call and they said, “Come over.” They absolutely accepted my profile and they said, “Just one last round of interview and it’s done.” It was very positive, all questions answered. All I needed to do was to relocate from Hyderabad to Pune and then, this was way back in 2006 when Grace Tabernacle was still not happening. I was still a part of another Church where Pastor James was preaching. I just got this opportunity and it was huge. Within fifteen days, I would be going to the US and you wouldn’t believe that day my heart was beating and I told myself, “Okay, let me ask my professor.” I said, “Sir, I got this opportunity to go to Pune.” And he looked at me and said, “When will this happen to me, Vijay? You just came, did your PhD and you are leaving like that.” And I was looking at all the other thing and I said, “Lord, there is something. I just can’t leave this authentic Word, this fellowship. So many years of searching, I have been fed in this place, I don’t want to go anywhere else.” Honestly speaking, it was an incredible career jump. It was tremendous and I’m looking back at my whole life and I say, “No, God. You come first. I’m factoring You here. I want to give myself maximum opportunities where I can expose myself to the authentic Word.” Think about that – do you make career choices like that? Just not once or twice but several times. And I put a freeze, I said, “Lord, I only want to take up a job in Hyderabad,” and God said, “No way,” and then, other things were history.

All you, young people, there will come a point in your life wherein you have to weigh your priorities on a balance and you have to say, “Lord, eternity or now.” I remember speaking to Srikar over the phone some time back and he said when Nabeel Qureshi was at the last stages and then he passed away and he said, “Pastor, Nabeel’s life has just vanished. He was just in his thirties, it’s over and when I consider that, it’s going. I don’t have opportunities more to serve God.” We just talk over the phone and it was so encouraging to say what he was saying and the Psalmist through Moses in Psalms.

Psalm 90: 12

¹² So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Teach us not wisdom; please don't teach us wisdom first. But *teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom*. He is not saying, "Lord, teach me wisdom!" No. "Teach me, Lord." Today is gone, it's not coming back, it's over, it's done with. Think about today even today, how much of your time you spent investing in things of eternity and how much of time have you wasted thinking about other things? Think how much of time you really spend. It doesn't mean you always have to spend time in reading the Word of God in that busy schedule of yours. One man of God says, "People are not busy but they are just lazy." It's not just busy and I know my father used to tell me, "Vijay, a busy man has got time for everything." Words of wisdom. It's called Aanimutyalu in Telugu; meaning – pearls before swine like me. You have a busy schedule? Did you factor in God in your time spending time in the Word, getting to know Him? You do have that quite time with God whatever you call it, your devotion time or are you depending upon on WhatsApp message for your devotion to handle, think about it. Look at what *1 Peter* has to say.

1 Peter 4:1-3

¹ Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ² so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

Why should we do that? And he is going to substantiate the statement with an argument saying – why should I do that? This is what he says.

³ For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.

Look at the language; a lot of people pursue a course in French, in Arabic, in Java, C and Dot net, in testing, in sensuality. And it starts from class one by the way. Books that you are exposed to, programs that you watch sensuality – course 101, sensuality 102, sensuality 103, sensuality 104, PhD in sensuality ultimately. Course after course in sensuality but no time for God. Course after course, for things that do not profit and has absolutely no caring for an eternity at all. Think about it, Pastor was talking about it – how many of you really do courses that will enhance your thinking? Courses to expand your domain of influence in your own companies so that you can have more opportunities to serve better in your own company. How many of you do that? Young people, you all are at an age where you are still teachable. You are still young, most of you'll be below 35. Someone told – by the time you reach forty years, your level of learning will be reduced because your mind is already programmed in a particular way. I said, "Lord, I reject that." It doesn't matter – sixty, sixty-five, seventy, seventy-five, eighty, if I have to learn something new, I will learn, if it requires for me to learn. You are pursuing a course in sensuality, saints? Many young people have the ideas of what the latest movie is but they have no idea of what God is doing in the earth today. No idea. So, time is so important. If God has to give something of His burden into our lives, we need to spend time in His presence. Think about the systems that you are building in your life, your spiritual systems – how much time do you spend reading the Word, praying, coming under mentorship asking people to show you where you are going around? Do you have time for anything of those or do you have a cavalier attitude towards Christianity? Think about that. The fathers, the mothers, students, workers, elders. Look at *Nehemiah 1*.

Nehemiah 1:1-4

¹ Now it happened in the month Chisleu (note that), in the twentieth year, while I was in Susa the capitol, ² that Hanani, one of my brothers, and some men from Judah came; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped and had survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem. ³ They said to me, "The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire." ⁴ When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned (mourned for how many days?) for days (it was not that, he mourned today and has an ordinance with king for tomorrow); and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven

He was confessing and repenting and asking God, "Show, Lord, in my life; yes, I made it in Babylon; I became the top shot (whatever you want to call it). I've arrived but Lord, this is not what You've called Your people to be." Month of Chisleu. Then, what happens?

Nehemiah 2:1

¹And it came to pass in the month of Nisan,

Do you know how many months pass by? Four months – one hundred and twenty days of fasting and praying and seeking the face of God, spending the time in His presence so that he could know that the burden that he has is genuine. You want to build something authentic for the Lord? My dear brothers and sisters, do you spend time in His presence? Do you send time? Do you give, what we call as, quality time? And by the way, you cannot give quality time until and unless you give quantity of time. There is nothing called as ‘quality time’ without ‘quantity’. You know that. What is called quality time, 10 minutes? Oh, ten minutes, you are able to converse, breakthrough the spiritual realm? Oh my goodness. I am telling honestly, you know, I read a book, if it is P. G. Woodhouse – interesting, next page, next page, next-page; I read something of A.W Tozer or Dietrich Bonhoeffer or C.S. Lewis, two pages, I am like, “When is it going to finish, Lord?” And how am I going to expect myself to grow in the Lord unless I give myself time? You think it is easy to build a relationship with the Lord? No way. It took thirty years for Jesus to build a relationship wherein He has communion once; He had this, absolutely hotline with His God and He used to continue doing that; He used to seek for opportunities to go away and spend time in prayer all night etc. I mean, think about it – how many of us really do that? How many of us are desperate for a prayer life or all-night prayer on Friday, let’s say? How many of you will come? You see, fasting and prayer? How many of you will come? You see. I remember the first time when Pastor was introducing fasting and prayer in the Church, he said, “The Lord told me, ‘the Church is going to build by only those who will be the part of the fasting and prayer’.” That’s the announcement he made – my heart started beating. And I will tell you honestly, whenever I used to miss a fasting and prayer, I used to think that I lost my call. Whenever I miss the all-night prayer, I thought I was gone and I used to have a class 8.30 in the morning. And in fact, I got a D-grade in a particular course after getting 80% in the final exam, just because I miss the classes, because of all-night prayer. I had to do the course again. Later, I got an ‘A-grade’ but that’s a different thing. Do you factor these things in at all? And when somebody says, “This year going to be the year of destiny,” does your heart beat against your chest? Does it pound? Does it race? Don’t spend time. See, we get the results because of the kind of systems that we are building, my dear brothers and sisters. It’s not in spite of the results that we are building, it is because of the system we are building. Okay.

Second thing.

Haggai 1:8

⁸ Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the LORD. ⁹ You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away (you brought it home, I blew it away) Why? Declares the LORD of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house.

Did you see that? In other words, if you want to build an appropriate system, you have to put God first, not ‘me first’; others first; not ‘me first’. Look at what it says in *Philippians 2*,

Philippians 2:3-4

³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Now, think about it – how much of your time is spent thinking about you, and how much of your time is spent thinking about the Church? You see, that is how we know.

Philippians 2:19-22

¹⁹But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus...

Oh! I love this. Out of all Paul’s co-workers, there was one guy, he says “I trust.” So many co-workers he has, he had Demas, he had Titus, he had Luke, so many people he had, Priscilla and Aquila; he had so many co-workers and he looks at all of them and then, he says, “You know what?” And he zeros on one guy, you know what that guy’s name is? Timothy. I trust in the Lord, I was discussing some time back with Eric. I was telling you know, “Eric, one of the things that we need to do as young people, we need to encourage young people, is to encourage them to build trust with the eldership, where you can

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be trusted.” You know something? You need to understand a lot of difference between the love of God and God loves everybody unconditionally but He does not trust everybody. You understand that? You need to understand that. And if you have been a believer for a considerable amount of time, you need to ask yourself this question” can I be trusted? Look at this

¹⁹But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition (state), (why does he want to send Timothy? He gives an answer) **²⁰For I have no one else like-minded** (Oh! boy what an indictment, of all the people, he says, I see any person who has the vision that I have for the Church, think about that, my dear brothers and sisters) **who will (sincerely) genuinely care** (in other words, he says that if I send Timothy it is as if I am sending myself, who sincerely care for you), **about your interests;** **²¹For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.** **²²But you know his proven character** (I like that, proven character) **that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.**

You see that? What about Timothy? What is this about Timothy? Let me tell you something, Timothy is a very timid guy, we know, we read Scripture; he was timid, he was not healthy, he had lot of stomach problems. I mean, he used to fall ill often. I mean, think about some of us who fall ill often. Often, we have some ailment and it could be because of your physical condition and nobody is going to despise that but think about that – does that stop you from serving God? I mean, you need to understand, when Timothy was exalted in 2 Timothy 1: 6, “*Stir up the gift in you,*” he took the counsel very seriously. You know what? He became a martyr. if you read the Church history, he was so on fire for God, he became a Bishop of Ephesus and one day, he was passing by the road of Ephesus, he looked at a crowd which was worshiping idols, he went and confronted them, he said, “What are you worshiping?” His spirit was stirred and he confronted to those people over there, worshiping idols and immediately, they stoned him to death and he died.

The same Timothy had all kinds of issues and problems and his fears and his health problems etc. What about Timothy that is distinguished him from the other works? I will tell you. This is found again in Scripture;

1 Corinthians 4:17

¹⁷For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and (what?) faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you...

See, He will not come and say, “This is what the Lord says.” It says that He will come and say,

...and he will remind you of (whose ways?) my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every Church.

I can trust this fellow. I’ll tell you what this ‘faithful child’ mean. Timothy had a teachable spirit. He could be taught. He could be confronted. He could be exhorted. He could be reprimanded. He could be reproved. He could be scolded. That is the difference and think about how many young people; you raise your voices in your own home; my own home – “Papa, don’t speak like that to me, Papa. Speak kindly.” That’s what I will say, “Why did you do that?” “Don’t speak like that. Speak kindly.” You cannot speak a little harsh with people. You have to really walk on eggshells, “What will they think?” You will be, forever, a set of people who cannot be trusted. I don’t want to be that. I’m telling you honestly – I want people to confront me and show me because I said, “Lord, I don’t care.” I told Jacinth; I said, “I didn’t leave my job to come here and to waste my time. I just want to do something which will last for eternity. It doesn’t matter what is going to happen to me, how many times I’m confronted, I will change. I will take correction.” And I pray, “Lord, I’m absolutely going to be tough on myself. It doesn’t matter who is going to correct me. I will take it. I want to have a teachable spirit because I want to finish what You have started in my life.” And the greatest hindrance will be me.

Haggai 1:12

¹² Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant...

You see that? Remnant. Very few. You see, there is a problem. It’s a very sad thing that not many people like this.

...the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him; and the people feared the presence of the Lord.

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You see that? They obeyed the voice and they feared the Lord. They said, “I want to take correction. I want to build trust. I want to be counted for something in God’s Kingdom. I want to be accountable with every dime that has been given to me. Every dime that I earn, I want to be accountable.” Think about it – how much does your company pay you? How many of you think that you have overworked? How many of you think that the company owes you a bonus because you spent so much time and you say, “They don’t give me my worth”? Or for every dime that they give you, do you think that you are accountable for every dime that you earn? And you say, “I get.” That’s the reason why many people say, “It’s grace. I get more than what I deserve.” Very few people fear the Lord.

Next – In *Haggai*, he is saying that very people will obey. And then, there is one principle that I learnt in obedience. This is found in *Luke 16*. What is obedience? We’ve heard this several times in the Church.

Luke 16:10

¹⁰ *He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.*

In other words, God is going to test us if we are obedient in little, small things in our lives.

Another principle, same –

Luke 16:12

¹² *And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own?*

David had to be proved. He had to be faithful with whose sheep? His father’s sheep until he got his own. My landlord just went to the US for a couple of months and he said, “Vijay, till I come back, hold fort.” As if it was a big fortress but he is saying, “Treat it as your own house.” Think about it. What is God saying? If I don’t treat somebody else’s house as my own, how will I get my own property? Simple. If you borrow somebody else’s car, do you treat somebody else’s car as your own when you borrow somebody else’s car? If you cannot be faithful with somebody else’s car, how can God give you your own car? Do you see that principle?

And finally, I’m going to stop here.

Haggai 2:10-13

¹⁰ *On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying,* ¹¹ *“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Now, ask the priests concerning the law, saying,* ¹² *“If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?””’ Then the priests answered and said, “No.”*

In other words, he is saying, “There is one small experiment – take holy food in your garment and even as you are passing by, touch somebody else’s food like this. Just because you are carrying holy food and you touch somebody else’s food, will that thing become holy?” They said, “No.” And then, he said, “Okay, do another experiment.” What is the other experiment?

¹³ *And Haggai said, “If one who is unclean because of a dead body touches any of these, will it be unclean?” So the priests answered and said, “It shall be unclean.”*

What is he trying to say? One lesson – sin is contagious; holiness is not. Meaning – I can’t transfer my holiness by touching other people; only God can do that. That is what happened when the leper came. Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, he came down and he said, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” “I am willing. Be thou clean,” and He touched him because He is the holy One. Just because He touched something unclean, He is not going to become unclean because He is absolutely infinitely pure but we are not. Paul will tell the Corinthians in *1 Corinthians 15:33*,

1 Corinthians 15:33

³³ *Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.”*

Reflect On Your Experience!

You know something? It's very easy to teach children bad language. Suddenly, they will use that word. "Where did you hear that?" "Papa used it." They are very easy. It is easy to transfer sin, impossible to transfer holiness. If you've been getting these devotions, every day, I've been looking at this and this is something which really touched my heart – the Puritans devotions on day 7, Pastor sent it. Look at what it says – "One leak in a ship will sink it. One stab strikes Goliath just as dead as 23 did Caesar. One Delilah may do Samson as much mischief as all Philistines. One broken wheel stops the whole clock. One vein bleeding will let out all the vitals. One fly will spoil a whole box of ointment. One bitter herb will all the pottage. By eating one fruit, Adam lost paradise. One lick of honey endangered Jonathan's life. One Achan was trouble to all Israel. One Jonah raises a storm and becomes a load. Gideon had 70 sons (this was the best of all) yet that one bastard child destroyed all the 70 sons. Ah, Christian, do you not know what world of mischief one unmortified lust may do? Therefore, let nothing satisfy you but the death of all your lusts." One. One thing you lack and that one think can change your entire destiny. One.

As I end, this is the last exhortation God has... I had prepared something but this is the last thing.

Haggai 2:20-21

²⁰ *The word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month,* ²¹ *"Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth,*

"I'm going to shake everything." Be sure that the foundations of the systems that you have built are strong and are based upon a solid foundation. And this is what *Hebrews 12* will say,

Hebrews 12:26-27

²⁶ *At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised,* (This is the same quotation from Haggai.) *"Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens."* ²⁷ *This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.*

That means He is going to shake everything in our lives. Everything. Let me tell you something – He is going to touch your finances. Be sure about your finances. He is going to touch your health. He is going to touch your family. He is going to touch your spiritual life. Every aspect of your spiritual life will be shaken so that you can be sure that what you're building is a system that stands the test of time. You can be sure. It is not to expose us. No. It is because He wants us to be partakers of His holiness so that one day, He will say, "You have come through all this shaking. You have a system which will stand the test of time. It doesn't matter what kind of opposition will throw at you; you will still be able to come through." Young people, do you want to be like that? I'm telling you honestly, I want to be a man like that. I said, "Lord, I want my life to be counted. It doesn't matter how many processes I go through, I want to finish the course that You have begun in my life. I can't do it in my own strength but I have the desire to finish it. I have the desire. You have power." *Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.* Shall we pray?

Closing Prayer:

Father, we thank You, Father, for this time. So many things to be learnt from this ancient prophet, Lord. So many things. Father, so many of us building lives. I pray, Father, that even as You have exhorted us, we will go and examine ourselves through this week, through this month, the end of the tenth year, the beginning of the last month, the twelfth month of this year, before that, Father, You are going to establish something of lasting value in our lives. I pray, Father, that we will choose to examine ourselves, Lord. It doesn't matter how painful it might seem to us, Lord, take us through, Father. Because You know, You judge us and You chastise us because You love us and You said, Lord, if we are without chastisement, we are illegitimate children. Lord, we do not want to be illegitimate, Lord. Father, stir us up. Shake us, show us, Lord, so that, Lord, we can build lives that will last the test of time. We can build spiritual lives, individual spiritual lives which will last, Father, the test of time; where we will build marriages and families which will last the test of time. We will build Christian Churches and organizations which will last the test of time. We will build businesses, Christian businesses which will last the test of time; careers which will last the test of time because, Lord, we have a character, O Lord Father, which has been proven and tested through fire. O Father, I pray, Father, that You would grant us that desire this evening, O Lord, and through this month, O Father. Stir us up. Grant us teachable spirits and a willing heart. You said in Your Word, "If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best of the land." Grant us grace to that end, we pray. We thank You, we praise You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.