Wisdom of Solomon

Clues to Living a Fulfilled Life

Ayodele Afuye

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To my wife,
with love and honour

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Having written and published online, a few series of some selected aspects of *The Wisdom Diary* of one of the most famous and wisest kings in the scriptures, King Solomon, I had a feeling that it would be a very good resource for everyone who craves for wisdom and desires to learn some strategic perspectives on living a fulfilled life. Hence, the reason for putting these together in an eBook, as it becomes accessible to all, especially in this era of digital technology and Social media.

The book*, Wisdom of Solomon: Clues to Living a Fulfilled Life* is not only meant for Christians. It could also be read by non-Christians, as it exposes the reader to some fundamental aspects of the human life, and how these important aspects of our lives can be managed. It is proven that adherence to these principles is expected to initiate or accentuate a change in the life of the reader, whether a Christian or non-Christian. A significant number of scientific researchers and their findings have been considered, and also a good number of biblical perspectives with principles, have also been delved into, making this a multi-dimensional resource for everyone.

However, I don't expect to bring every reader all the way to agreement, but I do hope to establish some biblical proven principles needed to live a meaningful and fulfilled life.

THE AUTHOR

Ayodele Afuye has served as a writer and Pioneer Editor of *His Love Magazine: an official Christian Publication* of the *New Covenant Church Manchester*, United Kingdom. He was Director of Media at the time *Peace & Joy Radio*, one of the leading online Christian radio stations in Manchester was established. Owing to his training and discipline, coupled with his passion for traditional and online publicity in Christian ministry, he created a digital media department and units at *ChristHouse Bible Church* in Manchester and served as the minister in charge of media and administration in the ministry. After his ordination as a Christian minister, he was posted as Resident Minister to pastor the branch of the CBC at Rochdale, in Greater Manchester. While carrying out this assignment, he continued to offer his volunteer services in the media department at the headquarters of the church in Manchester.

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All of the first person pronouns in this book are his.

CHAPTER ONE

QUALITY GIVING AND RECEIVING

"And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar. In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee". (1 Kings 3:4-5).

King Solomon happens to be one of the greatest characters in the Old Testament, and I have really been so inquisitive on the peculiarities of his personality, compared to other Kings in the scriptures. Due to my keen affinity for King Solomon's wisdom and the veracity of how he became a candidate for the blessing of wisdom from God, I delved into a study and research on the same matter. During my meditation early one morning, the Holy Spirit ministered to me in the book of 1 Kings 3:3-5 *"Solomon loved God and continued to live in the God-honoring ways of David his father, except that he also worshiped at the local shrines, offering sacrifices and burning incense. The king went to Gibeon, the most prestigious of the local shrines, to worship. He sacrificed a thousand Whole-Burnt-Offerings on that altar. That night, there in Gibeon, God appeared to Solomon in a dream: God said, "What can I give you? Ask."(Message Translation).* The message translation of the Holy Bible did address my dilemma on this issue of the reason God gave Solomon a blank cheque of *"what can I give you?".*

Following the above revelation in the book of 1 Kings Chapter 3, I decided to further search for some human mental perspectives on the same topic. I then stumbled on a report written by Arthur Dobrin, D.S.W., Professor Emeritus, Hofstra University and Adjunct Professor of Management. In his report about giving and receiving, he recorded that gifts giving is an outward expression of a relationship and as with any relationship; "*it can either be enhancing or diminishing"*. The way in which the transaction is carried out is as important as the content of the gift itself. It therefore, implies that the quality of Solomon's burnt offerings unto God played a significant role in the offer of the blessing God gave him.

You Are Made for God's Glory

However, King Solomon's state of mind and the expression of his love to God were precedences to the blank cheque God gave to him. He had a deep and profound love for God Almighty, and that was displayed in verse 3 of the above passage. God had a feeling that King Solomon offered sacrifices regularly on local shrines to Him and his heart was in those offerings, not just a tradition or norm. He also honoured the Lord, like his father, David, making it a transition from the past generation to another. God acknowledges a profound honour straight from the heart and rewards those that offer such. The burnt offering was not offered in a hurry. He could have gone and attended to other things in the palace, or attended to some important dignitaries that came to visit him. The king offered the "*Whole-Burnt-Offerings"* and after the whole process of offering, he slept in Gibeon"…*That night, there in Gibeon, God appeared to Solomon in a dream…*" (1 Kings 3:4-5). King Solomon was not too busy, attending to some kind of statutory responsibilities as the King, but he loved God and honoured Him, offered God his heart, presence and time, by sleeping in Gibeon.

In this era of technology and *busyness*, there is a significant vacuum between man and God.

A lot of distractive activities have taken hold of the heart of men and women who God has separated for His Glory. “Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.” (Isaiah 43:7). The creator of heaven and the earth had a vision and a plan in mind during creation. The overall plan was to make man for His own glory and not for some kind of man's selfish ambitions and desperation to be in control of the world. Each time you are distracted by any worldly pressure and shift your focus from God, you stand a chance of missing the icing on the cake, the sweetness in the pudding, which is the peace that comes with His blessings. Solomon wrote in Proverbs10:22, “The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.”

God is Always at the Door Waiting

God's unfailing love is incomparable with man's affection. He made you to regularly have communion with him. “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” (Revelations 3:20). One of my old mentors in faith, in a message, once shared an experience he had with having communion with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of comfort, a few years back. He prayed before he sat at the dining table to have breakfast alone. On that cold morning, he said the usual short prayer before he started eating, inviting the Holy Spirit to come and dine with him. Astonishingly, he discovered the teapot was almost empty after just pouring two cups from the pot... Very strange! While wondering what had happened to the tea in the pot, he heard a gentle voice in his ears… *“you asked me to dine with you and I did”.* He actually did confess… “*that was shocking to me”*…it is so real and clear that God is always waiting at the door of your heart, seeking

Your attention, always craving that you make your heart available for Him to enter. Solomon made himself available to God at Gibeon after the 1000 burnt offering and God visited him in a very remarkable and spectacular manner.

Solomon did not only open the door of his heart to God but patiently waited and gave up all the worldly distractions to enable him give a 100 percent devotion to the Almighty God of Israel. That was the climax of it all, and God, the giver of all things, appeared to him in the dream and presented a blank cheque to him… *"What can I give you?"* Even during this time and age, there is a need to understand what the heaven requires of you to be qualified for the blessings of God. There are steps to be taken to attract the presence of God. King Solomon sacrificed 1000 burnt offerings in Gibeon and slept there, and he received from God, the most valuable gift needed by every man on earth to succeed and prosper in life. It was possible for him to just present the offerings and leave the altar. Even as the King, it was possible to send a large number of servants to present the burnt offerings unto God, but he did not.

Beyond your Imagination

King Solomon demonstrated that the sacrifice God requires is more than material sacrifices, but your heart and soul offerings. There are innumerable blessings attached with offering your heart to God and desiring His presence. "The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto, and he shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." (Deuteronomy 28:8). We have a limited list of what we want and our desires are ridiculously insignificant compared to the plans and blessings God has in stock for us. "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Due to King Solomon's passion and deep love for God, as displayed in the event that took place in Gibeon, God offered him a very remarkable gift and you also could be qualified for God's blank cheque of *"What can I give you? Ask"* if you will give the entirety of your heart to God today, dwelling in His presence at all times. Desiring to be in tune with God creates amazing experiences, which is usually indescribable. You need to really experience this as a person and you will certainly have a story to tell. Peter had an encounter with Jesus as he craved to follow Him. It was a life-changing experience, which he could never recover from.

Gaze Unto Him and Experience Transformation

Simon Peter went back fishing after the death and resurrection of Jesus. "Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately, and that night they caught nothing". (John 21:3). After a while, Jesus appeared to them and instructed them to cast their net to a different direction. To their amazement, they caught a lot of fishes and their net stayed intact without breaking. "And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes". (John 21:6).

Due to the encounter Peter had been through with Jesus Christ, he could no longer stay with them on the boat, but he jumped into the sea, heading to the shores to meet Jesus. "Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea". (John 21:7). Seeing Jesus, everything changed…he no longer wanted the fishes or desiring to continue fishing. Your willingness and craving to be in contact with Jesus do not leave you passive, it conjures the supernatural aura of the Almighty God to begin to transform your mind, thoughts, desires, ambitions, and actions.

CHAPTER TWO

MAN'S MOTIVE: GREAT DETERMINANT FOR GOD'S BLESSINGS

"Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? (1 Kings 3:9)

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding". (Proverbs 4:7).

A story is told of an extremely wealthy old man, who on his sick bed, asked the head of his menservants, who has served him for a very long time, and whom he loved so much, to choose one thing he treasured so much amongst his entire estate. The head servant, having considered the magnificent nature of his master's property, the array of wealth and a pool of staff, without much ado, he quickly picked all the maids and menservants of who served his master. The reason he chose these men and women was that they all worked and from the proceeds of their labour, the wealth of his master multiplied day after day. Due to the special love his dying master had for him, immediately, he got a confirmation that his master had approved of what he asked for. In response to this remarkable approval, he was over the moon and was celebrating his newly found fortune. Also, the only son of the wealthy man, who lived abroad and just came back home to look after his father before going back to the far country where he lived, was also invited by the father.

Just as the loved servant was asked by the man to choose what he cherished so much amongst his estates, his only son was also asked.

But to the amazement of everyone, including the father, his son requested for all that the man owned including the head servant and all other servants (Male and female). The news of the son's choice speedily spread into every part of the kingdom. *What a wise choice?* That is the spirit of *sonship,* which King Solomon possessed during his days. In the previous chapter of this book, at Gibeon, God gave King Solomon a blank cheque in his dream when God presented him with an opportunity to make a request for something. 1 Kings 3:5 *"In Gibeon the Lord appeared to in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee."*

It was possible for Solomon to ask for wealth, riches and power, but on the contrary, King Solomon requested for a heart of wisdom and understanding. "And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" (1 Kings 3:7-9). In response to the choice of King Solomon, God was extremely pleased and granted what he asked for and also added what Solomon did not ask for. "Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days." (1 Kings 3:12-14).

A researcher, Dr. Joji Valli, (Ph.D. in CSR) wrote that “Selfishness is a pre-requisite for survival and maintenance for any living being on earth.” Also, the renowned Oxford's Professor of Public Understanding of Science, Richard Dawkins, also argued that “a predominant quality to be expected in a successful gene is ruthless selfishness. This gene selfishness will usually give rise to selfishness in individual behaviour...” It is therefore established that as humans, we have inbuilt a series of inherent tendencies to exhibit selfishness in every aspect of life. We are all *self-made* creature, and this plays a highly significant impact in every aspect of our lives. Even to those we love so dearly, our sub-conscious mind gravitates towards dealing first with our personal needs, both mental and physical, before others. It is naturally a function of our *self-made* mind that rules our thinking, actions and relating to the outside world.

What I have found outstanding about King Solomon's nature is the attitude of *made-for-self*, but *made-for-others*. “Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?*” (1 Kings 3:9).* Contrary to the scientific perspective and findings from researches conducted, King Solomon wanted wisdom, not for fame, self-gratification, wealth, riches or affluence. His burden and love for his people were the ultimate motives he asked for wisdom and an understanding heart. God, who created man, knows the innermost thoughts of our hearts, hence, he responds to these thoughts in relations to our motives. It does not matter how extremely desperate you are to achieve some set of goals and objectives, what matters is God is ascertaining whether your goals and objectives are driven by your intrinsic selfish nature or they are focused towards the interest of others. As much as people work hard to achieve their goals and aspirations in their own way, striving to fulfill individual needs, there is only a limit to what can be achieved by self.

Jesus reserves the power to make all things available, and your faith in Him automatically releases you into the abundance of His provision. “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper…even as thy soul prospereth”. (3 John 2). Solomon placed the interest of others at the centre of his goals and objectives as a king, and he was blessed by God and became so famous. “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others”. (Philippians 2:4).

Devoted and Blessed

In this dispensation and age, God is seeking for men and women who are yearning to know and willing to love Him, cherish Him and dwell on His word for understanding and wisdom. God is the word and the word of God is the wisdom of God. King Solomon devoted his time and substance to God and God was convinced that his love for Him was genuine and real. Beyond that, God recognised that King Solomon was selfless, hence he asked God for an understanding a heart to rule the Israelites the Chosen people of God. These special blessings of heart of wisdom and understanding gave unrivaled fame and recognition to King Solomon all over the world, and since, history has not recorded any king as wise as King Solomon.

1. What is your disposition to God?
2. What is the quality of your offerings (time and substance) to God?
3. Are you being real with your service unto God?
4. What is the motive behind your request from God?
5. Is God at the centre of your life and service unto Him?

These and other questions are required to enable you to conduct an effective evaluation of your stand with God, checking what page

you are so that corrections and adjustments can be made where necessary.

CHAPTER THREE

BLESSED TO FULFIL GOD'S PURPOSE

"The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea…" (Proverbs 16:4)

In the previous chapter, the cardinal discourse was that King Solomon's wise choice, coupled with his love for the people he ruled created a platform for God to bless him with an uncommon wisdom, and an understanding heart. "Behold, I have done according to thy words: I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee." (1 Kings 3:12). In addition to these blessings, God Almighty added riches, honour, and length of days to King Solomon's requests. God's blessings on King Solomon were extended to other aspects of his life because He did find in Solomon an element of commitment, dedication, and genuine love.

Humility: Precedence for Greatness

At some point, while I was conducting further research on the

request Solomon made from God, it then became so clear and vivid to me that he actually made the request, not for himself, but to enable him to govern the Israelites, the people of God in a very perfect way. Hence, he considered his position and his limitations as a young man who requires wisdom and an understanding heart to lead the people of Israel on the right path. “And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great is a people”. (1 Kings 3:8-9). This is the height of humility and lowliness of mind on the part of King Solomon. It is tricky for a man with a haughty mind to receive from the Lord.

In the midst of the complex world today, there is need to recognise the high tendency to be disillusioned and distracted by the advent of technologies, latest developments in knowledge, and even *professional management* of spiritual things, forgetting the existence of a God, who has infinite abilities and capacity to cause changes in all areas of life. Whether you like it or not, we live in a world that is controlled by the supernatural, and unless you have a grip of this revelation and discovery, you are standing on a shadowed mat, implying that you could make yourself vulnerable to uncertainties, leading to unpredictable circumstances. Humbly, King Solomon depended on God for such an outstanding gift, not for his own benefit and personal use, but to enable him to govern the nations God entrusted into his hands, and he was blessed in an incredible manner, becoming a legend that can never be forgotten.

Building a Temple for God: Your Heart

During the reign of King David, Solomon's father, he had an intention to build a temple unto the Lord, but God told him he would not…"But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build a house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood." (1 Chronicles 28:3). This was as a result of the kind of life he lived and God specifically mentioned that Solomon would build Him a temple. It has however been ordained that He would be a king after the demise of his father, and to the glory of God, a temple would be built by him. "And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. Moreover, I will establish his kingdom forever, if he be constant to do my commandments and my judgments, as at this day." (1 Chronicles 28:6-7).

Here is a cursor, pointing to the truth, that you have been created by God and He desires that you build a temple for Him in your heart. "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." (Genesis 1:27). It takes a committed mind to make an effort to create an atmosphere of communion with God especially in this era of secularisation. An age which is strictly characterised by self-evident, *I have my own view about my own kind of religion…* Timothy Keller, the 65-year-old author of *Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical*, argues that "every person embraces his or her worldview for a variety of rational, emotional, cultural, and social factors". In other words, there is a significant tendency that you may be carried away with your insatiable personal ambitions,

Especially if your God-given purpose is not clear from the outset.

> "Then Solomon sent to Hiram, saying: You know how my father David could not build a house for the name of the Lord his God because of the wars which were fought against him on every side until the Lord put his foes under the soles of his feet. But now the Lord my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor evil occurrence. And behold, I propose to build a house for the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord spoke to my father David, saying, "Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he shall build the house for My name." (1 Kings 5:2-5).

Solomon had a vividly clear vision that he would build a temple for the Lord and he harnessed every resource available, both human and material to achieve this. Solomon approached Hiram and made a request for assistance, which he did provide. "Now, therefore, command that they cut down cedars for me from Lebanon; and my servants will be with your servants, and I will pay you wages for your servants according to whatever you say. For you know there is none among us who has the skill to cut timber like the Sidonians". (1 Kings 5:6). Your heart is the most paramount to God, and as you gaze on Jesus, and adjust to His plan and purpose, His grace will be sufficient to sustain you. "My son, give me your heart, And let your eyes observe my ways". (Proverbs 23:26).

Being In Total Submission

Despite King Solomon's knowledge, power and position, he

submitted himself to the Lordship of the Almighty God, humbled himself, and got the reward in the long run. Before he was enthroned as king by David his father, it was announced that Solomon was the next king and that he was going to build the house of God. “Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; And keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself.” (1 Kings 2:1-3). At that stage, I felt the power had already been conferred on Solomon as King and the after-effects of the position of a *king-to-be* is pride, an attitude, even at a very tender age. But the situation was the contrary, as King Solomon reduced himself to nothing before God, and in return, he was blessed beyond his expectations.

Can you do a self-evaluation on yourself today?

Do you know why you were created?

What is your vision?

What is the motive behind your vision?

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LEADER IN YOU

"Devoted leaders give themselves to their calling, others are drawn to their vision" Terry Virgo

The iDisciples, a devotional material, stated in one of its series, Leading Like Jesus, "Leaders may see compassion as an inconvenient necessity, but for Jesus, compassion was embedded in His character." Considering the truth, that we are all created in the image of God, there is an innate leadership character in us, but until this consciousness is attained as humans, there might not be a sense of responsibility, which reduces the level of impact required to be made. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." (Genesis 1:26). That was the master plan of God for man, but there are parameters and benchmarks which could be used to measure whether you are really portraying these leadership and dominion traits, hidden in us by the creator of heaven and earth or not.

In the New Testament of the Bible, it was just a confirmation of the above discourse. God came to the earth as Jesus, in human form, and actually displayed that leaders have the responsibility to be compassionate, especially towards their subjects, including everybody around them. During Jesus' ministry, He was known for his compassion. He personally modeled it and also made it mandatory for all mankind, especially to Christians, and everyone around you. This love transcends just being able to serve them cups of tea when they come visiting, but seeing into their pains, aspirations and how you could be of selfless assistance to them, bringing to display, the compassion traits, which have been inherently built into you by God, the Almighty creator. "…Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; *and thy neighbour as thyself*." (Luke 10:27).

King Solomon's Dedication of the Temple: People Oriented

"A leader never stops being a follower of Jesus." Alan Hirsch

In my past series on the *Wisdom of Solomon*, a few perspectives have been touched on. Considering the above analysis of the innate human qualities, not just Solomon, we all are beings, with innate elements to lead. These inbuilt cards in us, in form of characters, could only be activated with a deep sense of individual consciousness that we are all designed to lead. A good illustration is Mango fruit, which has a seed inside of it. That automatically confirms that a Mango seed that falls on the right soil, will grow to become a Mango tree.

You being created in the image of God automatically gives you the innate characteristics of a leader. Compassion for fellow men is one of the inherent characters needed by every being to begin to operate in the realm of leadership.

I mentioned in the second Chapter that King Solomon's wise request at the initial stage was orchestrated by the passion he had for the Israelites, the heritage of God. He had a very deep thought; and needed supernatural wisdom and a heart of understanding to govern Israel, the great people of God. “And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?” (1 Kings 3:8-9) .

However, I personally see the attitude of seeking the best in others, a great virtue in the life of King Solomon. Bishop TD Jakes mentioned in one of his speeches “Wherever you put your focus in that's where you'll be successful.” I believe God also saw that King Solomon, expressing this kind of deep interest in His chosen people, prioritising the interest of others, God quickly made up His mind to bless him, and Solomon became an international mega-celebrity, the wisest man on earth.

The height of this was displayed during the dedication of the temple, which King Solomon built for the Lord. After he had directed the priests and Levites in making burnt offerings to God, he prayed and dedicated the temple to the Lord. In 1 Kings 8:15, he started by adoring the God of Israel who made it possible to build a temple unto Him.. . “And he said, Blessed, be the Lord God of

of Israel, which spake with his mouth unto David my father, and hath with his hand fulfilled it…" From that point, as he went on the dedication proper, Solomon continued to pray and almost all the prayers were centred on the people of Israel, their present and future deliverances. All the blessings were said towards this chosen people of God, and hardly did King Solomon pray for himself or his reign as king. The prayers were people oriented, as he focused attention on people praying; "If any man trespass against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house: Then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked…" (1 Kings 8:31). To King Solomon, life was about justice and fairness amongst his people and he stood for justice and fairness all through his era, as king in Israel.

Relevance of Kingdom Connection

In the process of achieving your God-given purpose, a major pre-requisite is developing a closely-knitted relationship with institutions and individuals with like minds. You are not created to be and work alone, as your destiny can only be fulfilled amidst a God-ordained network. A tree cannot make a forest. King Solomon had a very close relationship with his father's friend, Hiram, King of Tyre, an expert in hewing of wood. "…and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants according to all that thou shalt appoint: for thou knowest that there is not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians". Hiram was one of the kingdom connections which Solomon leveraged, as he committed himself to building the temple unto God.

Another significant effect of connecting with others in order to achieve your God-given vision is keeping peaceful co-existence with others, especially individuals and institutions which the Lord has placed around you. King Solomon gave himself to selfless service and fruitful relationship with all the regions around his territory, earning him loyalty and peaceful diplomatic relations. “For he had dominion all over the region on this side of the river, from Tiphsah even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side of the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon” (1 Kings 4:24-25). Apart from the advantage and support he got from connecting with the people of other regions and institutions around him, his reign was a peaceful one, as he did not experience any invasion of war throughout his reign. “…and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and they two made a league together”. (1 Kings 5:12). You are not called to achieve your vision alone. Paul admonishes the Romans… “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men”. (Romans 12:18). It is, therefore, a major hurdle to cross in pursuing your goals and aspirations now and in the future. Kingdom connection and peaceful coexistence both apply to both secular aspects of life and the Christian race.

Leadership with Compassion

Due to his compassionate attitude, he guarded against enemy's invasion of the people of God, even when they erred. He offered prayers to God for the safety of the Israelites and God granted him secured borders, hence, King Solomon did not fight any war or

battle throughout his reign, unlike David his father who fought all through his lifetime, even as a king. “When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee,…forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest unto their fathers.” (1 Kings 8:33-34).

Another passion exhibited by King Solomon was that the people of God would not lack and suffer at any point in time. As he continued in his people-oriented temple dedication, he prayed; “When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain because they have sinned against thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin,…give rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance.” Over the years in my pastoral activities, I have discovered a secret of putting others at the centre of one’s prayer. God listens to such intercessions and responds very speedily, not leaving you out, as the scriptures confirm that the husbandman will be the first partaker… “The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits”. (2 Timothy 2:6).

Activating the Innate Leadership Gene in you

According to the creation story, it is no longer a secret that you are made to lead. In Genesis 1:26, it was established “…let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth…” So whether you agree or not, there is a seed of leadership in you. Your perspective might be the one of a follower, but you have a seed of greatness in you. Until you begin to consider the way you put to use, these innate traits that were built in you, you might still be on the wrong side of the

fence, living an unfulfilled life. Solomon became very successful and prosperous as a king in Israel due to the blessings God gave him, and the blessings came from God as a result of his passion to get things right, ruling the people of God and the compassion he exhibited, placing everyone around him at the centre of all his requests (Prayers) before God. I therefore, charge you today, to begin to think over this, in a bid to remain at the centre of God's will, living your life according to how the creator has designed it.

CHAPTER FIVE

EFFECTS OF CONTROLLED TONGUE

"Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles". (Proverbs 21:23).

King Solomon, in his proverbs, pointed at a significant number of benefits derived from a controlled tongue. "He that keeps his mouth keeps his life: but he that opens wide his lips shall have destruction." (Proverbs 13:3). Over the years before receiving a vision and call to ministry, the exposure I have gained in the world of Public Relations, as a discipline, has actually given me a deep understanding of what communication is. I mean any kind of communication; communication in marriage, business, politics and any platform you can think of. But the truth remains that at every point in communication; there must be checks and a place for silence and listening. This is evident in the writing of the great wise king, Solomon. Knowing when to be silent and when to talk have great effects in our communities; the family, institution, the church, and even *one-to-one* relationships. The great evangelist, preacher, and legend of all times, Billy Graham, once mentioned that "The problems of the world could be solved overnight if men could get victory over their tongues."

Understanding the Power of Tongue and Silence

There once lived a husband and wife in a city. Both of them were always at loggerheads, arguing, nagging and disagreeing over almost every discussion. Most times, none of them had the patience to listen to the other. They were always in disagreements even over trivial matters. This happened for years, and there seemed to be no end to this menace to their marriage or improvements in their relationship as husband and wife. Due to the pressure from this uninteresting situation, both of them decided to attend several marriage seminars, conferences and kept a significant number of appointments with relationship experts, who have only been paid large sums of their joint life savings, just to receive counselling on the issues they had in their marriage, but nothing really changed.

This unpleasant situation grew worse, as the couple's grown-up children decided to move out of the home one after the other. When the children were confronted by their parents on their decision to rent accommodation outside the home, the children opened up to them, that their parents' constant arguments and disagreements had been having effects on them and their relationships. They explained further that the only way to avoid this was to seek their own accommodation, in order to be less exposed to this ugly situation, so it would not affect their future. This finally dealt a very heavy blow on the *always-disagreeing* couple and they took a bold step to seek the services of an experienced Psychotherapist Consultant.

Though, this was extremely expensive, but the immediate development that has just been mentioned about their children had actually driven them to take this step. After the first appointment with the consultant, he penned down his findings and analysed them, discovering that he did not need to administer any medication to either of them, but the problem was that both of them talked too much. And none of them was willing and patient to hear the other out, as they both wanted to talk at the same time. This then usually led to arguments, and disagreements ensued from that point, escalating to ignoring each other for hours, and sometimes, days.

During their second visit to the relationship expert, the consultant decided to have separate meetings with them on different days. While having a discussion with the husband, he gave him some tiny tablets and asked him to always take this medication each time he sensed the wife wanted to start a discussion with him. He added, taking this medication required the husband to only say yes during discussions with his wife, and also to put up a sign of agreement, which was nodding of his head, to whatever her perspectives were on the matter being discussed. The wife was also advised by the consultant to get more sleep and drink more water in the morning. Both of them were advised to undergo these therapies for the first eight weeks, and then an appointment was rescheduled for them. On the following day, as usual, the woman started discussing an issue regarding some unpaid bills and that payments were almost late. Immediately the wife started talking, the husband went into the bedroom drawer and dropped a tablet in his mouth.

into the bedroom drawer and dropped a tablet in his mouth. He nodded in agreement to all ideas the wife discussed and there were no arguments that morning. It went on and on for a couple of days and one weekend, the children decided to come and spend some time with their parents, and the atmosphere was so serene and calm. The children could not keep their feelings reserved, but voiced out. "*Dad, mum…something has happened, and it is very obvious*."

Before their children's visit, the wife had already noticed that her husband had turned a new leaf, because during discussions, she talked and there were no interruptions from him, rather, he agreed with her by nodding, which she felt was a great way of responding. The husband also discovered that his wife had great ideas on every matter she discussed, so he decided to listen more to her during discussions.

During a review appointment with the consultant after eight weeks, he confessed to both of them that the medication given to the husband was only an ordinary minty sweet and not a special medication for anything. And likewise, he only advised the wife to embark on a water therapy and sleeping-well habit for healthy living. He confirmed to them that what he discovered during his first appointment with them was that both of them needed to talk less and listen more to each other. This would help them have a peaceful marriage, a home without rancour, disagreements and it will usher in understanding, progress and unity. The husband talked less and listened more, while the wife kept quiet after talking for a while, for the husband to respond, and showed respect for her

husband, considering his position in her life. That was the beginning of an era of peace, joy, and progress in the family, and everything fell back in place. Even the youngest two of their children decided to come back home and they lived happily ever after.

Solomon wrote, “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise”. (Proverbs 10:19). This is a basic lesson for all, that a mastery of the use of your tongue puts you in control of your life. An unbridled tongue leads to pain, and the whole body is affected.

Being in Charge of your Tongue

One of King Solomon's proverbs which I cherish most is in Proverbs 18:20-21 “A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled. Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.” This aspect of the wise sayings in the wisdom diary of King Solomon is very spectacular to every man's life endeavour, as it determines the consequential events leading to how individuals live their life and what they make of it. The output of the use of your tongue and the control you have over it is a direct result of the quality of your life. Choosing to cultivate habits of being in charge of your tongue, and taming the loquacity nature of the tongue creates an avenue for you to achieve a highly significant measure of positivity in your daily endeavour. I am not being judgemental here, but the reality is that the tongue has the power of life and death in it, as King Solomon confirmed in his proverbs.The power of the tongue is capable of making it very

corrupt as John Acton stated in his words “The Power tends to corrupt...” It then becomes your responsibility to acquire enough momentum to fight the battle of putting under control, the small, but very dominant part of your body, which has the capacity to set the whole body, spirit, and soul on fire, destroying your life, and even the eternity. “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.” (James 3:6).

You have what it takes to Rule your World

The whole truth of the matter is that you have been created to make an impact in your world. As one of the wisest men that have ever lived, King Solomon played a vital role in making an impact in his world, through the knowledge of what he could achieve with the use of his tongue. Likewise, the Apostle Paul wrote in one of his letters to the Ephesians, a group of believers who were very blessed and rich in Christ, but they lacked the understanding of the quality of what they have in Jesus Christ. Hence they lived like beggars due to the ignorance of how magnificent their heritage was, in Jesus. “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” (Ephesians 4:29). Accepting Jesus and allowing the light of Jesus Christ to shine through you, with the positive use of your tongue brings you to the centre of God's purpose for all mankind. “From the fruit of their lips people are filled with good things, and the work of their hands brings them

reward.” (Proverbs 12:14). You've got what it takes… impacting your world…fulfilling God's purpose, using your tongue.

CHAPTER SIX

YOU CAN RISE AGAIN

"For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again…" (Proverbs 24:16)

As a king, Solomon shared his perspectives on falling and the aftermath of it in the book of Proverbs. Failing is only a question of *"when"*, and not *"If",* which means that there are certainly, moments of failure and disappointments in our lives. Seasons that we desperately crave for help, support and a shoulder to lean on, but none would seem to be surfacing. King Solomon wrote in Proverbs 24:16 "For a just man falls seven times, and rises up again…" Therefore it is noteworthy that falling or failing is not a sign of weakness or inadequacies on the part of a man who falls, but a test on his tenacity and determination to succeed in whatever the situation is. In his article, Dr. Guy Winch is of the opinion that "It's not whether you fail, or why, that matters, but how you react to it." Your response to failure is the most cardinal here. Your response to this might be positive or negative.

A famous self-taught scientist, Michael Faraday (1791-1867) excelled in chemistry and physics and became one of the most influential intellectuals in history. He's been called the "father of electricity. After failing for over a thousand times and recorded all

the failures, Faraday discovered laws of electromagnetism, invented the first electric motor, and built the first electric generator, paving the way for our mechanized age. This is a positive attitude, believing that failure is a teacher, and all you need during this usually unpleasant period is just to learn some specific lessons from it, and move on. Faraday did not relent in his efforts and actually fulfilled his aim.

In the scriptures, a significant number of characters also had issues with following the instructions of God, fell, and due to the manner with which they responded to this, they bounced back, and restarted all over again with God. Falling, due to failures in life, could be very demoralising and depressing. As an individual, you have the prerogative power at your disposal, not to control failures and falling, or when they happen, but to exercise total control on the effect they have on you when they eventually happen. It's absolutely your choice if you permit the unpleasant episode to rip you off your vision and ambitions in life. Though failure has very systematic and manipulative ways of paralysing your willingness to *try* again, but the most crucial step to take at this point is identifying the effects it has on you and the lessons to learn. Logically, instead of you allowing the negative occurrence to create an enduring mark on your person, the above discovery would guide you to turn failures into stepping platforms to achieving success and actualising your dreams in the long run.

The Inevitability of Falling and Failing

Solomon's father, David wrote in Psalms 20:8 “Those nations will fall

down and collapse, but we will rise up and stand firm." The question of falling or making a mistake, leading to failure is an inevitable one. I mean to everyone, who aspires to become great and desperately focuses on results, and not distractions like failures. In my experience as a digitals marketing and PR expert, I have noticed that the process of becoming great in whatever you do is a function of exercising tenacity and doggedness in achieving your goals.

During my years of practice as Digital Marketing expert, using a wide range of digital marketing software, I had spent all night, trying to configure new software, but not a successful outcome until morning. But arriving at the office in the morning and just before mid-day, a complete discovery is made and all configuration tasks concluded. It was a mixture of *trial, failing, and trying again* before the beauty of all the newly configured software could be seen by all. Also in history, I have read about a significant number of legends and great revolutionaries who blatantly failed to achieve their aims, but they kept at it, and in the end, they were able to fulfill their destinies because they did not *give up*. You have not failed until you have given up on your purpose and vision. The road to greatness has a lot to do with falling and rising, regardless of your experiences and story.

I was devastated and demoralised after writing my School Certificate Examination (the equivalent of the GCSE) the fourth time, and on my way from school, I hung around the corner of our street on that fateful afternoon. I could not go home because I was disappointed in myself and had a very strong conviction that my parents would also be disappointed in me for bringing home a

very bad result that could not earn me an admission into the university the fourth time. My mum, who was still in the civil service as a teacher was worried and started looking for me. She later found me sitting down on the gutter pavement in the other street, depressed, sad and confused. She ran towards me and held me tight to herself, asking *what happened son?* I responded *"Mum, I failed again",* and before I finished my statement, she put a finger to my lips and stopped me… *"Son you have not failed because you have not given up"*. My mum's statement changed everything, as I stood up, enrolled for another School Certificate Examination and came out in flying colours. That same year, I sat for the university placement examination and passed. My mum's statement kept coming to my ears like gentle whispers throughout my universities days, both my Bachelor's and Master's degrees, even when I was writing qualifying exams for my professional qualifications.

Failure is what you make of it

It does not matter the extent of your failure or falling. What matters is how you are able to deal with it and what you make of it. It's also amazing to know that this is just a way of making you better at what you do. David fell so badly, impregnating Bathsheba and killing her husband, Uriah.

> "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, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said

> "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite." Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant." (2 Samuel 11:2-9).
>
> "In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. In it, he wrote, "Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die." (2 Samuel 11:14-15).

One would have thought this is the height of falling in the presence of God, but on the contrary, when Prophet Nathan opened this up to him, David became sober and accepted that he has sinned against God and man. The baby that came from that sinful act died and David mended his way before the Lord. "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." (2 Samuel 12:13). Due to the way and manner David handled this situation, he bounced back and God still retained David's position in His heart. "…he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave their testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart…" (Acts 13:22).

Your greatest responsibility is to have a grip on whatever the situation is, and be tenacious about making something positive out of it. I have discovered that those that have fallen and failed in the past have a better mastery of whatever they do. It's about the

attitude…an attitude of *what is to learn from this?* Solomon wrote “For a just man falls seven times, and rises up again…” Imagine the significant number of lessons to be learned in falling on seven different occasions. A lot of strategies must have been tried, and after using each strategy, they stick and then another, and another, until you become the master of the Game. It has been confirmed by a group of researchers that it takes seven to ten years, consecutively doing something before you become the master of it. That confirms the Wisdom of Solomon in his Proverbs.

A significant number of God's servants fell and failed in the scriptures but in the end, they triumphed. Even when it felt heaven was falling, they kept at what they did and firmly focused their attention on God the Almighty who does not leave His children at any point. “…there shall not fail thee a man in my sight…” (1 Kings 8:25). Even when you fail, there is a redemption provision for rising, as the creator of heaven and the earth has confirmed it in His word. Failing does not necessarily have to be your error, as in the case of Joseph. He narrated dreams to his family and this was the genesis of his falling, as he found himself sold into Egypt and eventually landed in the prison as a slave immigrant in a strange land. Unknown to his brothers, God did not make Joseph a local ruler who was made to reign over a small family like theirs, but an international ruler, who has been ordained to save the whole world from hunger including Israel. Joseph did not give up on what he had been called to do. He gave interpretations to dreams in prison, and this brought

him before Pharaoh. Finally, he became a ruler in Egypt, due to the way he handled his failures and falling.

Considering the nature of the genesis of the calamities that befell Job, as the scriptures narrated it, I personally felt very emotional while studying his situation and ordeals. This is a proof that you do not have to consciously or unconsciously commit an error before you experience failure. As a matter of fact, Job was a perfect man in the sight of God, and by every standard, but he still experienced a very significant fall, that he lost all he had. “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.” (Job 1:1). The truth is that most times, failures are meant to check the level of our faith, tenacity, patience, commitment and doggedness about the course we follow and believe in.

> “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?...” (Job 1:6-9).

Despite Job's impeccable personal profile, he experienced the height of falling, that not only cost him his possessions but all his

entire family members were totally wiped out. Job was an epitome to patience and commitment in the Bible history of men that have waited on God in the midst of calamities, loss, pressure, and uncertainties. Even when his friends laughed and disregarded his positive confessions during this unpleasant situation, he persistently stood for what he believed.

You have got what it takes to stick up for what you believe and patiently draw towards Jesus for grace to gain sustenance in the midst of the turmoil. His grace is sufficient at any point in time. No wonder Apostle Paul said “But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.” (2 Corinthians 12:19). Be reminded that your failure or falling might not necessarily be your fault, so you do not have to blame yourself, and get distracted from what you believe. Rise up today and follow your dream.

> “Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light” (Micah 7:8-9).

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE HEIGHT OF DISTRACTION

"For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father". (1 Kings 11:4).

The dispensation and era of grace have given Christians a new lease of life in Christ Jesus. It is a significant shift from a position of working hard to be justified, and believing in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, giving the entirety of your life to Him and depending on His Grace for justification comes by faith in Him. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified". (Galatians 2:16). Apostle Paul, to the Galatians, painted a vivid illustration of how it all works; your works of self-righteousness are not tickets to fulfillment, but you are only justified by your faith in Him, thereby enjoying grace, an unmerited favour. Timothy Keller, in his view about faith, said "When we are justified by faith, it makes us want

to do more for Jesus". Having faith and being justified gives birth to zeal to loving God more, and the way to do this considering His will as an act of service and an expression of love and allegiance to Jesus. It is, however, noteworthy to mention this truth, that God Almighty is supreme and His ways are perfect. In all the years I have walked with God as a minister of the Gospel, I have always known, and so much convinced that He is loving, kind-hearted merciful, and powerful. "But God, who is *rich in mercy, for his great love* wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)" (Ephesians 2:4-10). He is also fearful and a consuming fire. "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: *For our God is a consuming fire*". (Hebrews 12:28-29).

Distractions and Loss of God's Presence

In the light of the above analysis about the nature of God, His love and deep interest in mankind, coupled with the required response from man to this unchanging love and attention, I am really convinced that King Solomon started his journey very well with God as a devoted king, but the end of the saga was a tragedy.

> "But king Solomon loved many *strange* women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites: of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their

gods: *Solomon clave unto these in love*".
(1 Kings 11:1-2).

Considering the commitment, tenacity, and enthusiasm with which King Solomon started his relationship with God, I personally felt it was something that would last forever, but due to Solomon's change of taste, lifestyle, new friends and public status, he disobeyed and deviated from the love of God, his creator. It is only human to go through a process of change and transformation at some points in life, but the commandments of God supersedes our thoughts and perspectives. King Solomon knew that God had specifically instructed and warned the Israelites *not to have anything* to do with the women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites, but for the pleasure of life and man's natural tendencies to be easily distracted, he went after these women and his relationship with them led to worshipping their gods. "…*Solomon clave unto these in love*". (1 Kings 11:2).

A recent research conducted on tendencies for human beings to change, which involved over 16,000 people from diverse demographics, revealed that more than 70 percent of respondents agreed they have experienced a significant amount of change in the past, but they are now of the opinion that changes would no longer take place in them till they die. But the question is, if they have accepted that changes had taken place in the past, on what parameters are they convinced and certain that there will no longer be changes in the future? These

changes take place in man due to some factors. Some are age-related, attitude, mental, and some significant human physiology. “For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father”. (1 Kings 11:4). I have really taken time to study the personality of King Solomon, but was shocked at his changed disposition to God, considering the level of his initial commitment, love, devotion, and loyalty to God, because there were at their heights. At the initial stage of his relationship with God, I thought these positive attitudes towards God would only advance towards perfection, and not gravitate to nothing less. But the natural man in King Solomon tilted towards those strange women and their gods. “And the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel…” (1 Kings 11:9). Instead of upholding and preserving the sacredness of the temple he built for the Lord, he erected altars for other gods and God got really irritated by this.

> “Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.” (1 Kings 11:7-8)

The 21st century Christians are practically so preoccupied with material things and have developed a strong affinity towards the perishable things… “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold…” (1 Peter 1:18). You are a precious gem in the hands of God and that is the reason He gave Jesus for the remission of your sins, so He can have you with Himself alone. Accepting Christ as your Lord and saviour is the first major step which leads to relying on His saving Grace to keep walking in His plan and purpose.

Sustained by Grace and Not Works

The sustenance of your relationship with Jesus Christ does not depend on your works but on His grace. Despite the magnitude of King Solomon's physical offerings to God, including the erection of an edifice, a temple for God, his works were not enough to keep him standing in line with the commands of God. He specially offered quality offerings to God only on high places and even thousands of burnt offerings. “…only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar”. (1 Kings 3:3-4).

Charles Spurgeon is of the opinion that:

> “No dependence can be placed upon our natural qualities or our spiritual attainments, but God abideth faithful. He is faithful in His love; He knows

no variableness, neither shadow of turning. He is faithful to His purpose; He doth not begin a work and then leaves it undone. He is faithful to His relationships; as a Father, He will not renounce His children, as a friend He will not deny His people, as a Creator He will not forsake the work of His own hands."

Dr. Timothy Keller, in his book, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes us Just,* wrote that: "…I have preached the classic message that God does not give us Justice but saves us by free grace…" Then the big question is how can I assess grace in Jesus Christ? What do I have to do to earn it? Is it a service which I have to subscribe to and pay for? "For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God". (Titus 2:11-12). The love God has for mankind is so great that he now lives in you and I. We only need to believe and have faith in Him and this is precedence to enjoying in the free grace, which keeps us perfect in all we do.

Another perspective to this is that King Solomon humanly did all he could to obey God and adhere to His commands, but the truth is that, as a human being, no natural strength and ability is capable of sustaining our salvation in Christ Jesus. Apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law;

we become conscious of our sin…for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus". (Romans 3:20-24).

Righteousness through Faith

The topic of righteousness by faith is a cardinal pointer to understanding and illumination of our faith in Jesus Christ. I have painstakingly researched and consulted some great minds and teachers of the gospel about this. One of them is John Piper, and this is his view is on the matter of righteousness and faith. "Christ died to pay our debt. Christ lived to provide our righteousness. When we despair of ourselves and trust the God who justifies the ungodly, God reckons our sin as punished on the cross, and God reckons Christ's righteousness as imputed to us". A significant number of life's bugging questions are being answered by Piper's statement. Can God forgive my sins? Can I still enjoy the love of God, due to my grievous past sins?

The death of Jesus is an invaluable sacrifice, which God paid to wipe away your sins, so you can be the perfect bride for the groom. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him...she (you) should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints". (Revelations 19:7-8). The whole duty of man is embedded in the love of God and He is only capable to draw men unto Himself. "For no one can come to me

unless the Father who sent me draws them to me…" (John 6:44). Now having been drawn by grace, man now has access to the free grace in Jesus Christ, who is our righteousness.

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Considering the required amount of knowledge needed to attain a level at which you can experience an optimum manifestation of certain blessings of God, these resources will be helpful.

- Generous Justice: *How God's Grace Makes Us Just* - by Timothy Keller
- The Harder Right: *Stories of Conscience and Choice* by Arthur Dobrin
- The Selfish Gene - by Richard Dawkins
- God's lavish grace - by Terry Virgo
- Making Sense of God*: An Invitation to the Skeptical* - by Timothy Keller
- The Book of Proverbs - The King James Version of the Bible
- God Is the Gospel - by John Piper


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