



A Warrior's Witness:
A Prayer for Godly Character in Post-Modern Times
by Rick Willison

All Bible quotations from the New International Version

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the fond memory of my mother, Dodie Willison. God answered her never-ending prayers for my salvation, allowing me the privilege of writing this book. She was a wonderful woman of God who made it her ministry to see all her children find salvation in Jesus. She taught me the power of prayer: I am living proof that God hears our prayers and works diligently to answer them. Thank you, Mom, for never giving up on me. I love you!

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my beautiful wife, friend, ministry partner and helpmate, Sonya, for all her support, love, nurturing, and faithfulness to God and me. Her prayers and encouraging words are always right on. She has helped me in my journey as she reminds me of who I am in Jesus. Thank you!

I would also like to thank Dr. Brad Tuttle. He is a true man of God. He puts his faith where his mouth is. He shows who Jesus is in his life through his every action. I have learned so much from him. He has mentored me in so many ways. He is a true man of integrity who exemplifies the attributes described in this book. Thank you for being a Warrior's Witness!

I would like to give special thanks to Regina Lundgren for all the hard work she put into this book. It was her encouragement that kept me on track, and her willingness to edit this book that made it a worthwhile read. Thank you, Regina, for all your work. You are a warrior for God!

Preface

It's amazing what happens when you listen to God.

I met Rick Willison when I was serving as leader of our church's front door ministry. You know these folks—the ones who stand at the front door smiling and welcoming you in? We took it one step further by praying for those who walked through our doors for the first time, visiting them in their homes, encouraging them to continue seeking after God, and working to find a place for them in the church. Rick and his lovely wife Sonya helped us get the ministry off the ground.

A few months later, we were serving in this function during one of Rick's X-Treme Team extravaganzas at our church. I had been praying that morning about how God wanted to use me in this endeavor. Unlike Rick, I speak softly and don't carry any kind of big stick. I don't have his flair, and I certainly don't have his gift for evangelism. I wasn't sure how my talents were going to help me win the lost for Christ.

And God said, "Rick Willison needs to write a book."

I must admit, I was a little afraid at the time that I was projecting. I mean, I write books. I have had published thirteen novels, four novellas, and two nonfiction books, one of which is in

its third edition. Rick bends things, smashes things, and does incredible feats of strength to show God's power over sin. He's reached thousands with the gospel. He's a warrior for Christ.

Me? I'm a seed planter. I don't know how my books have touched hearts; I just believe that God uses them to do so. But this time, I was called to plant a seed in Rick's heart.

So I did what most of us do, as Rick alludes to in this book: I reminded God of why this wasn't going to work. Rick was in the middle of a crusade. From the previous night, I knew he'd be busy before the service preparing and that there would be dozens of people crowding around him after the service. I didn't see how I was going to get close enough to announce that I, a little-known author and then fairly young Christian, knew what God intended one of his best men to do. I told God that if He really wanted me to talk to Rick that night, He was going to have to make a way for that to happen.

And He did.

I came down the hall from where the thirty-some people who had made a profession of faith were still praying and looked out across the foyer. Rick and his team were sitting at a long table, signing autographs and encouraging their fans. There must have been twenty people crowding around. No way was I getting to Rick.

And then the crowds parted.

I blinked. Here it was. There was no one between me and Rick. The next person in line for an autograph had stopped and was happily chatting with one of Rick's teammates, showing no interest in moving on to the man himself. I had an open invitation to stroll up and say my piece.

Heart pounding, I walked up to him.

"Hi, Rick. This may sound a little odd, but have you ever thought about writing a book?"

Rick smiled. “Yeah, I’ve got several ideas. God’s been talking to me about that lately.”

Stunned, I stammered, “Me too! I think I’m supposed to help you.”

He didn’t laugh. He didn’t point out that I had far more fiction than nonfiction to my credit and all my credits were in the secular press. He didn’t remind me that he’s the one with the ministerial credentials. He didn’t say thanks, but he’d rather do it his way. In typical Rick style, he got excited and he got cranking.

Life intervened, as it often does, but that only gave Rick more fuel for the fire. I did my best to encourage and support. I actually got so brave as to threaten once. He did the work; I tidied things up a bit. I learned a lot, about my life as a Christian, about how God can use even someone as quiet as me to further His kingdom. I’m honored to have been part of the team.

Jesus said that you will know us by the fruit that we bear. You hold in your hands the fruit of our labors. May it be a blessing to you as it has been to me. And may you read with an open heart, listening for what God wants of you.

It’s amazing what happens when you listen to God.

Regina Lundgren, also known as Regina Scott

Introduction

In our constant search for reality, we find ourselves placing our trust in things that are far from being real. I've read many self-help books that claim to make life better, people stronger. I've heard the latest "Big Thing" that tells us if we just do this, or if we repeat this prayer daily, or if we do these three things, then our lives will be transformed. I've watched our world steadily decline in moral values. I've witnessed too many men of God fall into the traps of the world.

I, quite honestly, am tired of watching what it does to the people who place their trust in such things.

A couple of years ago, I asked God what I needed to do to be a holy man. I knew that my past was a disgrace, at best. I knew that I never wanted to return to my former self, which was crucified with Jesus. But even though I had asked for forgiveness for my sins and renounced my former self, I still had to find a way to stay on the path of righteousness.

The Wrong Attitude

As a young man I rejected Jesus as my Savior and turned my back on what God had done for me. I wanted to be a millionaire who played professional football, owned many large homes,

enjoyed all the cars and toys, and always sported the best-looking girlfriend. I didn't want to follow Jesus and be some boring Christian who stunk up the church as I sat in a pew each Sunday. (I think that's why they are called pews.)

I thought I had a better plan for my life than God could ever imagine. So, at the young age of twelve, I began my journey of running from God.

Don't get the wrong idea here. I looked like any eager young Christian. My parents were God-fearing people who made sure their seven kids attended church every Sunday and Wednesday. But I wasn't there to learn about Jesus. In fact, the only reason I went to church was to please my parents (and to keep myself from getting into trouble). Church bored me. I could hang out with friends, but our time was spent playing games, talking, and passing notes. We were constantly hunting for the cutest girl. There was no spiritual value to what I was doing. Or was there?

Even though I tried to ignore anything related to my spiritual life, God still managed to get things into my head that would come back to me later in life. If it weren't for my parents forcing me to go to church, however, I would never have stepped foot inside the door. It seemed so phony to me. I knew so many "Christians" that lived one way on Sundays and Wednesdays and a totally different way the rest of the week. I couldn't see the need to be a hypocrite. So I ran from God as far as I could. I wasn't going to play some stupid game of church to impress people.

The minute I got out on my own, I quit attending church entirely. I went in pursuit of my dreams, which just happened to coincide with everything the world had to offer. My plan was to get all the goods and then, when I was lying on my death bed (say thirty years old), I would ask Jesus to save me from my sins.

Well, God didn't give up on me that easily.

A Candle in the Darkness

As I tried to fulfill my dreams of being a professional football player, I learned I had a hereditary eye disease called Retinitis Pigmentosa. It began affecting me in my twenties. By the time I was thirty, I had color blindness, night blindness, and tunnel vision, and my best vision was 20/200, which is the legal definition of blindness in most states. A person with 20/200 vision has to be within 20 feet to see a letter that a person with normal vision can see 200 feet away!

I could no longer play football. I could no longer drive. In January of 1992, I rolled my car three and a half times because I missed a curve in the road outside Weed, California. I was heading for disaster. I couldn't even make a living at this point. I had no training to function as a blind person. I had no idea what to do. So I quit!

I remember sitting in my living room in Campbell, California, contemplating my life and all I could see was a huge wake of destruction. I had married and divorced two women. By one of them, I had a son who was five years old that I had all but disowned. I was a broken, immoral, cheating, stealing, liar with hatred in my heart.

Most of all, I was furious at God. I wanted to fight Him. I wanted to know why He was picking on me. I literally cursed at Him and then cried out to Him.

"What do you want from me?" I demanded.

A great calm came over me. The Holy Spirit moved. Suddenly, there was a moment of clarity. At a time when I was ready to end my life, God intervened. He spoke to my heart. He told me that all He wanted was me.

He just wanted me.

At that moment I began to pray to Jesus. I asked Him to forgive me for my sins. I asked Him to come into my heart and fill me with His Holy Spirit. I turned my back on sin that day. I made Jesus my Lord and my Savior. I surrendered my entire life to Him.

I was saved!

But a new realization slammed down on me like a ton of bricks. What about all the terrible things I'd done? I remembered God calling me into ministry as a young child and felt God calling me again. He had renewed my life; now He was renewing the call on my life.

So, I did what many others have done in similar circumstances. I promptly reminded Him of my past. Look at all the sins I had committed. He couldn't possibly use someone like me. But God reminded me of something. He spoke these words into my heart.

"I don't care where you've been! I don't care where you think you are now! All I care about is what you do with your future!"

You see, God had a plan for me, and I was about to begin the greatest adventure of my life.

First Steps

I moved to Tillamook, Oregon, where I could live with my parents and become actively involved in church. I surrounded myself with strong Christians who would help me stay on the path God had laid before me. I began working with our Youth Pastor, John Yancey. He helped me understand the amount of courage, dedication, and love it takes to work with teens. I was sold. I felt God's call focusing in.

That is when I decided to go to Bible College. I knew I had to understand the Bible. I had to know what to do to be a great servant of God. Yet it seemed impossible. How could a blind person go to college? How could I study? How could I read?

I was accepted at Multnomah Bible College in the fall of 1993. Through the Oregon Commission for the Blind, I learned to travel with a cane and use technology to read class materials. They pointed me in the direction of scholarships and even gave me money for school. They helped me hire other students to read for me. I also utilized recordings of books and a specialized piece of equipment that magnified things so I could read them.

I became a full-time Youth Pastor at the Gresham Church of the Nazarene the same day I enrolled in classes. My adventure was going great. God was moving my life forward. This time, I was hand-in-hand with Him, eagerly anticipating all He had for me to do.

As I look back on those times, I see how God did so much to shape my ministry today. He put me in the right places at the right times to learn how to be effective in ministry. God opened the doors for me to go to Multnomah Bible College. I thought I would learn the Bible there, but that was only part of my education. I was taught how to do ministry by some of the best professors on the planet. Dr. Steve Patty exposed me to many aspects of ministry. He brought in ministers who had been highly successful to interact with us. It was amazing. I never had to plan a lesson for my youth group the whole time I was in college. I just taught them what I was learning.

I also found great friends. I have learned so much from my associates at Multnomah. Together we tested the waters of ministry. Now we are all over the place but still share that common ground. Our ministries interact often. I learned important lessons on accountability, love, friendship, consistency, and so much more.

The greatest thing I found at Multnomah was my wife Sonya. She is my partner in ministry. I met her just days after enrolling. She became my wife on July 9, 1994. It was one of those “God Things.” She knew I was her man, and I knew she would be my wife after dating less than a month. We’ve been in ministry together ever since.

Our marriage is my dream come true. Don’t get me wrong here either. I know I can be a difficult person, but God is in the center of our life together, and we are blessed on a daily basis.

We had our daughter, Raelee, on January 24, 2003. She is a wonderful blessing to us. You may be wondering what happened to that five-year-old son of mine. Sonya and I moved to Kennewick, Washington, so we could be near him. We know how turbulent high school can be, so we wanted to be close to him as he attended school. He graduated from high school in June 2005.

He is also a blessing to us. He and I have a great relationship. He even serves in ministry with me; he’s worked on our X-Treme Team since he was fifteen years old. He’s helped lead hundreds of young people to the Lord. He is my pride and my joy. I love my boy and my girl with all my heart.

As for the X-Treme Team, that is another of those God Things. God inspired Sonya and me to step out in faith in 1998 to begin a new ministry called T.E.A.M. Jesus Ministries, Inc. T.E.A.M. Jesus stands for “Tell Everyone About My Jesus.” Through this ministry, we’ve sponsored sports teams, gone on mission trips, done street evangelism, and more.

However, our most effective outreach has been the X-Treme Team. I won’t go into great detail here. Suffice it to say that we are a team of evangelists who demonstrate strength and endurance to the glory of God. We smash walls of concrete with our arms, drive our heads through ice, tear up phone books, bend steel in our mouths, and so much more, all to proclaim

the power of God over sin. In our first 7 years of ministry, we've seen over 50,000 people make decisions to follow Jesus. Praise God! You can learn more on our website at www.tjmi.net.

Living the Life of a Warrior

Now I tell you all that to tell you this: I want to live a holy and righteous life before our Lord, Jesus. I spend every day in celebration of the fact that He chose a wretch like me to reach people for Him, to be a messenger for His great and glorious Gospel. What a privilege that is all by itself! I never want to miss an opportunity to serve Him. I want to be able to stand before God someday and hear these words come from His mouth: "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

But being a man of God in our post-modern society isn't easy. We are told that truth is relative; that we should be tolerant of every view, even those that cause heartache and bloodshed; that giving the Gospel message is old-fashioned and out-dated. Men search in vain for role models that won't end up disappointing them by lying, cheating, or committing adultery or murder. People would have us believe that there is no devil.

We know otherwise. Satan is our enemy, and he is a master of disguise, trickery, deception, and confusion. If we want to be successful in what God has called us all to do, we need an arsenal of weapons that will help us detect and destroy that enemy. The good news is that God put together just such an arsenal:

"Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes . . . Stand firm, then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests" (Ephesians 6:11, 14-18a).

Pray in the Spirit. One of the best weapons I have against Satan is prayer.

A Prayer for Godly Character

This world needs more than ever men who will stand up and mirror God, men who provide the witness of a warrior for Christ. God has so many wonderful attributes: kindness, mercy, faithfulness, patience. Which of those attributes best reflect a warrior's witness? I believe there are several, which I'd like to share with you in this book.

I'd like you to pray about those characteristics, and I'd like you to act on them. The Bible shows us that prayer and action, in that order bring results. The Israelites begged God to free them from bondage in Egypt. God heard their prayers but waited until He had a man of action to lead them: Moses. God had a plan to reach the Gentiles but waited until He had a man of action to bring the message: the Apostle Paul. All of the prophets prayed deep and meaningful prayers, and then acted on those prayers.

James 4:8a says, "Come near to God and he will come near to you." When we pray and move, the Lord will be with us.

But don't think of this prayer as a magic trick. It is not a secret chant or some kind of spell that will transform your life if you say it just right or pray it every day. This prayer is simply a reminder of what we need to be as warriors of God.

Go Forth and Conquer

Believe me when I tell you that there is no better place to be than in the center of God's will. I live there 24/7/365. Is it easy? No! But it is where I find the most peace and contentment.

My hope for you is that you become all that God wants you to be. As a man who foolishly chased after the world, I can tell you that this world has nothing to offer. The pain of the world will simply never measure up to the wondrous eternity Jesus offers.

Please read this book with great care. Pray the prayer, but do it with a genuine heart. Put the principles into place in your life. Watch how God leads you to become the person He wants you to be.

Be X-Treme in your faith. Be radically saved. God is so good. My prayer for you is that you realize all the blessings He has for you. May you always appreciate those blessings!

Chapter One – The Wisdom of Solomon

“Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than any other man, including Ethan the Ezrahite--wiser than Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations” (1 Kings 4:30-31).

Wisdom is the gateway to a warrior's triumphs. It takes great wisdom for a warrior to succeed. A foolish man will rush into battle and be destroyed. A wise man considers his enemy, consults his experts, and chooses the wisest way to attack. The greatest battles have not been won because of how many were sent to fight, but rather, because of great wisdom in strategically overcoming the enemy. A warrior who desires to be a great witness for God needs to pray that God gives him great wisdom. He needs to use his mind to consider all things before going to battle. A warrior goes into battle to win, not to be overtaken and destroyed by his enemy. Wisdom is the foundation from which God can build a great warrior.

The Example of a Warrior

Solomon was an incredible man of God. He followed his father, King David, as ruler over the twelve tribes of Israel. He was chosen by his father over all his older brothers and approved by God. God even chose him to build His first temple in Jerusalem.

One night, after Solomon had been worshipping, God appeared to him in a dream. “Ask for whatever you want me to give to you” (1 Kings 3:5b).

Solomon could have asked for anything: wealth, fame, long life. But his desire was for wisdom. He recognized that he was only a young man, and he was going to have to rule over a mighty nation. He wanted a discerning heart to govern God’s people and to distinguish between right and wrong. Because of his humbleness before God, he received that wisdom.

As a matter of fact, Solomon is known as the wisest man to ever live. He was wiser than the men of the East (those Wise Men who later came to worship the infant Jesus), all the philosophers of Egypt (who’d been writing words of wisdom for over a millennium by Solomon’s time), and several famous Israelite worship leaders who had penned praise to the Lord (Psalm 89 and 1 Chronicles 16:42).

He was also an excellent judge of character, which made him one of Israel’s greatest leaders. Besides giving him wisdom, God blessed him with everything that this world could offer: riches, fame, and glory. Kings and queens came from all over to honor this great man of wisdom.

Decisions of the Wise

Solomon’s ability to make good decisions amazes me. The Bible tells the story of two women who came before him to settle an argument over who was the mother of a particular child. You see, one mother had rolled over on her child in the night and suffocated the little one. In her grief, she switched her dead baby with the other mother’s child.

When that mother saw that her baby was dead, she instantly realized that he was not her child. But the other woman would not relent. So they went before King Solomon.

When he heard their stories, he told the palace guards to take the baby, cut it in half, and give each mother a half. Instantly the baby's real mother, with her deep love and compassion for her child, cried "No!" and offered to give the child to the other woman. The other woman had no love or compassion and said, "Yes, let's do that!" She had lost her child and wanted the other woman to suffer as well.

Solomon gave the child to his real mother. Pretty smart, huh?

This may seem like an extreme case, but I want to have that kind of wisdom. I want to make the right decision every time. I want to have great wisdom that allows me to discriminate between the truth and clever lies. I want to help people with their problems by letting them know what's best without a doubt. I want to be able to say and do the right things every time I deal with my children and my wife.

I want to be smart enough to know God's will over my will or your will in every situation. I don't want to get caught up in the world's wisdom and be full of myself and lost when it comes to what God would do.

Worldly Wisdom

I've listened to people tell me about the wisdom of the ages, how Socrates or Aristotle or Plato or some other philosopher influenced our thoughts, how we have a world view because we buy into the ideas of these men of old. It seems I'm supposed to follow these wise leaders without question.

But I disagree with a passion. All these men were created by God; they are not the Creator or the author of wisdom. The very fact that they were human makes them weak at best. Their worldly wisdom will fall short every time.

The Apostle Paul understood this. He'd been trained by the best Jewish teachers of the age and was considered a Pharisee among Pharisees. That would be like a lawyer among lawyers these days. He was also steeped in the Greek traditions of philosophy. Yet he told the believers at Corinth, "We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began" (1 Corinthians 2:6-7).

If it's God's secret wisdom, it makes sense that only God can reveal it. If I want that kind of wisdom, I have to ask Him for it. Having such wisdom helps me make decisions in life, great and small. Such wisdom also helps my family, my friends, my ministry, and the ones to whom I minister. If I desire true wisdom, I need the wisdom that God gave Solomon.

Now I know that Solomon wasn't perfect and struggled later in life. However, I believe understanding those facts is part of the wisdom for which I pray. I don't want to make Solomon's mistakes, or the mistakes of any man for that matter, but I do want to take on the best qualities of Solomon's character. The most important of those qualities is the wisdom he gained from a humble attitude before God.

Seeing the Path

I want to always be in the center of God's will for my life, and I believe that it takes great wisdom to stay there. It is a great place to be, offering peace, joy, and contentment. Being in the center of God's will allows me to fulfill the purpose for which God created me. Only a fool would want to be God's enemy and live outside His will.

I was such a fool once. As a fool, I made many bad decisions, as you read in the introduction to this book. It is easy to make foolish decisions. It takes no effort whatsoever. It wasn't until I surrendered my life to the Lord Jesus that I began making wise choices.

Even then, it wasn't immediate. The wisest thing I ever did was to listen to God speaking in my life. I didn't just waltz over to Him with certain demands of my own. I didn't try to negotiate what I thought would be best for my life. I literally knelt down and begged for forgiveness for my sinful ways. I came to Jesus with an attitude of brokenness. I knew that I could bring nothing; I had nothing to offer. All I could do was lay my life on the altar and surrender everything to Him. He was the one calling me, not the other way around.

I instantly knew that I was a clean slate. I had put all my old ways behind me. Now I wanted to start out in a new way, following Jesus. That's why I told Him that I would go and do whatever He wanted.

I had no idea at the time where He was going to take me. I just knew that all the decisions I'd made up to that point had got me to a place that I didn't like very much. I'd just made my first wise decision—to surrender all to Jesus.

Since that time, I wish I could tell you that I've made all the right choices, but I can't. Sometimes, I slide back into that old self and rely on my human wisdom to make decisions. I take the path of least resistance, the way that seems easiest at the time. However, as the situation plays out, I've found that my human wisdom is always wrong. That's why I make asking for the wisdom of Solomon a daily prayer.

We should not be fooled by this world or the things of this world. The prophet Isaiah said of worldly wisdom: "The wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent

will vanish” (Isaiah 29:14b). We need to be upright, honest people of integrity. We need to strive for excellence in everything we do. To live that way, we must ask God for wisdom.

I think that James summed it up well when he said, “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5).

Wisdom in Action

Wisdom is not something that you can take for granted. You have to work at it. You have to be aware of your surroundings at all times. You have to think before you speak and seek God’s will before making your own plans. Paul told the Corinthians, “The man without the Spirit does not accept things that come from the Spirit of God for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things” (1 Corinthians 2:14 and 15a). We must practice discerning spiritual things.

One of the greatest tools we have to gain Godly wisdom is the book of Proverbs in the Bible. No matter how much I read it, I always find new nuggets of great wisdom. Of course, finding such wisdom there makes sense because King Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs, and God inspired him to do so.

The book of Proverbs has thirty-one chapters, so you can read a chapter every day of the month. I make it a part of my daily devotions. Many times, what I read in the morning helped me make a wise decision during the day.

I also wanted to impart that wisdom to my children. My son, Nick, who is nineteen, has some tough decisions to make on a daily basis. Today’s temptations are more easily available

than ever before. He is bombarded with everything from garbage on the Internet to too much spare time. He has to make the right decision even if his friends are making wrong decisions. He has to learn wisdom. I knew I had to help.

So here is what I did. I took about thirty blank post cards. As I read through Proverbs each day, I put the most profound and insightful thing I learned on one of the cards. Then I mailed it to him. Once the process got rolling, he received a piece of wisdom from me every day the mail was delivered. I know he read them, and I know he kept them. Encouraging him in this way will help him to make wise decisions in his life. Encouraging him is also one of the wisest things I could do as a parent. I will do the same with my little Raelee when she grows older.

Wisdom Only God Can Give

In Psalm 111:10 it says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow His precepts have good understanding. To Him belongs eternal praise.”

I find it interesting that wisdom starts by fearing the Lord. This isn't an unhealthy fear like man would give you, but rather a true, honest fear of the almighty God who is and was and is to come. It's an understanding of God's precepts for life: that our only significance lies in the hands of our Creator.

God has a plan for your life. You were created with a destiny and a purpose. Put your trust in Jesus and ask for the wisdom it takes to make it well through this life so you can fulfill your God-given destiny. Ask God for wisdom: the wisdom of Solomon. Watch how He blesses you through your obedience. He has helped me to understand the ways of man, deal with finances, serve Him effectively, raise strong Christian children, make our marriage a wonderful thing, and much, much more! It is amazing what God's wisdom can help you do.

Begin this day to pray this prayer. It starts like this:

Lord, give me the wisdom of Solomon so I can live a warrior's witness!

Chapter Two – The Integrity of Joseph

“The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned” (Genesis 39:2-4).

The next step in becoming a great warrior for God is in your ability to be who God has called you to be. As a holy person, you must constantly be measuring your level of integrity. A true warrior of God can always be counted on. Warriors do what they say they will do when they say they will do it. They live the same life behind closed doors as they do in the public places. Their yes is their yes and their no is their no. It is that simple.

A warrior has to be a person of great integrity. Without integrity, the wisest man will fall victim to the ways of the enemy. We must not lower ourselves to accomplish our God-given call. That will only destroy what God is calling us to do. Integrity is a key element in becoming a great warrior for God. No one will believe in what you say if your actions do not line up with your words.

Integrity was once explained to me as being an upright person who lives above reproach, even when no one is looking. Integrity is one of the elements that is lacking in our society today.

Some politicians and most of the entertainment media portray the need to say and do whatever it takes to make people happy. You live one way on camera and another off.

Why anyone would buy into a lifestyle that contradicts itself is beyond me. Such hypocrisy attacks our families by eroding relationships. It attacks each individual by eroding self-respect. We can only restore honor to our country by restoring the integrity of its people.

It Starts With the Young

Part of my job as an evangelist with the X-Treme Team is to speak in schools. I've had the opportunity to speak in hundreds of locations all over the world. Sometimes, my words have been translated into another language so that the students can understand me.

I speak to all age groups, from pre-school to college students. The approach may be slightly different, but the message is always the same. I tell young people that they were created with a destiny and a purpose. I tell them that they need to be young people of Integrity, Intensity, and Intelligence (the three I's). I believe in our kids, but I also know that they are surrounded by lies. I want them to know that they can live their lives in a way that will make them successful in all they do. That success starts with being a young man or woman of integrity.

Integrity is an attribute that all people could and should possess. The lack of integrity is the reason we have so many lawyers, prenuptial agreements, pages and pages of contracts with tiny writing, and lawsuits. It is time for each of us to consider the level of integrity we possess and begin to ask God to increase that level into something that will glorify Him.

I believe we can turn our nation around, even our world, if we begin to be men and women of integrity. I know that God is calling us to that very end. Can you imagine what it

would be like if you could actually take a person's word as a bond? What a different world we would live in!

A Warrior's Integrity

The man who embodies integrity in God's Word is Joseph. Joseph was one of the younger sons of Jacob, whom God renamed Israel. Because he was his father's favorite, his brothers had little use for him, so little use that they plotted to kill him.

Now Joseph didn't just wake up one morning as an adult and say, "Today, I will have integrity!" No, he lived a life of integrity from a very early age. He was who he was at all times, no matter the cost to him. Sometimes the cost was very high.

You see, Joseph was a dreamer. He had dreams of greatness, and he shared those dreams with his brothers. Instead of rejoicing with him, they grew more jealous. Even his father rebuked him.

Joseph's life was quite a bit different from his father's. Jacob proved over and over again that he was not a man of integrity. He lied, cheated, and even stole their father's blessing from his brother Esau. Perhaps Joseph looked at his father's life and decided that he would not act that way. Or perhaps Joseph's mother, Rachel, learned from her own mistakes and instilled in him the desire to be an honorable man of integrity. Whatever the case, I know that I want to be a man of integrity like Joseph.

Joseph had many opportunities to be dishonorable. He could have lied, cheated, and stolen just like his father Jacob. But he refused.

Just look at his life. He was persecuted by his family for his dreams. His brothers faked his death and sold him into slavery. They lied, and he paid the price.

He was put in prison for having the integrity to refuse a sexual relationship with his master's wife. She lied, and he paid the price.

He was left to rot in jail after revealing the meaning of the dreams of his fellow prisoners. They failed to keep their promises to remember him as soon as they were freed, and he paid the price. Again and again, the people around him failed him, yet he never went against his beliefs. He never changed who he was to fit into a mold or to get farther in life.

He was a phenomenal man of God.

His integrity did pay off in the end, just like integrity always does. When you do the right thing for the right reason, God sees and you will be blessed.

In Joseph's case, he became ruler over all Egypt. He was second only to the Pharaoh himself. The Pharaoh saw that he could trust this man and put him in charge of his kingdom. He entrusted the lives and welfare of an entire nation to Joseph, gambling that Joseph would manage well. Pharaoh's gamble paid off. Of course, it may not seem like much of a gamble to us, because we know the whole story, but for the Pharaoh to put a foreigner in charge of his kingdom is what we would now call a God Thing.

Joseph did not disappoint. He saved the nation of Egypt from famine. He made the Pharaoh's kingdom stronger and richer in the process. Not only that, but he saved the kingdom of Israel too. The Israelites were just getting started as a nation; it would have been easy for them to starve along with others in that time of famine. But they were saved by Joseph's integrity and wisdom.

Integrity in Action – Staying Above Reproach

I want to have the integrity of Joseph. No matter what the cost, I want to be a man of God who can be trusted to do the right thing every time. I don't care if people are watching or if I am all by myself. I want to live like Joseph did, with a holy fear of God. I want to live in a way that will always glorify my Lord and Savior, Jesus. I want to be a man of integrity.

Now what does integrity look like in practice? It shows in many ways. For example, when it is late at night and I can't sleep and find myself bored, I will not flip through the channels. Why? Because I know that there are programs on at that time that are not suitable for my viewing. As a matter of fact, they are not suitable for anyone's viewing.

Having integrity also means that my wife always has access to my computer so that she can see where I've been on the Internet at any given time. It means that I live my life in front of people in the same way I live it behind closed doors.

It would be easy to do the wrong thing when I travel, but I know that the consequences are greater than I'm willing to pay. That's why I always share a room with one of my teammates. We'll put three of us in one room rather than isolating one of us. It may seem like we are too protective, but we want to be men of integrity.

One of the greatest things I learned while at Multnomah Bible College came from Professor Dr. Norm Cook. He was a former missionary. He told us that he would never be alone with a woman unless it was his wife. Dr. Billy Graham adopted this same practice years ago. Both men have been known to get up from a table because circumstances left them there alone with a woman. Even in a public place they wanted to make sure they stayed above reproach.

You see, you never know who may be watching, and you don't want to give cause for even the slightest accusation to be leveled against you. This is called integrity.

I do this in my own life. I will not ride with a girl or woman by myself. I will not stay in my office if I am there with just our female secretary. I will not let the devil have any foothold on my life. I live this way when I am at home or abroad. When I travel, I make sure that I'm picked up by a male. I don't stay in a single woman's home. I don't let my integrity come under attack. I feel it is important to live what I say.

With my family, I do the same. I represent to my kids and wife who I am no matter what the circumstances. I never want to be known as a double-minded man.

I had a friend who was a Youth Pastor in Yuma, Arizona, the same time I was there. He was a tremendous, God-gifted man of ministry with a great rapport with teens. His ministry reflected his ability to meet young people where they were and help them move toward God. I was inspired by him time and time again. But he made one mistake in the way he handled himself in a certain situation.

His close friends had a sixteen-year-old daughter. The two families often did things together, prompting my friend to view her as his own daughter. Therefore, he would drop her off last after a trip or a night of youth activity. More times than not, he was alone with her. His wife knew about this and trust or integrity was never a question. Even the parents of the girl knew she was alone with him on occasion and had no problem with that.

Then it happened. This young girl became upset with my friend because he told her parents about a boyfriend she had been seeing behind their backs. In her anger she decided to hurt him.

She accused him of violating her, claiming they had had sex. When he tried to defend himself, he had no ground to stand on because everyone knew that he had been alone with her many times. She said that they had an ongoing relationship, and he had gotten mad at her when she started seeing another boy. Everything blew up in his face. He was put under investigation immediately.

After a couple of weeks passed, the girl began to feel guilty about her accusations. She went to her father and confessed that she had lied. The truth came out that my friend had never done anything inappropriate, but it was too late. The church leaders felt that his integrity had been compromised. To save face, they fired him. He was finished as a minister. It is a terrible shame, but one that could have been avoided if he had only protected himself.

This happens far too often. Even recently I was told of a young youth pastor who said that he didn't care what people thought of him. He knew he wasn't in the wrong. That is a big mistake.

Even Jesus dealt with this. During his trial, false witnesses slandered him, but the accusations did not stick because he had stayed above reproach. His enemies still found a way to kill him, but they had to know that their so-called truth was nothing but a lie.

Integrity in Action – Accepting Leadership

Men of integrity also step up to leadership. After rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah put in charge Hananiah, the commander of the citadel “because he was a man of integrity and feared God more than most men do” (Nehemiah 7:2). Today, men like Luis Palau and Billy Graham lead the charge of faith in Jesus. During a time where men seem to be falling out of ministry left and right, these men continue to be pillars of righteousness. They refuse to

let the world's ways impede them from doing God's will for their lives. They go out of their way to stay away from accusations. They are men of great integrity, true men of God.

I want to possess the greatest integrity. I strive to have the integrity Joseph did. I want people to know that my word is as good as any iron-clad contract. If I say I will do it, it will get done, and it will get done well. Jesus said, "Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one" (Matthew 5:37).

Godly Integrity

The world resists integrity. Television commercials tease us with "guilty pleasures," things we can do to gratify ourselves when no one else is looking. Sin City became famous all over again for its tag line "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas." Yet the Bible tells how even beleaguered Job refused to give up his integrity, despite repeated urgings of his wife and friends (Job 27:5). Like him, I will be who God has called me to be at all times, in all circumstances.

To enjoy God's greatest blessings, you must demonstrate that you are a person of honor and integrity, acting in ways that glorify Him. It's easy to start. Just do what you say you'll do. Live as you are called to live. Be a great Christian in front of people and when you are just in front of the mirror. Let God reign in your life.

Joseph was a great example of a man who had Godly integrity. Learn from him. No matter what your circumstances, keep your integrity first and foremost. In the end, like Joseph, you will reap the rewards.

Pray with me:

Lord, give me the wisdom of Solomon and give me the integrity of Joseph so I can live a warrior's witness!

Chapter Three – The Willingness of David

“After the king was settled in his palace and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, he said to Nathan the prophet, ‘Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent.’ Nathan replied to the king, ‘Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you’”
(2 Samuel 7:1-3).

What is a warrior without the willingness to go into battle? He is nothing! One of the requirements of a warrior is to be willing to die for his cause. In other words, he has to be willing to go anywhere and do anything he is commanded to destroy the enemy. As a warrior, you have to be willing to go and do.

Willingness is another key element in becoming a great warrior for God and a great witness for Jesus and how he is relative to today's world. God needs us to be warriors who are willing to do whatever He asks, whenever He desires. A warrior is always willing to do what God wants him to do—immediately!

It's easy to talk about all the things we're planning on doing for God, but it is an entirely different story when it comes to actually doing them.

A Young Warrior and a Small Stone

I instantly thought about David when God spoke this part of the prayer to me. David was another one of those incredible men of God. He and his mighty men did some awesome things,

defeating many of Israel's enemies. He became king over Israel at the age of thirty and ruled for forty years. He wrote much of the book of Psalms, and God promised that his seed would inherit an eternal throne (2 Samuel 7:16), a promise that was fulfilled in Jesus.

Just as Joseph practiced integrity early, David was willing to serve God from the time he was a young boy. Maybe it came from being the youngest in his family, being more willing to take chances. Or maybe tending his father's flocks by himself gave him more time to listen to the voice of God. He definitely learned that when the flocks were under attack, it was time to act! Whatever the reason for his willingness, he learned at an early age that you don't hesitate. You just get it done. He was always willing to do what needed to be done.

Remember the story of David and Goliath? It was a pivotal point in David's life and in the life of the nation of Israel.

Imagine, there they were: All the fighting men of Israel under the command of King Saul, armor on, weapons in hand, hunkered down on a hill, and ready for battle. Across from them, on another hill, stood the entire army of the Philistines. The battle lines were drawn as each man waited, with anticipation, for the call to fight.

Then something very different happened. Instead of both sides charging into battle, the Philistines employed another strategy, borrowed from their forerunners, the ancient Greeks. A giant warrior named Goliath came out and began to shout at the men of Israel. He wanted to fight their best man, winner take all. The ancient Greeks believed that such a fight showed the power of their gods. The man with the stronger god would win.

The Israelites very likely knew about this custom. You'd have thought that knowledge would have given them courage. Their God had brought them out of Egypt, allowed them to claim the Promised Land. Surely their God would prevail in this instance. Yet each morning

and evening for forty days, the Philistine came out to make fun of the Israelites and their God. And each day, the Israelite army cowered. It was a terrible mockery of the power of God.

David was sent by his father to bring food to his brothers who were part of Israel's army. When he arrived, he soon witnessed this uncircumcised heathen mocking God and His people. He couldn't understand why someone didn't go into battle and destroy Goliath. His brother even made fun of him for being a little boy with big ideas, but that didn't stop him. When King Saul called him over to find out what he'd been saying, David let him know that he was willing to show Goliath God's power.

With Saul's blessing, he took five smooth stones and his slingshot and ran into battle. He faced down this behemoth with the full power of God behind him. Goliath belittled him and threatened him, but that didn't even slow David down. He was sent by God to get the job done, and he did. He brought Goliath to his death with one stone. It was awesome!

Ready and Willing

David was always ready and willing to follow God's will for his life. Now, don't get me wrong. David let his own will get in the way at times. However, God said that David was a man after his own heart. David's willingness and constant preparedness is what I want to emulate to live a warrior's witness.

When I started T.E.A.M. Jesus Ministries, Inc., and the X-Treme Team, it wasn't easy. I had a paying job at the Springwater Church of the Nazarene. I had a level of comfort and job security. Then one day I was challenged by my pastor's sermon. He asked us what we would be doing if we knew we couldn't fail. For me the answer came instantly. I would break bricks and

do feats of strength while I preached the Gospel message. I would show people God's power over sin. It was obvious.

But then I had to do more than dream. I couldn't just talk about doing ministry that way; I had to do it. That's when I stepped out in faith to build a ministry that would travel around the globe proclaiming the truth of God.

Although it was an exciting time, it was also a difficult time. I had to face fears. People told me that this plan would never work, that I couldn't see well enough to travel. I even had one person question my ability because of my age. I'm sure they thought I was too old to break bricks.

But God was the one calling me, not those people. I stepped out in faith with my wife Sonya, and we have never looked back. We realize that life is too short to go against God's will.

So we were off and running. Has it been hard? Yes. Sometimes it seems impossible. Has it been fulfilling? Definitely! Would I do anything else? I've tried on occasion, when I've seen possibilities elsewhere, but it just doesn't work. I have to do what God tells me. And the results prove that the Lord is in it: over 50,000 people made commitments to the Lord in the first 7 years. That harvest makes all the work worthwhile. However, we are not even close to completing what God is asking us to do.

Willingness to do God's will doesn't stop with the big picture. We have to be willing in everything. One night after prayer at church, a few men wanted to go to a local coffee shop to witness for Jesus. As I looked at the group, I wondered if this strategy could be effective. I really didn't want to go. I was coaxed into going by my mentor, Dana Bencoter, a missionary from Honduras. He told me this would be a great opportunity to help the others learn to share their faith.

Remembering David's willingness, I jumped in the car with the rest of them. What an incredible blessing that night turned out to be! It was awesome to share Jesus with people through conversational evangelism. The men were amazed how easy it was to bring people to a point of decision making. We planted a lot of seeds that night, but we also showed a few Christian men that all it takes to reap a harvest is a willingness to follow Jesus. He will protect you and keep you and even give you the words to say when the time comes. Just like David's triumph over Goliath, it was awesome!

Willingness in Action

I can give you dozens of examples of how my preparedness, readiness, and willingness have allowed me to experience God's greatest blessings, but that is not the point. It is not about me or about David. No, this is about a prayer that will allow you to focus on what God wants for your life.

God wants you to be willing to do whatever he asks of you, without hesitation. This means that you need to be prepared and ready at all times.

How does that happen? It starts with a relationship with Jesus, a realization that you need Jesus more than you need your next breath. It isn't so much that Jesus is in the car of your life with you; you have to be willing to put him in the driver's seat.

Then you need a firm foundation in the Word of God: your Bible. Read it each day. You already know there's a chapter in Proverbs waiting for you. That's just the beginning. You'll find strength, hope, encouragement, and the truth you need to equip yourself to stand ready. Commit to reading through your entire Bible every year. Feed your hunger to know the Word of God.

One of the greatest tools we have to combat the devil is scripture. Jesus used it when he was tempted in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11). The Apostle Peter said,

“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander” (Peter 3:15-16).

We must always be prepared and arm ourselves with scripture, the “sword of the Word.”

You also need to surround yourself with strong Christians, true believers in Jesus Christ who can help disciple you in the ways of our Lord. Start with a mentor who can teach you more about God. We all need to keep growing. Next, as Howard Hendricks suggests in his book *As Iron Sharpens Iron*, look for someone at your level of knowledge. As a fellow warrior in Christ, this is the person who will help you sharpen your sword. If you discuss what you’re learning with a helpmate, you can better put the principles into action.

Finally, find someone newer in the Christian walk who you can teach what you’re learning. This will help you and them grow in Jesus. Besides, you’ve just created a three-strand cord, which the Bible promises is not easily broken (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

Equipped and Armed

You must have an urgency to tell others about Jesus. People in this world are in one of two camps: They are either saved, in which case you encourage them and spur them on, or they are lost and headed to hell, in which case, you need to show them what sin is, why they need to be saved from that sin, and who does that saving. As God spoke to the prophet Ezekiel, so He speaks to us today:

“When I say to a wicked man, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked

man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself.” Ezekiel 3:18-19

Finally, you have to be willing to do what God tells you to do when He tells you to do it. Anything else is not enough. There are lives at stake here. Bill Selvidge, long-time specialist in cross-cultural ministry and assistant professor at Nazarene Theological Seminary, says, “As a disciple of Jesus Christ, we do not approach God’s will as a buffet table from which we choose only what pleases our personal tastes. Once we have understood God’s will, His call requires that we passionately act on it.”¹

Prayer Break or Action?

I know at this point you may be tempted to stop for some serious prayer. You’ll want to be certain that God wants to use you in this way. I know it would be easy to stop, once again, and put everything on hold while you simply seek God for a while longer.

But I’m telling you that is a lie from the devil. You don’t have to seek to find God’s call. God is already calling you. His call is clear from the Bible: love others and make disciples of all nations.

As a follower of Jesus Christ, it is your job to be willing to move out in faith. This may mean quitting your job or selling your expensive vehicle and buying a cheaper one so you have resources to use. This will definitely require you to quit focusing on the many things the world has to offer and begin to focus on your relationship with Jesus.

¹ Selvidge, Bill. June 1999. “The Call of God.” *Holiness Today* 1(6):46-47.

Remember that this world is a temporary dwelling place. Your permanent place is in Heaven. Your job is to share Jesus with as many people as you can before you die. You have to be willing to move out in faith. It may look scary; it may look impossible. Speaking from experience, I can tell you that God will work out the details. He will put you exactly where He wants you to be. You just need to be willing to go.

God's Reward for Willingness

The first time I went to Kenya, my ability to trust God was put to the test. When we were invited to go, I had no funds for the trip. My brother Tim (T-Dawg) and I decided to leave the matter to prayer. All but \$1000 came in by the night before we were to leave. We did an outreach on October 31, 1999, outside Gresham, Oregon. By the time we had cleaned up, it was very late. I had received a phone call from a friend who wanted us to stop by so he could pray with us. Even though it was late we stopped by his home. He and his family greeted us with big smiles. They prayed with us, and he handed me a check for \$1000. He had no idea that we needed that exact amount to pay for our trip to Kenya. He was just being obedient to God.

That night was very short as we washed our team outfits and prepared to leave in the morning. But I never quit believing, and I never quit preparing to go. After thirty hours of travel, we landed in Nairobi, Kenya.

Instantly we had problems. Tim and I were targeted by some men who lacked integrity. They wanted a bribe to get us through Customs. We just laughed and waited for our guide to show up. He took care of business, but I was sure we would all end up in jail. We didn't.

This was the theme of our entire trip. In the U.N. Refugee Camp in the Turkana Desert, we were told not to preach the Gospel or we could be killed. So, we set up and preached the

Gospel in an open air market. God moved, many were saved, and we escaped unharmed. We were ready to do whatever God asked and trusted that He would take care of us. He did.

In the same way He will take care of you. Fear not! God is in control. He has delivered me time and time again. He will take care of you as well. Besides, what is the worst that can happen? Someone will kill you, and you will go to Heaven? Yes, God is in control and is watching over you. Be ready at all times to do what He is asking you to do.

Jesus said it best in Matthew 28:18-20:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

This is a direct command from Jesus. We are all to be witnesses for Him. We are all to be sharing our faith with everyone He puts in front of us. We need to be willing to do what God asks when He asks. We need to do this with the full realization that Jesus will be with us clear to the end of the age. That is more than reassuring.

If we let fear overcome us, people will die and perish in hell. I don't know about you, but I don't want to stand in front of the almighty God someday making excuses about why I did not tell someone about Jesus. I don't want to explain to Him why I wasn't willing to do His will for my life. I don't want to be anywhere outside the will of God.

Do you want the same willingness? Be ready to go at all times. Remember, your life is to be lived for Jesus. Focus and constantly prepare to do what God asks of you, when He asks you. You will be blessed.

Let's continue the prayer:

Lord, give me the wisdom of Solomon, give me the integrity of Joseph, and give me the willingness of David so I can live a warrior's witness!

Chapter Four – The Faith of Abraham

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible” (Hebrews 11:1-3).

A warrior will very quickly become discouraged in times of trouble if he does not have faith in what he is doing. How much more is your faith a key element to being a great warrior for God. Take away faith and you will fall flat on your face. A warrior must constantly remind himself of the power of God in his life. He must do what Jesus said in Luke 9:23: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

A warrior displays his faith in Jesus on a daily basis. He cannot be a witness for Jesus if he does not believe in what Jesus did and is doing. The power of God resides in a warrior who has great faith in Him.

A Warrior in Tennis Shoes?

When I first started courting my wife Sonya, I planned to take the bus from Portland, Oregon, to visit her and her parents in Burley, Idaho, during our Christmas break from college. Sonya had already gone home, so I took the city bus to the Greyhound station to buy my advance ticket.

To my surprise the station was so crowded that it took me more than an hour to buy my ticket. As I left, it was dark enough that I couldn't see much. As a legally blind person who has Retinitis Pigmentosa, night time is a bad time to be out without my cane (Seymour) or a friend to help me find my way.

Luckily, the bus stop to take me to downtown Portland was right outside the door. More difficult would be finding my stop at the bus mall in the middle of downtown. When the bus pulled up, I boarded, sat directly behind the driver, and immediately informed him of my dilemma. He told me that while he did not normally stop near where I needed to change busses, he would make an exception for me. I was so relieved.

But as we progressed down the bus mall, we never slowed down. Suddenly, I realized that the bus was turning right and heading out of the downtown area.

"What about my stop?" I asked the driver, once more feeling a moment of panic.

He smacked his forehead with his hand. "I am so sorry! I forgot! I'll get you back on track."

Then he went on to tell me his plan: He'd drop me off at this next corner. All I had to do is walk two city blocks, turn right, go one block, go to the left, cross the street, and there near the corner would be my bus stop.

I was in trouble for sure. If I didn't injure myself, I was sure to injure someone else. I am 6 feet, 4 inches tall and weigh 250 pounds; when I bump into you I usually have to help you up off the floor. Since I didn't have my cane, I didn't know what to do.

As I got off the bus, I said a prayer. I asked God to help me get to my bus stop without hurting anyone, including me. The one thing I could see was a lot of people moving around. It was shortly after five in the evening, and everyone was heading home from work.

I stepped onto the sidewalk and quickly looked around. To my surprise, I saw this really bright white pair of tennis shoes. They walked right in front of me. I began to follow them.

They walked down the first block and seemed to be going in the same direction I needed to go.

Then I looked up and spotted another problem: flashing construction lights, along with bright yellow tape all over the sidewalk and going into the street. It seemed I needed to go left or right to get around this construction. I was thankful the white shoes continued to lead me.

Then my heart dropped. The white tennis shoes stepped right off the curb, into the street, and over what looked to me to be a huge hole in the ground. I had no time to hesitate. I just told God that if this was an angel I was following, who could walk on air, and I fell into a hole, He and I would have a conversation when I saw Him.

I was amazed to find that what looked like a dark hole to me was actually a huge steel plate that covered the hole. I walked across it and continued to follow the white shoes. They went one more block, turned right, went another block, and turned left. We waited for the signal to change, and then those shoes crossed the street and walked right up to a bus stop. I looked up to see the number of my bus in lights. I then turned to thank the person I had followed, but the person was walking away. I watched as far as I could to see those bright white tennis shoes disappear into the crowd.

When the bus arrived, I boarded and headed home, safe and sound. Isn't God awesome!

A God Who Watches Over Us

Now I tell you this story to tell you this: I have faith in a real, living God, who watches over me all the time. I can trust in Him. He sees far more than I can. He knows what is best for me and where I need to be at all times. I think Proverbs 3:5-6 says it best: "Trust in the Lord

with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

In that dark night, I had to trust God with all my heart. I could not doubt Him. I had prayed for His help; I'm convinced He sent those white tennis shoes. It may seem silly, but God helped me do the impossible at a time when I could have said, “I quit” or “No way.” But I believed that He loves me enough to help me in tough situations, and I refuse to quit.

Faith of Our Spiritual Fathers

How much greater was Abraham's faith in God? He may have had more faith in God than anyone else in the Bible. Read what the writer of Hebrews had to say about him:

“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith Abraham, even though he was past age – and Sarah herself was barren – was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore” (Hebrews 11:8-12).

Abraham also took his son Isaac, who was the promised heir through whom God would build His chosen nation, up a mountain to sacrifice him. He did this because God told him too. But God was just testing his faith. He wasn't going to let Abraham kill his son. God waited until the very moment of death and told Abraham to stop. He then provided a ram for Abraham and Isaac to sacrifice instead. Abraham was willing to abandon everything to do God's will for his life. He was not going to hold back anything, not even his own son. He was a great man of faith.

Abraham left his home to pursue God. He believed in the promise God made to him about building a nation through him, when he was old and his wife had never been pregnant and was advanced in years. He never doubted that God would do what God said He would do. He had an unshakable faith. Now granted, he did try to hurry things up a bit, but he still believed passionately in the God of our universe.

The Gift of Faith

One of my spiritual gifts is the gift of faith. I am the kind of person who rarely questions God. I just believe He can and will do great things in my life. I deal with doubt quickly. I never fear where God is going to take me or what He is going to do with me. I figure He is in control.

When Sonya and I started T.E.A.M. Jesus Ministries, Inc., and the X-Treme Team, we walked away from a comfortable job in a church. We stepped out in faith. We did not have any promises of monies coming in to support us. Sonya continued working, and I prayed that God would provide. We went from bringing in \$400 a month to do ministry to almost \$1000 per month in one month. I just let people know what we were doing, and God laid it on their hearts to support our efforts.

After we had been in ministry for four years, we learned we were going to be blessed with our daughter, Raelee. Again, we had to make a conscious decision to be faithful to God by being faithful to our call. We had decided before we were married that if and when we had a child, Sonya would not work outside the home. This was important to us as we didn't want someone else raising our child. However, Sonya had a good job that paid well, and we knew that only God could help us make it without that income. We never doubted. We held fast and faithful. On January 1, 2003, Sonya quit her job. Twenty-three days later, Raelee was born.

We hung on to God's promise to sustain us. I didn't speak in any churches or do any outreaches until March. I needed to be home to help Sonya recover from her C-Section and to take care of our new bundle of joy. We stepped out in faith.

And you know what? God was faithful. He began to provide instantly for our needs. Again the giving to our ministry increased. We were now able to pay Sonya for all the administrative work she does in our ministry and keep paying me. It was awesome.

I could give you dozens of examples of how God was faithful to us as we trusted in Him, from the time we were in Bible College and didn't have enough money every month to pay our bills (but did) to all the times God has put us in other countries to preach the Gospel when we did not have the resources to do it. We have been surrounded by people who hate our God and what we stood for and seen those times turn into celebration as they accepted the gift of salvation from Jesus. Our lives have been put in jeopardy more than a few times, but God is always faithful to sustain us as we do His will.

On Faith Alone

Now I know that some struggle to keep faith strong. That has been the case throughout history. John the Baptist, in prison and about to die, wondered whether Jesus truly was the Messiah. The martyrs may have wondered why they were dying. Could this really be God's plan for their lives? Consider today the recent victims of hurricanes like Katrina in 2005. Some of the survivors may have looked at their situations and questioned God's love for them. Faced with loss of family, homes, and livelihood, their faith may have been shaken to the very depths.

But faith is not about what is going on in your life. Let me explain.

Faith is knowing that God is always in control. It is realizing that God has a plan, even if we don't understand it. Faith is putting your trust in God through Jesus Christ. Faith is relying on the Holy Spirit to direct your paths. Faith is not a worldly thing that we can utilize at convenient times, like when everything is going great. Faith is, simply put, obedience!

We must remember that all this world has to offer is temporary. We live in temporary bodies, in temporary shelters, and in a temporary assignment. We are aliens here on this planet. Our permanent dwelling place is in Heaven with God. We were put here to change people's lives with the Good News of Jesus. Besides, our lives here on earth are so short that we cannot view situations from God's eternal perspective.

For instance, I travel quite a bit. I get on airplanes all the time. To some people, this is the scariest thing anyone can do. I have seen people pray, cry, get drunk, hold their breath, panic, have a stroke, and even decide not to go after all, right at the last minute, all because of a fear of death. This shows me a lack of faith. This shows me that people do not trust God to take care of them as they do His work.

Does this mean that a plane won't crash with Christians on board? No! But I have to believe that God is in control. I believe He will work out all things for those who call upon His name and trust in Him. I really don't think I will show up to Heaven and surprise God with an early arrival.

This doesn't mean I go out of my way to put myself in danger. Jesus told the devil that you are not to tempt the Lord your God. It also doesn't mean that Christians don't suffer and die every day. They simply know that the pain ends here. They have faith that they are going on to better things.

Faith in Action

FAITH is an acronym. It stands for Fantastic Adventures In Trusting Him. Those who seek the faith of Abraham can start by focusing on how God is faithful. My friend Javier Medrano has spent the past year writing in a journal, recording all the things that are going on in his life. He has been on a journey with God trying to figure out his call in ministry. He has shared with me several times how God was so faithful to him and his family as they obeyed Him. He can look at his own words to see what has happened and how God saw him through.

It is easy to journal. Just get a notebook and write a paragraph each day about your life. Write down your prayers and then the answers to those prayers as they come. Look back into your history often so you can be reminded of how faithful God is to you. This will build your own faith.

You can also join an accountability group. These are Christians of your same gender who you can trust and who will help keep you accountable for all you do. Tell them about your life, pray together, lift up each other daily. They will help you see what God is doing in your life.

It is also important to testify as often as you can to God's faithfulness in your life. Giving faith voice reinforces it. Tell your friends and family how He's helped you. By recognizing God's faithfulness to you, you will be able to be more faithful to Him. God doesn't ask you to do anything you cannot handle. He prepares you for all the battles you will go through. He will even prepare you for death someday. But the cool thing about death is that it leads to eternal life.

Get your focus off the things of this world. Realize that you are blessed to be able to go through tough times. Coal under pressure becomes a diamond. Dough must be kneaded to make

bread. Besides, enduring hardship builds perseverance, and perseverance must finish its work so you can mature and be complete, not lacking anything (James 1:2-4). We will talk more about perseverance in a couple of chapters.

Faith From Above

Work on having the faith of Abraham. Give God the credit for all that you do and for all that you have. Realize that you are made with a destiny and a purpose. If you can grasp that, you will have great faith. You will be able to understand Godly things and see the foolishness in hanging on to worldly things. Your faith in Jesus will allow you to do great things for His Kingdom. Be brave as a warrior should be.

It comes down to this: I want to believe so deeply that my faith in God is never shaken. I want to be strong in the Lord. I want God to be able to tell others about my great faith in Him. Noah built a boat, Peter walked on water, Paul preached the Good News to the rest of the world, but Abraham exemplified a life of faithfulness to God. I rebuke doubt and embrace faith. I believe, I believe. I will not be shaken.

Pray it with me:

Lord, give me the wisdom of Solomon, give me the integrity of Joseph, give me the willingness of David, and give me the faith of Abraham so I can live a warrior's witness!

Chapter Five – The Strength of Samson

“As he [Samson] approached Lehi, the Philistines came toward him shouting. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power. The ropes on his arms became like charred flax, and the bindings dropped from his hands. Finding a fresh jawbone of a donkey, he grabbed it and struck down a thousand men” (Judges 15:14-15).

A warrior's witness for Jesus relies heavily on being able to do what God has called him to do. If a warrior is out of shape, his witness will be out of shape as well. Keeping the body strong is therefore important to being a great witness for the Lord and for being a great warrior in His service.

The battles we fight may be spiritual in nature, but they require a great amount of energy and physical strength to endure. A warrior will have the desire to beat his body and make it strong. He will become the master of his body. He will exemplify self-control over what he puts into his body and what he allows his body to do. It takes a healthy warrior to be an effective one.

The Lord's Handiwork

Our bodies are amazing pieces of work. They are constructed with the greatest of all craftsmanship. The most intelligent human minds still haven't completely fathomed how our bodies live and function. I mean, come on; we are made of dirt (Genesis 2:7). How does dirt live?

Even more impressive is the fact that we only utilize about ten percent of our brains. Imagine what things would be like if we used one hundred percent of that gray matter in our heads.

And how is it that our bodies get stronger the more we exercise them? Everything else in this world seems to deteriorate the more we use it. God created us with a special shell that responds well to exercise.

I've made it a habit to exercise at least six days a week. Most weeks I exercise all seven days. I really enjoy the way I feel as I run for an hour. I also enjoy the feeling I get from a good workout. My muscles are strong. My heart is in good shape. I have great health. That health, by the way, comes in very handy in dealing with a three year old.

My wife and I both take time every day to keep our bodies in good shape. We also try to eat the best foods we can. I believe the key to being in good shape is seventy percent diet and thirty percent exercise. We need to have good fuel to burn if we want to have a healthy engine. We need to be strong.

Strong as an Ox

Samson is known as one of the strongest men to ever live. He was one of Israel's judges before the time when Israel had kings. He led the Israelites for twenty years, making great strides in delivering them from the Philistines who were oppressing them at the time. He was a mighty man of God.

Now, his life did not always reflect holiness. He nearly failed in the end. But he had an attribute that I desire for my life, one that God revealed to me as a key to success in life and in ministry.

Samson had great physical strength.

Now you may be thinking, "I don't need to be strong to do God's will for my life." I disagree. We need to be smart about how we take care of our bodies. I know this shell is only temporary, but I don't want to be a poor steward with anything God has given me, especially my body. I can see the importance of exercise and good nutrition. I have lived with and without those things in my life. I prefer to be healthy. It is a much better way to live.

Any endeavor takes energy. Besides, the Bible cautions us to take good care of the body God gave us. The Apostle Paul called our bodies temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Wouldn't you want that temple to be the best it can be?

A Lifestyle of Weakness

Unfortunately, we have a problem in America. We live in a country where decadence is the ruler of the age. We believe that everything we want we should have. We want it all, and we want it now.

This decadence shows itself in several ways. We have become gluttons who are, for a large part, overweight. The National Institutes of Health claim that over sixty-four percent of adults aged twenty or older are either overweight or obese. That's nearly one hundred and thirty million Americans!

And we are passing this tendency down to our children. The prevalence of overweight children is increasing. The National Institutes of Health claim that over fifteen percent of children and adolescents are now overweight. Part of this weight gain can be attributed to lack of exercise. Children don't play outside much anymore or use their imaginations. We allow

video games, computers, televisions, and other passive forms of entertainment to take up all their time. We are slowly, but surely, allowing our children's minds to soften along with their bodies.

I remember as a child playing outside all day. We would have to be rounded up each evening to come into the house. Even then, we resisted. We would rather have played outside than spend hours watching television.

Adults get just as little exercise. Where once our jobs took us outdoors and had us working up a sweat, now we sit at computer monitors with our fingers doing most of the work. When we get home, more often than not, we also sit in front of the television. Our wonderful labor-saving devices give us the freedom to do nothing. We don't even have to get up to change the television channel anymore! Yet we don't seem to equate this sedentary lifestyle with giving less than our all for God. Surely God can use us no matter what, right?

God's Warrior, No Matter What?

God can work miracles, but the idea that He will use us no matter what we do with our bodies is severely flawed. If we exercise regularly, we'll have more energy. If we have more energy, we'll be ready to do God's will more effectively. We won't be held back because we're not feeling well or are too weak for the task at hand. If we spend time exercising our bodies, we will also reap the rewards of a healthy person. We will be able to serve God better.

I have a friend named Glen. Many years ago, he was in a terrible motorcycle accident that rendered his right side pretty much useless. He can walk with some difficulty. He utilizes a wheelchair to get himself around easier, and he is one of the smartest guys I know when it comes to computers and electronics.

However, in the past year he discovered a way to make his life substantially better. He realized that he needs to eat better and exercise more. By doing these two basic things, he's seen an enormous improvement in his ability to do his job. He's found more energy to play with his kids. He is stronger, happier, and more productive in all he does. He realized all these blessings, just by eating right and exercising. Amazing.

Spiritual Strength

The Bible doesn't tell us much about Samson's diet or exercise regime, but we know he was extremely strong. He once tore a lion to pieces with his bare hands. He killed a thousand Philistines with the jaw bone of a donkey. He was able to bring down a temple that seated over three thousand people with his hands by pushing the supporting pillars apart. He overcame God's enemies time and time again.

Many Bible stories in which Samson displays great strength state that he received that strength from God. The Bible says, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power" (Judges 14:6, 14:19, 15:14). He was an amazing instrument in God's hand. When he was focused on God, he was always able to do what God asked of him. He had the power to destroy the enemy.

To live a warrior's witness, I desire that same power. Now I understand that I do things a little differently than most of the world as I share the Gospel message. I know that not everyone will drive an arm through a wall of concrete, or smash a head through a wall of ice, or bend steel in their teeth, or rip up phone books, or do any of the other things I do to show God's power over sin.

But there is more to displaying God's power than simply being able to do feats of strength. I have dedicated my life to building God's kingdom. For me to do that, I need to have

a strong heart. I need to have strong legs and strong arms. I need to be able to endure all things for the sake of the Cross.

Being in good shape pays off in other ways as well. As I travel to places like the Kenyan desert or Honduras, where the temperature never seems to drop below one hundred degrees, I must have endurance, stamina, and a healthy heart. If I'm not in good shape, I won't be able to bring the Gospel message to the lost.

On one of our trips to Kenya, we were joined by a preacher who was in poor shape. He always had to stay behind to rest. He hadn't taken care of his body very well, and he paid the price. He wasn't able to do all that God wanted of him. He came to recognize that, however, and began to change the way he cared for himself when he returned to the United States.

Nowadays, he travels a lot more and is much more effective in ministry because of his good health.

I see it all the time. I have friends who cannot participate in ministry activities because they are in such poor health. They are always complaining about being tired, feeling worn out, and needing rest. I don't blame them. I understand their problems.

The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians, "Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" (1 Corinthians 9:26-27).

Those who grow too weary for God's work are often not beating their bodies and making them slaves. They are not fighting a good fight. Most of the time, they are just swinging at the wind because they are not able to physically do ministry. They are not receiving the blessings that God has for them.

What a shame. Good nutrition and exercise are such important parts of life. I pray that all people will learn to take better care of their bodies so they can reach the full potential God has for them. And I pray for the strength of Samson. I want to be able to do mighty things for my Lord Jesus.

Strength in Action

To be in the best shape for ministry, we need to watch what kind of food we put into our bodies. Don't get caught up in diets that promise you fast results. See a nutritionist to determine what foods will best benefit you. I can tell you that fast food is not one of them.

To eat more healthy foods that offer good fuel for our systems, we must be careful what we purchase at the store. A good rule of thumb is to buy around the edges of the store. Processed foods, which are not very nutritious, are mostly found in the aisles. In fact, a lot of the "Fat Free" foods have chemicals in them that actually make you hungrier. Chips, crackers, candies, boxed foods, canned foods, hot dogs and processed meats, and the like are not helpful to your body.

As you shop, think about the things that God created. This is where you find the most nutrition. Stay away from foods that have ingredients on the label that you can't pronounce or identify. Look for natural foods and strike a happy balance in the types of food you eat. Don't gorge or starve yourself. Be smart in what you eat.

I can remember feeling overweight not too long ago. I looked at my eating habits. Thanksgiving and Christmas had just ended. It was January, and I was eating too much sugar. I fell back into the trap of drinking soda pop as well. I cut those things out of my diet, even though it was tough to do. The first couple of days I suffered with tremendous headaches, but

then I felt so much better. As soon as the sugar and caffeine were out of my system, my body began to function better.

Just by eating right, along with my daily exercise, I lost five pounds in one week. It isn't magic. It just takes the determination to be healthy. I did not do this for me as much as I did it for God, my wife, and my children. I want to be able to play with my kids, live a long life with my wife, and serve God whenever and wherever He asks. It is important to get control over your eating habits. It is also important to exercise several times each week.

Consult your doctor before you begin any kind of exercise program. Be smart about your approach. If you have the finances, join a club where you can be instructed by a professional on nutrition, exercise, and weight loss. Getting into shape requires real commitment. It took you a long time to get into your present shape. It will take some time to shape up.

Dedicate your body to Jesus. This will help you take better care of yourself. Don't be a slave to the desires of your body, rather make your body your slave. You only have it for a short time. Take good care of it.

You may be wondering about the disabled, those among us with real impediments to exercise. I am a disabled person. I know many disabled people. The funny thing is that I don't know any who don't work hard to overcome whatever ails them.

I know a man who can only move his head. He never quits. He has two university degrees, he sponsors a camp for disabled children, he has a family, and he runs a ministry that reaches the far ends of the earth. He is tireless in his efforts to serve God. He has every reason to quit and just sit there, but he never will.

God's Warrior

It takes discipline to exercise and eat right. I know how hard it is to get started. I know the rewards of getting into shape. I also know that God gives me the strength and energy to do all the things He has asked me to do, but I am responsible for staying in the best shape I can.

I want the physical strength Samson had, but I also want the spiritual strength that comes along with serving God on a daily basis. If I am so unhealthy that I cannot do what God is calling me to do, then I am a disgrace to all Believers.

I want to be strong my whole life. I don't plan on quitting or giving up. If I get to the point where all that works is my mouth, then I will make sure I am always prepared to give the reason for the hope that I have. I will exercise daily, eat right, and pray for the strength of Samson. It is that important!

Will you pray this prayer with me?

Lord, give me the wisdom of Solomon, give me the integrity of Joseph, give me the willingness of David, give me the faith of Abraham, and give me the strength of Samson so I can live a warrior's witness!

Chapter Six – The Perseverance of Paul

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4).

Warriors are not wimps! Warriors persevere where most people would cringe. Warriors never quit. Their motto is “Never surrender! Never give up!”

A warrior must be able to be counted on at all times. He is not discouraged easily because he knows that what he is doing is of noble character. This ability to persevere comes from God. God needs warriors who are willing to sacrifice all in order to overcome the enemy.

Perseverance is a welcome part of a warrior's existence. It makes him stronger. It reminds him that he is in the right place doing the right thing—serving God. Perseverance is, however, the most difficult attribute to achieve, but the most rewarding. The warrior who stands strong for Jesus is the greatest witness that God has of His love for the world! Jesus is the best example of that kind of a warrior!

Pure Joy

The Apostle James said that we should consider it pure joy to go through the trials that develop perseverance (James 1:2). What is pure joy?

Some people say that pure joy is Brown Cow Ice Cream made by the Tillamook Cheese Factory. I tend to agree. Others say that pure joy was their wedding day or the day they found salvation and forgiveness for their sins. Still others have told me that pure joy is hitting a grand slam homerun to win the big game. I could agree with all of those as well.

I remember a moment of pure joy. My senior year in high school, I was playing in a football game. I played on defense and was a down lineman—a defensive nose guard. As such, I rushed the quarterback and was responsible for the center of the line. Nothing was supposed to get up the middle. I was right in the trenches.

We had just kicked off at the beginning of the game. Our special teams pinned the other team deep in their own territory, inside the five yard line. This meant they had to go ninety-five yards to score a touchdown. We huddled up as a defensive unit to call our formation. We were sure they would throw a pass. As the ball was snapped I did my best to get past the center and the guard. The quarterback dropped back to pass. We all had our hands in the air yelling, “Pass!” He let loose with a bullet, and I jumped into the air to try to block it with my hands.

Little did I expect to see that ball come right at my face. It hit me between the bars of my face mask, smashing into my glasses and flesh. My upper nose felt like it had been stung by hornets. I instantly tried to pry the ball off my face.

It was stuck in my face mask.

As I stumbled around trying to get it loose, somebody grabbed me. This just made me mad, so I shook him off and kept moving. When I finally got the ball out of my helmet, I found myself surrounded by our defensive unit in the end zone. I had not only intercepted the ball, but I had scored a touchdown! This was every lineman’s dream. This, my friends, is what I call pure joy.

It did not matter to me that my glasses were broken, or that I had to get stitches, or that I would have a scar on my nose for the rest of my life. All that mattered was that I, a defensive lineman, intercepted a pass and scored a touchdown.

The Joy of Persevering

Now God wants me to consider it pure joy when I go through trials and testing of all kinds. The Bible says that the testing of my faith will build perseverance and perseverance must finish its work so I may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. That is interesting.

In our world today, most people want to take the path of least resistance. They don't want problems, and they don't want to have to persevere through anything. We have made everything as easy as we can. Most of us will not walk a mile to go to the park, or store, or the donut shop as far as that goes. We refuse to dedicate our bodies to exercise. We struggle in being faithful about daily devotions. In America, we seem to have adopted the motto, "If the going gets tough, go on vacation."

That is not what God called us to do. God never promised that being a true believer would be easy. As a matter of fact, throughout the Bible and history, we see that most true believers were persecuted heavily, even put to death for believing in Jesus.

Look at the Apostle Paul for example. Talk about a guy who went through the wringer for his faith in Jesus. He faced so many trials and testing it almost seemed hopeless.

Persecutor or Persecuted?

Paul had once been a persecutor of the faith. He was the one who forced other Christians to persevere. I'm sure he didn't expect the time to come when he'd face the same or worse. He must have been pretty pleased with himself, riding off on the Damascus Road with letters from

the Jewish high priest himself to enter the synagogues and cart off any man or woman who dared proclaim they belonged to The Way.

But Jesus had other plans. He took the perfect tool of the Pharisees, a man educated and trained like themselves, and turned him into the perfect tool for God. He told Ananias, the Damascus disciple who would help Paul see the light, that Paul was his “chosen instrument to carry His name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel” (Acts 9:15). Jesus intended to show Paul how much he must suffer for Jesus’ name.

We can see the extent of what he endured for the sake of proclaiming the truth of Jesus in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28:

“Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.”

The Apostle Paul understood what it meant to persevere. He knew that the prize he strove for had little to do with what this world could do to him. He still took up his cross daily to follow Jesus. He knew that God’s plan for his life might not be easy, but it was well worth his effort. He had a heavenly vision and focus, rather than a worldly one. That’s why he fought the good fight and ran the good race. He knew that his efforts would pay off in the end as Jesus told him, “Well done my good and faithful servant!” This is why we must persevere no matter how hard things seem.

A Test of Faith

I've been in situations that seemed hopeless. I remember standing in a market place in Nairobi, Kenya, with my brother Tim, completely surrounded by angry young men. They knew we were believers. They were Muslims. They were angry because we were telling people about Jesus. One of them told us that we had no right telling people about Jesus when their bellies were empty. The anger rang out in his voice. He looked like he was going to start a riot. But our God stood strong. We stood strong with Him.

I remembered being told that those who preached the Gospel were taking a huge risk and could be put to death. I thought about my family. I wondered if serving God far away from them would be worth dying for. I wondered what I could possibly say to these angry young men.

Then God gave me the words. I told the young man and all the others that I agreed with him. No one should tell of the love of Jesus without first showing them His love. I began to explain how we had come to Kenya on a humanitarian effort, how we were part of Dr. Sammy Murimi and Share International, how we brought food and water to the Turkana people. I told him how we were here to help, not destroy.

It was amazing how the temperature of that crowd changed. All of a sudden we had friends where there had been nothing but hate. God moved.

Now I could have taken the easy road and said that I was not a Christian or bailed out some other way. But we had already decided to persevere, to hang in there and proclaim the truth of Jesus. It was pure joy for us to do it.

We must also persevere in everyday life. It is important to stand strong and keep training up our children in the ways of the Lord, even when the world finds those ways in opposition. It is important to persevere through tough times in your life, your marriage, and your job. God

relies on us to show others why we call upon His name to be saved. People need to see that there is a difference in serving the Lord and serving the world. One of the ways we show this difference is by persevering when others would fall away.

As my mom moved toward the end of her life in 2003 at the young age of sixty-five, I was witness to a true warrior for Jesus. She had been diagnosed with cancer in its late stages. The doctors tried to remove it, but when they opened her up they found it had spread all through her body. The cancer ate through bones which then broke. She underwent radiation treatment, which destroyed her intestines. She endured more pain than anyone I had ever seen. Her body finally gave out on December 29, 2003. But at that point she was in heaven with Jesus.

The part that really impressed me about my mom was the fact that she never blamed God. She never quit believing. She just hung in there. She was a witness of God's love to ambulance drivers, nurses, doctors, attendants, physical therapists, medical secretaries, her family, and her friends. She knew that her time was coming and that she had fought a good fight. She ran a great race so she could claim the prize at the end. That prize came to her because she persevered. She never let her faith in Jesus be shaken. She was a warrior.

It is because of her that I am in ministry today. You read my story in the introduction. I ran from God, but my mom never stopped praying for me. She persevered even when I was a total idiot and did things that hurt her deeply. She prayed not only for me, but for my brother Tim as well. We both owe it to the prayers and perseverance of our mom that we are in warriors of the Kingdom today.

Perseverance in Action

I urge you to have the same determination as the Apostle Paul. He refused to be overcome by the powers of this world. No matter what man did to him, he kept preaching the Gospel message. When they chained him to guards, he told the story of Jesus, and the guards found salvation. When he was in prison, he was inspired by God and wrote some of the greatest letters to encourage and equip the churches and followers of Jesus. You can find those letters in your Bible. When the end got near, he was even more excited because he knew what eternity held for him.

I think he said it best in Philippians 1:21, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." He had a heavenly perspective. He persevered because he knew that his life here was like a drop of water compared to the ocean of eternity.

My challenge to you is to be willing to go through whatever comes your way as you commit yourself to serving the Lord. Realize that it will not be easy, but if you want to be a true follower of Christ, you must stand strong. Fight the good fight and run the race as a person who intends to win the prize.

Remember that we are to consider it pure joy when we face these tough times. Why? Because that means that we are on the right track. That means that we are growing closer to God. That means the devil is mad at you and wants to destroy you. If you are not experiencing trials and testing, it can only mean one of two things: you are already dead or the devil has control over your life and does not have to spend time making you miserable. The dead won't be reading this book. You know where that leaves you.

If the devil has sway in your life, get on your knees and ask God for forgiveness. Then dedicate your life to serving Him in whatever fashion He sees fit.

When you serve God according to His call, I guarantee that you will go through tough times. Please persevere. It is well worth your efforts. It is part of the refining process.

Malachi 3:3 says “He will sit as a Refiner and purifier of silver.” This verse puzzled some women in a Bible study, and they wondered what this statement meant about the character and nature of God. One of the women offered to learn more about the process of refining silver and report to the group.

That week, the woman called a silversmith and made an appointment to watch him at work. She didn't mention anything about the reason for her interest beyond her curiosity about the process of refining silver.

As she watched the silversmith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up.

“In refining silver,” he explained, “you need to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames are the hottest to burn away all the impurities.”

The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot. “Do you have to sit there in front of the fire the whole time the silver is being refined?” she asked.

“Yes,” the smith answered. “I not only have to sit here holding the silver, but I have to watch it the whole time. If it's left a moment too long, it could be destroyed.”

The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked, “How do you know when the silver is fully refined?”

He smiled at her. “Oh, that's easy, when I see my image in it.”

You have to go through the fire in order to be purified, holy and suitable for God's use. He's going to be holding you the entire time you're in the flames, watching over you to make

sure you aren't destroyed. He will keep working on you until He can see His image shining through, until the entire world can see His image in you. He is patient and loving. He knows you are a work in progress.

Once there was a town where the people took great pride in their horses. They fashioned a great sled and loaded it with weight to see which horse was stronger. As the weight increased, more and more horses faltered. Finally it was down to just two. They both were able to pull the sled with 8000 pounds, but only one—the strongest one—was able to pull it with 9000 pounds on it. He was crowned champion!

Then in all the excitement, one of the men got a great idea, which soon trickled through the crowd. What if they were to harness these mighty beasts together? Would the horses be able to pull 17,000 pounds?

The people put the horses side by side, harnessed together. Then they put 17,000 pounds on the sled. The horses pulled it—no problem. What about 18,000 pounds? No problem! They tried 19,000, 20,000, 25,000 pounds—still no problem. The two horses were able to pull 30,000 pounds when they pulled together, over three times what they could do alone.

You too benefit from pulling with others. You might get so far on your own, but the real power comes when you are part of a group of godly people. You need the prayers. You need the encouragement. You need the accountability. You need friends to stand with you in times of struggle. This is the making of a true warrior. You can persevere on your own, but you will find success much easier when you surround yourself with God-fearing, Jesus-believing, Holy Spirit-led, X-Treme people of God!

I've have found this principle to ring true. I've surrounded myself with men I can trust. I have an incredible Board of Directors over our ministry. The Vice-President of our ministry is

my confidante. Our team of guys shares their lives. I have thousands of people praying for me and my family every day. I'm positive that I will have to persevere on this journey, but I'm also confident that God has put the right people around me to ensure the success of his plan.

Perseverance of the Master

Remember as you travel through this journey called life that you belong to the Almighty God who loves you and cares for you. He thinks about you all the time. He holds your very being in place. He fashioned you together in your mother's womb and created you fearfully and wonderfully. You are His child, and you are His warrior.

When you persevere in your trials and testings, you are a witness—a warrior's witness to what God can do through a person's life. You are literally, figuratively, and spiritually showing people that God can and will have victory over sin.

I want to emphasize this so that you will stand strong on the days of struggle. For real accountability in your life, surround yourself with other warriors who will stand with you through the tough times. You need to have the prayer support, the encouragement, and the strength that comes from three or more who stand together. You need the intercessory prayer. Your prayers, accountability, encouragement, and example of standing strong will help those who help you find strength.

Hang tough. You can do it. After all, you are a treasure to God. You gave yourself to Him, and he isn't going to let you go. Jesus said "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them

out of my Father's hand" (John 10:27-30). You are safe, through trials and tribulations, though death may yawn before you. You are His.

Go through the fire. Handle the struggles. Jesus never promised a perfect life on this planet. He promised perfection in the after life, the real life—eternity. This life is just a training ground. Stand strong as a warrior for Jesus. Give thanks as you persevere. This is what will make you great.

Pray this with me:

Lord, give me the wisdom of Solomon, give me the integrity of Joseph, give me the willingness of David, give me the faith of Abraham, give me the strength of Samson, and give me the perseverance of Paul so I can live a warrior's witness!

Chapter Seven – The Heart of Jesus

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

If there is one characteristic that sums up the essence of God, it is His loving heart. The heart is also the key to the warrior. It takes heart to do great things. Your heart is the core of your being, your desire, your focus, and your will to do what God wants done. Your heart is where we say Jesus lives, and it's what we use to tell people that what we do has real meaning. The heart is critical to living.

God is looking for people with heart; people who will do whatever it takes to answer His call. 2 Chronicles 16:9 says, “For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.” He is looking for people who will sacrifice all for the Kingdom of God.

Who epitomizes that dedicated heart, fully committed to God? As I searched through the Bible looking for the great men, I kept finding myself back at one name, the only name by which we can be saved.

The name of Jesus.

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under Heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Now is it just the name? No! It is God Himself, who humbled himself to become a man so that He alone would be able to save us from our sins.

It says in John 3:16 that God loves us so much that he sent Jesus to die for our sins, so that whoever would believe in Him will not perish but have eternal life. It goes on to say in Verse 17 that God did not send His Son (Jesus) into the world to condemn the world, but to save us from our sins!

That, my friend, is powerful stuff. The Bible also tells us that those who call upon the name of Jesus will be saved and who Jesus saves is saved indeed (John 8:36). In other words, Jesus died for us so that we may find forgiveness for our sins, which will lead us to eternal life with God in Heaven.

Human Hearts

If you have children, you will understand how great love can be. No matter what your children do, you will always love them. I would do anything to save Nick and Raelee's lives, even if it meant the loss of my own.

I constantly provide learning opportunities so they will understand the importance of being a true disciple of Jesus. I help them through the tough times. I celebrate with them through the great times. I love them all the time. There is nothing in this world that could ever take that love away.

The same goes for my wife Sonya. I would gladly give up my life for her without thinking twice. I love her so much, and nothing in this world could ever remove that love from

my heart. Even Sonya could never say or do anything that would cause me to stop loving her. I demonstrate my love for her in dozens of ways on a daily basis. My heart belongs to her. That is a permanent deal.

The same is true for God's relationship with us. When you stop and consider it, you'll find that we would not know how to love, except that God has shown us true love.

No matter what I do, God continues to love me. The Bible says that while I was still a sinner, a hater of God, Jesus died to pay the price for my sins so that I could spend eternity in Heaven with God (Romans 5:8). No one else has ever done anything like that for me.

Nor will they.

A History of Heartache

For us to best understand the heart of Jesus, we need to first understand the heart of mankind. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

That means we blew it.

We started well. In the beginning, God gave Adam and Eve the perfect place to live and raise their family. The Garden of Eden was a paradise. Adam and Eve had good food to eat, interesting work to do, no enemies, and no worries. The only thing God asked of them was to refrain from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they ate from it, they would surely die.

Now that, you would think, would be enough encouragement to stay clear of it. Unfortunately, our freedom of choice got in the way. Adam and Eve, enticed by the devil, decided to disobey God and try the fruit. They wanted to be like God! That is when sin entered this world. That is when man's heart became dirty.

Each successive generation was born in the same condition. Because of the sin that entered the world through Adam, we all have sin in our lives. You can test it for yourself. See if you are perfect. As Ray Comfort suggests in his book, *The Way of the Master*, ask yourself a few questions:

1. Have you ever told a lie, even a small fib? If so, you are a liar.
2. Have you ever stolen anything, even something small or insignificant? If you have, then you are a thief.
3. Have you ever lusted after someone? Jesus said that if you lust after someone it is the same as being with them in your heart and that makes you an adulterer.
4. Have you ever disobeyed your parents? If so, you are rebellious!
5. Have you ever used God's name in anger or as a curse? That makes you a blasphemer.
6. Have you ever murdered anyone? Remember what the Bible says in 1 John 3:15: By hating someone, you've already committed murder in your heart. That makes you a murderer.

Those questions cover only six of the Ten Commandments. If you answered yes to even one of those questions, you have broken God's Law. The Bible says that if you are guilty of breaking one of the commandments, you are guilty of breaking all of them (James 2:10). The punishment for doing so is death, an eternity in hell (Romans 6:23). How does that make you feel? Think about it!

An Invitation from the Heart

Now here is the good news. Jesus has a heart for all of us. As it says in 2 Peter 3:9, it is his will that none should perish but that all should come to repentance. That means that you

have to ask God to forgive you for your sins and then you have to turn your back on that sinful way so you can begin to follow Jesus.

But you have to be truly sorry for your sins. You have to realize that on your own the best you can do is earn an eternity in hell. You have to accept the payment that Jesus made on your behalf for the sins you committed.

Just as sin entered the world through one man, Adam, so then, salvation can only come through one man, Jesus. Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). He is the only man to live a perfect life, a life without sin. He is the only one who can be a perfect sacrifice and payment for our sin.

He became a man in order to lead us all to a relationship with God. He is all God, yet all man. He lived a sinless life to show us it could be done. But more than that, he did it to provide salvation for each of us.

This is the heart of Jesus: That not even one person should die without forgiveness of sin, that all repent from their sins and have a relationship with Him so that each can have an eternity in Heaven.

Jesus does not want you to suffer in hell for an eternity. He does not want you to be separated from Him. I feel the same way about my family. I don't want my kids or my wife to be apart from me for all eternity. I don't want any of them to suffer in hell forever. If I, a sinful man, can feel this kind of love, how much more does Jesus love you!

As a seeker of God's will, there comes a time when you must make a choice. Perhaps you've already recognized that God wants to give you eternal life through Jesus. Perhaps you've realized that it is a free gift to you, but a costly one paid by Jesus. Perhaps you went to an altar

to pray to God for forgiveness, or knelt with a friend or with only the Lord beside you. If so, good for you!

If you've never made that commitment, there's still time. You can stop right now and pray. Just admit to God that you are a sinner. Ask Jesus to forgive you for your sins. He will! Ask him to come into your heart so that he can clean it up. Ask Him to fill you with His Holy Spirit. Turn your back on that old way of life. Never return to it. Tell Jesus that you are going to follow Him from this day forward. Thank Him for loving you so much that He provided a way for you.

Close by telling God that you love Him. Then tell someone about what you just did. E-mail me if you like. I'll gladly celebrate with you and give you your next steps in Jesus. Just drop me a line at rick@tjmi.net. I'll write back.

Acting from the Heart

Because of what Jesus did for us on that Cross so many years ago, we have freedom. We are no longer slaves to sin. We have God's power to overcome sin. We will not be overcome by the temptations of this world.

We can't keep such Good News to ourselves. We must share this with everyone. We have to let people know that there is a way to overcome their sins. We have to open the flood gates of forgiveness that God has provided for all of us. In other words, we have to tell everyone about Jesus.

I founded a whole ministry on that one fact. T.E.A.M. Jesus Ministries, Inc., is set up to Tell Everyone About My (T.E.A.M.) Jesus. We do this in a variety of ways. But whether we are preaching on a street corner, talking with a new friend or stranger, sponsoring a sports team,

preaching a revival, speaking at a retreat or camp, teaching evangelism, or breaking bricks with our X-Treme Team, we are dedicated to telling everyone who will listen about Jesus. This is the heart of Jesus!

God has commissioned us to, "Go and make disciples of all Nations!" (Matthew 28:19) This is the key to being a believer in Jesus: You have to put your beliefs into action. You have to do something with the gift of salvation Jesus provided for you. You simply have to tell others about it. You will be amazed as you see people saved.

Love in Action

Today is the day! You can reflect Jesus to all who see you. Sounds like a big challenge, doesn't it? Imperfect man reflecting a perfect God? How can we meet that challenge?

One of the first things you can do is learn all about your faith in Jesus. That's what Jesus' disciples did. You must know who God is in order to tell others about Him.

To know God you have to read His Word, the Bible. Many Christians have several, but we often don't take the time to study any of them. We have to ask God for a desire to know Him more.

When I first met my wife, I was so taken by her that I wanted to know everything about her. I began by asking her friends about her. I watched how she interacted with others, how she spent her time. I talked to her often throughout the day. In fact, we spent a lot of hours talking about who we were and what we wanted to achieve with our lives. I still listen to her. I still seek to understand her better. I want to know her so well.

Now if I am willing to know so much about a person, who cannot save me from my sins, then how much more should I long to know about the God of the universe who created me? My

hunger to learn more about God won't end on this earth. When my life is done, I hope to sit in His presence for a long time asking even more questions about His wondrous being.

Part of learning about God is finding someone to mentor you. This can be difficult. I tried for several years to find a mentor once I graduated from Multnomah Bible College. I prayed and prayed. I asked several men to serve that role for me. None would do it. They seemed to fear failure.

Since then, I've found mentors to help me. I have a Board of Directors over our ministry that helps guide me spiritually. I have a good friend named Dana Benscoter who has helped me so many times and has taught me so much. Luis Palau taught me through his willingness to provide input to our ministry.

I have also found great spiritual understanding through my partner in ministry, John Marker. He may not realize it, but he mentors me as well as sharpens swords with me. This network of godly men has taken a long time to get into place, but God is always faithful. He has always provided godly men for me to learn about life's lessons and grow in my knowledge of Jesus.

You also need to realize that you may be the only Jesus some people see. People from your neighbors to your co-workers are going to watch you to see what difference this Jesus made in your life. Do you reflect Jesus in the way you talk? Do you reflect Jesus in the way you act? Even if some people never believe, does your life glorify Jesus?

You must also pray for those around you that don't know Jesus. Ask God to give you the opportunity to share your faith with them. Pray that you find favor with them so they will listen. Pray that the Holy Spirit does a great work in them so they will respond positively to the truth you present. Prayer is our most valuable resource. We don't save people—Jesus does!

On that note, remember that you are only the messenger. You are here to bring a message from God to all who will listen. Not everyone will accept your message. Rejection hurts, but it must never stop you from continuing to share the Gospel. As you mature in your faith, you will be compelled more and more to share Jesus with the lost. Don't give up. Lives depend on it.

If you can't imagine what you'll say to share your faith, I recommend the books by Ray Comfort (*The Way of the Master* with Kirk Cameron and *School of Biblical Evangelism*) as well as his website at www.thewayofthemaster.com. Remember too that Jesus promised that even in the most difficult witnessing situations the Spirit would speak through you (Matthew 10:19-20). Never forget that God is in control.

Of Evangelists and Witnesses

There should never be a day that goes by that you don't try to tell someone about Jesus. I know the argument that says, "I am not an evangelist!" That's fine. I am not talking about being an evangelist. I am talking about being a witness.

The difference between these two positions is simple. An evangelist is someone God has gifted and called to do a specific ministry. He/she is a harvester. They make it their life's work to give the Gospel Message. They also train up believers to witness to others.

An evangelist will go out of his or her way to let people know about Jesus. He preaches to all sizes of crowds. She is bold and willing to share Jesus with people who are strangers to her. He is like a lighthouse. He warns of the coming dangers if you continue in the wrong direction. She is there to proclaim Jesus.

The witness, on the other hand, plants seeds of faith in others. Take Regina, for instance, who helped me write this book. She's an introvert. She has the gift of administration. She is also an author who has been published many times. She may have days where she never leaves her home or verbally shares her faith with others. She is not an evangelist. She is, however, a witness. She regularly prays for specific people to come to know Jesus and receive forgiveness for sin. She waits on God to provide an opportunity to share her faith.

That is exactly what a witness does. The reason we are called witnesses is because we are first hand, eye-witnesses to what God has done in our own lives. We have been saved from death, an eternity in hell. Isn't that wonderful enough to share!

Let's say you were in a car accident today, and the car was smashed to pieces and on fire. You were left trapped with the fire lapping at your flesh. You couldn't move, couldn't breathe. Your life was just seconds from ending. Then out of nowhere, someone reached into the fire, unbuckled your seatbelt, and pulled you to safety. Would you be grateful? Would you thank your savior? Would you tell anyone what had happened? Would you honor the person who saved you? Or would you keep it to yourself and not tell a soul?

I have a feeling you would be like most of us and tell everyone who would listen. You'd fight off any public speaking fears to proclaim what had happened. You'd describe in great detail how this person saved your life when you were sure you were a goner! You would go out of your way to let people know. You would make sure to honor the hero who saved you.

How much more has Jesus saved your life? How much more has He given? This is the essence of witnessing. You may not be called to be a full-time evangelist – holding crusades, outreaches, trainings, seminars, and revivals, but you should be so thankful for what Jesus did for you that you tell others. You should be excited that you're not going to spend an eternity in hell.

You should feel an urgency to make sure those around you don't end up there. You have the answer. You are a first hand, eye-witness to what God can do in someone's life. Tell people.

A Warrior After God's Own Heart

When all is said and done, when you stand before God's throne someday, the chaff of your life will be burned away and all that will remain are the souls that were won for Jesus.

Nothing else really matters.

Let your heart be like the heart of Jesus, overflowing with love for the lost, for His people. It will take wisdom, integrity, willingness, faith, strength, and perseverance. It's a big job, brother, the job of a warrior, but with God, all things are possible. Pray for it. See how God transforms your heart from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh, a heart that is as caring as that of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ, a heart willing to do anything, go anywhere, for the sake of seeing others saved from an eternity away from God.

Many are perishing without that relationship. Do you feel the urgency to let them know before it is too late? Will you let God change your heart?

Pray this prayer with me:

Lord, give me the wisdom of Solomon, give me the integrity of Joseph, give me the willingness of David, give me the faith of Abraham, give me the strength of Samson, give me the perseverance of Paul, and please give me the heart of Jesus so I can live a warrior's witness!

Living the Witness of a Warrior

We've looked at seven characteristics of godly men, characteristics that allow us to live as warriors of Christ, providing a powerful witness to His work in each of us. I don't know about you, but I refuse to be a wimpy Christian, afraid of everything in this world. I put myself out on the frontlines every day, ready for battle. But I can only do that with the power of God firmly centered in my life.

Praying for these characteristics and putting them into practice gives me the confidence I need to do God's will. I truly believe that I possess each of these qualities in increasing measure every day. I pray for these qualities because I know that they are key elements to a successful Christian life. Practicing them will help me stand before God some day and hear Him say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant!"

But I cannot gain them fully simply by practicing them. I am nothing without the power of God in me. The Bible says that greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4). If God is for me, who can be against me? No one! I want to live in the fullness of God's will for my life. This is why I pray this prayer. It reminds me daily that I need to improve my character, but only God can truly make me fit to become the warrior He desires.

As you pray this prayer, I want to remind you once again: Do not think of it as some magic incantation. It is not the latest, greatest way to make your life simpler, richer, or more

convenient. The characteristics that are represented by this prayer are ones that God prizes, attributes of His glorious nature.

Thank you for reading this book. I hope that you'll be blessed as you align yourself with God's will for your life. I hope that you truly gain the wisdom of Solomon, the integrity of Joseph, the willingness of David, the faith of Abraham, the strength of Samson, the perseverance of Paul, and the heart of Jesus. What an awesome Christian you'll be!

I hope that this book has opened your eyes to some things you can change through the power of God. I'd love to hear how you have been blessed as you follow God's call.

I believe you can do it. Just do it! God will help you through this realignment. Rely on Him. Enjoy the blessings. But more than anything else, don't ever stop growing in your relationship with Jesus. Keep it real, and keep it fresh. Seek after God every day. Read your Bible, go to church, pray hard, fast often, and TELL EVERYONE ABOUT YOUR JESUS!!!

Study Questions

Introduction

I've given you a somewhat detailed version of my life, inviting you to participate in my past, my conversion, my present, and my future in Jesus. This is called my testimony. A testimony is one of the most powerful ways to persuade non-believers to give up their unrighteous ways and become a righteous person through the work of Jesus on the Cross. In other words, people can relate to Jesus when they see how God changed us into a new creation.

I encourage you to start here. Develop your testimony. Write about what your past was like (BC – Before Christ). Then write about what it was like when you found salvation in Jesus. Be specific. Think hard about the day you realized you were a sinner, that moment of clarity when you accepted the penalty that Jesus paid for your sins. Remember how it felt when you turned your back on sin, put Jesus in the center of your life, and asked God to fill you with His Holy Spirit. Then write what your life has been like since that day.

Your testimony can be short, told in a couple of minutes, or longer, taking as much time as needed. Don't focus too much on the negative things in your past. Talk about the past, but focus on your salvation in Jesus and what God is doing in your life now. We don't want to glorify the devil's work in your life; we want to glorify your life in Jesus!

Don't feel like you have nothing to say because you haven't done much wrong. All of us have fallen short of God's glory. Those who found salvation in Jesus at a young age and have followed Him their whole life are the greatest testament to God's power over sin and temptation.

Once you have written your testimony, share it with at least five believers so they can suggest areas of improvement and you can grow accustomed to sharing your life with other people. Confident in your testimony, you can begin sharing with non-believers.

To be ready to lead someone toward salvation, memorize the following verses: Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Romans 10:9-10, John 3:16-17, and 2 Corinthians 5:17. You can effectively share your faith through these verses. Also memorize and know the Ten Commandments. These are the laws God gave us to point out sin. By pointing out sin, we are able to show people why they need a Savior.

If you would like a training session on how to share your faith effectively, please contact me at rick@tjmi.net or by visiting our website at www.tjmi.net. I will gladly come to your church to train your group in personal evangelism.

Chapter One – The Wisdom of Solomon: Questions, Thoughts, and Insights

1. Why do warriors need wisdom?
2. Can anyone possess wisdom? If yes, how do you gain it? If no, why not?
3. Why did Solomon consider wisdom the most important gift he could receive from God?
4. How does having the wisdom of Solomon compare to having fame, fortune, or anything else the world can offer?

5. What is an example of the wisdom of Solomon? How could that example affect your own decisions?
6. What is one of the worst examples of a bad decision you've ever made? How would having the wisdom of Solomon have changed that decision?
7. How could wisdom help you deal with a current difficult situation?
8. Name another person from the Bible who possessed great wisdom. How did he or she exhibit that wisdom?
9. Who can help you pray for the wisdom of Solomon? With whom can you talk to ensure your decisions are backed by wisdom?

Chapter Two – The Integrity of Joseph: Questions, Thoughts, and Insights

1. What is the definition of integrity?
2. Why do warriors need integrity?
3. Can anyone possess integrity? If yes, how do you gain it? If no, why not?
4. What are two examples of Joseph exhibiting his integrity?
5. How does the fact that Joseph suffered to maintain his integrity affect your willingness to keep your integrity strong?
6. What situations test your integrity? How did you handle these situations?
7. How important is your integrity? Is your word your bond? No matter what the situation or circumstance, whether you are alone or in a crowd, are you confident in your ability to be the person God intended?
8. How does peer pressure influence integrity?
9. What do you need to do to strengthen your integrity? Who can help you?

Chapter Three – The Willingness of David: Questions, Thoughts, and Insights

1. Why do warriors need to be willing?
2. Why was David so willing to do whatever God asked of him? Why didn't he get caught up in fear or self doubt?
3. Can anyone have the willingness of David? If yes, how do you gain it? If no, why not?
4. How important is it for us to be as willing as David to do God's will for our lives?
5. Name two examples of David's willingness to follow God. What would his life have been like if he was not willing to do what God asked of him?
6. Describe a situation where your willingness to follow God's will worked out well. Was there a time where it did not go so well? Why?
7. How can you prepare yourself so that you are always ready to do what God wants?
8. What is the biggest issue that causes you to question God rather than moving out and doing what He wants?

Chapter Four – The Faith of Abraham: Questions, Thoughts, and Insights

1. Why do warriors need unshakable faith?
2. What is the definition of faith according to Hebrews 11:1?
3. Can anyone have great faith in God? If yes, how do you gain it? If no, why not?
4. Give two examples of how Abraham exhibited his faith in God. Why did that strengthen him as a man of God?
5. Name two other people in the Bible who had great faith. How did their faith change their lives? Their circumstances?

6. Briefly share a moment of great faith in your life. What happened to your confidence in God afterward?
7. How can a prayer journal help you strengthen your faith?
8. How can you better trust in God? What adventure does God have you on right now?
9. Who do you tell about the things God is doing in your life? How does sharing these insights affect your faith and theirs?

Chapter Five – The Strength of Samson: Questions, Thoughts, and Insights

1. How strong does a warrior need to be?
2. Where did Samson derive his strength? Was it just his hair?
3. Can anyone have the strength of Samson in the spiritual sense? If yes, how do you gain it? If no, why not?
4. As you understand the spiritual significance of Samson's strength and how God used him to overcome God's enemies, how can your physical strength prepare you for fighting spiritual battles?
5. What kind of shape are you in right now? What must you change to be a warrior for God?
6. How has your lack of physical strength stopped you from doing God's will? What would have been different if you took better care of God's temple (your body)?
7. Why is physical exercise important to a healthy relationship with God? Does God really care what kind of shape we are in? What about disabled people?
8. Set three goals that will help you have the strength of Samson:
 - A. Cardio-vascular

B. Strength

C. Nutrition

Chapter Six – The Perseverance of Paul: Questions, Thoughts, and Insights

1. Why do warriors need to persevere?
2. What does James 1:1-2 say about perseverance?
3. Can anyone have the perseverance of Paul? If yes, how do you gain it? If no, why not?
4. Why does God expect us to persevere? What good can come of it?
5. How does Paul's perseverance influence your situation?
6. Name three other people in the Bible who had to persevere. How did that affect their lives? Do you think it was worth it for them?
7. How have you been tested? How have you had to persevere? Did you think you would ever make it through? Where was God while you were going through that difficult time?
8. Who supports you through tough times? Who will pray with you and help you see the light at the end of the tunnel? How important is it to have this lifeline?

Chapter Seven – The Heart of Jesus: Questions, Thoughts, and Insights

1. Why do warriors need heart?
2. What is Jesus most concerned about? What is your main concern?
3. Is it possible to love people as much as Jesus does? If yes, where does that love come from? If no, why not?

4. Do you have an urgency to see people saved? How many people do you know that are going to hell right now? How does that make you feel? What are you going to do about it?
5. Name three other people in the Bible who had the heart of Jesus. How did they exhibit that quality?
6. Who have you told about Jesus in the past day? Week? Month? Year? If no one comes to mind, what keeps you from sharing your faith?
7. Why did God make you? According to Matthew 28:18-20, what does Jesus want us to do?
8. Who helps you stay on track and keeps you accountable for seeking the lost?
9. Is it a sin not to tell people about Jesus?
10. Give an example where you showed that you have a heart like Jesus. What happened when you followed your heart?