

STRONG FROM WITHIN

BE A WARRIOR, NOT A WORRIER

KINYA GITONGA AND LENNOX KAHATI

STRONG FROM WITHIN

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KAHATI

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ISBN: 978-9914-50-537-5

Published by Hidden Legacy Publishers, in Kenya.

First printing edition 2024.

Publisher

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We thank the almighty for the inspiration and guidance all through the journey of writing this book. We really appreciate the valuable support from friends.

Our heartfelt thanks to our editors and the publishing team. All your efforts and counsel are genuinely appreciated. To them that shared their stories with us, Mercy Nduta and Ken Moses, may God abundantly bless you.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to our cherished readers. May you discover wisdom and guidance from the Almighty.

PREFACE

Being strong is everyone's desire. Individuals often want to be portrayed as strong, but at times, situations may make them weak. To survive in the world today, we all need to learn to be strong from within so that we can also be strong for those around us, especially those that need our help.

"You cannot pour from an empty jar." This means that to be there for another person, you also need to have been there for yourself.

The main aim of writing this book is to enlighten individuals on the essence of being strong from within themselves—for themselves and for others. This is not a book for certain readers from a specific background or occupation; it is a book for all who want to get equipped with skills that empower them to be strong. Skills that equip you with the appropriate ways to respond when faced by the storms of life and help you discover where your inner strength lies.

Many books have attempted to explain where to source power during periods of tribulations, but in our writings, we confine ourselves to the writings contained in the Holy Bible, as well as real-life examples that apply to day-to-day life. We have an array of illustrations from different backgrounds, and this means that an individual is able to identify with something they are familiar with.

We also thrive on personal stories and illustrations, which are real-life stories told to us by our several participants. Note that most of the names used are fictional names. This book is a wonderful guide for anyone who is willing not to rely on worldly strength in times of trouble. It leads us to draw hope and inspiration from God through the message of His scriptures, as well as the Bible stories.

Strength from within is a book that will help us see our past and present experiences in the written story of others who faced the same situations but responded differently as well as what befell them. Through this, our approach to thoughts and actions is questioned and molded in distinctive ways. As you read this, may you be inspired to source your strength from God, may you be inspired to be strong from within you.

INTRODUCTION

Individuals think that they know where their strength lies or rather they feel they are strong. When trials and mighty storms related to life overwhelm them, they then realize they are lacking. This shows they are usually wrong and yet humans can only function at such times with strength. So since they were strong and now weak what is expected of the individual?

Strength is a positive attribute, which depicts ability or power to do something as well as confidence in something. Children rely on their parents especially the father as they depict him as strong. Christians rely on God, as he is supreme as well as strong. His power is unquestionable.

Most individuals feel it is wrong to admit that they are weak or that they need help. Why is that? This is because society has conditioned many, especially men, that showing weakness is wrong. This is not true. Others feel that being weak makes them vulnerable especially to their opponents forgetting that the same opponents are cautious fearing to be seen as weak.

This book aims at enlightening individuals majorly on issues that clearly bring out the strength that lies within them. One does not have to look so far for help, the help they need is close. It lies within an individual. However, what can one do when faced by trials beyond the usual? Where do they tap the strength? Or rather, what can one do?

By choosing to read this book, it is a new beginning. It is a new dawn to personally reflect on where your personal strength comes from. The writings will equip the reader with necessary skills to gain resilience, strength and vitality.

The writings are bound to help individuals of all ages. Parents need to train the young ones on the essence of gaining vitality and practicing these skills at a young stage.

Proverbs 22.6, 'Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn away from it.'

The bible urges parents to train their children in the right ways and they will not abandon their way of upbringing.

Each chapter offers examples and issues in relation to strength as well as strategies, which we deem effective. These examples are primarily used to illustrate a particular principle being discussed. Remember that admitting and working on weaknesses allows us to tap in our strength hence we get to create the ideal strength that one is lacking.

In 2 Kings 19:3 King Hezekiah uses this phrase "when children come to the moment of birth and there is no strength".

This is a metaphor used by Hezekiah to describe the desperate situation of the people of Judah when they were at war. He is comparing the inability to bring forth a child now of birth due to lack of strength naturally, to the inability of the people to withstand the threat of the Assyrian army. It signifies a state of helplessness and vulnerability in the face of a great challenge or danger but it

is a situation that brings forth a mighty thing. Despite the threat, Judah won. Despite being weak, into labor women bring forth bundle of joy. Let us understand that despite facing challenges and being weak, we are capable of bringing forth great things. It is how response to challenges that defines the outcome. Do we stand as faithful or we question our faith?



CHAPTER ONE

WITHIN US

Have you ever wondered what goes wrong with our belief in Christ when they are faced by problems? Look at a Christian who suddenly is diagnosed with chronic illness, whose business all of a sudden starts failing. What happens to them such that they turn to seek assistance not in the church but elsewhere? We forget that within you resides the Holy Spirit who is in a position to heal and give all that you need as a Christian.

The twelve men who followed Jesus in his missions were not perfect beings. Instead, they had flaws like any other human being. If it were a human being choosing, bearing in mind the current race is looking for perfect beings, they would not have chosen them. However, Jesus knew them all along yet he chose them as his inner circle. These were the men he sent on missions; each was unique in his own way. Why did Jesus not choose disciples from another globe? Why did He not choose others from far when he needed help in sharing the fish and loaves? Why did he choose among his disciples to accompany him to pray?

Because He knew strength lies close by, strength lies with people whom an individual associates with, God coming first. Strength also lies in prayer. That is why despite being Son of the Most high, he still prays when distressed.

Luke 22:42, 'Father, if you are willing, please take away this cup of suffering from me.'

This shows it is normal to experience a moment of weakness. It is also human to tap strength from God and support from that close to you.

Strength that lies close

Within you lies strength, mighty strength than one is quite aware of. Several occasions individuals face occurrences that cause them to get back to the drawing board. Here they seek help at all costs. Many forget that the help they are seeking lies close to them. It might be tiny but it does help.

For instance,

Lincoln was a senior campus student, was expecting to graduate, get a job and take care of his parents back at home. Just before graduating, his mother gets involved in an accident; she passes on some time later. His final exam was starting the same day, as his mother's burial, so he missed it. After that, his father suddenly is unwell and he passes away. The young man is shattered, as he does not know what to do. Will he manage through all this?

At such times, situations are beyond one's control. One's faith is under trial. Can one really manage being strong until things get back to normalcy? Here we see Lincoln all on his own. He is an orphan now with a humble beginning, he questions his faith constantly. Why me? What did I do to deserve this?

In such occasions, individuals may forsake their faith. Most seek strength from diviners and prophets forgetting that they can get the required support from those close by and above all God. Lincoln did not have to look far. He had a friend in God. He confided in him at all times. God in return fueled his strength to get past the grieving stage and all that.

Lincoln's relatives cast him out. Having humble beginnings he had no material things to inherit. Once again, he is alone after graduation with nowhere to start from. Luckily, he lands a volunteer position, he volunteers here for some time and later he lands a job at this place. Years later, he is settled with a family and a permanent job. He helps his relatives where need be.

While facing difficulties, people close to us are our source of support. At times, we may not realize this or the people may fail. Remember that God is always there for those who call on him. Lincoln's relatives ignored him when he had nothing but when he made it, they wanted him. One can forget that his/her help is just close by, only that it is not much clear.

Psalms 73:26, God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Within us, close and inseparable, lie our hearts, signifying that God is an integral part of us- truly, He is among us. Call unto Him in times of need and He will answer you.

Humble beginnings

One of my many favorite bible stories is in 1 Samuel 17. This is a story of David and Goliath. David was tiny in physique compared to his brothers and he was the youngest. While his brothers were fighting philistines, David was busy herding sheep. Jesse, his father, sent him to take loaves to his brothers who were in battle. He arrived there, he met Israelites, and Philistines drawing battle lines, he had to rush to take food to his brothers. Among the philistines, Goliath, who was mighty, stepped out and the Israelites ran away in fear. He was sad that Goliath was defying the army of the living God. His brothers wanted him to leave but he insisted on being given a chance to deal with Goliath. His case was presented to Saul who said to him as recorded in first Samuel.

1 Samuel 17:33, 'you are not able to fight him, you are a boy while Goliath has been fighting men since his youth.'

David insisted he wanted to fight Goliath. He drew his strength from previous experiences where he had successfully rescued his flock from lions and bears. Giving him a chance Saul said,

'Go and the Lord be with you.'

The tiny David could not use the king's armor thus went without it. He walked with a sling and pebble stones to the battlefield. The Bible records that

'The philistine, noticing he was only a boy, ruddy and handsome, despised him.' David swore to bring him down by the help of God.

At the end of the story, the tiny boy brought down the giant who was feared by many. His decision to be brave and strong brought him and the whole Israel nation victory. King Saul also rewarded him.

This story can relate well with the previous story of Lincoln. His Goliath was accepting the death of his parents and rejection by his own relatives. Nevertheless, by leaning on God, Lincoln found strength to survive. Other than this, God also rewards his faithfulness to him by giving him a stable job as he had always desired...

Just because David was young, he was looked down upon.

1st Timothy 4:12 says 'let no one despise your youth.'

The word teaches us not to get intimidated by others just because they might be older or stronger. David was brave enough not to be intimidated by his brothers; in the battlefield, he does not let Goliath intimidate him. Even after being despised, he does not chicken out, he still fights.

At times, individuals face situations, (Goliath) which seem overwhelming to them. They turn elsewhere for strength not minding that their strength is close by. It might be that friend or

that sibling you feel they do not add value to you yet they have the potential to assist greatly.

Proverbs 16:4' *God created everything for a purpose.*'

It is wrong to judge and despise others.

David was on his cycle of humble beginnings; he became the strength of Israel. A tiny boy killing a giant. The solution you might be looking for lies close by, it is within your circle with God coming first. God uses such beginnings and he raises us to be a testimony to many. This was David's journey to being a king someday. Just as it was, Lincoln's beginning to be a senior manager in that company.

David reflects on his past wins as a source of encouragement when the king questions his prowess. Certain storms will make an individual question their ability to overcome. Can I do this? Yes, you can, God will strengthen you. David could see how he fought lions previously, and from that, he found a way to deal with Goliath. Overcoming a difficult situation is a true indication that God will deal even with the current situation.

King Saul could have hired diviners to kill Goliath as people today use them to solve issues. Instead, he gives David the benefit of doubt and says to him, 'may the Lord be with you.' We should acknowledge that in all situations we need God.

It is important to notice that God does not send us to faraway places but brings our help very close to us; we need to just believe and fully rely on Him.

Proverbs 3:5-7, 'Acknowledge God in all your ways and He shall direct your paths. Learn not to lean on your own understanding.

This tale of humble beginnings imparts the lesson that individuals exhibit diverse approaches to tasks. We cannot all conform to a single mold; our uniqueness defines us. David's distinctive method of vanquishing Goliath, for instance, sets him apart — he eschews conventional spears, refusing to adopt Saul's war armor. The narrative underscores the importance of tackling situations in one's own way rather than emulating others.



CHAPTER TWO

STORM

As the pages of "Strong from Within" turn, we embark on a journey through the difficulties of life, guided by the unwavering light of faith. In this chapter, titled "Storms," we talk about the difficulties that test the fortitude of our souls, drawing inspiration from the steadfast teachings of Christianity. Like vessels navigating through turbulent waters, we explore the profound connection between resilience and the unyielding strength found within the depths of one's spiritual foundation.

Storms are inevitable—unpredictable and they challenge our course, threatening to sway us off our intended path. Yet, as we navigate through the waves of adversity, it is our unwavering faith that becomes the anchor, grounding us in the assurance that even in the fiercest storms, we are not alone.

This chapter unfolds as a testament to the power of the Christian spirit in weathering life's tempests. Drawing from biblical wisdom and timeless parables, we discover how the storms that rage within and around us are opportunities for growth,

transformation, and a deepening connection with our Creator. The chapters that precede "Storms" have laid the foundation, and now, as the winds howl and the waves rise, we stand poised to uncover the divine strength that lies within the heart of the storm.

In "Strong from Within," the storms are not pointers to despair but rather they are experiences within which our faith is refined, our character strengthened, and our resilience fortified. As we navigate the seas of life, let us find solace in the knowledge that, with each passing wave, we have the power to emerge stronger, wiser, and more steadfast in our Christian journey. So, let the pages turn, and let the storms within be met with the unshakeable foundation of a soul anchored in faith.

The greatest comeback

In the small town of Serenity Springs lived, a woman named Grace, whose life unfolded like a hymn. Grace had experienced her fair share of storms and challenges, and as the years unfolded, she became a living testament to resilience and unwavering faith.

Grace's journey through life's challenges began when a sudden illness swept through her family. The once jubilant and happy household echoed with the solemn notes of struggle and despair. Yet, Joy, armed with the shield of her faith, stood unshaken. In the midst of hospital corridors and tear-stained prayers, her unwavering trust in God's plan shone like a beacon.

As the storm of illness raged, Joy drew strength from the scripture, "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11) Each trial became a stepping-stone, a testament to her steadfast belief that even in the darkest hours; a divine light would guide her path.

After the illness, financial burdens loomed like dark clouds. Yet, Joy's resilience was not to be overshadowed. She embraced the challenge, turning to her faith for guidance. She remembered the verse, "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19) Through hard work, prayer, and unexpected opportunities, the storm of financial uncertainty gradually gave way to stability.

However, life's storms are seldom predictable, and a relationship challenge soon swept into Joy's life. Betrayal and heartbreak threatened to capsize the vessel of her emotions. Yet, anchored in her faith, Grace found the strength to forgive, heal, and rebuild. The scripture, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:32) became her guiding light.

As the years passed, Joy's story resonated in the hearts of those who witnessed her journey. Her life, a symphony of triumph over trials, inspired others to face their storms with faith and resilience. Joy emerged not only as a victor but also as a beacon of hope, proving that, indeed, those rooted in faith can weather any storm and emerge stronger from within. God restored her marriage and made her stable enough to also assist those in need.

The match day had come. We were all zealous and energetic to play. Every team anticipated that it was going to win the game. Vigorous preparations had been done weeks prior to the day. The rules were simple, that is in addition to the normal football game rules, winning was not based on the one who will have more goals after the time of play is over, but we had set it such that four goals by any team were to make us change sides. Then the first team to reach eight goals was to win the game.

The game kicked off and the ball was set rolling. We were the “Amigos FC”, while the other team was called, “Meza wembe FC”. Meza wembe FC managed to score four goals while we had only one goal. We changed sides and after sometime Meza wembe had only one goal remaining to win. They had six goals ahead of us. The scoreboard read 7 – 1, we were the ones at one goal. We had to make necessary changes as a way to make us come back to the game.

We still believed that we were going to win the game. We made sure the defense was strong, the midfield had the best players and the strikers were skillful. We scored the second goal and it gave us hope to continue giving our best. Things turned upside down because we were burning with hope and the other team was busy thinking that it was impossible for us to win. Logically it was impossible for us to win but we never gave up.

Finally, we made it to seven goals and won the match as well. We were filled with joy more than ever and celebrated the abnormal victory, which had occurred to us.

This story reminds us of the journey in this world. Most of the time we are enthusiastic and we believe in ourselves. Our greatest prayer is that victory be on our side. It really matters where the energy or strength comes from during our happy moments. The same hope and vigor has to last even when things seem not to work for us. Short-lived hope will make us give up whenever a situation seems like an unmovable mountain. A secret keeps people to continue trusting in the process even when statistics make it clear that they have lost.

See the Israelites at war against the Philistines. The physical appearance of Goliath made them forget the greater God who was on their side. However, David who had been always sourcing his strength from God was able to see that God had given them victory and thus asked for a chance to deal with Goliath. Still blinded by the fact that Goliath was too strong to be defeated; they were hesitating to give David the chance. After giving him a chance, the opposite happened! The giant that was too strong to be beaten was beheaded using his own sword.

2 Kings 19....What about Hezekiah. Upon receiving the letter from the king of Assyria, who threatened them that no one was going to deliver them from his hand. He knew that the message had made many of his people be downcast and feel weak. Therefore, he encouraged them not to be afraid of the Assyrians' army, a flesh army but they had God on their side. Then he knelt down with Isaiah to pray about the situation. God gave them victory after the prayer.

Storms will always create an impression that we are already defeated even before trying. The enemy will always make us

neglect our strong holds so that we can be destroyed easily. Most of the time during hard times we tend to focus on the magnitude of damage that such moments are going to cause in our lives and we forget that God has greater ways than ours; *Isaiah 55: 8-9*

8. *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.*

9 *“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Before the storm

We should always be prayerful even if things are good.

Before the games start every team always has hope that they are going to win. Every side believed that it was going to win. The faces depicted energy and confidence. The same way in life, during happy moments we put trust in ourselves for everything around us. This should not blind our eyes for it might be just an illusion, especially if the source is a temporary source. Strength and peace should prevail even during hard times. The truth is that hard times are not planned for. They sometimes happen.

Phil.4.6 – Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Phil.4.7 – And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Whenever trouble hits us, we often become anxious and at cross roads not knowing which is the best way to go. For us to stand firm and strong during such times then we should invest in the good times. We should invest more in reading the word of God, prayer and praise God. This nourishes our hearts and creates an atmosphere that makes us resilient from the outside world's influence.

The launch escape system.

During the launching of a spacecraft. The escape tower was located on top of the spacecraft, above the crew module. The tower contained the rocket motor and other equipment needed to separate the spacecraft from the launch vehicle and carry it to safety. During launch, the protective shroud covered the spacecraft to protect it from the aerodynamic forces and the heat generated by the rocket engines.

If a failure occurred during launch, the launch escape system would be activated. The rocket motor would ignite, and the escape tower would pull the spacecraft away from the launch vehicle, using a combination of rockets and solid-fuel motors.

The spacecraft would then separate from the escape tower and deploy its parachutes, allowing it to land safely on the ground or in the water.

The beginning of each new day is like the launching of a spacecraft. There are many expected perils before the day ends. We need to create a mechanism/system that is going to separate

us from worldly influence whenever an unexpected trouble happens along our way. NASA knew that it is not always smooth and did not assume that there were no faults, for man does make mistakes. Hence, created a system to separate from the vehicle and take the spacecraft to safety.

We should understand that things do not just happen on their own. Simple problems sometimes make us think that we do not need prior preparation for us to be strong enough to deal with the storm. Safety measures should always be employed; challenges do not give notifications whenever it comes. Having our foundation in Christ is one and only safety measure that will never fail. It is a world of seasons. During the harvest, let us make sure that our effort bears enough to take us even during the dry season. In times of adversity, our refuge from worldly challenges lies in prayer. By surrendering ourselves to the Lord and allowing Him to take control, we believe that during challenging moments, He will carry us in His arms, separating us from the negative influences of the world—akin to a launch vehicle propelling us beyond earthly distractions.

Job had built his foundation in the Lord by living a righteous life during the times when he had plenty. When he lost everything, he remained firm in the Lord and finally God doubled whatever he had lost. He never expected such hard times to come but he had built a launch escape system that took him to safety when the devil attacked him.

David lived a righteous life. He trusted in the Lord and God showed up when he was in trouble. We see while they were in battle with the Philistines, they came to Ziklag and found out that the Amalekites had taken all who had remained there and everything that was there. The men who were together with David became angry and wanted to stone David. In the midst of all that turmoil David was able to separate himself and encouraged himself in the Lord. God gave him strength to withstand all the pressure inside him and made him to pray and ask for guidance. He did not have a preconceived solution but was ready for a no or a yes from the Lord. The Lord told him to follow the Amalekites and he was able to retrieve all that had been taken.

A launch escape system should be created before a fault happens. Faults are dynamic thus; we need a launch escape system that is going to handle any problem. Investment in prayer and trusting fully in the Lord during the good times will keep us going in the difficult times. Having a deep understanding of God gives us the confidence and strength to thrive well. For our God is an extraordinary God.

The seven years of plenty and seven years of famine in Egypt also makes vivid the same concept of the escape mechanism. A mechanism that was used to curb the trouble that came with famine. The same story as well reminds us to be watchful because the Lord speaks to us in different ways. The time of Pharaoh God used a dream to tell them of the future thus making them save so that they are not consumed when the time comes.

Genesis 41: 35-36

35 And let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it.

36 That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine.”

During the storm, we should surrender it all to the Lord and focus on Him to help us come up with a solution.

It is during the storm that Christians suffer from scarcity of resources. Some actually regret how they had previously wasted resources in the season when they had. This chapter will guide on resource management anchored by the story of Joseph in the Bible.

{GENESIS 41:46-57, 47:13-26}

The Bible in Genesis 41 reports how Joseph stored a lot of food in the years when Egypt had plenty. When the season of plenty ended, Egyptians had enough food to eat while some Israelite countries had none.

In Genesis 47, the Bible still reports how Joseph managed to secure land for Pharaoh. He exchanges land with food that he had been saving during seasons of plenty and as people were facing scarcity, David and Pharaoh had plenty.

With resource management and the discipline of saving, Joseph managed to pull Egypt out of famine. It is very important to not only save but tithe to God so that in times of need, God can remember and bless you.



Chapter Three

DURING THE STORM

Jesus calming the storm

27 But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” 28 “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.” 29 “Come,” he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!” 31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?” 32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. 33 Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

First you see that Jesus walked on water even when the wind was there he did not sink. However, Peter after Jesus told him to walk on water, he saw the wind and began to sink. This passage clearly indicates to us that our faith in Christ really matters because being rooted in Christ will make sure that he will be with us even during the storm.

Peter doubted and began to sink but Christ came to hold his hand. When you see the wind raging and the storm so threatening, call the name of Jesus and he will hold your hand and the storm

will not make you sink. You will sink if you trust on your strength or when you fight alone without allowing Christ to hold your hand.

Mark 4:

39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. 40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" 41 They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

It is very important when you put your faith in Christ. Mark made it clear that even the wind or the storm obey Christ. This is the passage where you can draw confidence and fully surrender to Christ for even the storm obeys him. Life is full of ups and downs and stormy moments come to all Christians and non - Christians. For you to survive during the storm then you have to believe in Christ.

The state of your spiritual being is crucial when it comes to walking in a stormy moment. It is the same as walking through a dark tunnel where you are exposed to all dangers but you don't have the physical power to avoid them. Pain and suffering become a part of you.

The book of Ruth evinces how God guides his people through the moments of pain, loss and suffering. Naomi and her husband went to Moab when there was famine in Bethlehem.

Ruth 1:

*3 Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons.
4 They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, 5 both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.*

Moving to Moab was a solution to run away from the famine in Bethlehem, Naomi never expected to lose all members of her family, that is the two sons and the husband. Bitterness increased and she asked her daughters in law to go back to their parents for she knew that whatever had happened was not going to come back to normal. One of the daughters-in-law Orpha went back to her parents because there was no sign for redemption.

11 But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? 12 Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons— 13 would you wait until they grew up?"

Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has turned against me!"

14 At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

You can see that Naomi is even thinking that the hand of the Lord was against her. It was difficult for her to see what the Lord was doing in the background. I believe she would have rejoiced and sang songs of Joy and redemption if she would have known that the Lord was planning to have Ruth to become the great, great grandmother of Jesus. It is clearly said here that the plan that the Lord has for you will remain intact even when you are going through the storm.

Romans 8:

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Going through difficult moments may seem as if you have sinned but that's not always the case. Hard times make you grow in faith and you should view such times as moments for you to cling on to the Lord and to allow him to hold your hand. In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Ruth understood well that the Lord was going to work it out. She did not know how but her faith in the Lord made her follow Naomi yet she was not sure how and when the Lord was going to redeem them. She was ready to suffer and go through the same pain that Naomi was going through. She was the kind of person who will never look back once they get into something. This shades light to you that the storm should not make you look back and return to the comfort zone for abundance is in the Lord.

God was working everything in the background and that's the reason that he is mentioned a few times in the book of Ruth. His plan is always the best plan for everyone. Pain may make you follow your own ways that seem to work for you at that moment. Nevertheless, the book of proverbs reminds us that we should not be wise in our eyes.

6 But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." 18 When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

Loyalty is depicted in this passage as Ruth remains loyal to Naomi even at the face of turmoil. She did not abandon Naomi. It is easy for one to leave a friend during troublesome seasons

aswell it is easy to follow a friend during good times. Ruth went against what most people like Orpha did, she remained loyal to Naomi. Following Christ applies the same rule as shown in the passage below:

1st Peter 4

*12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, when it[a] takes place to test you, as if something strange were happening to you.
13 But to the degree that you share in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, so that also at the revelation of his glory you may rejoice and be glad.*

Friendship should not only be in the good seasons but also when you are walking through the lows of life. Therefore, suffering is not an indication that our friendship with God has elapsed. Going back to Bethlehem.

20 “Don’t call me Naomi,[b]” she told them. “Call me Mara,[c] because the Almighty[d] has made my life very bitter. 21 I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted[e] me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me.” 22 So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

Naomi and Ruth return back to Bethlehem from Moab. Naomi was still bitter of the loss and she insisted on being called “Mara” which meant bitter.

Ruth 2:

2 And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor."

Storm does not mean seating and waiting for it to subside. There will be time for crying and lamenting but still one has to regain energy and allow the Lord to renew your strength so that life can continue. For Ruth and Naomi to survive they had to find food, Ruth was not ashamed picking up leftover grain and relied on favor from the owner of the fields that she found herself in. It is easy for you not to accept the fact that life changes whenever a storm comes. The status that one was on diminishes and it becomes even worse when one finds himself/herself in abject poverty within a short period after a loss.

The truth is that storms make some homeless, those who were rich become poor, friends run away, children become homeless and many more problems. Different people respond differently in such circumstances. Although, the rule of thumb here is relying on Christ and he will take away our shame and embrace us with love and kindness. His peace which surpasses the understanding of men will guard our hearts and mind.

Once you are reduced to a lower level by a storm it is good to accept and just continue from that new point upwards. The bottom line is that it is all figured out by God and it will

eventually

workout for your good. You should not let difficulties make you feel ashamed and avoid making moves. The timeline of God is different from the timeline of man. God can take you to a level that other men through their own strengths took years to reach, in a day.

8 So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me. 9 Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled."

22 Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, "It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with the women who work for him, because in someone else's field you might be harmed."

Boaz and Naomi are all conveying the same message that Ruth should not go to other fields but to Boaz's field only. Naomi made it clear that in the other fields she might be hurt. It was clear that God had guided Ruth to Boaz and not to any other field. The friends or rather the people that you go to seek help from in terms of need should be the ones that God has guided you to.

Sticking together with fellow Christians will be so helpful for you to be nourished and regain your strength. Destined helpers are not arbitrarily chosen but should be prayerfully considered

so that God's guidance takes you to the right people who will not let you down.

Seeking advice from the ones that are above you and obeying the instructions given is a key point to note when going through a difficult time. Ruth obeyed and followed the instructions given to her by Naomi and Boaz and you will see how the story unfolds as God's orchestration comes to manifest.

Ruth 3:

3 One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, I must find a home[a] for you, where you will be well provided for. 2 Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. 3 Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. 4 When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do."

The time has reached when Ruth has to stop wearing the mourning clothes and has to dress up well to make herself available for marriage before Boaz, the redeemer. Loss and pain make you grieve, shed tears, be sad and other ways of grieving. All these should happen for sometime. A time will come when it won't matter whether the storm is still with you or not, but

you will have to dress up well for a new season. You will have to make yourself ready for a shift into a new arena of fulfillment of God's promises.

You will have to stop weeping and avail yourself for God's provision to take you out of the storm. The problem comes when such a time reaches and you continue weeping, you continue blaming God for the pain or disaster that he caused you, because it will be difficult for God to lift you out of the problem.

During the storm you need to be alert and have a sober mind. You can see how God uses Naomi to come up with a plan that Ruth was to follow for her to get married to Boaz. Sometimes, God gives us instructions to follow and other times He works miracles for us. It will be a big mistake to always wait for God to do miracles for us. Ruth's situation was to carry out the instructions given to her by Naomi. Since she was a woman of noble character she did it precisely.

18 Then Naomi said, "Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today."

After Ruth had gone to Boaz's place at night, Naomi was sure that everything would be okay. Indeed Boaz did not settle until the matter was settled.

Ruth 4:

13 So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. 14 The woman said to Naomi: "Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! 15 He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him."

16 Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. 17 The women living there said, "Naomi has a son!" And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

There was a closer relative to Naomi than Boaz but he refused to take Ruth as his wife and Boaz did the redemption. The storm that Naomi and Ruth were experiencing elapsed and a new season began. It was through resilience, obedience, loyalty, integrity and inner strength which was the work that God was doing in the background as the two were going through what it seemed as a huge mountain. They had to accept the shame of living a life that they never expected, collecting the remains that others left after harvesting.

It's amazing, how God brings the pain, weeping, loss and tears into a great redemption and ultimately the greatest redeemer of the world found his lineage.



Chapter Four

AFTER THE STORM

In the aftermath of life's issues, there exists different responses among Christians in their response to the varying experiences they endure. This chapter brings on board different responses from different Christians who undergo the challenges of life. For some, the storms serve as a crucible, fostering gratitude and humility as they emerge on the other side, thanking God for the strength to weather the adversities. However, as we explore these narratives, contrast also unfolds, revealing a subset of Christians who, instead of expressing gratitude, succumb to pride. This chapter has stories of faith tested by trials, shedding light on the diverse responses that follow the storms of life.

When dawn comes after a long and scary night, do not forget to thank the one who guarded you and gave you another day. Not many have survived. It is also an indication that God has something great for you.

Isa.49.8 - This is what the LORD says: "In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you; I will keep you and will make

you to be a covenant for the people, to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances,

Isa.49.9 - to say to the captives, 'Come out,' and to those in darkness, 'be free!' "They will feed beside the roads and find pasture on every barren hill.

Isa.49.10 - They will neither hunger nor thirst, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat upon them. He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water.

Isa.49.11 - I will turn all my mountains into roads, and my highways will be raised up.

Thanksgiving is a force, power and authority just as the verse below asserts the message.

Reuben Dunamis (Main Campus Christian Union)

Jer.30.19 – From them will come songs of thanksgiving and the sound of rejoicing. I will add to their numbers, and they will not be decreased; I will bring them honor, and they will not be disdained.

Thanksgiving moves God, and makes Him do great things to us. Gratitude is a force that shows reverence to God and thus He blesses us.

“Through knowledge the just shall be delivered. Without knowledge, the power cannot deliver you. He that is ignorant do not follow him around. Whatsoever you don't know it's power, you can never actualize its benefits in your life”

Reuben Dunamis (Main Campus Christian Union)

Reuben Dunamis continues to say that, “whatever you don’t know its power you can never actualize its benefits in your life.”

We need to understand the power of offering gratitude to God for us to be able to give credit even for the things, which we consider very small like waking up. It is a special gift for us to be alive.

In her book *Thrive*, Kinya Gitonga expounds by saying that grateful people have a different way of approaching difficult issues. For instance when one loses a loved one, they may hurt but at the same time, they are able to thank God for the time He had allowed them to spend with the deceased. This gives them energy to preserve through the season of grieving.

Luke.17.15 – One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice.

Luke.17.16 – He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

Luke.17.17 – Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?”

Luke.17.18 – Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”

The ten lepers were cleansed of leprosy but only one came to give thanks. We know that they had been waiting for such a miracle to happen to them but when it happens, they forget to give thanks! Imagine assisting someone who fails to express appreciation. While it is possible that gratitude resides deep

within their hearts, it is essential to recognize that gratitude is most meaningful when communicated. Acknowledgment and expressing gratitude have the power to uplift one's spirit, serving as a form of feedback for the actions or assistance received. Leaving appreciation open-ended for the recipient to deduce on their own may not effectively convey the true depth of gratitude. In this light, actively expressing thanks becomes a crucial aspect of fostering mutual understanding and appreciation in interpersonal relationships.

After God guides us through a difficult moment, learn to give thanks always. It is a way of appreciation and asking Him to guide even in the next activities.

When we do not give recognition to God as the one who led us through the storm; we will take pride in growing in us and thus end up thinking that it was by our strength that we made it.

In the book, *Purple Hibiscus*.

By Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian author reminds us of the importance of giving thanks to God in the midst of a difficult situation:

“Before we ate, Father Amadi led us in a prayer of thanksgiving. I wondered what we had to be thankful for, with all that was happening in the country, but as Father Amadi spoke, I realized that there was so much to be grateful for. I was grateful for this meal, for the fact that we were all here, alive, and together. I was grateful for the rain that had fallen earlier in the day, for the sun

that was now setting, for the breeze that blew through the open windows, for the flowers that bloomed in the garden.

Father Amadi spoke of thanksgiving not just as a form of prayer, but as a way of life. He said that we should be thankful for every moment, every experience, and every person that we encounter, because all of these things are gifts from God. Even in the midst of pain and suffering, he said, there is always something to be thankful for.”

In this passage, the main character, Kambili, is at a dinner with Father Amadi, a Catholic priest. Despite the turmoil and violence in Nigeria at the time, Father Amadi leads them in a prayer of thanksgiving, reminding them to be grateful for the blessings in their lives, no matter how small. This passage reflects the importance of gratitude.

This excerpt really stresses on the aspect of giving and expressing gratitude for everything that happens around us.

Storm causes loss and wears us out.

From the book of Haggai. The people of Judah after returning from captivity they found a ruined city and temple. They stayed for quite a long time without rebuilding the house of God. They just built their own houses and left the house of God as a razed structure.

They stayed until God raised the prophet Haggai to remind them of the temple, which had become an Oblivion.

Hag.2.2 – “Speak to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people. Ask them,

Hag.2.3 – ‘Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?’

When compared with the former glory, the present looked like nothing. Storm destroys but God restores. After having gone through a difficult moment, which might even cause us to lose our beloved ones in the process. Other troubles like being involved in an accident and ending up with a broken leg, broken hand or injuries that make us feel worthless and have low self-esteem. However, this is not what God wants of us.

Hag.2.4 – But now be strong, O Zerubbabel,’ declares the LORD. ‘Be strong, O Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,’ declares the LORD, ‘and work. For I am with you,’ declares the LORD Almighty.

Hag.2.5 – ‘This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. In addition, my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.’

Hag.2.6 – “This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land.

This is the assurance that God was giving to the people of Judah. He knew that the present situation was making them afraid; it was making them feel as if He was not amongst them. They even

forget that God had covenanted with them that He was going to be with them.

God walks with them, encouraging them that they should be strong and not to fear. It is evident from the passage above that the focus of the people of Judah really mattered. They were to be strong and not to fear. They were focusing on the situation, which made them fear and wonder whether the present will reach the glory of the former house.

Hag.2.9 – ‘The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,’ says the LORD Almighty. ‘And in this place I will grant peace,’ declares the LORD Almighty.”

This reminded the people of Judah to forget about whatever was lost during the time they were attacked and taken to captivity. God assures them that the glory of the present house will be greater than that of the former house.

The same way we should not worry about what we lose during difficult times but trust in God for He has promised to make the present situation of greater glory than the former one.

We see the same from the story of Job that after suffering and losing everything, God blessed him at the end of it all, with double of what he had.

God in all seasons of life.

Hebrews 13:8, 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.'

Do you believe that God never changes? If yes, what makes you think so? Suppose it is a no, what makes you think God is dynamic?

At times individuals face situations, which hit them so much that they are left questioning their faith. Many wonder whether it was meant to be so. It is at this time that individuals start questioning the existence of God. Does God actually exist? Why did God let me undergo this and that? Why me? Why not someone else?

In the well-known biblical-story dealing with the problem of undeserved suffering, Job loses his children, his possessions and even his wealth.

Job 1: 13-22 reports that while Job was feasting in his brother's house, his oxen and donkeys grazing nearby were taken by Sabeans. A little while later, the fire of God fell on his servants and cattle. They all die. His sons and daughters also feasting at their uncle's house are killed by mighty winds. The Bible documents that Job reacts by saying,

'Job 1: 21 Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord was taken away. May the name of the lord be praised?'

Job 1: 22,' In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.'

In today's world, where material wealth is highly valued, who would not feel the pinch of losing their hard-earned wealth? Who

would not feel the pinch of losing his children? Despite all this, Job acknowledges that it is God who gives and it is God who also takes. He never rushes to diviners, instead the Bible reports that he praises the Lord.

When individuals face such trying times, most of them abandon their faith and seek help in other places. It is at this time that a Christian forgets how strong they have been, they forget how God has been there for them all-long. Instead, they turn to witchcraft. Most of them visit diviners and traditional medicine men for help. In such times, most are given concoctions or armlets and other items, which they deem powerful. All of this is against God's word, which requires us to:

'Be still, stand firm and see the deliverance that the Lord will bring you today. The lord will fight for you; you need to be still [Exodus 14; 13-14.]

Other than just losing his children, Job faced more trials and temptations. He is struck with boils. His wife is surprised, why doesn't he curse God? Why does his faith not waiver?

Job 2:9 Are you still holding on to your integrity. Curse God and die!

This Bible verse brings into light what happens to most of the Christians when faced by trials. They tend to give up and lose faith in God. They get so desperate to the point of wishing death.

Despite all this, Job answers by saying:

Job 2: 10, 'Shall we accept well from God, and not trouble?'

Job responds to this by demonstrating his unending faith in God. He makes his wife realize that both good and trouble can originate from God but all are for our good. In all situations, Job did not lose his hope and faith in God.

The story of a job on its own shows that anyone can suffer. There is no one who deserves suffering and another who does not deserve suffering. Job himself experienced undeserved suffering. He had done nothing wrong against God. Therefore, brethren's, anyone can suffer. Christian or not. God gives everything.

James 1;17,' Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to no change.'

In regards to the story of Job, he holds on fervently praying. It is at the end of the storm that God greatly rewards his faith. Job says to God,

'I know that you can do all things, no plan of yours is thwarted. 'Job 42:2

This shows that his belief in God never swayed.

Job 42:7 God reports to Eliphaz that he is annoyed by how his two friends spoke about him.

This story of Eliphaz and his friends shows us that God is keen in our responses and at times, he gets annoyed with how we behave. It is important to respect God for who he is.

Philippians 4; 4-5 to 'rejoice in the lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The lord is near.'

Careless words made the Lord God get angry with Job's friends. Despite all this, Job never hated his friends, instead he prayed for them.

Job 42: 10, 'After Job prayed for his friends, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before.'

Job's friends mocked him and wondered how he would still trust in God even after losing everything. Most people would have thought of vengeance. As Job did, we should pray for enemies. God blesses those who hope and wait on Him. He restores what is lost. Job died while old and full of years.

According to Hebrews 13:8, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. What does that mean? It means that God is the same always and never ever changes. He is always good, always loving and all-powerful. No matter how the world changes around us, he is ever consistent. In seasons of laughter, joy and trouble, in seasons of lack, having and having not He remains to be God.



Chapter Six

TIMES OF ADVERSITY.

While navigating the waters of life, we often encounter periods that test the strength of our faith, character and resilience. In this exploration, we delve into a topic that is both universal and deeply personal: "Times of Adversity." These are the moments when the fabric of our existence is stretched, and the true measure of our fortitude is revealed. These challenges shape us, exploring the lessons hidden within adversity and the transformative power that emerges when faced with life's formidable trials. Through this exploration, we aim to share insights on how individuals, communities, and societies navigate and grow amidst adversity, transforming challenges into catalysts for personal and collective evolution.

'Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with THANKSGIVING, present your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Jesus Christ.'

Philippians 4:6-7,

The Bible tells us even when suffering we should make all these requests known to God and thanksgiving is inclusive. Tell me, what do you begin doing when faced by trouble? Is it praying to God making your requests known to him but thanksgiving? Alternatively, is it complaining?

Being a Christian does not exempt us from facing trouble. It is by this that God's name is glorified.

My soul will boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together.

Psalms 34:2-3,

This is from *Daniel chapters 6 and 9.*

In the story of Daniel and the story of Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego, The bible shows us how Daniel and his friends lived in Babylon during the time of captivity. Here they are faced with pressures to conform to the Babylon way of life and give up the ways of their people. Daniel and his friends did not give in to pressure. Daniel prayed to God even when it was illegal to. Shadrach and his friends never bowed to the king's image even when they were expected to. As a punishment Daniel is thrown in the den of lions, even when he was in the den of lions, he never betrayed his faith in God nor gave in. He held steady of his faith in God. God rewards Daniel by giving him wisdom and ability to interpret dreams. Other than that, the Lord God seals the mouths of lions and

they do not feed on him. On the other hand, Shadrach and his friends were thrown in the furnace, which was made several times hotter, but they were not burnt. God saved them.

This story teaches us that through adversity, God's name is glorified and exalted. For instance through this, the people of Babylon came to realize that God does exist. The King of Babylon also came to realize that God rules both in Heaven and on Earth.

It is important to realize that God is still God at all seasons. He was God from the beginning and he still is and shall remain to be God. As a Christian hold on to your faith and glorify God. In due time, he shall reward you. It is from God that we get to source our strength. The Bible reports that when the king of Babylon peered in the furnace, he not only saw Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego, he also saw a fourth man that looked like the son of God. This means that God is always there for us, when we call Him, he answers.

'He gives power to the weak and to those who have no might he increases strength.'

ISAIAH 40:29,

No matter how bad the condition or situation of your life is, do not give up. Lean on Gods' grace and not your own understanding nor your own ability to get the desired results.

‘When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.’

Isaiah 4:32

This alone should be able to boost our Christian faith as God promises us that he will never abandon us. It is our choice to keep going through the tough seasons with God or quitting. Whenever we feel like giving up, we should watch out, for we might be operating on the carnal us. Let us have faith in God for He is in our team, He is the best team leader. Little by little, He will help you in clearing away the issues you are facing.

Times Of Joy And Celebrations, God Did It!

It is very important to not only fellowship with God at sad times but also to fellowship with God at happy times. Individuals forget desperate times when they needed God to be there. They instead take ownership of happy times forgetting that it was not their own making, it was God is doing.

‘I will give thanks to you, lord, with all my heart; I will tell you of your wonderful deeds.’ PSALMS 9:1

LUKE 17: 11-19

This Bible story is a story that illustrates the wonderful works of Jesus. Jesus was traveling along the border between Samaria and Galilee. He met ten men with leprosy who cried unto him to have pity on them, which literally means to heal them. Jesus asks them

to go show themselves to the priests and they shall be healed. When they were healed, the Bible records that it is only one of them among the ten that came praising God in a loud voice.

‘Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?’

‘Then He said to him, ‘Rise and go; your faith has made you well. ‘Luke 18-19.

Most Christians lie among the nine; barely do we thank God for giving us success. The lepers had struggled for so long with leprosy but when they received healing, they forgot to thank the one who healed them. Thanksgiving is key in the kingdom of God.

We ought to keep our promises to God. Whatever we promise God in our prayers binds us until we fulfil it. This is seen when Hannah pleads to God for a son. She promises to give back to God by allowing this son do God’s work. In the end, God heard her and He gave her a son. She also honored her promise.

‘Be joyful always; pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

I THESSALONIANS 5:16-18

‘ And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, Knowing that tribulations brings perseverance; and perseverance, proven character, and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God

has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy spirit who was given to us. ‘

ROMANS 5:3-5

Growing Strong With God In All Seasons Of Life.

It is easy to feel close to God on Sundays or after attending a service. Most surprisingly, we feel close to God when we get what we prayed for. Subconsciously, some of us conclude that God hears us.

It is crucial to understand that strong relationships take time to create and require wisdom. We should always remember God not in the times of trouble or need.

Appreciating God in all seasons of life comes with its own price. Helps one to desire for a closer association with God, choosing God because He is God, reading, memorizing and understanding scriptures, as they are the primary sources of knowledge in the journey to a strong spiritual foundation. It is difficult to manoeuvre through hard times but it is vital to handle tough times by trusting in God.

‘The seasons change and you change, but the Lord abides evermore the same, and the streams of His love are as deep, as broad and as full as ever.’- Charles H. SPURGEON.



Chapter Seven

FAITH

Faith is the unwavering belief in one's inner strength and resilience. It is a profound trust in the core of one is being, a belief that, despite challenges, setbacks, or uncertainties, there exists a wellspring of strength and courage within. This faith serves as a powerful anchor, guiding individuals through difficulties and empowering them to overcome obstacles with determination and resilience. In essence, faith, in the context of "Strong from Within," is the unshakeable confidence in one's ability to navigate life's challenges and emerge stronger on the other side.

Being strong from within seems easy yet challenging. There are times when an individual wants things to work out, yet he/she does nothing to actuate the burning desires. It is of importance to not only pray but also do our part, sitting and waiting for God to do magic does not work at all.

JAMES 2:26, 'Faith without action is dead.'

Research has shown that Africans tend to be more religious than mechanical. In what sense? Sitting and waiting?

The word of God clearly stipulates in JAMES 2: 26 *that, 'As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.'*

God also wants Christians to do something regarding the issues they are praying about. Several individuals give up on trying to change situations, maybe because they tried and it failed, maybe for one reason or the other plans changed. At this time, they feel that there is no need to try to figure out things. The Bible requests us to have faith; take action and God will reward our faith.

PROVERBS 16:9, *'The heart of man plans his way but the Lord establishes his steps.'*

How many plans have you planned without regarding God's will? How many plans have you done without including Him? Our plans sometimes fail because we do not rely on God.

PSALMS 33:11, *'The plans of the lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.'*

Discipline in Holding on Our Faith.

Faith is the belief in something we do not see. Through our faith in Christ, we become strong.

Discipline is that ability to do what you are expected to do at all times even when you do not feel like it. It is developing habits and

techniques that help in achieving what is set. As Christians, we develop discipline to hold on to our faith through:

- Prayer
- Worship
- Reading the scriptures.

'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept faith.'

2 timothy 4:7

When we hold on to faith, God enables us to fight our battles and gives us victory. To do this, we in turn have to live God's word.

Faith without Action Is Dead

2:14 what good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?

2:15 suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food.

2:16 if one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs what good is it.

2:22 you see that his faith and his actions were working together and his faith was made complete by what he did.

2:23 and the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend.

2:24 you see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

2:25 in the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?

2:26 as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

JAMES 2: 14-26

This scripture itself is self-explanatory. It shows the essence of having faith and examples in the bible of people who exhibited the same and how God rewarded them. At the end of the day, we learn that faith without action is dead. God also rewards our faith just as if he rewarded Abraham.

How Do We Strengthen Our Faith In All Seasons?

Creating a relationship with God in prayers where by one is free to turn to God for help. For instance, when faced with storms, it will be easy to turn to God for help majorly through:

a. Prayer.

Prayer is how Christians communicate with God. Just like our mortal relationships, we need communication to get along; as well, we need to communicate with God. It is essential to turn out to God and ask for everything that we need and he surely answers at the right time.

Prayer is a medium of communication where Christians come to the presence of God. Through prayer, we take our petitions to God. Prayer strengthens our connection with God for it takes us

closer to God just as when we come together with friends we create lasting bonds.

ISAIAH 60:22, *'At the right time, I, the Lord, will make it happen.'*

b. Reading the scriptures.

'Ignorance of scripture is ignorance of Christ.'

The Bible is an essential aspect in Christian life where Christians get to hear and learn from God. Reading the Bible alone is not enough. It is important to read study and understand the Bible. Other than that, one needs to memorize and understand scriptures as this will be their guide. Reading makes Christians sharper, more effective and changes their outlook as well as attitude towards different situations in life. Reading of scriptures brings solidarity in Christian Faith.

Do you look at the Bible as a letter from God?

When we receive text messages or letters, we tend to take time to read them as well as respond appropriately.

Why not look at the Bible today as a letter from God?

Reading the scriptures guides Christians through difficult trials; it strengthens our faith and helps us to live a holier life.

REQUIREMENTS IN READING SCRIPTURES.

- Set time to read scriptures.

As you designate time to do daily duties, it is equally important to set time and read the bible. This can be at times when you feel focused and alert. Making this a routine helps Christians to strengthen their faith and create a connection with God.

When was the last time you read the Bible?

- Pray before reading.

Prayer is essential even in reading scriptures. It helps us to ask God for guidance as well as enlightenment. It is through prayer that Christians request God for understanding of the scripture.

- Reflect on your reading.

Reflecting on God's word strengthens Christian faith. Reflect on passages of scriptures to determine messages that God might be sending you. It is through this that we get guidance on situations and hardships that we might be facing.

c. Worship.

Worship is devotion to God. We do not have to do so much for God to know we love him. When we uphold our faith, our actions reflect on showing Gods' goodness. Worship can be by singing or listening to Godly songs. This impacts our faith as worship gives us a platform to look back and see storms, which Jesus actually

calmed for us, prayers that He answered and such. This doubles and strengthens our faith in Him.

Genesis 15:7-21.

This Bible story takes us through the story of Abraham. Even when he was childless, he did not turn away from God. God blesses him with a child and he is quite excited. The same God asks him to sacrifice the child, which he does not get selfish with. He chooses to do as God requests and God sees his unwavering faith. Instead, he gives him a lamb to sacrifice. He is named the Father of Faith.

Amidst all these we see God testing Abraham severally and finally multiplying his faith. He blesses him exceedingly.

Uphold your faith in God at all times, He will remain God at all seasons.

‘Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.’

2 TIMOTHY 2:7

Why Is It Important That We Hold On To Our Christian Faith?

In the modern world, ungodliness is rampant and this corrupts Christian faith. It is at this time that humans have chosen to have faith in anything that literally gives them hope. May it be witchcraft, may it be medicine for men and women.

However, the true meaning of faith is ‘the evidence of things not seen.’ This is according to Hebrews 1:11.

1. Without faith, we cannot please God.

When you sit on something for instance a bench you are at ease because the bench is supposed to accommodate you entirely and you believe it will not give in to your weight?

If you can have faith in such material things, how much more times are you expected to have faith in God?

‘But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.’

HEBREWS 11: 6,

This verse creates awareness in us that when we have faith, we please God.

2. Faith moves God.

God notices our faith in Him. It is this faith that moves him to act and answer us.

In Matthew 15:21- 28, this Bible story talks about how Jesus came across a Canaanite Woman, who wanted his help as her daughter was demon possessed. She keeps on following him.

Verse 23, the disciple’s approach and urges Jesus to ‘Send her away, for she keeps crying after us.’ However, Jesus does not. Instead, he observes how

consistent and how she has hope and faith in him to heal her daughter. He says to her:

Verse 28 'then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O, woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' In addition, her daughter was healed from that very hour.

This verse shows us important elements in our Christian faith.

Jesus is moved by the amount of faith that we demonstrate in Him. He is moved by how much the woman believes that He is able to heal the daughter. This act makes him extend healing to the child.

Other than this, the verse shows the aspect of consistency. The woman does not give up even after nothing is done. She pursues after Christ until the disciples feel that she keeps on crying after them. It is important to understand that faith is what moves God to act.

Those who wait on the lord and have faith in him will not be put into shame.

'None of whose hope is in you will be put to shame.'

Psalms 25: 1,

3. Faith strengthens us during storms of life.

We live in a world where we have trouble from time to time. Faith is what makes us strong in such times. Suppose we experience trouble, it is faith that acts as a shield.

‘Above all, taking the shield of faith with which, you will be able to quench all fiery darts of the wicked one.’

Ephesians 6:16,

Fiery darts may be sicknesses; they may be in poverty, loss of jobs and such.

4. Faith also encourages others.

Unwavering faith cannot be hidden. It is something individuals observe and they can see. This encourages those who might be undergoing troubles in order to be firm in their faith. Just like smiles, faith can be contagious. Choose to stand strong in faith and inspire others to do the same.



Chapter Eight

LIVING THE WORD OF GOD

Living God's word may seem so easy. However, it is not every day that individuals choose to do things right or to do as God might have wanted them to. It is of importance to choose to do things in a Godly manner at all times.

'And Jesus said unto him, no man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' Luke 9: 62

This verse records as Jesus is saying, those who put their hand to the plough should continue with their journey and not give up. He insists that those who look back are unfit for his kingdom. What does that mean? Once we step out for our journey with Jesus, there will be no going back.

While farmers are ploughing, they need to guide the animal or machine pulling the plough in order to get neat rows, which are needed, for farming. Such farmers do not keep getting distracted as it messes with the intended goal. Christians also look forward to God's kingdom. They should not be distracted by earthly

things, physical comforts and other items they personally need to work on their faith and actions to ensure that at the end of life they attain eternal life.

When we start having faith in God, we get strong from within. We establish a relationship with God. It is not a relationship that serves only at happy times; it is a relationship that goes on all through our lives. Jesus is a source of our inner strength and he is not a partial source, God should be our source all through. True Christians focus on Jesus and despite the urgent need of money, wealth, basic needs we do not waver our faith.

Living God's word becomes a source of our strength in that, when troubled, we tend to turn to God for guidance and strength. With this, we do not waver in faith. Living God's word can be seen in our day-to-day activities.

For instance:

- a) Are you humble enough to appreciate God's doing after fervently praying?
- b) Do you believe in God's word?
- c) Do you accept it as God's doing?

Lessons Learned About Christian Suffering.

'The spirit helps us in our weaknesses. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.'

Romans 8:26,

Just like all individuals, Christians too undergo suffering even when they have done nothing wrong. It is important to understand that there is no one who is meant to suffer while another gets exempted from suffering and tough seasons.

The Bible in Romans 8:26 reminds us that even when we are weak, he helps us pray. This means that even in suffering, Christians are never alone. Instead, the Holy Spirit is with them. DECIDE TO BELIEVE in God even during trials and temptations.

This teaches us that:

a. Suffering Precedes/ Comes After Liberation.

‘And the God of Grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.’

1 Peter 5:10,

Individuals undergo suffering in life. God comes at their aid and delivers them. It is equally important to uphold our faith, wait on God who will uplift us and we enjoy freedom that comes with being strong in Christ.

b. Do Not Be Condemned

When we face troubles and raging storms, we might fall but God renews our strength in him. Falling and undergoing trials does not mean anyone should be condemned. Look at how children grow. They may try walking but they fall not once but several times. They may be bruised and some actually get severely hurt.

Despite all this, they keep trying until they perfect the art of walking. Children's development is universal but the experiences are unique to each child. This should reflect us as human beings. We all face setbacks and we may fall but this does not mean we should give up. Similarly, universally individuals face tough times but each has their own unique experiences and way of response.

Christians have to accept that being a Christian does not exempt anyone from human experiences. We all have strengths and weaknesses. Allow Christ to be strength in your weaknesses. Allow Him to be your strength during times when you are weak.

c. Do Not Give Up.

'It shall be done for you as you have believed.'

MATTHEW 8:13,

Giving up during tough seasons in life makes Christians to get discouraged and lose their faith. Christ does not want us to get discouraged, instead He wants us to get encouraged and keep on waiting and hoping in Him. Be patient with yourself and be patient with God as he works out good things for us.

While waiting on God, our responses to tough times are crucial as they determine what we get to do next. It is very important to be positive. Instead of thinking that I am doomed, God is never there for me, we can say that I believe God is there for me, no weapon against me will prosper and other scriptures that strengthen our faith in God.

In Matthew 8:13, the bible tells us that it shall be done unto us just as we believe. When we believe discouraging words, they happen, when we believe good things, they happen.

d. All Things Work for Good.

‘All things work together for good to those who love God.’

ROMANS 8:28,

It is important for Christians to believe and trust that all things work for good. God designs what we go through in life that is if we allow His plan to be our plan. Therefore, no matter the situations, our Christian faith should guide us to believe in Him, because everything happens is for our good. Do not tremble when faced with storms because God is the same in situations. Faith will give us inner strength to be steadfast and to wait upon God.

e. Always Have Hope

Abraham was named the father of faith. The bible records that he never gave up on God but he trusted Him even when he did not understand. Today when trouble comes, some of us do question our faith while others abandon our faith and seek solutions from the world. Abraham trusted in the Lord even when her wife Sarah could not bear a child. He waited on God all through and God rewarded his faith by making him a father of many nations. Do not lose hope in God. Instead, be willing to have an open mindset and accept what God wants to happen in your life.

f. Adopt A Peaceful, Calm And Alert Mind

There is a lot to do in this generation. In fact, time seems insufficient. There is a lot of noise all the time. The moment we step out of the house, there are machines, cars, people and birds. When we get back home, there are kids, television, music and such. The mind is always occupied until we have no time to listen to God's still voice. Train your mind to be still and hear from God. It is then that we get to hear what God wants from us. Be careful of what you think as it dictates what you believe. Similarly be careful of what you constantly hear and we get to do that which we feed ourselves with. Bad character ruins good morals. When we constantly surround ourselves with people who do not believe in God, we end up being like them. When we surround ourselves with them that believe in God, we tend to also believe in God.

g. Aligning Ourselves With God's Will

'No, in all these we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.'

ROMANS 8:36,

It is important to understand that being a Christian does not really exempt us from suffering. Just like a job who was blameless, we may also be tempted and tested severely but it is of importance to hold on and align yourself with God's word.

The Bible tells us that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God.

‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.’

ROMANS 8: 35,

This means that even in hardships, God is always there for us and at the end, we emerge as conquerors. It is important to hold on God’s word and align ourselves according to His will.

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.’

1 PETER 1:14,’

In regards to Gods’ will, we should abandon sin. Sin damages our faith and it alienates us from Christ who is our source of inner strength. When we did not know Christ we acted differently, now that we know Christ, we are called to act in a godly manner so that others can learn from us and witness that Christ lives. It is therefore very important to change and act accordingly and in ways, that pleases God.

In MARK 14: 32-42,

We learn of how Jesus took his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. The Bible records that Jesus prayed saying the following.

Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will. ‘Verse 36

He later gets back and finds his disciples already asleep. He wakes them up and still goes back to pray while the disciples fall asleep again. This verse generally teaches us about consistency in prayer as well as accepting Gods' will. Jesus had no sin; he had done no one any evil, amidst all this He is crucified for our sins. It is human to feel overwhelmed and helpless amidst trouble. He also was overwhelmed but instead of turning to humans for help or running away, Christ prayed. Look at how Jesus approaches God with humility, Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. He acknowledges God is able but if it is Gods' will may it be done. In addition, God's will be done. Christ is crucified and he upholds His faith even in the cross. God rewards all this by his resurrection. The Bible story teaches us that faith and not giving up is essential. Believing in God is equally crucial. Jesus did not give up praying when he met disciples already asleep. He wakes them up then resumes. May we learn to align ourselves to God's will and to accept His doings?

'In Him we are chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.

EPHESIANS 1:11-23,

In Ephesians, the Bible reminds us as Christians that we are chosen and predestined according to God's plan. Everything that God does, He does it with the purpose of His will. All that is needed of us is trusting in God, praying, upholding our faith and God gives strength as well as victory.



Chapter Nine

PRIDE

Pride is defined as a deep satisfaction derived from one's own achievements. It is excessive self-esteem, which leads individuals to elevate their opinions and thoughts above God's authoritative word. The Bible is against pride i.e.

Proverbs 11:2, 'When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom'

Most of us often feel like exposing our strengths so that everyone else sees how better than them we are. There are those moments when we aim at gaining titles and fame. Other times we fail to appreciate others even when we see them giving their very best. We always seek to be appreciated and called good names. This bleeds the urge to dominate even in fields where we are not best. Forcefully, we do things in a way that outsmarts others.

Envision a world where you stand alone, gifted in every skill. Consider a scenario in your neighborhood, where people turn to you for solutions.

Picture yourself addressing an electrical issue at a neighbor's home when another approaches seeking assistance in repairing broken items. Simultaneously, someone implores you to tend to his or her ailing livestock, while another insists that you lead the evening praise session and must rehearse beforehand. Amidst these requests, your own family also demands your attention.

The list is long, but so far, it seems overwhelming? The truth is that you cannot be a jack-of-all-trades and a master of none. Here is the call to humility from the book of Daniel.

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. In addition, those who walk in pride he is able to humble. Dan. 4.37 -

God is almighty and He is able to humble us whenever we try to blow our own trumpet.

Chinua Achebe: African Christian writer

Pride, like a moth, devours our joy,
And robs our hearts of sweet employ,
It blinds our eyes to truth and right,
And dims the radiance of our light.

Pride, the father of all sin,
Corrupts the soul that dwells within,
It lifts us up with empty praise,
And leads us down hellish ways.

But Christ, the humble Son of God,
Trode the path that sinners trod,
He bore our guilt upon the tree,
And set our captive souls free.

So let us lay our pride aside,
And in His grace and love abide,
For in His blood we find release,
And in His name, we have true peace.

May Christ's humility be our guide
And in His love we will abide,
For in Him alone we find,
The joy and peace that fill the mind.

From the first and second stanzas of the poem, we can see that Chinua Achebe is trying to remind us of the consequences of pride. With pride, we become biased in such a way that we try to do things with our propensity being fame and above others. We rig things for our own personal gain. Sometimes we go to the extent of harming others for the sake of quenching the thirst that pride has caused in us.

It becomes even worse when we sin and keep sinning so that people can see how good we are at it. The main point is as per the poem that pride leads us down to hellish ways.

The only way we can overcome pride is by following the example of Christ. For through the love he had for us he chose to become flesh and die for us. His death brought salvation and set us free. Let us allow Christ's humility to be our guide.

After God has taken us through the storm we should acknowledge Him and be convicted that it was Him all through. It was not our strength and it was Him guiding us all through the winter season.

We will be going astray when we start boasting and believing that it was by our own power. This will lead us into a state whereby we will forget God and all that He has done for us.

It is of great importance for us to continue worshipping God and walk with Him so that pride will not lead us into disobedience.

When looking at the Israelites while in the desert they forgot about God and started trusting in their own strength. They forgot that God was the one who took them out of bondage in Egypt. They forgot that God was the one who provided manna while still in the desert.

When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said,

"Come; make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."

Exod.32.1 -

Patience was lacking among the people and they drifted from trusting in God. They decided not to wait for the message God was to bring them through Moses. They forget the great things that God had done for them. They used their own wisdom or ideas to come with a god made by them. Its fun how they think of something they have made using their hands as a supreme being to them. How can one make his or her own artwork, which they can change whenever they need, as their god? Just imagine, today I make a golden calf and worship it then as time goes I get some idea of modifying the idol so that it looks more appealing to me, so I add some color or change its appearance. The truth is that I will be living a lie. For no human has ever had control over God. He is supreme and no one can understand Him until He reveals himself to us.

Exod.32.2 - Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me."

Exod.32.3 - So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron.

Exod.32.4 - He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt. "Forgetting God to this extent is very bad. Because by doing so the Israelites angered God to the point of God wanting to destroy them.

Exod.32.8 - They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'

We can see God repeating the same statement to Moses: 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.' The Israelites had made God furious at them. This is how we sometimes behave when we completely get drone into pride and we start following our own ways that draw us away from God. And His anger burns against us.

Exod.32.9 - "I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are stiff-necked people.

Exod.32.10 - Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."

Exod.32.11 - But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. "O LORD," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?"

Exod.32.12 - Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people.

The love of Moses to his people is depicted here. God gives him the chance of becoming the father of many nations but Moses refuses, and he asks for God's mercy over his people.

Moses reminds God of the covenant He had made with Abraham, Isaac and Israel; that He was to make their descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky.

Exod.32.14 - Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

God listens to Moses and relents. Apart from stealing our joy, pride makes us to anger God and without us realizing and repenting, we shall end up being punished.

Concealed Sin

Transgression is committing an offence towards God. It might be consciously or unconsciously. Sin is an act that makes us feel ashamed. It is also an act of wickedness or an act that is immoral.

Some might be wondering. What does sin have to do with being strong from within? What does sin have to do with my faith? Sin affects how we operate and relate with each other and it majorly affects our relationship with God in that it breaks our relationship with God. Normally when individuals do their friends or family wrong, they feel guilty. Some actually avoid these individuals as they feel ashamed or as they feel guilty. What happens if the issue is not resolved? It becomes more of a stressor and gradually, the relationship fades away.

That is exactly what happens when we offend God and keep quiet about it As Christians. Our Christianity is tampered with. . How do we recollect this? As Christians, it is important to turn back to God, repent our sins and recollect our relationship with him.

Everyone is subject to sin. It was born of flesh and so are we. To overcome it, we have to be Strong in God and his word as well as strong in faith.

‘For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

ROMANS 3:23,

The bible also continues to guide and give examples to types of transgressions that may ruin our relationship with God.

For instance, in:

People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving,

*slandorous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, and conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.*² ND TIMOTHY 3:2-7

'Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.'

1 JOHN 3:4

1 CORINTHIANS 6: 8-11, 13

6:8 *Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers.*

6:9 *do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders*

6:10 *nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*

6: 13 *"Food for the stomach and the stomach for food" --but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.*

The Bible verses above give us instances where we might be doing wrong. All this ranges from cheating, not loving God, Loving the flesh, lack of self-control, not loving others etc.

The Bible continues to remind us that this is what some of us used to be. Nevertheless, God washed, sanctified and justified us in His name. Is he not a merciful God? It is by His power that we are raised from the dead and by this power; we are united to the Lord in spirit.

6:11 and that is what some of you were. However, you were washed, you were sanctified, and you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

6:14 by his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us.

6:17 But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

BIBLE STORY.

IN 2nd SAMUEL 11 This is the story of David. David was involved in war with ammonites. Other than joining others at war, he is left in his bedroom. Joab asks him out to war, which he goes. At the back of his mind, he is aware that during war, soldiers are expected to abstain from extramarital affairs. He also gets to see Uriah's wife bathing, other than guarding his eyes, he feeds them to worldly pleasures. He goes ahead to commit adultery even after knowing that she is married. The woman sends word saying she had conceived and David does not own up his mistakes. He goes ahead to ask Uriah to get back. David gifts him asking him to get back with his wife. As a dutiful soldier,

he rejected this as others were at award. I wonder, was David trying to get him to sleep with his wife so that Uriah might think this child was his? When that failed, that is when he decided to terminate him. Other than that, David abuses his powers by asking Uriah to be killed. He organizes this and when the deal is done, he marries Uriah's widow

It makes me wonder if Bathsheba had any idea (at least initially) that it was David who issued the order that Uriah be killed. I seriously doubt that David would ever have told her; nevertheless, it became a matter of public knowledge. David's plan was to have Uriah killed and then to do the magnanimous thing of taking his wife into his harem. His plan was to accomplish Uriah's death with only one other person knowing about it – Joab. It did not turn out as David had hoped.

This is the story below:

David attracted to Bathsheba

11:2 one evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof, he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful,

11:3 and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"

David plans to make Uriah lie with his wife so that he conceals the pregnancy.

11:9 But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house.

11:10 When David was told, "Uriah did not go home," he asked him, "Haven't you just come from a distance? Why didn't you go home?"

11:11 Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my master Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open fields. How could I go to my house to eat, drink, and lie with my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!"

11:13 At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. However, in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants; he did not go home.

When God got displeased, David's downfall began. He was not just any man; he was a leader and a King whom people respected and relied on.

IN 2nd SAMUEL 12

Nathan confronted David with the truth very carefully. I do not know how long Nathan took to prepare this message, but his approach was masterful, and it accomplished his task. He confronted David with his sin, brought him to repentance, and stayed alive in the process. David had grown up as a shepherd. I think he loved sheep. When he kept his father's flock, David may

very well have had a pet lamb. Nathan tells David about a poor man who owned only one lamb, a pet lamb. The lamb was like a daughter to him, like a member of the household. The man would carry this lamb in his arms and feed it at the table. A rich man who had a large flock of sheep had a visitor come and stay for dinner. Rather than killing one of his sheep, the rich man took the poor man's pet lamb, killed it, and fed it to his guest. The real villain was David. It was not a little lamb that had been stolen from a poor man, but one young wife, who had been taken from a man under David's authority. As the rich man in the story had many sheep, David had many wives. As the rich man took what was not his, David took Uriah's wife. If David felt the rich thief deserved to die, how much more did David deserve to die for what he had done to Uriah?

Why Did God Have To Wait Before Punishing David?

He was not punished immediately after killing Uriah from this we learn that God delays bringing judgement upon men as a manifestation of His grace. God delays judgement in order to give men the opportunity to repent.

Some people do not learn things the easy way; by being warned in advance; instead, they have to learn the hard way. It is at these times that God allows the sin to play itself out to its fully developed form. God allowed David's sin to grow, unchecked, until his uncontrolled lust brought about the death of several

Israelites and devastating consequences for David's family and the nation.

No wonder the Bible says that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

There is yet another reason, I believe, for God's delay in sending Nathan to confront David. It is not that God waited to begin dealing with David. God waited to send Nathan to confront David until He had sufficiently prepared David for repentance.

David himself tells us this in

3 When I refused to confess my sin, my whole body wasted away, while I groaned in pain all day long. 4 For day and night you tormented me; you tried to destroy me in the intense heat of summer. (Selah) 5 Then I confessed my sin; I no longer covered up my wrongdoing. I said, "I will confess my rebellious acts to the Lord." Then you forgave my sins. (Selah)

Psalms 32:3-5

God waited to directly rebuke David until his spirit had been adequately tenderized and sensitized to his sin. David's heart had been condemning him long before Nathan spoke his words of rebuke. I believe Nathan's rebuke was almost a relief to David. Now, at last, his sin was out in the open and could be confessed and forgiven.

Then David exclaimed to Nathan, *"I have sinned against the Lord!"* Nathan replied to David, *"Yes and the Lord has forgiven your sin. You are not going to die"* (2 Samuel 12:13).

David truly was a “man after God’s own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). In spite of his terrible sins, David loved God, and he listened to Nathan’s rebuke. His response is only one short sentence. There are no excuses and no qualifications. David admitted he was guilty of the charges Nathan spelled out. David will elaborate on this in Psalms 32 and 51, but it all comes down to a very simple admission of guilt.

David was forgiven (12:13). He should have died for his sins, and he did not. However, there were going to be painful consequences for his sin. Nonetheless, because you have treated the Lord with such contempt in this matter, the son who will be born to you will certainly die” (2 Samuel 12:14). Not only would David’s son die, but David’s family and his kingdom would suffer as well. The consequences were closely linked to David’s sins:

The consequences for David’s sins were spelled out and fulfilled precisely. Because David used the sword to strike down Uriah the Hittite, God said the sword would not depart from David’s dynasty. The sword was often employed in David’s dynasty.

His son, Absalom, would kill another son, Amnon. Absalom would seek to overthrow David, and thus David would have to fight against Absalom and his forces to defend his kingdom. Joab would kill Absalom. Adonijah would seek to establish himself as king in David’s place, and Solomon would eventually have him executed (1 Kings 1 and 2).

Because David took another man’s wife privately, God said that another man would take David’s wives publicly. Later, we also

see that his daughter gets assaulted and such. After repenting, he is forgiven. David gets back to God, and God accepts him.

There are other bible stories that tell of people who did wrong and confessed and God forgave them.

Does transgressions tamper with our relationship with God who is our source of strength? Does it tamper with our faith?

Sin Robs Us of Joy

When individuals have done something wrong, some tend to feel ashamed. Some actually dread anything that reminds them of what they did. This preoccupation kills away joy within them. It is at this state that some forget to pray or even draw away from God.

In the story of David, he committed Murder; he asked Uriah to be killed and as a king, he ended up committing adultery with this woman. The Book of psalms 51: 12, records that David prayed to God to restore the joy of His salvation unto him again with His generous spirit.

Sin Robes Us Peace

When one has committed a crime, they feel uneasy. Some actually lack contentment as they dread the past and wish they never did wrong.

It Hinders Our Fellowship With God.

, 'No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known Him. 1 JOHN 3:6

This verse reminds us that God hates sin and when we sin, it destroys our relationship with Him.

Transgressions Make Individuals Lose Faith and Confidence in Prayer.

3:18 *Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. 3:19 this then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence 3:20 whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. 3:21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God 3:22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. 3:23 and this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. 3:24 Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. In addition, this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit, he gave us.*

1 JOHN 3: 18-24

The Bible verses above require Christians to love not in words only but in actions. Christians need to know that God knows everything even when they are wrong. If our hearts condemn us, it tampers with our faith in God and faith in prayers. This shows that we need to Obey God and his commands.

To conquer sin, Christians are required to:

- a) Humbly acknowledge that they are subject to sin
 - b) Identify what tempts them to sin
 - c) Avoid what makes them sin
 - d) Recognize effects of sin to others and also to their relationship with God
 - e) Recognize that God Is Gracious; other than dealing with ego and pride, humbly turn back to God. He is merciful enough to forgive.
 - f) This also requires individuals to own up the blame of what they did and not play blame games. This is where one wants someone to bear the blame of what happened.
- Lastly, individuals have to confess and ask for repentance from God.

However, since everyone is subject to sin, how do we recollect ourselves and establish or re-build our relationship with God?

Repentance

Repentance is the act of sincere remorse and seeking forgiveness.

In the modern world, when we talk of repentance it feels unpleasant; more of taking bitter medicine to get bitter. Some do it because they know it is necessary. Repentance makes us feel that God has forgiven us. It gives joy and peace to the heart.

Repenting needs individuals to do the following:

- Recognize their sin
- Renounce their sin
- Return to God.

‘Whoever who conceals their sin does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.’

PROVERBS 28: 13,

‘If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness’

JOHN 1:19,

Importance of Repentance in Christian Faith.

a. It Restores Our Relationship With God

‘Return to me, declares Lord Almighty, and I will return to you.’

ZECHARIAH 1:3,

When we repent and acknowledge our wrong doings, God does forgive. He returns to us and thus our relationship with Him thrives.

Repentance Makes Us Free From Torments of Sin

It is upon sinning that individuals feel unworthy before God. They feel that God is not for them and this is what wants. To keep Christians trapped in sin.

‘Repent, then, turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the lord.’

ACTS 3:19,

Through repenting, we get forgiveness from God and we are able to receive mercy and grace from God when we need it.

b. Repentance Restores Our Faith

Faith believes in what we do not see. In repentance and confessions, we believe that God can actually hear our prayers and forgive us. This it is a huge step of faith. It is through this that we get back to praying and believing in God to restore us.

Through these readings, one can clearly see that transgressions tamper with faith and they tamper with belief in God. Therefore, it is of importance that individuals hold steadfast faith such that they make it a norm to do well unto others.

It is through faith and belief in God that one is able to win and defeat worldly temptations. Make diligent use of your faith, turn away from transgressions and no longer walk in your old natural state. Fellowship with God who is our source of inner strength is increased by belief in God, assuring ourselves of the good things that come along with being a good Christian.

Shared lived experiences

A. Ken Moses

It never crossed my mind that I would sit back and reflect on the myriad thoughts of my experiences. I often refer to it as "My Past Life", because it has transformed me into a new and stronger person over the seasons.

As I retrospectively reflect on my life journey this far, I have gained profound insight into my intrinsic motivation and perseverance in the face of immense challenges. Though imperfect, I have always felt an insatiable drive to push forward towards growth and purpose. What has kept me going through the trials of life is not just sheer willpower, but an inner light that continues to burn bright.

My past is not one of privilege or ease. Quite the contrary, my formative years were fraught with pressures and setbacks that threatened to derail me from my path. The year 2021 was particularly tumultuous, testing my resilience in new ways. I grappled with conflicting realities - the idealistic world in my mind versus the harsh actualities of my external circumstances. My thirst for knowledge and higher purpose seemed at odds with the pragmatic demands of my environment.

Compounding these internal struggles were the high expectations of my family and community, who had always viewed me as a high achiever. Their hopes for my success weighed heavily upon me, even as I felt lost in a dark abyss of my own

making. It seemed surrender was the only option that I should give in to the sway of stronger winds not of my choosing.

I remember vividly my therapy sessions in town; they were quite expensive, and I cried at the assistant dean's office at ADD simply because my body had crumbled and I felt that there was no other way to become reborn again. At that time, I had started a bad habit of consoling myself with a bottle or two because, after every time I felt drunk, at least my mind could remain empty, a little bit high, and with less thinking. Seriously, how was I going to explain to a person that I was stuck between realities? You see, my reality was one that was almost longing for perfection in all entities and bodies, maybe because I had been raised in a harsh and cruel background, and my mind needed a break. My mind was looking forward to having a fast and simple solution to all the disorders and traumas that I had to go through in almost all my ages.

It was not long before I realized that finding "peace" by being drunk was becoming a burden and had apparently been crashing me even more. You see, drugs have this kind of effect where they create just a temporary dopamine and satisfaction, whereas in the long run, they become a ruin and a disaster to the personality, health, and even the relationships with others. I had subconsciously initiated a new problem for myself while on my constant search for understanding.

To cut the long story short, in the midst of all this ruin and chaos, the more I sought help from other people, the more I felt misunderstood. I had even forgotten about trying to understand myself. After realizing that external help did not work for me, I took time to do some self-soul-searching, during quiet time, I even started some personal meditation. Interestingly, it worked. The more I took time to understand myself, my needs, my own potential, and ultimately the reason for my entire existence, things became clear to me. I was beginning to see some light once again in my life.

I came to realize that through all of this, I had lost sight of the inner compass that had guided me thus far, and I had to regain my sense of direction. My love of learning and growth had been a natural instinct since childhood, not something imposed from without but arising from within, (this is something that I came to learn during my soul meditation and self-understanding). This innate drive gave me direction when all else felt unclear and sustained my determination to overcome every obstacle, and hence my previous choice of seeking direction from other people had proven futile. I was at peace now.

In retrospect, I now see how experiencing such depths of despair ultimately made me stronger. By confronting and conquering my doubts and fears, I tapped into an inner strength and clarity of purpose that has defined my character. The pressures that once threatened to break me instead forged within me a sturdier resolve and a deeper understanding of self.

To date, I can testify that I have learned that true motivation comes from within, not from the expectations or demands of others. When times seem darkest, I have found my inner light burning brightest. This revelation has given me confidence in my ability to weather any storm and has shown me that the only limits I face are those I place upon myself. Inner drive and purpose, not outer circumstances, are what truly matter.

B. Mercy Nduta.

I hold a firm belief in the possibility of a brighter life and a positive outcome even after enduring challenging times. My faith in a promising future persists, especially in the face of grief and poverty. I draw inspiration from individuals who have experienced similar struggles or faced even more great obstacles. Above all, my unwavering belief rests in the Most High.

Reflecting on the journey that brought me to where I am today, I acknowledge the difficulty but attribute my current standing to God's grace and favor. Persevering with hope, I anticipate the day when these trials will become a testament to the greatness of God. The encouragement from my mom, who has immense belief and confidence in me, fuels my determination.

I recall a moment with my math teacher where doubts were cast upon my abilities. However, my mom steadfastly defended me, asserting that there was a time when I excelled. Overcoming skepticism, I began to shine, yet faced challenges, including the same teacher punishing me. Despite setbacks, I emerged as the

top student in the national exam, shocking everyone except my mom, who had unwavering confidence in me.

Financial constraints threatened my dreams of secondary education, fueled by my parents' separation. Unexpectedly, my dad returned, offering to sponsor my education—an act I appreciate to this day. Secondary school presented its own set of challenges, including financial struggles, but by God's grace, I successfully completed that chapter.

As I aimed for higher education, financial barriers loomed again. Desperate for a solution, I took on the role of a young housekeeper, facing physical strains and meager earnings. God's timing, however, proved by grace, providing the full amount for my fees and accommodation just when I needed it the most.

Arriving in the city with minimal possessions, God continued to manifest His faithfulness. Despite my hardships, He surrounded me with understanding friends who became a pillar of support during difficult times. Their encouragement and hope in me, coupled with God's grace, shielded me from outwardly displaying the challenges I faced.

Today, I stand as a testament to God's faithfulness. Despite having little, I present myself with dignity, a reflection of His favor. The hope for a brighter future persists, and I carry a story that serves as encouragement for those weathering similar storms.

Author's note.

Kinya Nina Gitonga

In a world filled with challenges and uncertainties, it is key to recognize that true strength comes from within you. It is not just about physical strength but also the resilience that resides within us. Do you want to be strong even at times when you feel weak? *Strong from within* is a book that will enhance and open your mind. The book is an empowering journey of discovering, harnessing strength that lies within an individual. It equips you with skills and strategies, and most importantly it guides in establishing a relationship with God. No one ever grows great unless they are focused, dedicated and disciplined. Join us as we explore triumph, self-discovery as well as transformation that inspires us to rise above life's obstacles.

Lennox Kanyoe Kahati

Most of us are prone to destruction or breaking down whenever a storm hits. We need inner strength that is going to take over when the physical strength has been overcome by a storm. *Strong from within* is a book that outlines some ways to follow whenever we are in difficult moments. We aim at shedding light and give a way so that everyone can come up with methods that work for him or her well. Throughout the book, you will see that God is the center of everything, the one we should always trust and stay strong in Him and within us.

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OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR; KINYA

he is also an author of the following books;

✓ The How's of Anger (2021)

‘This is an ultimate guide to controlling your emotions. It equips one with practical strategies and techniques of dealing with anger in a healthy and constructive manner.’

✓ Thrive

‘It is a book which enlightens how to prioritize individual mental health especially when faced with challenges and even after challenges. Wondering how to be happy again? Thrive will guide you.’ (Get a copy via 0796037994)