

# Meditative Thoughts for Empowerment



30 Days Spiritual Reflection and Renewal

Uju Oramah

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**“But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought our peace was on him; and by his wounds we are healed.” Isaiah 53:5**

# **DEDICATION**

**Princess Chioma,  
Thank you for bringing so much joy into our lives.**

# **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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**For God so loved the world, that he gave  
his one and only Son, that whoever  
believes in him should not perish, but have  
eternal life. (John 3:16)**

# Table of Contents

<b>PREFACE</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b><i>A TALE OF TWO KIDS</i></b>	
<b>DAY 1</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b><i>CLEAR VISION</i></b>	
<b>DAY 2</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b><i>CHASING AN ILLUSION</i></b>	
<b>DAY 3</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b><i>THE HOOD</i></b>	
<b>DAY 4</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b><i>WHO LEADS YOU?</i></b>	
<b>DAY 5</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b><i>REMEMBERED</i></b>	
<b>DAY 6</b> .....	<b>33</b>
<b><i>DECEPTIVE</i></b>	
<b>DAY 7</b> .....	<b>36</b>
<b><i>WASHED CLEAN</i></b>	
<b>DAY 8</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b><i>OUR HEARTS YEARN</i></b>	
<b>DAY 9</b> .....	<b>46</b>
<b><i>SOLD HIS SOUL</i></b>	

<b>DAY 10 .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b><i>A BOY AND A KNIFE</i></b>	
<b>DAY 11 .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b><i>SCAMMED</i></b>	
<b>DAY 12 .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b><i>TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL</i></b>	
<b>DAY 13 .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b><i>GOD'S FAITHFULNESS</i></b>	
<b>DAY 14 .....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b><i>MERCY OF GOD</i></b>	
<b>DAY 15 .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b><i>RESTORED</i></b>	
<b>DAY 16 .....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b><i>PAID FOR MY COFFEE</i></b>	
<b>DAY 17 .....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b><i>CONFORMITY</i></b>	
<b>DAY 18 .....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b><i>THEY DONT COUNT</i></b>	
<b>DAY 19 .....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b><i>JUSTICE</i></b>	
<b>Day 20.....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b><i>OUT OF ORDER</i></b>	
<b>DAY 21 .....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b><i>LIFE IN MOTION</i></b>	

<b>DAY 22 .....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b><i>SAVED FROM DEATH</i></b>	
<b>DAY 23 .....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b><i>HER TRIUMPH</i></b>	
<b>DAY 24 .....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b><i>A MAN OF INFLUENCE</i></b>	
<b>DAY 25 .....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b><i>ANSWERED PRAYER</i></b>	
<b>DAY 26 .....</b>	<b>112</b>
<b><i>THE PRICE</i></b>	
<b>DAY 27 .....</b>	<b>116</b>
<b><i>THE SHADOW OF DEATH</i></b>	
<b>DAY 28 .....</b>	<b>119</b>
<b><i>ALL IS VANITY</i></b>	
<b>DAY 29 .....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b><i>DELIVERANCE</i></b>	
<b>DAY 30 .....</b>	<b>127</b>
<b><i>PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE</i></b>	
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>130</b>
<i>Hold onto God no matter what!</i>	

# PREFACE

“From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.”

Acts 17:26-27 (NIV)

I once saw a father playing with his daughter. Suddenly, he picked her up, threw her in the air, and caught her before she could fall to the ground. He did that three times before he placed her gently on the ground. They both laughed and continued to play together. Anyone could see the great bond between the man and his daughter.

God wants us to relate to Him like the little girl with her father. It is true we may not see Him physically, but everything around us attests to his presence, kindness, and love for us. St. Augustine said that our life is restless until they rest in God.

To rest in God means to trust and to have faith in Him in any situation, and to live according to His commandments. It

also entails spending time and communicating with Him. Today there are many Christians who, while they believe in God, still do not relate to Him in their daily lives. They manage to attend church service on holidays or special occasions. There are others, who seek Him, not to know Him, but to receive miracles or to ‘command’ Him to do their bidding. Nevertheless, there are those who sincerely and steadfastly search to know God to satisfy their soul’s ache for Him, the reason why God created us in the first place. Our ultimate goal in life, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church is to know God, love Him, and serve Him so that we can be with Him in Heaven at the end of our lives.

Simply put, God requires us to enjoy a personal relationship with Him throughout our lives on Earth. With such a connection, we gain true knowledge and understanding of God and His ways. As a result, our lives will be more God-driven, like Moses, Abraham, and the Apostles who allowed God to lead their lives.

Besides, we became Christians to earn the privilege to be counted among those who will inherit the kingdom of God and enjoy Him for eternity in Heaven. However, in the Bible, Jesus Christ likened The Kingdom of Heaven to a merchant in search of fine pearls. When the merchant found a single pearl of a great price, he sold all that he had in order to purchase it. (Matt 13:45-46)

Therefore, to know and be with God in Heaven is our goal. It is the greatest treasure anyone can possess, but the challenges of life often cause us to fall by the wayside.

We know that every successful venture requires periodic stock check, or it will not survive the competition in the marketplace. As Christians, the constant danger we face is that we might lose eternity with God if we fail to periodically think through our lives to ensure we are still running our Christian race as we should.

This book is a 30-day spiritual journey for every child of God no matter the level of our spiritual growth. It is written using stories and life examples to challenge us to think and examine our own lives and be empowered to encounter and hear God speak to us daily in our lives' situations. It also uses "Food for Thought" to help us deepen our relationship with God. As a result, we will achieve the God-driven life.

It is important to remember that this book is not an end, but it is a means to rekindle the fire of God's love, already within each of us.

# INTRODUCTION

“One who spares the rod hates his son,  
but one who loves him is careful  
to discipline him.”  
Proverbs 13:24

“I don’t understand how you can call yourself  
a Christian and lead such an idle, useless life. Have you  
forgotten Christ’s life of toil?” — St. Josemaría Escrivá

## A TALE OF TWO KIDS

**T**here once lived two couples on the same street. What they had in common was that they had no children after many years of marriage. As they waited on the Lord and prayed, they both conceived. They each gave birth to a son.

The parents of the first child, in their expression of love, gave their son everything he wanted. They allowed him to have his way, rather than have him cry. When he played outside and



wasn't ready to go inside, the parents waited outside until he got tired. They only fed him the food he preferred.

When he was of age to go to school, the parent took him to school, but he did not want to stay there, so they tried homeschooling, but it did not work. The parents did the best they could with what he agreed to do. He lived like that until he turned twenty-one, but he could not hold a job, so his parents continued to provide for him. One day, when the boy was in his thirties, both parents were fatally injured in a car accident. Within three years, he squandered the legacy his parents willed to him, sold their family house, and became homeless.

However, the parents of the second child showed their love for their son differently. They disciplined him accordingly. When he was of age to go to school, he went. His excuses not to go didn't work. Rather, the parents found a way to encourage him to like school. As the years rolled by, he did well in school and won many awards. He obtained both a Master's degree and Ph.D. in Computer Engineering. He later became a regular face on television because he developed an online program that brought him fame and wealth. He took his parents in and provided for them.

One day, a homeless man approached him at a traffic light. He gave him money. The homeless man recognized him but said nothing. As the man drove off, he noticed through his side mirror that the homeless man was no longer standing at the

junction seeking for arms, but sat at the corner with his head bent.

Meanwhile, the homeless man stared at the money in his hand, tears falling from his eyes. He knew that his benefactor did not recognize him. He has seen him on television. He knew him because they grew up on the same street. He never hung out with him with his friends. Uncontrollable tears fell from his eyes.

Like the parents of the second child, God directs our lives, so we can achieve greatness. All our crosses, trials, and experiences work for our good if we do our best, pray, and wait on the Lord.

Often in our Christian journey, we see God as a faraway Deity whose Will is challenging to fulfill, and we focus instead on the pursuit and acquisition of the fleeting material wealth.

The problem is not that we Christians do not live fully as those who sincerely want to make heaven, but it is our failure to learn to hear and obey God when He speaks to us. As such, we may miss the opportunities God orchestrates for us to meet him on Earth so that He can guide us to fulfill our destinies and to be in Heaven with Him at the end of our lives.

How then can we relate to God in our daily lives, and thus grow in faith and love for Him?

To love, obey, and communicate with God is simple. Hence, it is doable, but it requires discipline, dedication, and

practice. True, it may not be easy, but neither is the game of life, professional sports, or business ventures.

To get the most spiritual benefit from this book, it is recommended that the book be read one chapter a day with deep meditation for inspirations and personal moral resolve. The whole creation waits for what God will use us to accomplish. The time to begin to know our heavenly father intimately is now, for tomorrow may be too late!

# DAY 1

“Now Yahweh said to Abram,  
“Leave your country, and your relatives,  
and your father’s house, and go to the land  
that I will show you.” Genesis 12:1

"Let us always keep before our eyes the fact that here on earth we are on a battlefield and that in paradise we shall receive the crown of victory; that this is a testing-ground and the prize will be awarded up above; that we are now in a land of exile while our true homeland is Heaven to which we must continually aspire." St. Padre Pio

## CLEAR VISION

**O**n the 31st of October 2016, tired, I left the office and headed home. About two miles down the road, I noticed the flashing lights of several police cars. There were about six fire trucks. Together, they blocked the road.

Many cars ahead of me made a U-turn and drove away, but because I dread the alternative longer route that would get me

home, I waited, in vain, for the police cars and the fire trucks to clear the way. When it dawned on me that it might take hours before they would unblock the road, I too made a U-turn.

As I drove away from the scene, I looked out for the shortest route to reach home. I saw a road to my right, and because other drivers were turning onto it, I followed it, but it led to a dead end.

After I missed my way twice in my efforts to find a shorter route by blindly following other drivers, I made up my mind to take the familiar route home. However, it took me about twenty minutes more to get home. But then, I made it to my house because I had a clear vision of where I wanted to go.

When God called Abraham, He didn't tell him immediately where he was taking him, but simply asked him to go, that He would show him the place. Even though Abraham faced many obstacles on his journey to the Promised Land, he trusted God. Through his obedience to the commandment of God, he reached the Promised Land. Because of his obedience, God blessed and promised him, that through his offspring, all nations on Earth would be blessed (Genesis 22:18), and that offspring is our Lord Jesus Christ. Today, he is known as our father in faith.

Again, there are many others in the past and in our modern time that allowed God to direct their lives. As a result, they became great men and women of history. Moses divided the Red Sea and led a great Nation out of bondage. Mother Teresa

globally became the face of the poor, and Martin Luther King fought for America where everyone would be treated as equal.

In our Christian journey, unlike Abraham, and other great men and women of faith, we often ignore God's presence and words, but we pick and choose how to live our Christian lives. We live unaware that like Abraham, God called each one of us with a plan to personally lead us to achieve our destinies and enjoy His company.

We often think that we know, but has any of us figured out, in detail, how the rest of our lives will be? Might our lack of faith in God be because we are not spending enough time with Him? The scripture has shown that all who spent time with God, like the Apostles, were equipped with grace to face any of life's challenges without losing faith.

It is said that success in anything requires a clear, defined vision: what, why, and the price to acquire the object of pursuit, and with that, the person can then plan on how to get there. More so, experience has shown that for every goal one pursues, there are bound to be detours and delays. However, the strength of our 'WHY' is what will determine whether we achieve our goal or not.

If we recall what the Apostles of Jesus Christ lived through to spread the gospel, we will agree that they were successful because they had a clear vision of God as the author and finisher of their lives, so they stuck with Him at all costs. As a result, through them, we receive the gospel.

As God called Abraham, He too has called each one of us; and as God proved to Abraham through his trials, so will each of us be tested. We need to know this upfront as we follow Him.

In my mentioned experience, despite the obstacles on the way, I reached my goal, which was to get home. So as Christians, our first job is to gain clarity of what God demands of us and get on with it without further delays. As a result, no matter the temptations or trials that come or the number of times we fall and get up, we will not only find our way back to God and fulfill our destinies, but we will also help others to find and follow God for a fruitful life on Earth. At the end of our lives on Earth, we will all make it to heaven, a place where we will rejoice and glorify God forever.

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Before a farmer begins to plow his field, he sees the harvest. So, he makes provision for it. Do we see ourselves in company with God here on Earth and in heaven? Are we excited about that?

Or, do we think our idea is superior to where God is leading us? Who loses when we do not listen? Do we remember the fate of the prodigal son after he left his father's presence and worked according to the desires of his heart?

Or, is there anything in our lives that is stopping us? Let us take a moment now to examine our lives with a firm resolve to do what it takes to follow God. For further reading, see “Uniformity with God's Will” by St. Alphonsus.

PRAYER: Psalm 23.

### ***LIKE A BUTTERFLY***

*Set me free from the cord that entrapped me, oh Lord!*

*Melt from me the deeply rooted sins*

*Break from me the constraints You never consent*

*Like a butterfly, command me to display your beauty*

*To fly high, wide and far to the limit*

*You ordained for me from the beginning*

*I pray you, my Lord and my God!*





# DAY 2

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, isn’t the Father’s, but is the world’s. The world is passing away with its lusts, but he who does God’s will remains forever.” 1 John 2:16-17

“Hold the line! Stay with me! ... Brothers, what we do in life echoes in eternity”  
Maximus Decimus Meridius(Gladiator)

## CHASING AN ILLUSION

““Are you a student teacher?”  
“No, I have my license. I’m an interim teacher.”

"What does that mean?"

"I'm not permanent."

*Not permanent, what position is permanent?* I thought as he hurriedly left me. For sure, every job is temporal, notwithstanding how long it may last. Saddam Hussein ruled

his country for about twenty-four years before he was killed. Robert Mugabe ruled for thirty-seven years, first as Prime Minister, and then as President before he was removed by the military of his country in 2017. Muammar Gaddafi ruled for almost forty-two years before an opposition group killed him.

Permanent about earthly position or wealth is an illusion, and our belief in it has caused us to pursue material wealth to the detriment of our souls. It influences our attitudes towards God, people, and how we live our lives. We forget we are on Earth for a time, and that our efforts cannot gain for us a minute more beyond the time God ordained for us. We overlook that the only thing that will count for or against us is our actions and inactions towards God and our fellow human beings while we live.

In short, every material thing we possess, including our lives is temporary, not permanent. Our valuables last only for a short while. We also change like the sky. We first come into this world as newborns. We grow to be teenagers, and finally, we become senior citizens until our death. Our end may occur at any stage of the cycle. Life, like water, renews itself with every new death and birth.

Why then do we hold onto things until they are ripped from our hands while we live, or at death? Why don't we be more generous with our time, talent, and treasure, in service of God and neighbor, as God commanded us?

Jesus Christ said: “Don’t lay up treasures for yourselves on the Earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume, and where thieves don’t break through and steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:19-21

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Have we ever taken a moment to meditate on life after death? Do we believe that Heaven and Hell exist? How will we feel if we acquire all the riches of the earth and miss Heaven? In silence, let us meditate on our possible fate if we die today. Let us also think about what we need to start doing today as children of God.

PRAYER: Psalm 25

#### ***MADE NEW***

*I made friends in high places*

*I felt secured in my accomplishments*

*Strife came like storms, and my friends deserted me*

*I was crushed and distraught, but no one cared for my life*

*My worldly goods were gone, and I existed like a living dead*

*In my soul anguish, I heard Jesus say,*

*“Come to me all who are heavy burdened,  
And I’ll give you rest.”*

*The light of his words overpowered my life*

*His grace dispelled the darkness that enslaved me*

*I came alive*

*Thank you, Jesus, for saving me*

# DAY 3

Samuel said to Saul: "The LORD anointed you king of Israel and sent you on a mission, saying, 'Go and put the sinful Amalekites under a ban of destruction. Fight against them until you have exterminated them.' Why then have you disobeyed the LORD? ...Obedience is better than sacrifice. For a sin like divination is rebellion, and presumption is the crime of idolatry. Because you have rejected the command of the LORD, he, too, has rejected you as ruler."<sup>1</sup> Samuel 15:18-23 (NAB)

"Moral principles do not depend on a majority vote. Wrong is wrong, even if everybody is wrong. Right is right, even if nobody is right. The refusal to take sides on great moral issues is itself a decision. It is a silent acquiescence to evil. The Tragedy of our time is that those who still believe in honesty lack fire and conviction, while those who believe in dishonesty are full of passionate conviction."  
Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen

## THE HOOD

**A**t a middle school, a teacher gave an assignment with the instructions that required students to input numbers on a graph and connect the points

with lines. When done correctly, the image would be Superman's hood.

Some students listened and followed the instructions, and as a result got the required answer in the form of Superman's hood. One student, on the other hand, played and ignored the teacher and refused to pay attention to instructions. When he turned in his class assignment, the teacher saw that he did it incorrectly because his drawing didn't come out as a Superman's hood. For sure, the boy expected to pass the assignment, but he failed because he didn't listen to the teacher when she gave instruction on how the assignment should be done.

Likewise, we often ignore God's promptings in our hearts, or His revealed Will, as contained in His words to our own detriments. Like the middle school boy, some of us expect to make it to heaven with little or no effort to love and obey God. There are few people that put in the required work to do God's Will.

The word of God says, "Enter in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter in by it. How narrow is the gate, and restricted is the way that leads to life! Few are those who find it." Matthew 7:13-14

We regularly fail to seek God for Himself. We habitually seek for fun from one activity to another. Or, we seek for

miracles from one church to another, as if that's the primary purpose of why we worship God.

But God said in Revelation 3:16: "Because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of my mouth." And for miracle seekers, Jesus called them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign," Matthew 16:4.

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Do we diligently keep the commandments of God? Monsignor D. E. Inyang, during one of his homely at Holy Rosary Wuse, Abuja said, "Our race to heaven is not comparative, but superlative, therefore, try your very best, try your hardest, for many will try, but will not succeed."

PRAYER: Psalm 51 and 32

#### *THE DAY'S DEEP SECRET*

*At dawn, cock crows repeatedly*

*A tale sign of a new day*

*At the first morning light, the birds sing*

*All nature in order obeys, except humans*

*Wild and untamed, we fault all rules*

*Sin chains us like common slaves*

*To our sins, we add rebellion*



*Babbling on and on, we live the day as it comes  
We do not grab the day's deep secret  
People age, people die, things decay  
These things boom and boom  
But we are hard of hearing  
My grace is enough, said the Lord  
Grab the sign, the preacher admonished  
They are blowing in the wind, he insists  
We hear all, but we lack understanding  
Lord, we are still holding on still  
Save us from pride and self-love  
Forgive us our sins  
Help us to live aware  
That all humanity will return to dust  
And as a reward, Heaven or Hell awaits*

# DAY 4

“If you will ask anything in my name, I will do it. If you love me, keep my commandments. I will pray to the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, that he may be with you forever, the Spirit of truth. You know him, for he lives with you.” John 14:15-17

“Christian optimism is not a sugary optimism, nor is it a mere human confidence that everything will turn out all right. It is an optimism that sinks its roots into an awareness of our freedom, and the sure knowledge of the power of grace. It is an optimism that leads us to make demands on ourselves, to struggle to respond at every moment to God's call.” St. Josemaría Escrivá

## WHO LEADS YOU?

I turned a corner onto a downhill road. With my two hands firmly on the steering wheel, I allowed the car to roll down the way without stepping on the car's accelerator pedal or the brake. It smoothly went while I enjoyed

the ride. The exercise was fun. Then, I gained insight. The car rolled downhill on its own, but without my hands on the steering wheel, the car would have lost control and crashed.

I realized at that moment that, like the car, if we do not allow God to direct our lives, we will miss our way, and be lost forever. When we look around in the world, we will notice that so many of us have lost our ways. We languish in sin. We silence God's Spirit inside us.

In conformity with the world, we bend the truth, we create our idle god and worship it. We left Jesus knocking on the door of our hearts. We delude ourselves, that we can live in the total freedom of what God demands of us and still make heaven. We sometimes worship ourselves by following our every whim instead of God's Will, a sin against the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me." Exodus 20:3.

Jesus said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men." Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever will lose his life for my sake will find it." Matthew 16:23-25.

Almost all temptations we ever faced are rooted in what we want, which conflicts with what God demands of us. If we allow our self-wants to rule us, we may live a miserable life, and

we may lose God forever in the process. However, if we surrender to the authority of God, we may have challenges, but we will live in peace. We will achieve great things because God will be working through us. We may also keep in mind what the word of God said, “I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want.” Galatians 5:16-17 (NABRE)

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Do we live aware that our lives consist of constant battles between good and evil that want to dominate our lives? What then do we need to conquer temptations, discouragement, and disappointments in life and still focus on fulfilling God’s Will? We might need to persevere, pray, and read His words with the knowledge that God will help us navigate our lives’ challenges through whatever means He deems best. And while we pray, we need to be prepared to experience God, our father.

PRAYER: Oh! God our father, direct our way, teach us wisdom, and fill us with the Holy Spirit. Please God! Rend the veil that blocks us from encountering You. Let us see your glory in our lives, the world, and our spirit! We pray in Jesus’ Name! Psalm 141.

## DRIVEN BY THE WIND

*The trial came like a raging storm*

*It flung me like a leaf driven by the wind*

*I became an outcast to my friends*

*Like a deer runs for running water, I ran to you*

*Like a gentle breeze, you appeared*

*Peace became my portion in the midst of the storm*

*You uphold me, I walked on the storm like Peter*

*In your hand, I surmounted the storm*

*My love for you grew and blossomed*

*Here at your feet, I'll remain forever*

*My love and my God*

# DAY 5

“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” What does man gain from all his labor in which he labors under the sun? One generation goes, and another generation comes; but the earth remains forever.” Ecclesiastes 1:2-4

“An example I often use to illustrate the reality of vanity, is this: look at the peacock; it's beautiful if you look at it from the front. But if you look at it from behind, you discover the truth... Whoever gives in to such self-absorbed vanity has huge misery hiding inside them.” Pope Francis

## REMEMBERED

I watched a toddler as she made efforts to take her first step. I smiled, and I thought, no one else will do this for her. She must take the steps required at each stage of life as long as she lives. When she becomes of age, she will make the decisions that will affect the rest of her life.

Like her first step, only her actions can determine how far she will go in life. Parents, teachers, and friends may help, but the final actions rest on her, and no one else. She takes the credit or bears the consequences of her actions and inactions.

As adults, none of us can recall when we struggled to take our first step. It's now part of history we may never remember. Today, our urgent needs consume us. Tomorrow, what we hold dear today may be forgotten, as did our first step. Our youth becomes distant memories in old age, and we remember our childhood like summer in the winter time.

Sadly, we pride ourselves superior to other people because of our worldly attainments and achievements, and we forget that our possessions may become lost or obsolete. It is also possible that, as soon as we die, the living, like scavengers, take up all we labored for and acquired. We live like fresh leaves that sprout out in spring but are gone in winter. Why then do we strive and labor as if we will not die and face judgment one day?

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Where should we invest our utmost efforts: in the acquisition of the material things of the world, fame, or in the fulfillment of the Will of God? Are we aware that whatever we experience, our education, and achievements are only steps along the way to our destinies and to heaven with God? Do we know that being in constant communication with God and living aware of

His ever presence will guarantee our success and fulfillment in life, despite the obstacles in our way? Therefore, let us give God the chance to speak to us every day in adoration at our personal altar.

PRAYER: “Come, oh Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created, and Thou shall renew the face of the earth!” (Catholic Prayer). Psalm 90

### GONE LIKE A SEASON

*Everything will fade and turn back to nothing  
This thought flashed through my mind  
As I trashed my once prized gown  
I notice too, the junks that are in the dumpster  
They were once priceless possessions to their owners  
This reality ricochets around us  
Every second, every minute, and every hour  
But do we ever pay attention?  
An unexamined life is not worth living  
Each day, once new items turn old, they are trashed  
Today, yesterday's babies are adults*



*Each day people die and are buried  
We too shall one day be gone like a season  
Look around; we exist as in a trance  
We live unaware of the shortness of our stay here  
Like one about to drown, I cried  
My God, never forget me!  
Oh Lord, be the custodian of my senses*



Dumpster

## DAY 6

“But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Arise, and go toward the south to the way that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is a desert.” He arose and went; and behold, there was a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority. The Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go near, and join yourself to this chariot,’” and Phillip obeyed.

Acts 8:26-27, 29

“It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels.” Saint Augustine

## DECEPTIVE

**T**he morning was windy and cold, but the sky was bright and sunny. I felt a great push to go towards the woods as I rushed to my car after Mass to tend to my daily concerns. I dismissed it, but the urge to go persisted and finally won me over.

I drove to the edge of the woods and was thrilled by the beauty that was on display. It was early spring. Trees in blooms stood in a row like fully-lit Christmas trees. *Did they blossom overnight?* I wondered. As I watched, they swayed from side to side to the rhythm of the gentle breeze that was blowing. Untold joy enveloped me.

Then I heard a noise above, and I looked up. I saw an airplane that appeared so small like a little child's toy. I knew it was way bigger than what my eyes witnessed because two weeks earlier, I flew in from California in one of them. While in the airplane, the buildings below, as I looked down from the window also appeared like toys.

It then dawned on me that indeed things are not as they seem. As such, perceived appearance can be deceptive. I thought, *how then can we figure God out?* At that moment I just knew that no matter what we hear or see, we'll never understand fully the greatness of God, His ways, or the immensity of His love for us because of our nature as human beings.

I took a deep breath and watched in silence as I took it all in. I looked about; the trees were still swaying from side to side. Hugely grateful for the insight of God's love received, I thought, indeed, the essential things in life, like the understanding I just gained, cost nothing but our obedience to the prompting of God's Spirit.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

How many times have we rejected God's promptings because it was not convenient? Can we live a fulfilled life outside God?

Do we remember the story of Jonah's refusal to go to Nineveh?

The question is, are we on Earth to do as we choose, or are we here to fulfill what God sent us to accomplish? Again, where would we end up if we continue to resist God?

PRAYER: Psalm 37

***I WALK THE MOON***

*Someone said*

*I walked the moon*

*I wore the stars*

*I lay on the rainbow*

*Strange and impossible, I thought*

*Now with my God in my heart*

*I walk on the moon*

*I wear the stars*

*And the rainbow is my bed*

# DAY 7

“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

Romans 8:28

“Patience, persistence and perspiration make an unbeatable combination for success.”

Napoleon Hill

## WASHED CLEAN

**I** saw a bird. It flew overhead and perched on a nearby tree. It ate fruits and played around, hopping from one branch to the other, but before it flew away, the bird passed its droppings on the tree. The tree did nothing: it cannot do anything even if it wanted. On closer look, the trunk of the tree was covered in poop obviously left by other birds that ate its fruits. By the height, and the look of the tree, it must

have suffered this for years. Heavy rain started to fall. My flow of thoughts stopped as I ran for cover. The rain fell nonstop for about an hour and a half and ended. I came out and saw that the rain produced puddles and running water. When I walked up to the tree the second time, I noticed that the violent storm washed the tree clean causing the bird poop to become part of the ground upon which the tree stood.

I realized that the bird's waste in the form of manure would become food for the tree. With that epiphany, I smiled and went on my way. As I walked away, I saw a similar bird flying over. I looked up, afraid it may poop on me, but at that moment an Eagle appeared and snatched the bird away. I thought; indeed, nature knows how to settle and bring all things to perfect end. I then wondered, *why do we stress and lose our peace in our efforts to take revenge on someone who wronged us?*

We think we know, but we don't. We think we understand, but we don't. We believe we have figured everything out, but we do not. I realize it is prudent, always to bear these facts in mind: We can only live in the 'now.' We cannot go back in time to the past, neither can we move forward into the future, but we can trust and rely on God who can.

There are bigger pictures, beyond our capacity, to understand. Given the above, does it not make sense to allow God to be God in our lives by letting go of things beyond our abilities to resolve? Does it make sense to spend time, energy, and emotions attracting enmity, sickness, and discord into our

lives without fixing the situation? Sadly, in most cases, those that hurt us hardly remember they did.

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

What could have become of the gospel St. Paul spread to the Gentiles if God had killed him after he authorized St. Stephen's death?

Again, the best closures for our situations often happen when we let go. At each of those moments, it appeared as if like magic we gained understanding and got the problem solved or it resolved itself. The situation may force us to discover and embrace our hidden talents and excel beyond our dreams. If so, doesn't it make sense to practice daily meditation on issues facing us, free of prejudice with faith that the Spirit of God will direct our steps and get it settled?

PRAYER: Psalm 7

### ***OUR DESPERATE NEED***

*Traveling through the country*

*I saw a sight that lured me into reflection*

*I roam the world*

*But am oblivious of masterpieces hidden in plain sight*

*Limitless land coated with trees*

*Wildflowers in their coats of many colors  
Wait endlessly to revive my wearing spirit  
Hurriedly, I've pursued what I want  
But have ignored what I need  
Fresh air and a place to dream and to wonder  
Oh! Nature, beautiful handiwork of God  
How you are inspiring, teaching and showcasing  
The magnificence of God  
Tell me more about Him and let me feel Him  
Purify me for His presence that I may sing and dance  
Like a child  
Teach me to understand and appreciate Him  
Tell me your story; how long have you been here?  
Oh! Nature  
Beautiful garden of my God  
Unlike humans, you obey God always  
Teach me the same for I know God loves me  
I need to obey and glorify Him.*





**A walk in the wild path**

# DAY 8

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord,  
“plans to prosper you and not to harm you,  
plans to give you hope and a future.”  
Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

“Through hard work, perseverance and a faith in God,  
you can live your dreams.”  
Ben Carson

## OUR HEARTS YEARN

**A**s a young lad, Joseph saw in a series of dreams that his brothers and his father would bow down to him.

His brothers became jealous. They beat him nearly to death and sold him to Egyptian slave masters. In their minds, Joseph’s dreams will never come to pass. Joseph walked to Egypt as a slave.

As things turned great for him at his new master's house, his master's wife tried to seduce him to commit adultery with her. When he refused, she lied on Joseph, which caused his

master to throw him into prison, where he remained for years without knowing how he would come out. But his ordeal did not cause him to abandon God. He stayed faithful even as his dreams seemed impossible to come true.

There in prison, he interpreted dreams for pharaoh's servants. He asked one of them, whose dream was favorable, to remember him when it came to pass, but pharaoh's servant forgot Joseph. Three years passed before he remembered him.

It happened that Pharaoh had a dream that greatly troubled him. It was Joseph who interpreted it for him. As a result, he made him a great leader second to only himself.

Thus, through obedience to God's commandments, even in adversity, Joseph lived to see God's promise to him fulfilled.

As humans, our hearts yearn to be heard, understood, and validated. Unfortunately, we seek fulfillment from the wrong places: family, faceless crowds, and foes, and we ignore God, who is the author and finisher of our lives.

We often work by sight instead of by faith, and we give up easily with the conclusion that our pursuit will never come to pass. Consequently, we end up with broken dreams, dashed relationships, and hope. If we recall, St. Monica prayed for St. Augustine for about forty years before God answered her prayer. As a result, both her and her son ended up becoming great saints of the Church.

It is therefore pertinent that we remember to wait on God if we failed to accomplish our desires on our timetables. Then,

like Joseph, we shall see our goals achieved no matter the number of people that scheme to kill or stop us. Like Saint Monica, we become Saints, including our family members for which we persistently pray to God for their conversion.

Thus, to fulfill our destiny, it is required that like Joseph, we live our lives trusting God and live by His Will no matter the circumstances we might find ourselves. Joseph could have easily slept with his master's wife, but he knew it was against God. He instead chose to suffer the wrath of his master's wife rather than offend God. Unlike Joseph, we cut corners and excuse our defiance. It gives me chills to think about what our disobedience to God's Will has stolen from us.

Therefore, there is no excuse to live in disobedience to the Will of God. We should bear in mind that whatever we experience is often allowed by God to purify, teach, or to lead us to the fulfillment of His purpose. Like Joseph, nothing that happens in our lives as Christians is an accident. Often, though, we suffer without succor because we disobey the voice of God that warned us against the danger.

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Joseph's experiences, although brutal, prepared him for the office as the second in command to Pharaoh. From his ordeal, he learned humility, wisdom, and to depend on God for his survival and sustenance. As a result, he executed his office well.

What about us? Are we filled with resentment because of what we suffered? Could we be where we are today without them? Did we miss God's blessings because we are still bitter about our experiences? Again, do we think that Monica and her son could have become Saints if God had answered her prayer sooner than later?

“It is in the quiet crucible of your personal private sufferings that your noblest dreams are born, and God's greatest gifts are given in compensation for what you've been through.” Wintley Phipps

PRAYER: Oh God! Help us. Heal us of our deep-rooted hurts and pains with which we are struggling, by the power of the death and resurrection of your son. With You, nothing shall be impossible. We pray in Jesus' Name!

Psalm 116

### ***MY VOW***

*Countless times I've vowed to do your Will*

*The next moment I forgot the vow I took in distress*

*From the depth of my being, I pray*

*God! Protect me in your pierced Sacred Heart*

*Where your fountain of unfathomable mercy*

*Will shield me for all eternity*

*Remind me, Lord, that all worldly pleasures are illusions  
That I may focus on You, the reason for my being*

# DAY 9

“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

Mark 8:36

“Oh, how senseless we are! The good God calls us to Him, and we fly from Him! He wishes to make us happy, and we will not have His happiness. He commands us to love Him, and we give our hearts to the devil. We employ in ruining ourselves the time He gives us to save our souls. We make war upon Him with the means He gave us to serve Him.”

Saint John Vianney

## SOLD HIS SOUL

**A**n incident happened in Onitsha, Nigeria, during one of the terrible gas shortages that the country sometimes witnesses. During that time,

transportation for people and goods stalled. As a result, virtually every activity in the country was shut down.

Owners of cars found themselves sleeping for days at the filling stations with the hope to buy gas. You could see cars queued for miles at gas stations.

One day, one man, out of desperation, approached a filling station owner and begged him, in the name of God, to sell a gallon of gas to him because he had urgent errands. What the owner said in reply shocked all the people standing by witnessing the drama.

According to many witnesses, the owner said to the man, "Don't mention God to me, for I asked Him to give me money, but he did not give me. I then went to Devil; he gave me."

Sadly, many years have passed since the man who made this statement died. The word of God said, "For the wage of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23

There are consequences for everything we do under the sun, whether good or bad. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruits. Thousands of years later, humanity still suffers because of it. We would have suffered forever, but God sacrificed His son, Jesus Christ to save us.

In our time, Satan is still bent on destroying us.

Jesus said: "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may



not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." Luke 22:31-32

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Is it possible to make heaven when all our actions and refusal to change our ways challenge God's justice? As we face trials, do we complain and reject God, or do we pray in recognition that we might be under siege by the power of darkness? We should remember that every trial challenges our faith in God and might steal our heavenly inheritance if we fall without repentance.

Again, what should we do about the evils of our world? Do we complain and gossip about them? Do we stand in the gap, and pray for our brothers and sisters who might perish if no one prays for their conversion, like Jesus prayed for Peter?

Moreover, is the man in the above story still enjoying the money now that he is dead? What has happened to his soul, and the money that Satan gave him? Do we gain or lose when we are in defiance of God?

PRAYER: Psalm 34

## ***I HAVE SINNED***

*Forgive me, Lord, for I have sinned  
I have done everything you said I shouldn't do  
I have become entangled with conformity  
Everything goes  
Thus, I swim in sin  
I've squandered the inheritance you gave me:  
Your grace, the precious blood of your son  
I've neglected my assignment  
To live for your glory  
And your commandment  
To make disciples of all nations  
Instead, I allow the world to make a disciple of me  
As a result, I lost you, my inheritance  
I have wondered about  
Like a madman without kin  
I have nothing but rags:  
Envy, jealousy, covetousness  
To cover my nakedness  
All my desires yielded emptiness  
Grief and damnation*

*For forty days and night  
I've wandered in the wilderness of sins and regrets  
Caused by self-pride and disobedience  
In my folly, I forgot that my days are numbered  
Like a gallon of milk, I have an expiration date  
Forgive me, Lord  
Do with me as you want  
Please never allow me to stray from you again*

# DAY 10

“As an eagle that stirs up her nest and flutters over her young, he spread abroad his wings, he took them, he bore them on his feathers. Yahweh alone led him.”

Deuteronomy 32:11-12

“I believe if you keep your faith, you keep your trust, you keep the right attitude, if you're grateful, you'll see God open up new doors.” Joel Osteen

## A BOY AND A KNIFE

**I** once watched a two-year-old boy as he made his way to grab a knife. His mother quickly removed and kept it beyond his reach. The boy threw himself on the floor, kicking the air and crying. The mother made attempts to distract him with toys, but he refused. However, when the mother started walking away, the boy got up and ran after her.

The boy, due to his age, has not developed enough intelligence to understand the danger involved with playing with a knife. His mother, therefore, did not make an attempt to communicate that to him. She only took the knife away. The boy was upset, yet, he still ran after his mother because he recognized beyond any reasonable doubt that his survival depends on the mother.

At that moment, I understood what Jesus Christ meant when He said, "Unless you turn and become as little children, you will in no way enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

Matthew 18:3

For some of us Christians, when God says 'no' or 'wait' to our petitions, we distance ourselves from God and move at all cost to secure what we want. We forget that God created us, loves us and that we depend on Him to be alive, and to attain our highest potential in life.

We simply guess at what we think we need because of our limitations as humans, but we lack perception of the imminent and future danger we might fall into if we succeed in our current pursuit. What will expose us to the risk of missing heaven? God knows, and He has proven His love for us by sacrificing His son Jesus Christ who gained salvation for us.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

When will it be time for us to reciprocate God's immense love for us, or are we not yet convinced that He loves us and would never forsake us? It is true that we face life's daunting trials. However, to overcome, we might need to make God's words the soundtrack of our lives and follow Him wherever He leads.

PRAYER: Psalm 136 and 24

***I BESEECH YOU, MY GOD***

*Lord, turn my fear to courage*

*My anger to peace*

*Frustration to fulfillment*

*Anxiety to expectation*

*For I'm swimming in a roller coaster*

*Of self-doubts, disappointments, and griefs*

*Lord I'll never let you go unless you bless me*

# DAY 11

“The thief only comes to steal, kill, and destroy. I came that they may have life and may have it abundantly.”

John 10:10

“Be sober and self-controlled. Be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, walks around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Withstand him steadfast in your faith, knowing that your brothers who are in the world are undergoing the same sufferings.” 1 Peter 5:8-9

## SCAMMED

**A**fter her education, one of my aunts secured a job. Later she was laid off. She tried hard to obtain another one, but it was difficult for her. She thus relied on people's goodwill, and she also did petty trading. But

what none of the family members knew was that she had a reasonable sum of money saved up in her bank account.

One day, a man met her and promised her an easy way to multiply her savings but warned her not to tell anyone. She agreed and did not tell anyone. Finally, she cleared her account and gave all the money to the man. Afterward, she could not reach the scammer because upon the receipt of her savings, the man disappeared.

She confessed what happened to the family and the police with hope to catch the man, but the man was never found. People were shocked that someone conned her. That incident was a terrible blow from which she never fully recovered until she died years later.

Today, we are bombarded with messages that offer thousands of dollars and other benefits for free. No sweat. Really? To various scams, many have lost nearly everything like my late aunt. Instead of a life of abundance, they now live in abject poverty and misery. Nothing good comes easy, as the saying goes.

So also, the Devil entices us with worldly pleasures and material wealth to abandon God. What we failed to remember is that he vowed to ensure we do not enter heaven, a place that was once his home. He hates us with a passion.

He once enticed Jesus Christ to bow down to him, that he would give him the material wealth of this world. But in the Devil's mind, he was scheming to steal the mission of Jesus



Christ and his inheritance, like he is doing to us today. Many people have fallen victim, but thank God, Jesus defeated him and crushed his head.

The word of God says, “My people perish due to lack of knowledge.”

As children of God, we often forget that we are at war with the Devil. What is at stake is our souls and eternal happiness. Thus, it is not wise to live in ignorance that Satan wants to offer us the material wealth of this world to steal our destiny, purpose, and our heavenly inheritance.

The word of God said in Revelation: “Therefore rejoice, heavens, and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil has gone down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time.” Revelation 12:12

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

What ways has the Devil used to wreak havoc in our lives without us being aware of it? Is it greed, unforgiveness, vindictiveness, and by living a life that feeds our selfishness?

Now maybe the time to turn from a life centered on self to a life focused on God and of service to others. Would we let Satan steal our inheritance and condemn us to eternal damnation?

PRAYER: Psalm 86

***HE IS ON MY SIDE***

*Living a just life is a huddle*

*A fierce fight*

*A mind drainer*

*To make the right choice is a pain in the neck*

*It causes me to feel*

*Like a baby denied of her mother's milk*

*Living above sin is a continuous warfare*

*That will end at death*

*Life's huddles pale when compared to Jesus Passion*

*With recourse to Him, one will regain strength to fight on*

*For Jesus is on our side*

# DAY 12

“Behold, a stairway set upon the earth, and its top reached to heaven. Behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it.”

Genesis 28:12

“No, I never saw an angel, but it is irrelevant whether I saw one or not. I feel their presence around me.”

Paulo Coelho

## TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL

**S**ome years back, I visited my late Spiritual Director, Rev. Father Itabor at his younger brother’s house in Abuja, Nigeria. During our conversation, he narrated how his brother encountered his Guardian Angel at Gwagwalada on the road to Abuja, the nation’s capital.

According to him, his brother's car broke down. He looked around; there was no building as far as he could see on both

sides of the road. It was on a deserted highway route. He tried to stop some commuters plying the road to get help, but they all sped past him. No one stopped to help. He was stranded. The night was fast approaching. At the time in question, mobile phones did not exist, so he had no phone to use to call for help. He knew he was in grave danger. He was terrified.

He said a desperate prayer for help. Shortly after his prayer, from nowhere, he saw a handsome young lad walking towards him, smiling. He wondered from where he appeared. As if hypnotized, he stayed and watched the lad. Without saying a word, the stranger went under his car, worked for a minute and stood up holding something that looked like a nut in his hand, and his hands were all covered with black grease.

When my Spiritual Director's brother started the engine, it responded. Filled with excitement, he offered the stranger money, but he waved it away. He also offered to give him water to wash his hands, but he refused, and right before his eyes the stranger disappeared.

Father's brother safely drove back to the city. As he traveled, he replayed the whole incident in his mind. Suddenly, he just knew that the lad was his Guardian Angel he had petitioned to God to allow him to see. He was happy, but he then wished he had touched the stranger.

I was intrigued that his brother's Angel helped him. For about three years by then, I had stopped saying prayers to my

Guardian Angel because I stopped believing in his ability to help me.

So that day, after my night prayer, while lying on my back in bed, with my hands behind my head, looking up to heaven, I said,

“God if you think that my Guardian Angel is important in my life, let him wake me up by 5:30 am in the morning to attend adoration before morning Mass.”

I mentally figured that I needed more time to get ready before heading out for Eucharistic adoration and Mass, so I added quickly,

“God please, let him wake me by 5:25 am.” Afterward, I slept off.

Sometime in my sleep, I felt a strong push to wake up. At that moment, I remembered my prayer. I just knew it must be my Guardian Angel waking me up. Still feeling drowsy, I wanted to sleep more. So, without opening my eyes, I said:

“Oh God, I know now that I need my Guardian Angel. Thanks for answering my prayer, but I need to sleep a little more.” I dozed off again.

After what seemed like a long while, I stirred, and I thought, *I have missed the Eucharistic Adoration*. In a panic that I had missed Mass too, I jumped out of bed. I turned on the light and checked the time. To my surprise, the clock showed precisely 5:25 am. It was not a minute more or less. I started screaming. Wait a minute; my Guardian Angel knows me

enough to wake me the way he did, ensuring I got up by 5:25 am. I was humbled.

Since then, I learned to trust and call upon my Guardian Angel as my trusted friend. Secondly, I know now that God hears and answers whatever we say to Him in a conversation. Since then my Guardian Angel has saved me in many difficult instances I called upon him for help.

The word of God said:

“Ask, and it will be given you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives. He who seeks finds. To him who knocks, it will be opened. Matthew 7:7-8.

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Have we ever prayed as such that we rose from prayer knowing, not just by faith, but deeply in our core that we have encountered God? Again, we stand to gain a lot if we have a personal relationship with God.

PRAYER: Oh God, I sincerely desire to have a personal relationship with You. Please reveal yourself to me in a way that I'll know it's you. More so father, may you also unveil my Guardian Angel to me in any manner you Will. Let me feel his or her presence. “Angel of God, my Guardian dear, to whom

His love commits me here, ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.” (Catholic Prayer)

Psalm 25

## ***GOD IS HERE***

*God is in everything and everyone*

*Look inward and around*

*He is in and around you*

*You are His prized possession*

*Call on Him; He will answer you*

*His Holy Angels guide and protect you*

*You don't need to search for Him*

*All things proclaim His beauty and wealth*

*Infinite, His vast domain*

*Everlasting, He reigns*

*He is faithful, merciful, and loving*

*He is a covenant keeping God*

*Look around*

*He is here, and He is love*

*His Love for you endures forever*

# DAY 13

“Because Yahweh loves you, and because he desires to keep the oath which he swore to your fathers, Yahweh has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Know therefore that Yahweh your God himself is God, the faithful God, who keeps covenant and lovingkindness with them who love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.” Deuteronomy 7:8-9

“The same everlasting Father who cares for you today will care for you tomorrow and every day. Either he will shield you from suffering or give you unfailing strength to bear it.

Be at peace then and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginings.”— Francis de Sales

## GOD’S FAITHFULNESS

**I**n meditation during one of our three-day yearly (fellowship) retreats at Camp Marymount in Fairview, Tennessee, like a movie, it played out to me, how I



rejected God's call many years back. In deep remorse, I asked God for forgiveness.

At the end of the retreat, I took my sister to Atlanta where she was to start her Master's degree program. In the morning, I woke up singing a song, one with lyrics that I did not know very well. But my friend, in whose home we stayed the night, knew the song, so she taught me. After that, I saw myself singing it endlessly.

That morning at Mass in meditation, it came to me that the song was God's way to assure me that He forgave me and to remind me of how endless His love and mercies are for humankind, if only we ask for it.

The song goes like this:

*The steadfastness of the Lord never ceases.*

*His mercy never comes to an end.*

*They are new every morning, new every morning*

*Great is thy faithfulness oh Lord, great is thy  
faithfulness.*

For sure, God's faithfulness is everlasting. His mercies never end. Even after that incident, I've fallen and gotten up many times. When we look around, we will witness God's faithfulness, manifesting: the breath we take, the sun shining during the day, the moon during the night, our reflexes, and abilities. God remains ever faithful even though we offend Him daily.

Like a good shepherd, God never gives up on us. He continually provides circumstances to cause each one of us to repent, acknowledge our sins without excuses, and come back to Him, as He called me back during the retreat.

A friend once said that doing God's Will is not fun. Many of us, like my friend, know what God requires of us, but our hearts have gone cold because we want to partake in worldly pleasure; we feel we are missing out because of our faith. Thus, we discard our beliefs like overused rags.

Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

In Romans 12:2 we are advised:

"Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God – what is good and well-pleasing and perfect."

King Saul, many times in the Old Testament, ignored God's revealed Will to him. When confronted, he always had an excuse. In the end, he lived in misery and lost His throne to David. Our forefathers, Adam and Eve, lost the right to the Garden of Eden.

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

If God is human, what do you think could have happened to us by now because of our disobedience and wickedness?

Is it not worth five or more minutes each night to recount our activities for the day and repent of our shortcomings? If we do thus, our faiths are bound to be renewed, our purpose revealed, and we might be able to live a life that pleases God like our forefathers in the faith.

PRAYER: Holy Spirit, grant us the grace to die to self and enkindle us to aspire to do Your Will always. May the love of God never depart from us in Jesus' Name. Psalm 123.

## OUR GOD

*The grandeur of God is beyond our comprehension*

*His strength transcends beyond the physical*

*In splendor, glory, and equity, He is robed*

*God is Supreme*

*Omnipotent, the Alpha and Omega*

*The Beginning and the End*

*God is Love*

*He gives life to all things and lives in all things*

*God is joy*

*His joy is absolute, amazingly perfect*

*He gives pleasure to those that love and obey Him*

*God is merciful*

*His mercy endures from age to age  
He preserves our souls from abyss  
God is life  
He wants you to live an abundant life  
Without Him, life is meaningless  
And nothing can exist outside him*

# DAY 14

“Let the greatest sinners place their trust in My mercy. They have the right before others to trust in the abyss of My mercy. My daughter, write about My mercy towards tormented souls. Souls that make an appeal to My mercy delight Me. To such souls, I grant even more graces than they ask. I cannot punish even the greatest sinner if he makes an appeal to My compassion, but on the contrary, I justify him in My unfathomable and inscrutable mercy. Before I come as a just judge, I first open wide the door of My mercy. He who refuses to pass through the door of My mercy must pass through the door of My justice...” (1146)

Dairy of St. Faustina

“Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.” Francis of Assisi

## MERCY OF GOD

**I**n the Bible, Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector, desperately wanted to see Jesus, but because he was short, he ran and climbed a Sycamore tree to see

Jesus who was passing that way. He did not mind that he was wealthy nor what people might say seeing him on top of the tree. Jesus Christ rewarded his efforts. He went to him and asked him to come down that He would dine with him that day in his house. However, this was disagreeable to others who regarded Zacchaeus as a sinner. The encounter changed him forever. He repented and made atonement for his sins. On the other hand, when Samuel confronted Saul for disobeying God, Saul chose to claim righteousness. Because of his unrepentant heart, God took the kingship away from him.

Many of us today, unlike Zacchaeus, run away from God because of our sins. We often forget that Jesus Christ spread His hands on the cross to accept us back.

The word of God said, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” Hosea 4:6.

Saint Paul said, “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who didn’t spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how would he not also with him freely give us all things? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns?” Romans 8:31-32

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

What are the areas of our lives our minds are pointing out for us to discard? The Creator of heaven and earth is asking us to

come back to him. What are we waiting for to answer Him?  
Time is running out before we might lose everything like  
King Saul.

PRAYER: Psalm 6.

### *GOD'S MERCY*

*God's Mercy is an incredible miracle*

*It's a gift that abounds in nature at every turn*

*Priceless!*

*It's in the air, sea, and land*

*When you seek and thirst for it*

*It will find you, and it will embrace you*

*You shall never be the same again*

*Jesus Christ is God's Mercy*

*If you seek Him, He will come to you*

*He is our Good Shepherd!*

# DAY 15

“The righteous cry, and Yahweh hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. Yahweh is near to those who have a broken heart and saves those who have a crushed spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but Yahweh delivers him out of them all.”

Psalm 34:17-19

“Pain is the precursor to change.”

-- Mel Gibson

## RESTORED

I stepped out of my home and looked up. Thrilled by the pictures well displayed in the sky, I took in a deep breath of fresh air, entered my car and drove to work. As I moved through traffic, many ordeals I've been through flashed through my mind, causing tears to sting my eyes: the loss of my mother, betrayals of trusted friends, and others. I cried out to God to restore and heal me because sadness like a



cloak covered me. To God's glory, He answered and restored me, and the clusters of pain I felt went away like mist in the first morning light. My joy was restored.

These days, as I go about my daily concerns, I see myself in others: strengths and weaknesses, flaws and goodness, failures and triumphs. I understand we are the same. I notice too that many of us fail to call upon God and wait on Him in adversity. I watched many put up tremendous efforts to resolve the issues facing them without recourse to God at the cost of their peace of mind. From experience, I have learned that pain is part of our reality.

“God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.” 1 Corinthians 10:13 (NIV)

More so, complete trust in God will always remove the pressure from us and help us focus on doing the best we can while resting assured that God will see us through to a victorious end.

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Right now, what are our worries? Will it not be better to tell God our concerns and ask Him to direct our part? Do we realize that our unique need may even be the reason why I wrote this book in the first place? There are no lengths God is

not willing to go to get our attention for the purpose of saving us.

Again, it is our responsibility to respond to graces God provides for us after we make our request in prayer. When in doubt, it's prudent to pray for clarification. Again, the enemy may steal our grace by causing us to doubt the message we may receive if we are not attuned to the Holy Spirit that resides inside us. Finally, it's necessary to remember that God's voice is always gentle, and He will never force His Will on us, but it is our job to submit to Him at our own free will.

Prayer: Psalm 103

#### HOW I WISH

*How I wish I have the right words to write about Him  
Oh, how I wish, I have the mind to comprehend Him  
My words are not enough to express what I deeply feel  
I yearn that my feelings for Him reveal themselves at will  
Oh! How I thirst to be a person that makes Him happy  
What I feel is too deep to be expressed with words  
I wish my love for Him shows in everything I do  
I ache to please Him every second and every moment  
Oh! How I wish one day I will love Him enough*

*That all who sees me will only be seeing Him  
My Creator and my God!  
Oh! How I wish*



“My soul glorifies the Lord, and my Spirit rejoices in God my Savior!” Luke 1:46-47

# DAY 16

“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of Yahweh, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.’ For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler, and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers.

Under his wings you will take refuge. His faithfulness is your shield and rampart.” Psalm 91:1-4

“Though I walk in the middle of trouble, you will revive me. You will stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies. Your right hand will save me...

Psalm 138:7

## PAID FOR MY COFFEE

**A**t 12:30 am, a few years ago, tired and exhausted after a whole day of training, I drove alone on a four-hour journey from Atlanta, Georgia to Antioch, Tennessee.

About two hours down the road, I suddenly woke up. Fear seized me, for I realized that I had dozed off while speeding at more than seventy miles per hour (112.654km). I did not allow myself to think about my fate if I had crashed. For that reason, I wiped my face, and frantically looked out for a rest area, but none was within sight.

I dozed off the second time. As I awakened, I realized then that my life was in danger since my effort to stay awake had failed again. I grew desperate, but soon after, I came to a rest area. I quickly went to buy coffee with my card, but the machine was not working. A stranger who witnessed my efforts paid for my coffee. I thanked her, but I knew that God who saved me from crashing when I dozed off was still looking out for me.

Outside in my car, I tried to sleep, but it eluded me. I rested, drank my coffee, and drove safely back to Antioch. With a grateful heart, I thank God for saving my life.

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Have we ever experienced a near death situation? Why did God spare our lives? Was it for us to continue in pursuit of material wealth, or could it be that God gave us more time to repent and accomplish our life's mission? Again, do we know our calling, or are we afraid of what people may say or the sacrifices that the assignment might demand? If we die now, what account are

we going to give of our lives in service to God? Does it not make sense to change today since tomorrow might be too late?

PRAYER: Psalm 128

*WITH ALL MY HEART*

*When will I behold your face?*

*To thank you for favors received?*

*My life stories testify*

*You rescue me in every crossroad*

*What could I have done without you?*

*Nothing!*

*Things have failed me:*

*Money, friends, health*

*But you Lord remains steadfast*

*You are all I ever wanted*

*My life is nothing without You*

*I pray Thee*

*Never refuse me your presence*

*Worldly comfort I offer in exchange*

*With all my heart, I implore Thee*

*Never forsake me, my Lord and my God!*

# DAY 17

“Don’t be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what is the good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of God.”

Romans 12:2

“You never see a U-Haul behind a hearse, Ryder.  
The Egyptians tried it. It doesn't work.  
You can't take the money with you.”

Denzel Washington

## CONFORMITY

**I**n a discussion about the evil that floods our modern time, a friend of my father shared a story. According to him, a young girl once lived in a neighborhood in Nigeria. On the same street lived a lady of means who owned flashy cars and wore costly outfits and accessories. The young girl openly admired her. As time passed, the lady befriended the

young girl. She gave her expensive gifts and took her to high-class events. The girl felt privileged. Her parents were against the relationship, and her friends warned her, but she ignored everyone and stopped hanging out with her former friends.

One day, the lady asked the young girl to accompany her to an event. However, instead of the lady driving to the place, she decidedly engaged the service of a taxi driver for the occasion. On the instruction and directive of the lady, the taxi driver took them to a location that was inside a bush far from the city.

Upon arrival, the lady asked the driver to wait outside in the cab; she then went into the compound with the girl. Shortly after, she came out alone with a large bag and asked the driver to take her home.

The driver, out of instinct, took the lady to a police station and told the police officers what happened. The police checked the woman's bag, and they found it loaded with money.

With the police, they went back to the location where the lady left the young girl. By the time they got there, the lady's partners in crime had already killed the girl. The police arrested the lady and her accomplices.

However, the girl perished because she ignored her parents' and friends' advice. Her attitude mirrored how most Christians behave. Many of us hear the word of God but refuse to live it out. Instead, we imitate the fashion, lifestyles, and behaviors of the people of the world. In the process, we disregard the moral principles which we promised God at



baptism that we would uphold. Consequently, we sin and expose ourselves to the danger of losing our souls forever.

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Does it make sense that we are Christians, but we live in disobedience to the Will of God...and because we desire to be accepted by the world, we invest all our abilities in the acquisition of earthly things, like the ungodly? We should remember what the word of God said,

“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, since I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” John 15:18-19.

PRAYER: Psalm 4

#### *LIKE A FLOWER*

*My God!*

*I love you more than ever*

*Whatever I do, I have recourse to you*

*You are everything*

*Like a flower, I'm open to you*

*Whatever ensue, Lord*

*Be always at hand to shield and guide me  
Else I fall into temptation and be lost*



Like a flower, I'm open to you and I pray thee for Mercy  
Oh Lord!

# DAY 18

Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your children here?”

He said, “There remains yet the youngest. Behold, he is keeping the sheep.” Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and get him, for we will not sit down until he comes here.” He sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with a handsome face and good appearance. Yahweh said, “Arise! Anoint him, for this is he.” Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the middle of his brothers. Then Yahweh’s Spirit came mightily on David from that day forward.”

1 Samuel 16:11-13

“Isn’t my word like fire? says Yahweh; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”

Jeremiah 23:29

## THEY DON'T COUNT

**T**here was a time when I was battling and praying to discover God's purpose for my life. After Mass one morning, I was inspired to visit the shrine of St. Francis of Assisi at our Parish. Within the shrine, I saw a

stone tablet with an inscription, “Bloom where God plants you.” After I read it, I immediately gained an understanding that I needed to be the best I could be where God planted me. The understanding took the pressure off me.

In the word of God, David bloomed as a shepherd. When his time came, God rejected all the sons of Jesse until his father brought him at the request of the Prophet Samuel.

As it happened, when Samuel came, it appeared that Jesse thought that David's presence during the occasion wasn't necessary, so he forgot to mention him. It also seemed that he favored his other sons over him for a reason not made known to us. But at the end, his father's preferences did not count because God chose David, and even called him a man after His own heart. Thus, nothing happened until David came.

For us Christians, we don't need to worry about where we are right now or people's opinions about us. We should focus on God and do what is possible where we are. When our time comes, like David, God will do the impossible. He will ensure that we receive what He ordained for us. All we need to do daily is to exercise our faith, carry out our duties to the best of our abilities, and trust God to do the impossible on His own time.

Furthermore, King Saul, out of jealousy, pursued David to kill him after he defeated Goliath in a battle. Saul was later killed in a battle. As a result, David was crowned king in his place as God ordained.

As Christians, we may not all be anointed a king like David. Nonetheless, God's will ensures that His plans for our lives are fulfilled no matter who or what tries to stop us, if we stay in faith.

Therefore, let us believe and trust God. He knows the time He has ordained for each of us to shine; however, when we go against God to bring about our glory, we may lose our inheritance like Saul lost his kingship to David, or like Adam and Eve lost the Garden of Eden.

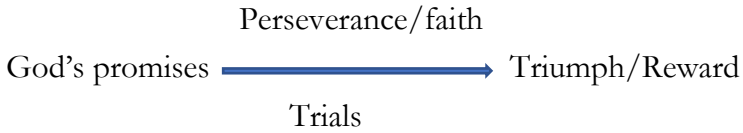
While we wait, like David, let's bloom where we find ourselves. Whatever our circumstances might be, God uses them to prepare and get us ready to manage what He planned to place in our care. Remember, God causes all things to work for good for all those who love Him. (Romans 8:28)

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

What if we resolve to spend at least 30 minutes, 5 days a week to find and to fine-tune our God-given talents? Can we imagine what could happen in a year to five or ten years' time if we remain focused? It might be something we love to do even without pay but can benefit others and like David whom God elevated from a Shepherd of sheep to a king of a great Nation, we too might be promoted by using and fine-tuning our talents.

Why don't we start our baby steps today?

## FORMULA TO RECEIVE GOD'S PROMISE



PRAYER: Psalm 143

### YOU ARE UNIQUE

*You came to Earth, armed with purpose  
You also came equipped with God's Spirit  
He will guide you through life if you let Him  
If you search within, you will find your purpose  
All trials are to sharpen you  
They help you discover your purpose  
Build on your strength  
Your weakness is to humble you  
Your deficiency is another person's strength  
Allowed by God for everyone to be appreciated  
When you respond to God's Spirit within you  
You will discover your unique gifts and purpose  
And you will enjoy heaven on earth.*



# DAY 19

“Don’t seek revenge yourselves, beloved, but give place to God’s wrath. For it is written, “Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay, says the Lord.”

Romans 12:19

“Trust in Yahweh with all your heart, and don’t lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Proverbs 3:5-6

## JUSTICE

A man was said to be fed up because of the injustice and evil that pervaded the world. He asked God to take his life. God instead invited him to meet by the stream. If, after the meeting, the man still wanted to give up his life, God would then grant him his request.

At the stream, God made him invisible inside a tree, but the man saw everything around him. Soon, a king came and



took his bath. When he finished, he forgot his bag of money and left. As soon as he was gone, a monkey came, picked up the bag of cash, emptied part of its content into the river, then dropped the bag on the ground, and jumped away.

Shortly after, a young lady came, saw the bag of money, took it, and went away. As soon as she left, a young man came to take a bath. By that time, the king has discovered that he left his bag of money by the stream. He rushed back to the river with his guards, but his money was gone. He seized the young man and accused him of stealing his money. The young man's denial and claims of innocence did not otherwise convince the king, so the king had him killed.

By that time, the invisible man has had enough. When everyone cleared, the man came out, both angry and sad. God smiled and explained that the money the monkey dropped into the stream represented the amount the king owed the church. The part the lady took was the amount the king owed her father. The father of the young man killed the king's father a few years back for no reason. The man asked God for forgiveness when he realized his error of judgment.

Our experiences, like the man in the story, are shrouded in mysteries. We witness injustices, and we judge God, but we fail to recognize that there is a lot we don't see, understand, or will ever know. Only God knows everything.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Why do we find it difficult to trust God in all things? Do we not understand that God is the best and the only real judge of humankind who possesses the power to right the wrong in a way none of us can? We should therefore not lose sleep in scheming our revenge. Rather, we should take the right steps necessary, and leave the rest to God.

Prayer: Psalm 94.

### ***THE PRESENCE OF GOD***

*I wait for your presence like a parched land waits for rain  
Like the watchman waits for the dawn  
Now you are here; I feel like a baby in her mother's breast  
My heart now sings like a bird at the first morning light  
Your love shields me  
Like a blanket that protects me against the cold  
Your love tastes like the nectar of the choicest flower  
Your presence has thrown me into ecstasy  
Like Peter, I say,  
"Lord, let's build tents here,  
One for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah!"*

# Day 20

“For my hand has made all these things, and so all these things came to be,” says Yahweh: ‘but to this man will I look, even to he who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at my word.’”

Isaiah 66:2

Jesus answered them, “Those who are healthy have no need for a physician, but those who are sick do. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Luke 5:31-32

## OUT OF ORDER

**A** few years ago, a friend was late to work, but she needed gas. In a hurry, she mistakenly put diesel fuel instead of unleaded gas in her car. Because

the car was made to run only on gas, it did not start when she turned on the ignition. She then hired a mechanic to restore the vehicle. By the time the mechanic finished, the day was half gone.

Apparently, the car could not run on any other fluid except gas as its original maker intended. Therefore, any other person's preference, opinion or circumstance didn't count. And if anyone handled the car any way other than as specified by the manufacturer, such person would be asking for a problem. But why would someone knowingly do that?

As Christians, we often live contrary to what God desires for our lives. Therefore, when we look around the world today, we will agree that humanity suffers because we have rebelled against God. Despite technological advancement, we are worse off than ever before. Evil rules. No one is safe; people kill others for no reason. Ailments that defile treatments are on the rise; rich and poor suffer from depression. Many of us are brokenhearted, captives, blinded, and crushed. We are out of order, like my friend's car. We, therefore, need restoration.

The word of God says, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

As Christians, it is our responsibilities to know and do God's Will. It makes sense to seek God as soon as we sin for Mercy

and restoration. That way, we will be empowered to live a better life. Like my friend engaged a mechanic in repairing her car to good order, we too may need to do the same after we stray.

PRAYER: Psalm 2

### ***ILLUMINATE***

*Stars are the jewelry of the sky  
They Sparkle and illuminate the night  
So are you, my Jesus  
Your love illuminates my life  
You are my star, the jewel of my life  
In struggles and Joy  
In crosses and victories  
Today and tomorrow  
You remain my light and my song  
My hand is in your hand forever!*

# DAY 21

“God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. There was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.”

Genesis 1:31

“The heavens declare the glory of God. The expanse shows his handiwork. Day after day, they pour out speech, and night after night, they display knowledge. There is no speech nor language.” Psalm 19:1-3

## LIFE IN MOTION

**O**ut in the woods, facing the clear sky, I spread my hands and spun around and around. I felt young, and I began to reflect on the memories of my childhood playtime. A bird flew over me and brought me back to the present. I looked around, and I saw lives in motion. I pondered on the greatness of our God, who made all that I saw possible for each of us to enjoy.

I watched the bees as they extract nectar from flowers. Like an army, the ants marched in and out of their hole. The butterflies, coated in their different colors, perched from one flower to the next. Further out in the woods, I saw a rabbit, cautiously trying not to become prey, gathered its food. Watching the busy animals attend to their concerns caused me to forget about time and to ponder the wonders of God.

A gush of wind blew on my face. I felt a strong sense of belonging and peace that I have not felt in a long time. I slipped off my shoes and walked barefooted. I felt connected to God. Peace like wine intoxicated me. Joy beyond the acquisition of material wealth became mine. For, at that moment, I knew I did not need to stress over anything. Everything belongs to God. As such, they belong to us too. Tears of contentment dropped from my eyes. Then, I thought, what peace we miss for not having time to experience nature.

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Do we often wander, free in the open, to be refreshed? Do we notice when a gush of wind blows on our face or when the birds chirp on and on? When was the last time we noted or felt the beatings of our hearts? In the above story, animals in the wild, like humans, were busy with each of their daily chores, but unlike us they gather as much as they need, and play. Again, do we respect life whether humans or animal with the

understanding that every living thing is the handiwork of God  
and like us has a mission to fulfill?

PRAYER: Psalm 148

### **WOUNDED HEART**

*Beaten by life, I took a walk into the wild  
Hoped for solace and distraction  
With head bowed low, I walked for a while  
I came into an opening and looked up  
A breathtaking sight I've never envisioned was before me  
Blooming trees, reflecting lights like Christmas trees  
Dazzled, I felt I was in a magical land of lights.  
Speechless, I gazed on  
Trees in their thousands extended beyond my view  
Mesmerized, I looked around  
Three birds, a step from me, were taking a bath in a pond  
I explored on  
The hills and the valleys dressed in cluster of trees and scrubs  
I looked up to the sky; its blueness radiated  
The clouds ornamented the sky in shapes of  
Angels, animals, humans,*



*Like a grain of sand, I exist between the infinite sky and land  
These imposingly engulfed me  
Chills of untold joy ran through me  
This awesome sight made my heart sing  
And my pains were gone  
Apparently, the love of God brought me here to heal me  
Oh! God, how can I ever repay you?  
How loving and caring you are even in silence  
Thank you for healing my wounded heart*

# DAY 22

“The meek man is not a human mouse afflicted with a sense of his own inferiority. Rather he may be in his moral life as bold as a lion and as strong as Samson; but he has stopped being fooled about himself. He has accepted God's estimate of his own life. He knows he is as weak and helpless as God has declared him to be, but paradoxically, he knows at the same time that he is in the sight of God of more importance than angels. In himself, nothing; in God, everything. That is his motto. He knows well that the world will never see him as God sees him and he has stopped caring.”

— A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*

“We are the Bibles the world is reading; we are the creeds the world is needing; we are the sermons the world is heeding.” ... Billy Graham

## SAVED FROM DEATH

**I**n Nigeria, Eric Okafor, my professional colleague went to board a commercial bus from Julius Berger Bus stop Wuse, Abuja to Dei-Dei, also in Abuja.

As he approached the bus that was loading passengers for the trip, he noticed a vacant seat in the front beside the driver. As he moved to occupy the seat, he felt someone behind him, shoving him away. He stepped aside and observed the man that pushed him, as he went and sat on the seat he intended to occupy. He then decided to sit on one of the empty seats in the rear of the bus. Then, he heard a voice that said, "Do not enter that vehicle." He stopped in his tracks and stepped down, for he knew it was the Spirit of God that spoke, so he obeyed.

The bus filled up and left. He then boarded the next bus. When it had enough passengers, they left the loading station. On their way, well into the journey, they came upon a scene of an accident. Upon closer look, he saw that the vehicle involved in the mishap was the first bus he could have entered. And the only person that died happened to be no other person than the man that shoved him away to sit in the front seat.

On learning that, goose bumps broke out all over his body, and his stomach fluttered. He wondered about many 'if's' and fear seized him for the rest of the journey. But he was thankful to God for sparing his life, and for warning him against traveling on that bus.

With this event, he learned that disobedience to God's Spirit could cost him his life. As a result, he now pays attention and acts on the promptings of the spirit more than ever before.

"I've benefited immensely from this resolve. Many events had proven beyond reasonable doubt that we stand to gain

when we obey God's promptings, even when it does not make sense” he concluded.

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Do we recognize when the Spirit of God ministers to us as we engage in spiritual exercises, or as we go about our business? Do we hear the gentle voice that usually asks us to do things contrary to our preference or ego? Many people attested that it was when they obeyed such voice that challenges them to do what they didn't want to do, that they found answers to their difficult questions and were raised way beyond their imagination.

PRAYER: Psalm 144

### ***WISDOM***

*Logically one talks soundly*

*Analyzes all perfectly*

*Obstacles tempt absolutely*

*One fails woefully*

*One's nothingness lay openly*

*God's grace saves mercifully*

*As one calls on Him helplessly  
His grace saves victoriously  
To call God in trials is true wisdom*

# DAY 23

“Blessed is the man who trusts in Yahweh, and whose trust Yahweh is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, who spreads out its roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat comes, but its leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”

Jeremiah 17:7-8.

“Behold, Yahweh has proclaimed to the end of the earth, ‘Say to the daughter of Zion, Behold, your salvation comes. Behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.’” Isaiah 62:11.

## HER TRIUMPH

**E**lizabeth experienced immense joy during and after the birth of her son, John the Baptist. A woman who was called barren became his mother, which foreshadows the birth of God's son, according

to God's plan. Thus, her years of shame as an object of scorn and gossip were forgotten. She instead became a person envied by others for her good fortune as the mother of John, a great prophet of God.

She gave birth at an old age, yet, today she is remembered while the women of her time are all forgotten. Her trial became her triumph. God's plan for her thus proved to be the best.

Again, with spiritual eyes, I could see St. Veronica as she made her way to wipe Jesus Christ's face. All around, people shouted hateful words against Jesus Christ. St. Veronica, oblivious of the crowd and the threats of the soldiers, pushed her way forward to help Jesus. She didn't care about the bodily harm that her actions might cause. However, she was successful in her efforts before the soldiers could stop her.

Fondly, she is remembered today as a good-hearted woman who, because of her great love for Jesus, braved the soldiers and showed Him love and mercy when others deserted Him. She thus became an icon of charity. This singular act of hers etched her name in history. Whenever we remember the passion of Jesus, we remember her. What happened to the names of the famous and celebrated achievers of her time? Your guess is as good as mine. It thus pays to do the work of God and to wait on God to exalt us at His own time if we do His Will.

Also, when we hear about the saints who lived before us we say that they are holy people; as a result, they became saints.

The above is equivalent to looking at persons at a gym doing so many pushups and lifting weights, and say they can lift weights because they are strong. But the truth is that they are strong because working out is what they do. And they do it on a regular basis, and that is why their bodies are toned and in shape. Therefore, if we strive to do the Will of God daily, eventually we will also be counted as friends of God.

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Could Elizabeth have received God's best if she didn't learn to persevere and had turned her back on God when she didn't conceive after many years of marriage? Is anything discouraging us from persevering until we see God's promises fulfilled in our lives? Do we see our lives as boring without excitement, recognition, or promotion? Could Elizabeth's, and St. Veronica's story give us hope in our current situation?

### ***BEFORE MY END***

*Passing time*

*Flow as you may*

*You have no power over me*

*I ceased to worry*

*God owns you*



*Surely, He'll give me  
Enough of you  
To accomplish my purpose on Earth  
Before my end*

# DAY 24

“Contend, Yahweh, with those who contend with me. Fight against those who fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler and stand up for my help. Brandish the spear and block those who pursue me. Tell my soul, ‘I am your salvation.’” Psalm 35:1-3.

“The greatest legacy one can pass on to one's children and grandchildren is not money or other material things accumulated in one's life, but rather a legacy of character and faith.”

Billy Graham

## A MAN OF INFLUENCE

**T**here once lived a man of means with influence. He was popularly known to amass wealth at every opportunity. He had about seven grown sons. It was a common belief that he wanted to leave a huge legacy for

his sons. According to the story, the man had many properties. He lived in one with his family and rented the rest. One day, the man disappeared. People asked questions, but his children cared less. Upon investigation, the police discovered the man's body in a fridge under the stairwell of his home. Further investigation revealed that his sons jointly killed and placed his body in the fridge. Without remorse, they moved about their business as if nothing happened. When interrogated, the man's sons claimed that their father was a mean man who deserved to die, so they killed him.

But many people wondered, could it be they eliminated their father to possess his wealth rather than wait for him to die of natural causes? While the man lived, he amassed wealth that he believed pleased his children, but in the end, they killed him because of it without regret. What a tragedy.

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

“Yes, my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted,  
who ate bread with me, has lifted up his heel against me.”

Psalm 41:9.

Who then can we completely trust, if not God?

PRAYER: Psalm 35

## ***TRAVELLED FAR***

*Sought to enjoy immense pleasure*

*I went far and wide by land and sea*

*Dined with nobles, men and women*

*Yet found no joy*

*Neither peace nor rest*

*Unto God's presence, I came to seek redemption*

*His peace like a cocoon enveloped me.*

*I knew then he was the pleasure that I seek*

# DAY 25

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” Isaiah 61:1.

“Whatever you will ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you will ask anything in my name, I will do it.”

John 14:13-14

## ANSWERED PRAYER

**A**t the Holy Rosary Catholic Church Nashville, a woman approached me as I was about to pray the “Stations of the Cross” before the Mass. Tears ran down her face as she embraced me. My hands voluntarily hugged her too. She was elderly with a lot of grey hairs.

“Please pray for my husband.” She said. “We have been married for sixty years. He is in the hospital, and he cannot breathe. The Doctor doesn’t think he can make it. He needs surgery, but the doctors said that if my husband did survive the surgery, he would have to be on a respirator, a breathing machine, for the rest of his life. And they needed me to sign the paper of consent if I want them to do the surgery. I don’t know what to do.” I saw more tears run down her face.

“What do you want?” I asked while I gently held her hands and gazed into her eyes.

I noticed flashes of surprise mirrored on her face as she looked back at me but said nothing.

“Do you realize you are in God's presence, and that Jesus is truly present here? Go and tell him what you want and forget what the doctor said,” I said.

She nodded, and we both walked to the tabernacle. I prayed in the spirit while she verbalized her prayers in front of the Eucharist. We both parted and went to our respective pews for Mass.

Before Mass began, my mind raced down memory lane, reliving my journey of faith and trust in God. I remembered numerous times with tears in my eyes; I would unburden my situations to Jesus in the Eucharist.

Many times, I've faced many challenges, but God saved me from them all. I was, therefore, confident that Jesus who answered me will also respond to her.

At the end of the Mass, the lady said, “When I got up to go for communion, I looked towards the tabernacle, and the sun was coming right through the glass door and shone directly on the tabernacle. From that, I knew that was my sign that God heard me. I now feel the peace I’ve not enjoyed for a long while now.” She said.

A week later, at the church, I met her again. She approached me. This time she was all smiles.

“My husband is home from the hospital. Thank God, and thank you for praying for me,” she said.

I thought, *Jesus Christ in the Eucharist never fails*. From my experience, I know that if it is not the time for us to receive what we seek, Jesus will grant us peace while we wait. It, therefore, pays to speak and to visit Jesus in the Tabernacle regularly.

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

When last did we go to God to present the storms in our lives as we would to our best friend? Did we go at the beginning or after everything failed? If not, would it not benefit us immensely if we start today to practice telling God our joy, concerns, and challenges, and ask him for help? It doesn’t matter how little or how big the issue might be.

“Come to me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest”. Matthew 11:28

PRAYER Read 1 Chronicles 16:23-31 and Psalm 103. We will live to testify of God’s goodness in our lives in Jesus’ Name!

## ***JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST***

*I prostrate myself In Your presence*

*Seeking healing and redemption*

*Adversity like a flood threatens to consume me*

*Trouble like a cloak covers me*

*No one cares for my life*

*Conscience condemns me*

*For my ways have been sinful and evil*

*Forgive me my sins oh! My Savior!*

*Deliver and set my heart on fire for You*

*To desire nothing but You*

*Heal my body and soul that I may be whole again*

*Grant me the grace to be faithful*

*Hide me in your Sacred Heart*

*Where no evil can penetrate*

*That I’ll be pure and blameless*



# DAY 26

Jesus "was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his garments became as white as the light. Behold,

Moses and Elijah appeared to them talking with Him.

Peter answered, and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you want, let's make three tents here: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

Matthew 17:2-4

"But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory.

Before him all the nations will be gathered, and he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Matthew 25:31-32

## THE PRICE

**B**ased on St. Peter's testimonies, can we imagine ourselves so transfigured? Or have we ever sat down to envision how it will feel if we are

all transfigured, and we can hang out with Jesus, Angels, and the saints in a heavenly banquet?

Peter, James, and John's glimpse of the transfiguration of Jesus is a tip of the iceberg of what awaits those who love and glorify God in their lives.

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” 1 Corinthians 2:9

Moses appearing with Elijah to discuss with Jesus Christ has proved beyond any reasonable doubt that there is life after death and that in heaven, God honors those who loved, and glorified him here on earth. In God's heart, there is room for everyone. He invites us to His feast to live in His presence forever, a place of endless joy, love, and understanding.

Heaven is real; so is Hell.

In Matthew 22:12-14, the king said, “Friend, how did you come in here not wearing wedding clothing?’ He was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and throw him into the outer darkness; there is where the weeping and grinding of teeth will be.’ For many are called, but few chosen.”

So, inferring from the above, there is a selection and elimination process. Thus, to qualify, we must clothe ourselves in righteousness, love, and follow God's commandment.

Jesus Christ said, “Enter in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and

many are those who enter in by it. How narrow is the gate, and restricted is the way that leads to life! Few are those who find it." Matthew 7:13-14

It is true that God wants to save everyone, but it is only those dressed in righteousness who will be saved.

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Whenever God calls us, it is to move us to the greatness we cannot attain on our own. There are bound to be hurdles we must struggle through to grow and to become who God wants us to become.

Now, what is preventing us from responding to God's call? Is there anything more important than allowing our creator to guide us to reach our highest potential, and to come into our inheritance? It's up to us to reject or accept the invitation.

Prayer: Psalm 62

***THE END***

*My God!*

*I believe and trust in you*

*Teach me your ways and truth*

*Guide me on uneven life terrain  
Else I perish  
My soul thirsts for you like a parched land  
I do not know my beginning  
Neither do I know my end  
But You do  
Lord, when my eyes close in death  
Be at hand to receive me  
“Into your hand, I commend my spirit”*

# DAY 27

“You are my hiding place. You will preserve me from trouble.  
You will surround me with songs of deliverance.”

Psalm 32:7

“But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you, and guard you  
from the evil one.” Thessalonians 3:3

## THE SHADOW OF DEATH

I closed my eyes as I prayed at the Grotto of Our Lady. Something forced me to look down. When I did, I saw two black ants aiming for one of my feet.

Quickly, I raised my leg to avoid their bite. I then watched them as they moved over my slippers. My first urge was to kill them, but on second thought, I spared their lives. As I watched, they moved freely about their business with no clue of imminent danger that could have ended their lives.

A cold shiver ran down my spine at the thought of ever being in such situation like the ants without my knowledge. And I prayed: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” Psalm 23:4

Apparently, we too go about freely, unaware of many times we would have lost everything including our lives, but God saved us. Thus, we move and plan our lives as if we are in control, but we are not.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Do we have the capacity to avoid or overcome every danger without God?

PRAYER: Psalm 91

### ***A BUSY BEE***

*I live in the chaos called life*

*Bills to pay, scores to settle, dreams to chase*

*I moved endlessly like a busy bee*

*Revealing lack of understanding*

*Believing in God notwithstanding*

*Then life hit so hard that I fell and kept falling*

*“Lord Jesus save me!” I cried  
He appeared with his outstretched hands  
I took them and gazed into His eyes  
His bleeding Heart drew me like a magnet  
Peace became my portion and was redeemed  
At last, my heart sings  
For within His heart I gain salvation  
Thank you, Lord Jesus!*

# DAY 28

“Yahweh knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile. Blessed is the man whom you discipline, Yah, and teach out of your law; that you may give him rest from the days of adversity.”

Psalm 94:11-13

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from where we also wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will change the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working by which he is able even to subject all things to himself.” Philippians 3:20-21

## ALL IS VANITY

**A**fter I visited a friend, we both came outside. Her one-year-old daughter, who was all smiles and playful, was also with us. While outside, I saw an



elderly lady as she stepped out of her car. Her hair was all white, and her skin all wrinkled. She carried some groceries. As she approached, I noticed that her steps were unsteady. She stopped when we greeted her. Noticeably, I saw her body was shaking while she stood. I assumed she was most likely in her eighties. My friend took the bags from her while they talked. My friend's one-year-old extended her hands towards the lady so that she could pick her up.

"I wish I could still do that," she said. We all laughed.

By this time, another lady joined us puffing a cigarette. She talked with the elderly lady for a while. I wanted to leave then, but my friend asked me to wait. Together with my friend, the older lady entered the apartment block.

At this point, I tried to keep some distance from the lady smoker because I do not like cigarettes. But I noticed that as I walked away, the lady was walking towards me. Before I knew it, she closed the gap between us.

"She had just lost her son last week," she said, pointing at the elderly lady as she closed the door behind her and my friend.

"She lost him to cancer," she said.

I looked at her and wondered why she still smoked. I wanted to ask if the man that died was a smoker, but I changed my mind.

"She had four kids, and two are now dead. She is not herself anymore. Who would be?" she asked, puffing her cigarettes.

What she said triggered my memory. I recalled some of my dreams of what I wanted my life to be, that never came to pass

as I planned. I then wondered what would have been the elderly lady's dream before she had her children. But I knew for a fact that she never dreamt she would be the one to bury any of her children. And today she has buried two of them. I wondered about her feelings, and on what goes through her mind now? It must have affected her view of life when compared to what it was while she was growing up. Then I thought, how would my story end? What of the one-year-old, and those yet to be born? Only time will tell.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT:**

Do we know how our stories will end?

PRAYER: Psalm 38 and 150

***HE STILL BLEEDS***

*Gazed upon the crucifix while kneeling in prayer*

*My mind traveled beyond the presence*

*I saw myself in time when they nailed Jesus to the cross*

*I witnessed the commotion; then I saw the crowd jeer at Him*

*Then I saw Jesus all bloody as he laid on the*

*Cross and mourned while they nailed His hands and His feet*

*The hammering sound was louder than the jeers of the Jews  
My heart crushed within me  
Tears came running down my face  
Oh! How dearly Jesus paid for your sins and mine  
“Why? Lord Jesus why?”  
I asked Him as I watched his broken body on the cross  
Few minutes passed  
He then turned his head towards me  
His eyes pierce my soul and he said  
Cry for yourself and your generation least you all perish  
Strife that this suffering of mine will not be in vain  
Right now, humanity is heading towards perdition.*

# DAY 29

“I love you, Yahweh, my strength. Yahweh is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower.

I call on Yahweh, who is worthy to be praised; and I am saved from my enemies.”

Psalm 18:1-3

“So, you will ask me, who then are the people most tempted? They are these, my friends; note them carefully. The people most tempted are those who are ready, with the grace of God, to sacrifice everything for the salvation of their poor souls, who renounce all those things which most people eagerly seek. It is not one devil only who tempts them, but millions seek to entrap them.” Saint John Vianney

## DELIVERANCE

**A** woman with her husband, in Nigeria, visited their country home. One day, the wife was upstairs eating while the man was working in the

backyard. He looked up and saw a lady, who was his wife's relative, passing by, but she did not see him. He hurried up with what he was doing to meet and greet their visitor. As he got upstairs, he saw his wife on the floor almost lifeless, with eyes that had already turned white. And the visitor was nowhere to be found. He looked through the window and saw the lady walking away. He called after her, but she ignored him and rushed out of the gate. He tried lifting his wife, but she was too heavy for him. Unfortunately, there was nobody in sight to help him. Out of desperation, he cried out to God to save his wife. He reminded God of what they have been through, and how He had helped them in the past. He told God it would be impossible for him, alone, to take care of their nine children if He let his wife die? A minute or two into his prayer, while making efforts to lift his wife to a seating position, his wife vomited a dark, foul-smelling substance that formed a pool on the floor. After vomiting, the wife gradually regained consciousness. She asked for the lady that visited; the husband told her she was gone. The woman said, "But she was here a minute before everything went blank for me."

Until this day, the man is still grateful to God for saving his wife. Strangely, the lady avoided the couple, and they never confronted her before she died a few years later.

Jesus said, "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28: 20.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Who do we call upon first in our difficult situations? What could have happened if the man, out of panic, forgot to call on God for help? Do we lose faith in the face of circumstances that seem hopeless, or do we call upon God in faith for help?

PRAYER: Our Jesus, we know only you can change every situation. Come to our aid and turn our lives around. Like a parched land waiting for rain, we wait on you to save us. Come and walk in our every situation as you walked on the street of Galilee, healing the sick, raising the dead, and fighting every battle. Jesus, we trust in you! Psalm 104

***LORD JESUS***

*You Knew you will die horribly on the cross*

*Yet you came to this sinful world to save us*

*To the jeers and mockery of those you healed, fed and empowered*

*Words elude me.*

*At times, the profession of love for you feels empty*

*With knowledge I've not kept your commandment.*

*When I consider your Divinity*

*Yet You became poor that I may become a child of God!  
Your agony in the garden, scourging at the pillar,  
crowning with the thorns  
The carrying of the cross, the strip of your garment  
Your crucifixion and death on the cross  
Words evade me  
Now gazing on you exposed as the Bread of Life  
Still loving us despite our unworthiness  
I pray you Lord, makes all hearts to burn with love for You*

# DAY 30

“In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord.”

Proverbs 3:6-7

“It is not hard to obey when we love the one whom we obey.”

St. Ignatius of Loyola

## PURPOSE-DRIVEN LIFE

I was at a discount store looking for bargains on the items that I needed. I looked down, and I saw a hardcover book carelessly lying on the floor.

There was no inscription on it to draw my attention, but I felt a strong urge to pick it up. But I said to myself, “I have a lot of books that I have purchased that I have not read, why buy another one.”



I took about three steps away from the book, but the urge was too strong for me, so I went and picked up the book. I scanned the pages, shrugged, and went and paid for it.

When I got home, at my free time, I started to read the book, and I was hooked. I needed to hear what the book said. I meditated on it throughout the Lenten season of that period, which began after about two days. I got the book. I told all my friends and acquaintances about it. To my surprise, most of them know about the book.

The book is "Purpose-Driven Life" by Ricky Warren.

Before the Holy Spirit directed me to the book, I had neither heard of Rick, nor the book. I was so grateful to God for leading me to the book. If you have not read the book, I recommend you do so.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Do we recognize the voice of God when He speaks to us in our busy lives, or obey Him when He interrupts our plans?

PRAYER: Psalm 149

***DON'T WANT TO LOSE YOU***

*I sit and ponder*

*Whose plan to spend my life on, mine or God's?*

128 | Page

*Which will pay me more?  
My mind zigzagged back and forth  
Wondered, how much choice do I have?  
Is it prudent to live on my terms?  
Or to live a life within God's Will?  
What's the essence of being alive?  
Am I on earth on my own accord?  
Or am I here because God created me to do his will?  
Deep down I know the truth  
So, I pray  
Set forth your Spirit upon me, oh Lord  
Free me from the darkness of self-will  
Else it sever me from you  
I don't want to lose you*

# CONCLUSION

## Hold onto God no matter what!

**I**n a video, I watched an African elephant giving birth. The baby came out motionless. Repeatedly, the mother kicked and nudged her baby with her legs. Slowly, the calf stirred and cried out. The mother continued to help and support the wobbling newborn to stand on his own and to gain balance. The elephant did that to help the calf to live, claim his nature, and thereby protect it against the predators in the wild.

So too, the challenges we face are God's way of shaking us up to claim our nature as His sons and daughters and be equipped to handle any hurdles that might confront us in our lives.

David faced Goliath, Joshua commanded the sun, and Elijah called down fire from Heaven. These three saints spend time in God's presence. As a result, they overcame so many daunting obstacles and were victorious over their lives' challenges.

In our time, Pope John Paul II was firm in establishing moral justice, and he dedicated his life to the cause of peace and harmony in the world. Mother Angelica opened the biggest Christian television network, and St. Padre Pio attracted thousands of people from all over the world to his hidden monastery while living within the confine of his monastery.

While the saints lived, they prayed, worked, and were patient with God. Their lives attested to the Glory of God, and His power was mightily displayed through them.

The next phase is for us to allow God to work through us without being frustrated by the unpleasant things in our world. It is about time we consider submitting ourselves to God's wisdom and the process He employs to equip us to take on His assignment. Living as such is a sure way we can each live a fulfilled life.

Trusting in God, obviously, is non-negotiable. So, it is necessary that we create time to know Him intimately. He is waiting for us. We only begin with hearts thirsting for God, and He will do the rest by guiding us to discover and to fulfill our purpose.

Finally, the three enemies that might stop us if we are not mindful of them are self-love, material wealth, and fear. May God bless each one of us in time and eternity through Jesus Christ our Lord!

# **NOTE**

Unless otherwise stated, all Bible quotations are taken from World English Bible (WEB) by Public Domain.

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## **WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU**

Did you have an encounter while or after reading this book? What was your experience? Do you mind sharing it? It will be great if you can. Your shared stories will help uplift and encourage others in their spiritual journey. Remember, one's legacy is every life one touches! And God will bless you abundantly for that.

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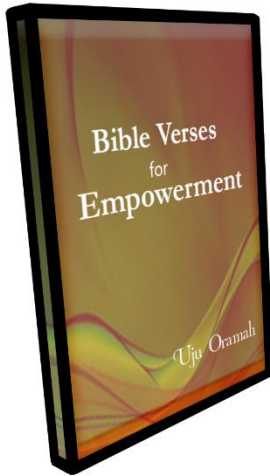
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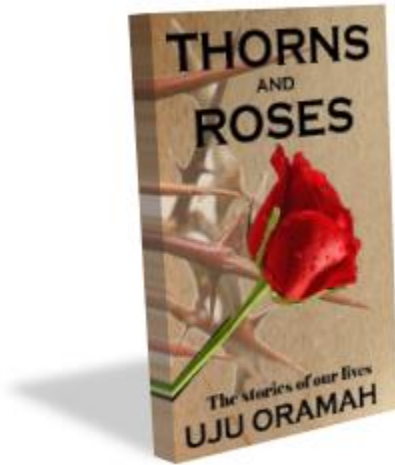


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