

THE NEWFOUNDLAND FOUNDATION, INC.

THE TRUE WORSHIP MAGAZINE

Volume 1, Issue 10

December 2020



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THE NEWFOUNDLAND FOUNDATION INC.
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THE MARRIAGE ENHANCEMENT CONFERENCE

A BEAUTIFUL LOVE STORY

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Key Speaker:
Dr. Mfon Cyrus-David, MBBS,
MS.,
Sugar Land, TX.

Also Speaking:
Dr. Faith Atai, MD.
Sugar Land, TX.

**Love is demanding, yet truly
fulfilling. Come and discover,
rekindle or enhance the love in
your marriage.**

Joyful Forbearance

Ashley and John were newlyweds. They were young and deeply in love. As one would expect with any young love, things were still in the spontaneous phase, where one just gravitates towards the other, and in turn, the other assumes that what he or she wants would be just okay for the partner. However, as we all know, this was not the case, for soon the differences emerged, and the spats broke out. That was when she discovered that he had a bad temper, and at that a violent one. And, he on the other hand discovered that she had an untamed and often very disrespectful tongue. There were times, she would finish speaking, and he would feel like a dumb loser, which made him very angry and often bitter towards her. Then came the unfortunate day, the day of trouble, the day that she put him in a dumpster verbally; and he determined that he was going to get some respect from her, she was going to know that he is the husband in that house. He took hold of her, twisted her arm, and gave her a very dirty slap that left her ears ringing. Since, this was not the first violent episode, but the most hurtful, she knew that she had to do something. So, she picked the phone and dialed 911, as she called the cops. To his utter shock, strangers were coming to his house, because his beloved wife had called them in. Before he knew it, he, the cherished and loved son of Margaret and Ben Dunkley was heading for the county jail. He thought to himself, "I have never been in trouble with the law, and here I am going to jail. I can't believe that Ashley did this to me; she has sent me to jail!" To cut the long story short, by the time they had processed him into a holding tank, where he spent the night with less than savory characters, something snapped within him, and he knew that he would never return to her again. Thus, the very young and promising love died, as he tearfully called his parents to come for him in the morning. He could never come to terms with the fact that the

woman he loved, and planned to spend the rest of his live with, had placed him in a place that he never thought that he would be in life. He was done.

So, one may ask, "What went wrong here?" The truth is that they were unprepared for love's journey, in that no one has just the attributes that the other prefers; because we go into these relationships with the best and the worst parts of us. Thus, the spontaneity of infatuation has to give way to the deliberateness required by the practical demands of living with and loving someone; in spite of the good, the bad, and the ugly parts of them. What did Ashley and John miss? They did not anticipate each other's character flaws, and reacted selfishly and destructively when these came to the sur-

"Fostering a boundaryless relationship where one is either being abused or is codependent is not being forbearing."

face. It is pertinent to bear in mind that Ashley's foul mouth would have ruined John eventually, as the words of a partner can discourage or diminish, as well as encourage and enhance a person. On the other hand, his violent temper, would have either maimed or killed her down the pike, as has been the case with many. She could have called a friend and stepped out of that house, and insisted that she would only return when an amicable solution had been found for the violent engagements. Then, she would have made a counseling appointment, where a trained counselor would have helped them to walk through their problems. This would have been his opportunity to air his views about her foul and destructive tongue, and he would have been



Forbearance is not just zipping up; rather, it is having peace and a constructive plan of action.

heard. Putting it simply, they both failed to forbear with each other, and this led to the death of their relationship.

Forbearance is the act of refraining from the enforcement of something (such as a debt, right, or obligation) that is due. It is a painful process, in that one has the option of exacting the toll that is due, rejecting a request, or simply retaliating when offended; but chooses to take the path of forgiveness, compassion, patience, understanding and empathy. One is long-suffering when one chooses to accommodate one's partner when he or she makes a demand that is less than convenient. Furthermore, the use of constructive strategies to establish the boundaries of what is tolerable is also being forbearing. However, fostering a boundaryless relationship where one is either being abused or is codependent is not being forbearing. With the latter, one partner has the habit of faltering, knowing fully well that he or



Slavery is different from forbearance, in that one has no choice.

Joyful Forbearance

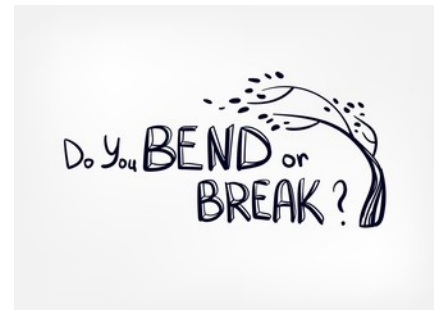
she would be picked up by the other partner. And, the other partner draws his or her relevance by stepping in to clean up the other's messes; thus, both cling to each other for comfort. With the former, one spouse takes advantage of the other, hurts or mistreats, while the other suffers in silence or does nothing tangible to stop the abuse. With forbearance, one has control, but takes the most loving and constructive path towards solving the problem. There are plans in place, the issues are identified and are being addressed hopefully, in a strategically sound manner, with clearly defined outcomes. Then comes the questions, "why bother with a difficult relationship?" "Why not just move on and look for a more compatible person?" I'll address this next.

If Ashley and John in our story were told that they were incompatible, they would have rebuffed that assertion with disdain. However, time would have proven to them how true this was. The truth is that while a typical married couple has baseline compatibility, which is often why they got married in the first place; compatibility is something that one creates, as no one is completely known at first, nor stays the same thereafter. There are bound to be significant discoveries in people's backgrounds, and life-altering events down the road, which would necessitate making some adjustments in order to foster relational competence. Thus, our imperfections, misperceptions and reactions to such, the natural disasters and pestilences that challenge our basic existence, and above all, the fact that we truly need each other, all culminate in the need to learn to forbear. One cannot truly love if one steps out of a marriage once the demands are more than they initially anticipated. Marriage was designed to be a lifelong walk with the other person, through the seasons and changes of life; and the certainty of being successful is through the

troughs of forbearance. Forbearance says through the wife of the deployed soldier, "I am here, and when you return, I will be waiting." Forbearance is the bedrock of selfless love—agape love, God's kind of love. And, no marriage can be successful without forbearance. Forbearing love allows a spouse to fumble and then recover; pass through an identity crisis, and the other spouse is still there lovingly; it is that deprived spouse, who still sends out soft words, and welcomes you home with a warm smile and a big hug; it is love in action. One cannot help but wonder, "If forbearance is not abuse, then one is just paying for an ongoing relationship." While, this thought may sound true, yet, it is not; in that something vital, great and wonderful happens while one is forbearing. Let's explore that next.

"Marriage was designed to be a lifelong walk with the other person, through the seasons and changes of life; and the certainty of being successful is through the troughs of forbearance."

So, what other things happen when one is forbearing with an unpalatable situation? One changes. It is much like a man who is forced to perform manual labor, with tons of rocks to crush with just a sledge hammer. Often, he would curse the day that he was brought into such an abusive situation. Yet, as he pounds the rocks to bits, day after day, with no evidence of a significant event in his future, other things are happening that he may not be aware of; often, other very important if not life-saving things. His musculature develops, his heart rate drops, and he finds that he breathes less heavily in stressful situations, and later on, during his physical



To bend is to be malleable and resilient; but to break is to be obstinate and brittle.

check-up, he is told that he has the blood pressure of a teenager. While he was psychologically stressed-out during the tumultuous period of his life, he was being physically conditioned to live a much longer and healthier life. This is how forbearance works for us in all the dimensions of our existence (see Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4 below).

Romans 5:3-5 (NKJV)

³ *And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;*
⁴ *and perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

⁵ *Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*



God's plan is to raise a dauntless generation. One wonders, "why not through marriage?"

Joyful Forbearance

Matrimonial bliss will remain a pipe dream so long as we fail the test of forbearance. This is because, the state that fosters having matrimonial bliss can only be acquired or attained through the changes that forbearance brings. This is why Paul the apostle encouraged the Roman believers to embrace the tribulations that came their way. If one casts his or her mind back, it would become clear that the Roman believers were in the dragon's pit (i.e. in Rome), where the Christian-hating Caesars reigned. This is where Peter was killed, and many were burned at the stakes. Thus, in order to be a thriving Christian, one had to face and endure persecutions. However, they were not persecuted so that God would have some fun as He watched them; they were to pass through these trials, and be transformed, so that they would be better suited to walk in partnership with the infinite, omnipotent, omniscient God. Therefore, Paul exhorted them to "glory in tribulation." There is no way that one can embrace tribulations except one knows the purpose and the benefits of such experiences. The truth is that tribulations provide stresses, which induce the need to endure, and this process causes one to be stretched, and as such to gain tensile strength. The latter shows up as character, which is the ability to act appropriately even when seriously provoked. No wonder, King Solomon stated in Proverbs 16:32, that a man who can demonstrate self-control is greater than a mighty warrior who sacks a city. However, it does not stop here, in that when one has godly character, then one gets to walk in sync with God, who has the ability to do all things; and is sure to bring to pass all of His promises—the basis of our expectations in Him. This is also alluded to in James 1:2-4 below.

James 1:2-4 (NKJV)

² My brethren, **count it all joy when you fall into various trials,**

³ knowing that the **testing of your faith produces patience.**

⁴ **But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.**

Beyond God, what else does one need in marriage, but a thoughtful, sensitive, mature, and deliberate spouse. All sorts of things will happen in life while one is married; but with God and a wholesome partner, one is sure to get through these events. Thus, in the passage above James tells us that the trials work to generate a very high level of maturity that leaves us as competent and reliable servants of the cross and of each other. If the Almighty God needs one to change in order to walk with Him, how much more a finite spouse? Forbearance will cause one to acquire reverent submission to God's will; to learn to pray fervent prayers; to be thoroughly sanctified, and as such to die to this world; to grow to maturity, and become the fully manifested

"At a personal level, one's spirit would grow, and become more mature; one's soul would become tamed and better aligned with the Holy Spirit, and this would show up in the form of a very mature character."

son or daughter of God. At a personal level, one's spirit would grow, and become more mature; one's soul would become tamed and better aligned with the Holy Spirit, and this would show up in the form of a very mature character. These translate into wholeness, and one becomes a more pleasant person to have around, which would in turn foster matrimonial wellness. The impact of forbearance on one's spouse can also be phenomenal, as alluded to by Peter the apostle in 1 Peter 3:1-4 below.

1 Peter 3:1-4 (NKJV)

¹ Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the



A light house is not only strong, but it guides many a ship to a safe harbor.

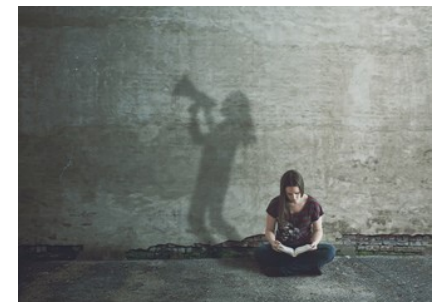
conduct of their wives,

² when they observe your **chaste conduct accompanied by fear.**

³ Do not let your adornment be merely outward--arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel--

⁴ rather let it be the **hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.**

The apostle exhorted the wives who were faced with the stresses of submitting to their unbelieving husbands (who often mistreated them), to allow the radiance of their inner beauty to shine upon their husbands in such a way that it would transform them; and this without having to complain or quarrel. This inner beauty of Christlikeness will radiate on one's children, friends, and other relatives, and as such, providing them with a role model; one would become a case in point of how the meek inherit what others strove for and lost; and to the world at large, one would become a



Silent words.

Joyful Forbearance

sign post on the way of how to manage one's affairs or larger responsibilities. However, forbearance is long-suffering, and suffering is not only unpleasant, but enduring suffering for long is easier said than done. So, how does one succeed at forbearance?

The secret to successful forbearance in marriage is to understand that marriage was not meant to be just between the spouses, but was to be with God as the senior partner. Without the help of Jesus Christ, human love fails, and spouses cease to forbear with each other. When a marriage is characterized by frequent quarrels, abusiveness, and bitterness, then, forbearance has failed (see Hebrews 12:14-15 below).

Hebrews 12:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ **Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:**

¹⁵ **looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;**

In the passage above, one is encouraged to search for peace and to stay holy, as these are required for true and acceptable worship. It goes further to indicate that the failure to achieve these attributes shows that one is not in sync with God, and is at risk of becoming not just defiled as a person, but to cause others, such as the spouse, the children, friends and other associates to be defiled. Bitterness is pathognomonic of a failed attempt to forbear, and if allowed to fester can lead to raw hatred, betrayal, divorce, and even homicide. No wonder a marriage can start off full of love, and then ends up with the spouses hating each other. The long and short of it is that forbearance needs help, the help of the Holy Spirit. In the time of tribulation, one needs faith, the faith that tells one that all is well; one needs hope, the sure hope that all that God has promised will come

to pass, therefore, one can plow on; one needs love, the love for God that gives us the motivation to tow His line, and also the love for one's spouse, that ensures that what one does is for the right reason, and the betterment of all. However, during trying times, right in the midst of the peril, often one gets weary; this is when the joy of the Lord springs in, for the joy of the Lord is truly our strength (see Nehemiah 8:10; 1 Peter 1:8-9 below).

Nehemiah 8:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ **Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our LORD. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."**

1 Peter 1:8-9 (KJV)

⁸ **Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:**
⁹ **Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.**

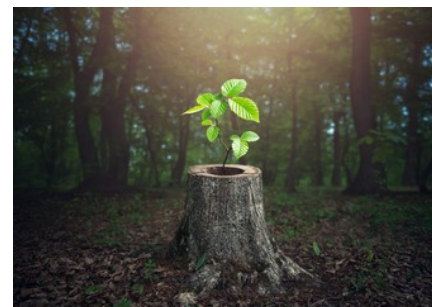
"When others expect us to collapse, fold up and quit from the fight, we raise the songs of the high praises of God, and rejoin the fight in earnest."

Joy is the feeling of pleasure and happiness. However, natural joy comes from positive events (i.e., perceived or real). Thus, in difficult times, all that one gets is sadness and one may even become depressed. However, we thank God for the joy that comes from His



Joy unspeakable and full of glory. This is the joy of trusting in God.

Spirit, the joy that is not dependent on natural events, but is the outflow of His person—the joy that truly strengthens us. This joy makes us as believers unbreakable, as we surge forward in the midst of our trials. When others expect us to collapse, fold up and quit from the fight, we raise the songs of the high praises of God, and rejoin the fight in earnest. It is "joy unspeakable!" It is like running the gauntlet, and all that can go wrong happens; yet, if one leans on Him in prayer and praise, one is lifted up far above one's troubles, and soon one can stand at the end of the struggle, with the victory at hand. If all one did during a trial was to suffer, then forbearance would be like serving a lifelong jail sentence in solitary confinement. However, this is not the case, because He also comforts us (see 2 Corinthians 7:4; 1 Corinthians 10:13 below).



Forbearance is founded on hope, a hope that does not disappoint.

Joyful Forbearance

2 Corinthians 7:4 (NKJV)

⁴Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NKJV)

¹³No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

“Above all, they knew that all problems must come to an end, and as such they would only be allowed to face what they could endure, as relief was sure to come—true forbearance.”

In the midst of their trials, the warm embrace of the Holy Spirit brought deep comfort to Paul and the other servants of Christ; the word of God reminded them of God’s unfailing promises, thus renewing hope; the certainty of God’s unfailing love, ensured that their suffering was not without their personal benefits, and would surely bring abundant blessings to many, thus, they stayed strong. Above all, they knew that all problems must come to an end, and as such they would only be allowed to face what they could endure, as relief was sure to come—true forbearance.

One may say, “This is all well and good, but I can’t take it any longer, I just can’t.” However, God’s word says that you can. What one needs to do is to have an honest conversation with the Holy Spirit and pour out one’s soul to Him. Tell Him that you feel inadequate, and can go no further, but do desire to do His will. He will empower you, comfort and uplift you, such that you will have the ability to take just the next step, the step of faith and obedience, the only step that one needs to ever



When you think that you can go no further, get help.

take—the step of victory. Eventually, one will achieve a higher level of maturity, spiritually, emotionally, and cognitively, as one would have a better knowledge and understanding of life, people, and God’s plans. Beyond these, would be the increased tensile strength, and a greater level of effectiveness. Love strong.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Mfon Cyrus-David is a preacher and teacher of God’s word.

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Can A Rich Person Go to Heaven?

The rich young ruler was a truth seeker. He was raised in a devout family, where he had learned to obey God's commandment. Thus, meeting with Jesus, he could not but be curious about what he had to do to meet the standards of this new spiritual upsurge of his Jewish faith (see Matthew 19:16-30). First, in view of the fact that he had been keeping God's commandments from birth, he was taken aback by the fact that Christ had reservations because he dared to call a gifted rabbi a good person. Christ pointed him to the limitations of the rudimentary worship of God, where the sins of men were atoned for by the blood of bulls and goats, which did nothing more than just cover them, for there was no permanent cleansing. So, he learned that essentially, being devout did not make him a good man before God, because no man was good until Calvary. Second, the bombshell was still to come, in that he was to find out that his righteousness was at the surface, for he had little awareness of the betrayal of his heart. After, he had enumerated his achievement by the law, which for all intents and purposes were true, he was asked to shoot for perfection, maturity, or depth, by giving all to his God—he was asked for his life. This turned out not to be his body, nor his gifts or talents, but his riches. His riches were his life, his world, his everything. Our rich young ruler was not as devout as he might have appeared, for he was an idol worshipper, he worshipped money. He did what was convenient; he gave to the poor and kept God's commandment; but his heart was elsewhere, his heart was where his treasures were—his riches. No wonder he walked away sorrowfully, because he came face-to-face with the Truth, and found that He was too expensive for him, for he was not ready to sell all that he had to "buy" the Truth, because his wealth defined him; therefore, he would go on living out a lie. In Matthew 19: 23-30, Jesus Christ alluded to the realities

of the ongoing conflict between acquiring worldly riches and harnessing the kingdom of God (see below).

Matthew 19:23-30 (NKJV)

²³ Then Jesus said to His disciples, **"Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.**

²⁴ **And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."**

²⁵ When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, **"Who then can be saved?"**

²⁶ But Jesus looked at them and said to them, **"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."**

²⁷ Then Peter answered and said to Him, **"See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore, what shall we have?"**

²⁸ So Jesus said to them, **"Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**

²⁹ **And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.**

³⁰ **But many who are first will be last, and the last first.**

I have heard many sermons preached on the passage above, and many a preacher has had quite some difficulty dealing with it. The truth is that to the best of my knowledge, there is no other object called a needle in the Mediterranean world other than the one threaded for sewing. This is because, one minister claimed that the word "needle" described a special contraption for managing camels, and not the sewing needle. Indeed, it was the sewing needle, and it is that difficult to be very rich in this world, and not have real challenges with seeking



Quite a daunting task, yet with God possible.

and following God. In order for the camel to pass through the eye of the needle, one must pound it to pulp, and shred it into tiny little strings of subjugation, then painstakingly thread it through with diligence; and only Christ and His finished work can help one to achieve these—one needs Him. This is why the disciples were perplexed, knowing that they like all other humans tended to care about material things and could be covetous. Thus, Christ quickly reassured them that WITH GOD, it would be possible to be rich in this world, and still gain access to and operate in the kingdom of God. He did not stop there, but reiterated that no one who leaves his world to follow Him would lose both here, and in the world to come. In order words, God is as committed to our material prosperity, as He is to our spiritual maturity, but it can only be in a viable partnership—kingdom first. So, one may ask, "Why is it that being wealthy can be so destructive? This I will address next.

"In order for the camel to pass through the eye of the needle, one must pound it to pulp, and shred it into tiny little strings of subjugation, then painstakingly thread it through with diligence."

Can A Rich Person Go to Heaven?



Materialism and covetousness are bed-fellows.

First and foremost, it is pertinent to define a few related terms, so that one can delineate between what is appropriate and what is not, and as such identify where people often start to falter. Being wealthy is having the abundance of valuable material possessions or resources, and there is not sin here; for this is within the will of God for His children. Furthermore, materialism is a preoccupation with or stressing upon material rather than intellectual or spiritual things. The word preoccupation is synonymous with being obsessed with something. It means that one's heart has been hooked, and that one has been taken by material things. It shows up as worrying about, fighting over, chasing and falling apart, and living for material things. In this state, your world is about survival and material comfort, and even God is a means to these ends. Another word that demands one's attention is covetousness; this is the tendency that is marked by inordinate desire for wealth or possessions or for another's possessions. Materialism and covetousness are bed fellows. With the former, one is preoccupied with the accumulation of material things; and with the latter, one is willing and ready to do unsavory things in order to acquire wealth. Having addressed the housekeeping issues, I will now return to why we are so vulnerable to the destructive attributes of worldly riches. The truth is that we live in

a world that is full of adversities, and much like a primate in the wild, we are out looking for the means to sustain ourselves, and the solutions to our real or imagined problems. Beyond these, are the sociocultural expectations of what success means, and our susceptibility to the unseen forces that manipulate, tempt and pull us towards destruction. Who does not want to solve his or her problems? We all do, and money does that so well that even the Almighty God has alluded to this fact (see Ecclesiastes 10:19; 7:12 below).

Ecclesiastes 10:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ A feast is made for laughter, and wine makes merry; But money answers everything.

Ecclesiastes 7:12 (NKJV)

¹² For wisdom is a defense as money is a defense, But the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it.

As the passages above indicate, money is often an effective means of solving a wide array of problems. With money, one can address most of one's needs, wants and desires. However, as the second passage above indicates, it is one thing to provide a service or a defense, and it is another to do so adequately, and in a sustained and ultimately fulfilling manner. On the contrary, when one brings wisdom (i.e., godly fear and prowess) into the equation, the limitations and the destructive attributes of worldly wealth are extinguished by God's omniscience, and we end up with His abundant and fulfilling life. Yes, money answers to everything, often inadequately; but money with godly wisdom brings lasting abundance in life. Our vulnerability to the destructive influence of material wealth is further aggravated by the numerous misperceptions that we have about its value as follows.

Money as the Means and the End: Often, money is misconstrued as the means and the end. Proverbs 18:11

states,

Proverbs 18:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his own esteem.

It is as if the person in question, took the time to amass wealth with the hope that he would be strong, and feel great about himself. However, life's lessons indicate that those walls are often erected only to be breached. As a matter of fact, there is no city wall in history that was raised to keep one safe that was never breached. From the Great Wall of China to Hadrian's wall in Britain, all were breached. No wonder the Psalmist stated as such in Psalm 20:7-8:

Psalm 20:7-8 (NKJV)

⁷ Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

⁸ They have bowed down and fallen; But we have risen and stand upright.

The military might, which also includes the walls fall short of the glorious protection that comes from knowing and trusting in God. "Neighbor, where is your heart?"

“Materialism and covetousness are bed fellows. With the former, one is preoccupied with the accumulation of material things; and with the latter, one is willing and ready to do unsavory things in order to acquire wealth.”

Can A Rich Person Go to Heaven?

Money as an Idol: Since money is versatile and can be used to solve different kinds of problems, it tends to become so treasured that it takes the place of God, and is worshipped as an idol. This is when it becomes all-important, subordinates and eventually, enslaves. When one wakes up to money and its demands, and one's major decisions are determined by the prospects of getting and staying rich; when one's values are heavily compromised or determined by one's materialistic ambitions; then, one is worshipping money. Thus, in Matthew 6:24, Christ stated:

Matthew 6:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Mammon is the god of covetousness. It is where money connects with the darkness of this world, for it is where the evil one places his hooks, and baits us to "come and get some." In Luke 16:9, Christ called money unrighteous mammon. Money does truly beg for worship, and the unaware can be entrapped and imprisoned, if he or she does not take the time to ensure that the source, the process, and the outcomes are in line with God's word. Yes, there is dirty money, and there is devilish wealth; and this type is out for one's soul, and demands worship.

Material Wealth has an Uncertain Destiny: That money is innately unstable is incontrovertible, in that since it came into existence, many a wise investor has tried to trap and save money with limited success. Some attempt to trap it in real estate investments, while others go for the gold rush. Yet, there is always that hand that shakes the universe, then the other bad word called devaluation gets uttered, and things start to depreciate. What about the fact that

many of us have either packed out of a place that we subsequently could not afford, or have comforted those who had this painful experience? Unfortunately, only few know that the Creator, the One who knows all things, had already advised that money is not reliable, and cannot be counted on (see Proverbs 23:5 below).

Proverbs 23:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Will you set your eyes on that *which is not?* For riches *certainly make themselves wings; They fly away like an eagle toward heaven.*

It is a horrible thing to start a journey with a leader, to receive your instructions, to understand the strategies, and implement them painstakingly, yet to lift up your head, only to find out that he or she is no longer there. This is what trusting in money does. The truth is that it was created to be guided by market forces that we neither fully understand, nor have control over. Sometimes, everything works out just well, and one becomes a success story; then, at other times, even with a greater talent and performance level, things just do not work out as were expected. And, even when they do, the unexpected happens, and we find ourselves in ground zero again. This is not surprising, in that godly wisdom had already declared that it is inherently unstable and its future uncertain. In Matthew 6:19, Jesus Christ advised that one should put one's treasures in heaven, where these would be preserved from decay, and where the thieves cannot break in and steal. In light of our needs, this view may seem unrealistic, but as we proceed in this discourse, it will be found to be invaluable, because God is interested in our material comfort, but it is all about the priorities.

Material Wealth Comes with Arrogance: Material wealth brings with it some confidence about life, a sense of being highly placed in the society, some may even coin in the word "nobility", even though it is



If it moves you, then, it has you.

erroneous; it also fosters an ego boost. These changes usually result in one becoming arrogant, and often difficult to relate with (see Proverbs 18:23 below).

Proverbs 18:23 (NKJV)

²³ *The poor man uses entreaties, but the rich answers roughly.*

The poor man, faced with life's realities, tends to be lowly of heart, and to be more considerate of others, and as such more relationally competent. Meanwhile, the rich man in his perceived high and mighty place, sees others as low, and underserving of his respect, which results in relational incompetence. This calls to question, a rich man's ability to spread the gospel through his lifestyle. This is even more of a problem, when one considers that as wealth increases, one has a higher purchasing power, which often leads one to improprieties, as money feeds our lusts and pride, and as such fosters worldliness (see Philippians 3:19 below).

“Money does truly beg for worship, and the unaware can be entrapped and imprisoned, if he or she does not take the time to ensure that the source, the process, and the outcomes are in line with God’s word.”

Can A Rich Person Go to Heaven?



It is not the need for money, it is the love of it.

Philippians 3:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame--who set their mind on earthly things.

Here, the apostle Paul encouraged the Philippian believers to refrain from fellowshiping with people who had lost touch with what was considered to be godly, and went on to describe their deplorable state; where one having had the ability to acquire material things, binged on food, and embellished that which they should have been ashamed of; and since their hearts were worldly, drove full speed ahead into the pre-determined destruction. No wonder, being rich calls for being circumspect, because riches foster the antithesis of wisdom—foolishness.

Material Wealth Entraps, Enslaves and Destroys: A classic portrayal of this view was in the Downton Abbey series, which was very popular in the United Kingdom. The Crawley family had money, high societal status, servants, and political connections, and appeared to have had all that one would dream of. But as time passed, their lives became punctuated with financial and personal crises to such a point that they no longer lived as free people, but as people trapped by their social class, who slaved to retain Downton Abbey (i.e., castle), and to keep up with the expectations of the high society to which they belonged. Simply put, being rich and affluent

became the center-point of their existence, as they married for money, manipulated others, murdered, did whatever they felt it would take to stay on top. They were far from being free and in control, they were enslaved, and later were destroyed by materialism. In 1 Timothy 6:9-10, the Truth spoke through the mouth of the apostle Paul, that money is a bait used by the evil one to entrap, enslave and then, destroy us (see below).

1 Timothy 6:9-10 (NKJV)

⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

The key issue here is the love of money. For, it is one thing to need money, yet another to give your heart to it. A person who is going somewhere to accomplish a laudable task, may need money to get there, and in this case he or she has a purpose-driven relationship with money, and here, it serves. Meanwhile, a person who needs money just to be wealthy, and has no noble purpose associated with it, but hopes to use it to control the world and to bear rule, loves it; and will fall under it, and be destroyed by it, because it is the master. For, it is the source, the primary purpose, the process of acquisition, and the intended use that determine the outlook of one's relationship with ungodly mammon.

Materialism Hinders One's Spiritual Maturity: The love of money induces ungodly compromises and subsequently, failures in one's Christian walk. Psalm 15:5 states,

Psalm 15:5 (NKJV)

⁵ He who does not put out his money at usury, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does

“The key issue here is the love of money. For, it is one thing to need money, yet another to give your heart to it.”

these things shall never be moved.

Usury is lending money at an interest that is considered to be unreasonably high. In other words, one is taking an unfair advantage of the borrower. The litmus test of true Christianity, where one does not love money is making an effort to ensure that one is fair in one's dealings, especially with the poor and the needy. The person who loves money usually does not care. This level of materialism is so noxious to the Lord that He rightfully links it with not just bribery for gain, but treacherous bribery, where one perverts justice, such that an innocent person suffers. Then, He goes on to reassure us that those who refrain from these practices, would be invincible, in that, He would be with them. So challenging is the love of money that Jesus Christ identified it as one of the major show stoppers of the Christian walk towards fruitfulness (see Mark 4:18-19 below).



One of the ominous signs is cutting bad deals against the innocent.

Can A Rich Person Go to Heaven?

Mark 4:18-19 (NKJV)

¹⁸ Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word,

¹⁹ and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

The passage above describes a situation where the “circumcised” live as if they are “uncircumcised.” This is a strait that every Christian in this life must walk through, the strait of material needs, the pressures of the legitimate demands of life, and the seductive influences in this world. Their key question is, “Who will you choose?” The persons that depicted the third ground heard the word of God, received it joyfully, and understood it enough, but were not ready to pay the price of the high calling of God, they were not ready to give all they had for it. Thus, they cut some deals, negated to pray or went for the world’s alternatives, and ended up barren. Abraham and Sarah faced a major famine, and in the struggle, Sarah was stolen by the Pharaoh of Egypt for a while (Genesis 12:10-20); Isaac dug wells after wells and all these got covered, and the philistines almost took Rebekah from him (Genesis 26:1-11); and Naomi lost her two sons, and faced abject poverty, and God seemed so far away (Ruth 1:1-5). This is when our faith gets tested, and many who fail to watch and wait on the Lord wilt and make ungodly compromises, and some even die out of the faith. It is not the money; it is the love of it.

The key issue is that money needs a master, as it is supposed to be a servant. However, because it is so useful, and so powerful, in that Satan had latched on to it; and we are so vulnerable in view of our numerous needs, wants and desires; mammon easily takes over and ruins our lives. This is why we resist God and His commandments, and this is why it is very difficult for a rich person

to make through the pearly gates (see Matthew 19:23-26 below).

Matthew 19:23-24 (NKJV)

²³ Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

²⁴ And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁵ When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, “**Who then can be saved?**”

²⁶ But Jesus looked at them and said to them, “**With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.**”

What Christ was saying here was that being materially wealthy without God as your source, and His calling as your purpose in life or mission; and the means of amassing the wealth in compliance with His word; and the intended use contradictory to His ways, would be damning. However, when the converse is the case, and a son responds to the Father’s calling and purpose, and the Father allots to him the due resources for the tasks at hand (i.e., including his wellbeing); then, no matter how wealthy, he will be okay. In this scenario, the relationship is sure, and the partnership is characterized by the active worship of God by the junior partner; thus, it becomes a matter of the kingdom, and as such, it is possible to be “all that” in Christ Jesus (see Proverbs 10:22 below).

Proverbs 10:22 (NKJV)

²² The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.

God blessed Abraham until he had much wealth, 300 fighting men who defeated 4 kings, and yet, he was so worshipful that God called Himself after Abraham—the God of Abraham. From the sheepfold of his father’s house to the court of king Saul, and thereafter to his cedar palace, king David grew rich; yet,

“The key issue is that money needs a master, as it is supposed to be a servant.”

he found it in himself to follow hard after God, to build the tabernacle of worship, and to set aside the materials for building the definitive temple of worship; he too was a wealthy and godly man. What about the innocuous Daniel, who served through two empires, was the chief administrator of the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires; yet, he prayed and interceded for the restoration of the nation of Israel, and the rebuilding of the temple, and was released to see to the accomplishment of these tasks? He too was a wealthy and godly man. Money when provided by God for the building of His kingdom brings peace, and one can surely go over the wall.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Kingdom First! The secret is to acquire riches in the context of God’s kingdom.

Maturing Spiritually



We were born in sin, and in need of a Savior.

We are born dead. This may sound sensational or even erroneous to some, yet it is true that we are born dead to God, and steeped in the darkness of our sinful nature. According to John 1:1-4, it makes sense that if our God is the life, and it is the life that is the light, which lights up all men, then, the separation from God or the absence of a viable Christ's blood-birthed relationship leaves us spiritually dead (see Psalm 51:5 below).

Psalm 51:5 (KJV)

⁵ Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

If sin is tantamount to being separated from God, and as such spiritually dead, then as alluded to in the passage above, we were all born dead, and need to be born again. What does it mean to be born again? This I will address next.

What It Means to be Born Again

It is possible to be very religious, even serve God as a minister, and yet not be a born again Christian. A look at the call of Samuel can shed more light on this (see 1 Samuel 3:1-7 below).

1 Samuel 3:1-7 (NKJV)

¹ Then the boy Samuel ministered to the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation.

² And it came to pass at that time, while Eli was lying down in his

place, and when his eyes had begun to grow so dim that he could not see,

³ and before the lamp of God went out in the tabernacle of the LORD where the ark of God was, and while Samuel was lying down, ⁴ that the LORD called Samuel. And he answered, "Here I am!"

⁵ So he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." And he said, "I did not call; lie down again." And he went and lay down.

⁶ Then the LORD called yet again, "Samuel!" So, Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." He answered, "I did not call, my son; lie down again."

⁷ (Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor was the word of the LORD yet revealed to him.)

The name Samuel means *God heard*. He was literally a gift from God to a barren woman, who had promised to return him back to God for a lifelong service. It means that he was God's property. Furthermore, as the passage above indicates, he served God with the High Priest and his sons. Yet, he did not know who God was, neither did he have insights into God's word. His service was external, rudimentary or without depth. If one fast-forwards to the New Testament era, one would stopover at the meeting spot where Jesus Christ held the all-important conversation with Nicodemus (see John 3:3-7 below).

John 3:3-7 (NKJV)

³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

⁴ Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

⁵ Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

"If sin is tantamount to being separate from God, and as such spiritually dead, then as alluded to in the passage above, we were all born dead, and need to be born again."

⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

Nicodemus was a devout Pharisee, who knew the laws of Moses, and as such saw himself as someone in a good state with Jehovah. Then came this young Rabbi with great wisdom that was backed up with signs and wonders to challenge his beliefs. Unlike his fellow Pharisees, he decided to take the path of a seeker, and engaged Jesus Christ in a bid to address the perplexing question of being born again. He asked, "Are we to get back into our mothers' wombs in our old age and be birthed all over again?" (My paraphrase). What he did not know was that prior to Calvary, human beings are only alive physically and psychologically; but are dead spiritually, in that they are separated from God. This is what Christ addressed with mastery. He (Christ) told him not to marvel that being born again is necessary, because that which is birthed by the human body is physical; meanwhile, that which is



The joy of God's salvation.

Maturing Spiritually

birthed by the Holy Spirit, is spiritual. As such to be born again is to be birthed spiritually, with a brand-new bouncing baby spirit that is in sync with the Creator, and is of the kingdom of God. Thus, without experiencing the process of salvation, one can claim to be a Christian, yet is not known by God as such, and is not such. However, it is important to note that the latter became possible only after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. As indicated in Hebrews 9:7-10, the ritual sacrifices that were offered according to the Old Testament ordinances could not address the problem of our sinfulness, and the resulting guilty conscience (see Hebrews 9:7-10 below).

Hebrews 9:7-10 (NKJV)

⁷ *But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance;*

⁸ *the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.*

⁹ *It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience--*

¹⁰ *concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.*

The word salvation means deliverance from the power and effects of sins. It carries with it a certain sense of emergency, in that the rituals of the Old Testament failed to do just these—deliver us from the damnation of sinful living. Thus, it became necessary for the sinless Lamb of God, our Savior Jesus Christ to die for sinful men, as the last and final sacrifice for sin. Thus, His life became ours, who had been condemned to die, since according to Romans 5:12, one man's sin brought death to all men. Straight

out of the throne room, the sinless Lamb of God came out to take the place of sinful men, so that all WHO BELIEVE, would have His life—His eternal and abundant life. The evidence of the effectiveness of His sacrifice was that it tore through the veil that separated sinful humanity from a holy God, and by His resurrection, He created the possibility for a phenomenal relationship and partnership between the finite human being and the infinite God. No wonder, after His resurrection, He was appearing and disappearing), walking through walls, and yet breaking bread with His disciples (Luke 24:13-35); He was a God-man—a son.

To be born again starts with the recognition that one is lost in sinfulness, in bondage to the lusts of this world and the forces that manage these, and is dead to the Creator. These realizations foster a state of contrition, where one acknowledges that one has sinned and failed God, and leads one to repent (i.e., turning away) by confessing and asking God for His forgiveness, all from a sincere heart (see 1 John 1:9-10 below).

1 John 1:9-10 (NKJV)

⁹ *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

¹⁰ *If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*

A sincere confession and prayer for forgiveness, done from a contrite heart aligns with God's word, triggers the cleansing effect of the shed blood of Jesus Christ, and releases the grace of salvation, and one becomes born again, and is registered as such in the heavenly grid. One can just imagine a hitherto non-existent spot beginning to blink and bleep, and the angelic managers jump for joy, as it becomes clear that another soul has just been saved. On the earthly side, one experiences the relieve of the heavy



Lord, I have sinned, and I am not worthy of your grace; please, forgive me.

burden of sin, and the joy of salvation floods one's soul; and then, one knows that it is well, in that one is right with God. What a wonderful event! What an important event! It is so important that Jesus Christ Himself deemed it the most important of all of one's Christian experiences (see Luke 10:18-20 below).

Luke 10:18-20 (NKJV)

¹⁸ *And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.*

¹⁹ *Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.*

²⁰ *Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."*

"To be born again starts with the recognition that one is lost in sinfulness, in bondage to the lusts of this world, and the forces that manage these; and as such is dead to the Creator."

Maturing Spiritually



Sanctification is when the light of God floods one's darkness.

“Satan falling like lightning from heaven?” Isn't that what true Christians would like to achieve? That is to have very powerful ministries, where Satan is defeated, and bondage to sin and death broken? Yet, Jesus Christ exhorted His disciples to appreciate the most important thing, and that is that they were born again, and as such saved from the wrath to come. To some, this is the end of the journey, in that they believe that they have fixed their relationship with God for good. Meanwhile, for others it is like a new kitten that has just been brought home. It starts to sniff around cautiously, yet persistently, as it studies, knows and creates a place for itself. Usually, this is the type that thrives (See 1 Peter 2:1-2 below).

1 Peter 2:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ *Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking,*

² *as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,*

In the passage above, Peter lays out the tasks for the new believer. He indicates that in order to consolidate one's salvation, one is to walk away from the old behaviors that were fostered by one's adamic nature, and to take hold of the instruction manual that would provide the roadmap for the journey ahead. “The journey ahead?” One may wonder. Yes, it is the journey of sanctification towards the destination of spiritual maturity. Thus, with salvation, one is born again, yet a

newborn baby; knows God, yet in a limited manner; set free from the condemnation of sin and death, yet still bound by the old habits and the besetting sins that can make one subject to the principalities and powers of this world; rich in Christ with innumerable blessings, but unaware of most; and is destined to reign with Christ, but too young for the inevitable confrontation ahead. Thus, Peter urged the believers to get sanctified, and to fill up on the basics of God's word, so that they would grow up in Christ.

Sanctification and Growth

It is not enough that one is born again, one must become well versed with the basic doctrines of Christianity, and undergo the process of becoming gradually sanctified or cleansed, so that one would be able to acquire and enjoy the authority of the believer, and as such the abundant life of Christ. To be sanctified is to make productive of holiness and piety; in other words, to be pure of worldliness or sin. Why is this necessary? It is necessary because the Christian walk is in a relationship and a partnership with a holy God, who will not accept sinfulness. Furthermore, sinfulness hinders the communion between a person and God, and interferes with the God-man exchanges, as sin creates the unwanted distance between God and the worshipper. Simply put, sin hurts the trip to spiritual maturity, and after the Calvary experience, placing ourselves in the advantageous position of holiness, where we can walk effectively with the Holy Spirit should be our primary responsibility (see Philippians 2:12-13 below).

Philippians 2:12-13 (NKJV)

¹² *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;*
¹³ *for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good*

“It is not enough that one is born again, one must become well versed with the basic doctrines of Christianity, and undergo the process of becoming gradually sanctified .”

pleasure.

Paul the apostle urged the Philippian believers to learn to obey the Holy Spirit by working out their salvation diligently. The question arises, “How can one work out what was meant to be a free and automatic gift?” The answer is a simple one, in that it is one thing to receive a gift enthusiastically, and yet another to unwrap it, and then use it appropriately. God's salvation is free and complete, but is the beginning of a relationship that is to grow into a mature partnership, where God's purpose for His kingdom is established here on earth. Thus, it is a complete kingdom with clear objectives, and we are privileged to be a part of this wonder, called the kingdom of God. One is not alone in this journey, because God is always there to make us want to and do His will. As a matter of fact, one of the ways that one knows that one is in sync with God, is the presence of the desire to commune with Him and to please Him. However, like any growth process, this phase is usually a challenging one, as was the case with the Corinthian believ-



The young believer is to be nurtured.

Maturing Spiritually

1 Corinthians 3:1-4 (NKJV)

¹ *And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.*

² ***I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;***

³ *for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?*

⁴ *For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?*

And again, in Hebrews 5:12-14,

Hebrews 5:12-14 (NKJV)

¹² *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to **need milk and not solid food.***

¹³ *For everyone who partakes only of **milk** is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.*

¹⁴ *But **solid food** belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

It is one thing to have a spiritual birth, and another to translate that into one's soul (i.e., mind, will, and emotions). The spirit is willing, but often, the soul lacks the in-depth knowledge of God's word, and is too young and distracted to hear and yield to the Holy Spirit. These are

“This is where one places the distance between one's self and the world, as one gets closer and closer to God.”

the mechanisms of spiritual immaturity, and these show up in the form of the fruits of the flesh—envy, strife, divisions, sexual immorality, quarrelsomeness, hatred, malice, and the like. The apostle speaks of being worldly though born again, and acting as mere humans, instead of being Spirit-filled; and he also goes on to allude to the fact that the inability to understand and use the complex Scriptural concepts underscores the observation of the prevailing spiritual immaturity. Thus, this is the period where one is taught and learns to pray fervent prayers, becomes knowledgeable about the word of God, learns to hear from and yield to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and gradually gets rid of the besetting sins in one's life. This is the process of gradual sanctification. This is where one places the distance between one's self and the world, as one gets closer and closer to God. At this point, the Holy Spirit becomes a real partner, and is addressed and engaged as a person, who listens, responds, and empowers one in this upward journey. It is saddening yet effective to feel Him grieve when one thinks the wrong thought or says that which is not appropriate. He really causes us to will and do of His good pleasure. Once again, the tendency is to stop here, and build a stiff doctrinal premise around this phase. However, this phase of growth ushers us to yet the higher level of maturity—the mastery of self.

The Mastery of Self

The truth is that Jesus Christ defeated the devil and made an open show of Him by His death and subsequently by His resurrection. However, we the weak links in the salvation train, must grow up to maturity by aligning with the Holy Spirit. Hebrews 6:1-3 states,

Hebrews 6:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection,*



God's word is the final authority, know it well.

not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,
² *of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*
³ *And this we will do if God permits.*

In the passage above, Paul the apostle summarized the basics of our Christian faith as the repentance from worldliness, learning to have faith in God, getting baptized in water and in the Holy Spirit, the use of spiritual and ministry gifts, and the knowledge of the coming judgment. He declared that we should MOVE ON to perfection (i.e., maturity). And, in Romans 5:1-5, he prescribed the regimen for growth to maturity.

Romans 5:1-5 (NKJV)

¹ *Therefore, having been justified by **faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*
² *through whom also we have **access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.***



The radiance, the beauty, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Maturing Spiritually



Without smelting, the ore remains impure and of limited value.

³ *And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;*

⁴ *and perseverance, character; and character, hope.*
⁵ *Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*

And again, in James 1:2-4,

James 1:2-4 (NKJV)

² *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,*

³ *knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.*

⁴ *But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

In our Christian journey, we fight against two sets of evils, the evils that oppose our objective of becoming one with the Holy Spirit, and these are the evils within us (i.e., self), and the evils without us (i.e., the principalities, the powers, and the forces they marshal through other human beings against us). The passages above provide the insights into this regimen of confrontation with self, and then the elemental forces. Paul the apostle indicated that through salvation, we became justified by faith, and then gained access to God's grace; and by aligning with His word and Spirit, we stand with the high and sure expectation that His promises will come to pass. Please, bear in mind that to stand includes living a holy or sanctified life. However, then comes the

regimen for the next level, the level where we are tried; where we hemorrhage out our pride, arrogance, ignorance, greed, self-will, and the like, through the refining fire of tribulations. This is where one either backslides by making ungodly compromises, or leans completely on the Holy Spirit for strength. This is where one gives all to Christ, declares that He is all the matters, and loves Him with all of one's heart. It is the threshing floor of the Calvary road, and it is carefully designed by God, so that we can become who He wants us to be—perfect, lacking nothing. For, this is when we become in sync with the Holy Spirit, and dead to ourselves. Like Paul the apostle, we can boldly declare, “It is no longer I that lives, but Christ that lives in me.” Dearly beloved, no one can be spared from this part of the journey, and this is true because, even Jesus Christ was not (see Matthew 4:1-2 below).

Matthew 4:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.*

² *And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.*

The Holy Spirit took Him to the wilderness to confront the devil. However, He first empowered Him for the external confrontation by helping Him with the internal one (i.e., self) during the forty days and nights of fasting and prayers. Why is suffering necessary? It is necessary because, God designed that first and foremost, no flesh shall boast in His presence (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). The earthen vessels that we are, are to be filled with divine treasures, and then used for His glory, which includes teaching the principalities and powers, the multifaceted wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10). Secondly, we who were made out of the dirt of the earth cannot face those elemental forces on our own, as we are simply not strong enough. We need to be one with Him. Thus, having laid a strong

“It is the threshing floor of the Calvary road, and it is carefully designed by God, so that we can become who He wants us to be—perfect, lacking nothing.”

foundation, we then grow up through the furnace to smelt out the dross, and become firebrands, ready and fully equipped for the Master's use.

The Stage of Manifestation

In Philippians 3:10-11, Paul the apostle summarized the path of maturity of the believer (see below).

Philippians 3:10-11 (NKJV)

¹⁰ *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,*
¹¹ *if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

According to Paul, the journey starts by knowing God (i.e., becoming born again); then one gains traction by communing with the Holy Spirit through prayers, studying God's word, fellowshiping with other believers, and developing one's character by manifesting the fruits and gifts of the Spirit (i.e., sanctification and growth), and also becoming skillful in the use of the weapons of our warfare.



Come and join the fellowship, the fellowship of His suffering.

Maturing Spiritually

Paul calls the next phase the fellowship of Christ's suffering, where we become one with Him, in that, just as He died, we also die to ourselves, and completely align with Him (i.e., self-mastery). This is when we become mature, as His attributes become ours—His wisdom, character, power, and abundant life. In Hebrews 6:4-6, Paul nails in the reality of this stage of maturity as follows.

“At this stage, one has the in-depth knowledge of God’s word, has had it ground into his being through suffering, and made effective through repeated usage. One is practically, an extension of the divine, one with God.”

Hebrews 6:4-6

⁴For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit,

⁵and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,

⁶if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.

At this stage, one has the in-depth knowledge of God's word, has had it ground into his being through suffering, and made effective through repeated usage. One is practically, an extension of the divine, one with God. This is the stage of the miraculous, born not just out of having a ministry gift, but out of closeness to the Holy Spirit. It is the zone of the resurrected living, where miracles are commonplace, and great fits are achieved. At this stage, one has reached the point where backsliding makes repentance impossible to



My beloved is mine and I am His, and His banner over me is love.

achieve, because, sons lay down their lives, they do not backslide. The good news is that from being saved to manifesting as a son or daughter of God, the Holy Spirit is with us all the way. Thus, we can be assured that we will remain pure and strong.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Mfon Cyrus-David is a preacher and teacher of God's word.

OUR MESSAGE IS THAT GOD IS SOVEREIGN, WE SHOULD WORSHIP HIM; HIS LOVE IS UNFAILING, WE SHOULD TRUST HIM; GET READY FOR HIS IS COMING BACK.

COMING SOON

TO

THE TRUE WORSHIP MAGAZINE

Are the articles, titled as follows.

Broken Together?!

The Bane of the Third Ground

Beholding the Invisible

Do not miss these!

Colorectal Cancer: The Risk, the Protective and the Other Factors



The images of the colon and rectum.

The colon starts at the lower right aspect of the abdomen, and extends upwards to the upper right aspect, crosses the over to the left side, and then descends to the lower left aspect to join the rectum. It is what we call the large intestine, and functions largely to reabsorb the water, and the electrolytes back into the body. Thus, it helps to regulate water and electrolyte balance, and to concentrate and store the feces for evacuation through the rectum later. Like all the other organs that are not readily visible, we tend to be oblivious of it, and it comes to life when something goes wrong, such as when we pass blood in our stools, or have lower colicky pains, diarrhea or constipation. The sad part of the colorectal cancer story is that by the time it has become symptomatic, it is often too late.

Globally in 2018, it was estimated that 1.8 million persons would be diagnosed with colorectal cancer (CRC), and that 881,000 would die from it. Furthermore, it ranks third in new cases, and second in terms of deaths due to cancers. While there are more new cases in the developed than the developing countries, there are more deaths in the latter than the former, suggesting the negative impacts of the socioeconomic differences on health care services between the two groups. The story in the United States is similar, in that CRC is the third leading cause of death, and in 2020 it has been estimated that there would be 147,950 new cases, and it

would account for 53,200 deaths. The sad part of this story is that persons of African American race/ethnicity are more likely to be diagnosed and to die from CRC than other racial/ethnic groups. Meanwhile, they do not have a higher rate of precancerous lesions (i.e., colonic polyps), which suggests that the observed differences are largely due to the poorer uptake and use of early detection strategies, which cause the diagnoses at an advanced stage, and predisposes to poorer outcomes. In addition, one cannot also rule out the impacts of limited access to adequate treatments once diagnosed. In view of the high risk of death, once early detection fails, it becomes necessary for one to become more conversant with the risk and protective factors for CRC.

The Risk Factors

The risk factors for CRC that are based on consistent findings include the following.

Increasing Age: The risk of developing CRC increases after 40 years of age, and then rises sharply at ages 50 to 55. It then doubles in 10-year increments and continues to rise.

Genetic Predisposition: There are two well-described forms of hereditary CRC, and these are the Familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP), and the Lynch Syndrome. These are caused by the genetic aberrations that are inherited and are as such are present at birth; and subsequently, further insults trigger the development of the cancers. These persons tend to have numerous colonic polyps, and are diagnosed with cancers at relatively earlier ages than others.

Family History of CRC: Persons with a family history of CRC have been found to be 2-3 times more likely to be develop the disease. However, it is important to note that one may have a family history of CRC without having any of the syndromes mentioned above; but the

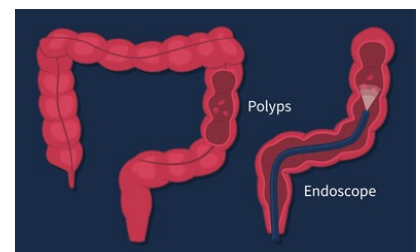
“The sad part of the colorectal cancer story is that by the time it has become symptomatic, it is often too late.”

higher risk may be due to shared family risk factors (i.e., shared known or unknown exposures).

Excessive Alcohol Use: Alcohol contains substances that are can cause cancer. Numerous studies have reported that the risk of developing CRC is significantly higher among those who drink alcohol (i.e., 3-5 drinks per day), when compared to non-drinkers; and this risk was regardless of one’s gender, and the part of the colon or rectum. Another set of investigators reported that that the heavier the intake of alcohol, the higher was the risk of death from CRC.

Cigarette Smoking: That smoking cigarette causes cancer is not news, however, it causes more just non-small cell lung cancer, it also causes CRC, among others. Prolonged and intensive cigarette smoking increases the risk of developing and also dying from CRC.

Obesity: Being obese has been shown to be associated with the increased risk of developing and dying from CRC.



An endoscope is placed in the colon and rectum to help identify and remove polyps.

Colorectal Cancer: The Risk, the Protective and the Other Factors

Personal History: Persons who have been diagnosed with and treated for CRC, are also more likely to have a recurrence or to develop a new CRC.

The Protective Factors

Physical Activity: The association between leading a sedentary lifestyle and CRC risk is not consistent across the globe. However, being physically active is associated with a 40-50% reduction of one's risk of developing colon cancer. Furthermore, high energy expenditure was found to be protective for developing CRC in both men and women.

Aspirin Use: The daily intake of aspirin (i.e., acetyl salicylic acid [ASA]) for a period of 10 years or longer was found to be associated with the reduction in the risk of developing and of dying from CRC. Furthermore, in the patients who had been diagnosed with and treated for CRC, aspirin treatments were found to reduce the risk of developing polyps (i.e., precancerous lesions), and new cancers. The lower doses appeared to be more protective than the larger ones.

Combined (Estrogen-Progestin) Hormone Replacement Therapy: The use of the combined hormone replacement therapy (HRT), has been found to reduce the risk of developing colon cancer in postmenopausal women, but not the risk of rectal cancer. An important study report showed that when compared to the women who were on placebo, those who were on the combined HRT had a reduce risk of developing CRC.

Polyp Removal: Polyps are the outpouchings of the linings of the colon and rectum, and are known to develop cancerous changes (e.g., larger [>1.0 cm], disordered cellular features, etc.), which can become full-blown cancers later. Thus, the surgical removal of these polyps is done once these are discovered,

usually during screening for colorectal cancers. It has been reported that there is a 76% -90% reduction in the risk of developing CRC, and a 53% reduction in the risk of death after polyp removal. Although these findings may be exaggerated, one cannot help but wonder why one would bother to do a colonoscopy for CRC screening, and not remove any precancerous lesion.

The Other Factors

The other factors that are worth mentioning are those that either are not associated with increasing or reducing the risk of developing or dying from CRC, or the scientific evidence are inconsistent, in that some show a significant relationship, while other reports do not or completely contradict the previous findings.

Factors that Do Not Alter the Risk of CRC: The following are factors that have been shown not to be associated with the risk of developing CRC.

Use of Estrogen-Only HRT: The use of estrogen-only HRT does not reduce the risk of colon cancer, but may be even be associated with an increased risk of rectal cancer.

Use of Statins: The use of statins does not protect against developing or dying from CRC.

Factors with Inadequate Evidence of Being Associated with CRC Incidence or Mortality Risks: The relationships between these factors and the risk of developing or dying from CRC are inconsistent, and as such are being studied further.

Use of Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs): The use of non-aspirin NSAIDs have not been shown to be consistently associated with CRC risk reduction, but on the other hand, may even cause significant harms due to their side effects.

Calcium Supplementation: While the intake of calcium has been associated with the reduction in the risk of developing colonic polyps, this protection has not been shown to have been translated to the reduction of the risk of developing or dying from CRC.

Dietary Factors: While several investigators have reported a positive association between a high fat diet or meat intake and developing CRC, these findings have not been consistent. It is also clear that the risk of developing CRC is higher in the western countries where more high fat and meat products are consumed relative to the African and Southern Asian regions; which suggests the important role of dietary factors in the development of CRC. However, in the absence of consistent findings, which are often due to the limitations of the study designs and methods, one cannot but rely on the available evidence. In this vein, some authorities have recommended that one should limit eating processed meat or fatty foods. My view is that the diets that are not heart friendly, should be limited, in that a healthy dietary habit with respect to one's cardiovascular health will also suffice for the cancer prevention benefits.

“A healthy dietary habit with respect to one's cardiovascular health will also suffice for the cancer prevention benefits.”

Colorectal Cancer: The Risk, the Protective and the Other Factors



The Caveats

While one should be proactive with respect to one's health, it is im-

portant to take the time to access and digest the facts about the disease, one's personal risk profile, the preventive methods available, and the best way to access and use these. Just because these risk reduction methods exist does not mean that these are safe. For example, the use of aspirin, even the low-dose aspirin is associated with increased risk of gastrointestinal ulceration and bleeding, intracranial hemorrhage (i.e., bleeding into the brain), and hemorrhagic stroke (i.e., the stroke caused by the bleeding of the arteries in the brain). Furthermore, the other NSAIDs are known to be potentially harmful, in that they can cause in addition the side effects mentioned for aspirin, renal impairment, myocardial infarction, and

heart failure. In addition, while removing polyps is good, the procedure also has the risk of bleeding and infrequently, the perforation of the large intestine.

It is also important to be aware of the unproven practices that are part of our culture. An example is that of flushing one's colon as a part of cleaning out the cancer-causing toxins. There is no evidence that such a practice reduces one's risk of developing or dying from CRC.

CRC is an insidious killer, and this calls for one to harness one's resources and take charge of one's health, because it is preventable!

“It is important to take the time to access and digest the facts about the disease, one's personal risk profile, the preventive methods available, and the best way to access and use these.”

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Polyps in the colon and rectum are known to undergo changes that can transform them into cancer. Thus, appropriate screening and polyp removal saves lives

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James 1:3-4 (NKJV)

“...knowing that the testing of your faith produces
patience.
But let patience have its perfect work, that you may
be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK: This month's edition has articles from the four arms of our ministry, namely:

The Marriage and Family Ministry - **Love Strong.**

The Christian Life Ministry - **Over the Wall.**

The Young Adults/Singles and Campus-Focused Ministry - **Pure and Strong.**

The Clinical Cancer Prevention program - **It's Preventable!**

These are designed to inform, motivate and revive our spirits, as we continue on our walk with the Holy Spirit.

ABOUT THE NEWFOUNDLAND FOUNDATION, INC.: Our mission is to live our lives and to carry out His commands in such a way that would demonstrate God's sovereignty through His interventions in the lives of individuals or nations; His unfailing love through the salvation of souls, and the meeting of various needs, and to prepare our world for His return by building the body of Christ unto maturity.

CONTACT INFORMATION: For further information, visit www.newfoundlandfi.org, or send an email to mscd@newfoundlandfi.org.

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