

Shepherd Daily Devotional – Overcoming Crisis

January 2022

Thank you for downloading the e-copy of *Shepherd Daily Devotional*. In this edition, Ben Dankaka explores ways that anyone can confront and overcome challenges through biblical principles of leadership.

It is our prayer that you will be inspired by the Holy Spirit as you go through the pages of this devotional. God bless you.

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Daily Devotional

A non-denominational devotional for leaders.



Overcoming Crisis

**“He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.”**
- Isaiah 40:29 (NIV)

By Ben Dankaka

NOT FOR SALE

How to study *Shepherd Daily Devotional*

- Begin each topic by reading the scriptural reference(s) at the top left-hand side of every page.
- After reading each topic, pray and meditate.
- You may study alone or as a group in order to discuss the lessons on every topic.
- Although the various topics in this devotional are arranged according to days, you can, however choose to study the devotional anyhow you like. For instance, you can choose to study the whole devotional in a single day or read any of the topics, irrespective of the days.

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www.bendankaka.blogspot.com

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Email: shepherddailydevotional@gmail.com

Website: <https://sccl2.cw.center/>

Phone: +234 803 9308 537

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**Unless otherwise stated, all scripture quotations are from the
Holy Bible, New International Version.**

NOT FOR SALE

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A Note from the Author



The day my life changed

One day, I closed from work feeling terribly bad because things didn't go well as I planned it. On my way home, I got some biscuits for my two kids. On reaching home, they immediately snatched the biscuits. But just before I relaxed, my daughter returned her biscuit and asked me to open the pack for her. I immediately opened the biscuit pack. And at the same time, I noticed my older child still struggling to open his own biscuit pack. When he suddenly realized his younger sister had begun to eat hers, he hurried back to me and cried out, "Daddy, help me!"

After a good laugh, I helped him open his pack. Then, it dawned on me that I had been acting like my son. Instead of acting like my daughter who gave me back the gift so I could help her unwrap it, I was trying to run my own life, all alone. To put it simply, I was trying to succeed without God's help. Just because God has already blessed us with gifts doesn't mean He isn't interested in helping us maximize those gifts. God wants to teach us how to make the best use of the gifts He has given us.

We all go through crisis that overwhelm us. But instead of depending on God, we oftentimes try to deal with our problems by ourselves. Others may depend on worldly principles, but Christians ought to rely on God's Kingdom principles because the wisdom of God is the guiding philosophy of our lives. Would you choose men's wisdom over God's wisdom?

In this edition of *Shepherd Daily Devotional*, our focus is on how to overcome crisis by the application of God's word. It is my hope that as you go through the pages of this devotional, you will slowly but surely replace your fears with a strong belief in God's word as you build your ability to triumph over every challenge that life brings your way. And whether you are going through a crisis or not, I pray that through this devotional you will build up your spirit and become a better citizen of God's kingdom.

- Ben Dankaka

Learning from Crisis

“Let that crisis become an opportunity for you to reinvent yourself.”

We don't have to blame ourselves for every crisis that shows up in our lives. Crises may come into our lives through no fault of ours. For instance, you are not the reason why someone you loved died or why your country is in economic crisis. There are times that troubles would meet you even while you were minding your own business. If you are currently going through a crisis, sharpen your senses because you are about to learn something new. While crises can be painful, they also have some benefits because no one goes through a crisis without growing.

The crisis you are going through will move you from where you've been to the place God wants you to be. Let that crisis become an opportunity for you to reinvent yourself in a positive way. Perhaps, the current crises in your life is designed to build you up. If David hadn't experienced calamities, he wouldn't have been inspired to write some of the Psalms he composed. One time, David cried out to God, “It was good for me to be afflicted, so that I might learn your decrees” (Psalm 119:71). Like David, learn from the crises in your life.

Prayer/Confession: I will outgrow my current challenges. Help me, Lord. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Isaiah 38:17

Psalm 119:71

Forget the Past

“You can’t move forward and backward at the same time.”

After going through terrible experiences in the hands of Babylonians, God said to the people of Judah, “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past”. But that wasn’t an easy thing to do. These were people who had been banished from their own country and had lost everything they owned. Yet, God wanted them to forget the past. Why would God ask them to do that? After telling the people to forget the past, God went on to say, “See, I am doing a new thing!”

When God is about to do a new thing in your life, He would expect you to lose your grip on the past. God knew that if the people of Judah didn’t forget their pain, they wouldn’t be able to see the promise. By not forgetting the bitter experiences, they would be unable to experience the joy that God was bringing into their lives. To experience the joy that God is bringing into your life, you have to forget the pain of yesteryears. In life, you can’t move forward and backward at the same time. Forget what happened in your past, make use of the present and wait on God’s promises.

Prayer/Confession: Father, thank you for replacing my pains with Your promises. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Isaiah 43: 18-19

Leave the Past

“To move forward in life, you might have to let go of some the things you currently cherish.”

Sometimes, the things we hold on to, are the very things that prevent us from moving forward. For instance, you can't sleep on two beds at the same time. In order to use a new bed, you have to let go of the old one. Getting rid of the old bed may be necessary as you might not have enough space to keep the two beds in the same room. Equally, there may be things in your life that are currently occupying the space intended for the new things that God wants to bring into your life.

As Moses was leading the Israelites, he asked his brother-in-law, Hobab to accompany them so he could be their guide in the wilderness. Hobab answered, “No, I will not go; I am going back to my own land and my own people.” But Moses persuaded him, with promises of a better life. So, Hobab found himself in a tight spot: *To forgo his past or embrace the promise?* It is not clear whether Hobab agreed but it seems that he might have remained with Moses (Judges 1:16). To move forward, you might have to let go of some of the things you now cherish.

Prayer/Confession: I will move forward and let go of the past. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Numbers 10:29-33

Judges 1:16

Don't look back

“If your eyes are fixed on what is behind you, you wouldn't know what is in front of you.”

Have you ever wondered why our eyes aren't positioned at the back of our heads? Among other reasons, God placed our eyes on our faces so we can have the ability to move forward. If our eyes weren't situated in front of our heads, we wouldn't be able to advance. Therefore, we must realize that what we do with our eyes can either slow down or speed up our progress. If your eyes are fixed on what is behind you, would you know what is in front of you? Moments before the city of Sodom was punished, the two angels who had been assigned with the task had hurriedly led Lot's family out of the town and left them with a strange warning, “Don't look back”. But Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt. Perhaps, her disobedience was due to an emotional attachment to a life she was leaving behind. Whatever her reasons might have been, she got stuck because she looked back. One of the consequences of dwelling on your past is immovability. She looked back into her past and lost the chance to get into a future that God had prepared for her. As you leave your past, don't look back.

Prayer/Confession: My eyes are fixed on the promises of God. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Genesis 19:15-26

Obey!

“Do what God is asking you to do.”

When the two angels who had been assigned to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah led Lot’s family out of the city, they gave them specific instructions. Although the angels were interested in rescuing Lot and his family, there was a limit to what they could do for them. For instance, the angels were able to take Lot’s wife out of Sodom. But they couldn’t stop her from going against their instruction. In other words, the angels couldn’t control her willpower. For the rescue mission to be successful, Lot’s family had their own role to play.

Many believers are ignorant of the power they have over their destinies. The angels had said to Lot’s family, “Flee for your lives! Don’t look back, and don’t stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains **or you will be swept away!**”. Based on their instructions, Lot and his family had to choose, whether to run or be swept away by the fire. Even though, God plans to take you to another level, you would have to play your own part. Perhaps, what you need to do at this point of your life is to simply obey God. Do what God is asking you to do.

Prayer/Confession: Dear Lord, I am willing to do whatever You want me to do. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Genesis 19: 15-17

Matthew 9:9

Take Responsibility!

“It may not be your fault; but you’ve got to take responsibility.”

Many people are unaware of the benefits of taking responsibility over everything that goes **wrong** in their lives. You may not be responsible for all the things that have gone bad. But if you want to correct the wrongs, then you have to take responsibility. When you don’t take charge over the things that went wrong in your life, you will lack the ability to correct the wrongs. Instead of fixing the things that caused you pain in the past, you would go about wasting time, looking for who to blame. You can’t get ahead with that kind of mentality.

Think of what happened to Judas and Peter. Both of them failed their Master. They both felt pained and remorseful afterwards. But when Judas returned to the Chief Priests with the money he had been given, they said, “What is that to us? That’s your responsibility.” Instead of taking responsibility, Judas threw the money back to them. Then he went away and hanged himself. Peter acted differently when he denied Jesus three times. After realizing his mistake, he wept bitterly and then took responsibility as he went back to correct his mistakes and to become the leader of the Church.

Prayer/Confession: As I correct my mistakes, I’ll take responsibility. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Luke 22:54-62

Matthew 27:1-5

Forgive Yourself

“Your problem may not be about an attachment to the past.”

Judas Iscariot and Peter both played active roles in the ministry of Jesus. They both lived with Jesus for three years, heard His teachings and witnessed the miracles He performed. They were among the disciples that Jesus gave authority to preach, heal and cast out demons (Luke 9:1–2). Also, Peter was a member of Christ's inner circle while Judas served as treasurer. But despite their close relationship with Jesus, they failed Him. But then again, while Peter was able to make up for his mistakes, Judas killed himself. Why did Judas commit suicide? Didn't he realize he would be forgiven?

Most likely, Judas was aware that God would forgive him because he had heard Jesus preach on forgiveness. But in spite of the teachings, Judas didn't think he deserved to be forgiven. If Peter could move on, why not Judas? Possibly, Judas committed suicide because he couldn't forgive himself. Undoubtedly, Peter was able to bounce back because he forgave himself. To forget the past, you must, first of all, be able to forgive yourself. What is holding you back may not be an attachment to the past. It could be that you haven't forgiven yourself over what happened. Forgive yourself!

Prayer/Confession: Because I've been forgiven by God, I will not condemn myself. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Romans 8:1

Luke 22:54-62

Mark 14:50-51

The Dark Side

“We cannot experience light until we’ve been through the dark lane.”

Light is a symbol of many things. Among other things, light serves as a symbol of knowledge. We’ve been taught that followers of Christ are the light of the world. That is, we ought to exude light by influencing our world with good works, which is made possible by knowing God’s will. But while light is seen as a symbol of good, for many people, darkness represents evil. So, we often embrace light and try as much as possible to avoid everything associated with darkness.

In reality however, darkness also plays an important role because it is after we’ve been through the dark lanes of life that light shows up. Usually, we don’t experience light while we are inside a tunnel until we are able to pass through. To put on light in any room, you must first of all, confront the dark atmosphere. Recall that before God created light in the beginning, He met the darkness that hovered on the surface of the deep. Jesus also had to confront the kingdom of darkness before bringing light into the world. I pray that the dark experiences you’ve been going through will give birth to light.

Prayer/Confession: Dear Lord, let my light so shine and drive away the darkness around me. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Genesis 1:1-3

Psalm 23

Enduring Pain

“If you are determined to do God’s will or lead in an area, you will be tested.”

Job was a man of great faith. When he was prosperous, he stayed faithful to God. When he lost everything, he remained faithful. And as he held on, he got discouragements. First, his wife asked him to curse God. Then his friends tried to make him think he was suffering for his own sins. Job disagreed with all of them even though, he couldn’t figure out why he was surrounded by tragedies. But what Job didn’t know was that he was going through a test. His trials were intended to test his faith in God.

Like Job, maybe you are overwhelmed. Don’t hurry and conclude you are under a curse. Not all crises are caused by curses. As we have seen in the case of Job, even a righteous person can be overwhelmed by indescribable crises. If you are determined to do God’s will or lead in an area, you will be tested. Before He was arrested, Jesus told his disciples, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Jesus made that statement because He knows that crises are inevitable. But He wants us to know that in Him, we also are overcomers.

Prayer/Confession: Lord, thank you for the grace you’ve given me to overcome my challenges. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Job 8:20-21

John 16:33

John 17:15

Waiting on God

“Even if you think God has abandoned you, continue to wait on Him.”

The hymn, “The steadfast love of the Lord” has the popular lyrics; “*They are new every morning, new every morning: great is your faithfulness, O Lord*”. These words were taken from chapter three of the book of Lamentation. The entire chapter captures the feelings of a man who is going through deep pain. Although the author may be referring to Jerusalem, he personifies his message, making it like the thoughts of a person who was in great affliction. The author is worried that God had driven him away and made him walk in darkness rather than light.

There was a time I had a similar experience. And while I was praying, it seemed like God had shut his door on me. Instead of moving ahead, I was stuck. If you ever find yourself in a situation like that, wait quietly. Even if you think God has abandoned you, continue to wait on Him. That was exactly what I did after I realized that the same person who was crying out his heart to God in the book of Lamentation also said “it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD” (Lamentation 3:26). So, don’t grumble. Just wait!

Prayer/Confession: Lord, I know you are on my side. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Psalm 40:1

Exodus 14:14

Lamentation 3:1-32

Trust God

“Like lions, we are built by God to conquer. But...”

As a kid, I was often intrigued by stories of how lions subdued other animals. But as I grew up, I discovered that what I learned about lions were somewhat exaggerated. Though lions are truly among the strongest animals, they didn't always have their way. I recall how stunned I was when I saw a video clip of a lion being cornered by Hyenas. Indeed, lions are endowed with strength, but they don't always win due to certain circumstances beyond their control. Like lions, we are built by God to conquer. But life can hit us with a crisis, capable of weakening us.

Just as a lion can be cornered by hyenas, you too can be taken unawares by a crisis. When we are at our weakest point, our ability to bounce back will largely be determined by our relationship with God. I am sure this is one of the points the psalmist was trying to make when he said, “The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing”. No matter what you are going through; you can get back on your feet if you would only trust God.

Prayer/Confession: I sought the Lord and He answered me. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Psalm 34

The Daily Cross

“Don’t suffer for the wrong reasons.”

Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” Obviously, Jesus wasn’t referring to a physical cross. And He didn’t mean we would have to live or die in the same way He did. Specifically, Jesus wanted us to know that we would have to face our own troubles. Though we are bound to experience crises, Christ assures us that our suffering will not be in vain. However, it is important for us to realize that the “daily cross” isn’t just any kind of trouble.

Whether we like it or not, life hits everyone with troubles. You don’t have to be a Christian to face persecution. Even if you’re an atheist, you could be rejected for your beliefs. Whether you love Christ or not, life can hit you with travails. Crises don’t affect people, based on their religious affiliations. So, we shouldn’t assume that every problem in our lives is a sign that we are carrying the cross that Jesus talked about. If your suffering is due to a foolish act, then it isn’t a cross. It is my prayer that you will not suffer for the wrong reasons.

Prayer/Confession: By the grace of God, I’ll not suffer for the wrong reasons. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Luke 9:23-27

Trouble in His Presence

“God uses crises to build our faith in Him.”

Before Jesus began his ministry, His disciples were mostly skilled workers, hoping to spend their lives pursuing their own dreams. Then Jesus showed up and asked them to follow Him. Since they were fascinated by the great Rabbi, they trusted Him. But one day, Jesus said to them, “Let’s go to the other side of the lake”. Without knowing why, they got into a boat. Then a life-threatening storm came. The disciples were frightened and surprised at the same time. Here was a great storm, bad enough to take their lives. But Jesus lay quietly on the boat, sleeping!

Many of us have found ourselves in similar situations. Perhaps at one time, you were doing something you thought was important to you. Then came Jesus. But after following Him, you’ve now found yourself in what seems like a life-threatening storm. Like the disciples, you are now surprised that while you are being confronted by challenges, it seems as if He is sleeping. I’ve learned that God uses crises to build our faith. Recall that when Jesus rebuked the storm, He said to His disciples, “Where is your faith?” Don’t be frightened by the storms in your life. God is with you.

Prayer/Confession: Father, my trust is in you. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Mark 4:38-39

Psalm 40

Victory without Injuries

“While we can overcome certain challenges with our willpower, such victories don’t often come without bruises.”

One day as Jesus entered the synagogue, he was suddenly confronted by a demon possessed man. As soon as the demon inside the man recognized Jesus, it cried out. To shut the demon, Jesus commanded it to come out of the man. As is always the case, the demon complied but in the process of leaving, it drew the man on the floor. Interestingly, even though the evil spirit flung the man, it came out without injuring him. That is, the violent fall didn’t cause any injury on the man’s body. It was a case of victory without injuries.

Life can overwhelm us with tough challenges. While we can overcome certain challenges with our willpower, such victories don’t often come without “bruises”. Instead of using your own intelligence to address certain problems, sometimes, it is wiser to seek Heaven’s help. Imagine what would have happened if the man with the evil spirit had tried to discharge the demon with his willpower. For sure, the demon wouldn’t have surrendered without a vicious fight. But thank God, when Jesus came, the man was delivered without a scratch. To win your battles without injuries, ask God to help you.

Prayer/Confession: Lord Jesus, my eyes are on you. Fix me. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Luke 4:33-35

The Things of God – Part One

“For every pain that life brings your way, God turns it into a gain.”

When Jesus told His disciples that He would suffer many things and “must be killed and after three days rise again”, they probably wondered why He said that. Here was a leader who had performed miracles. He had been preaching about this great kingdom which they all thought will take them to a new level. Now He was telling them He would suffer many things and be killed. Peter had immediately rejected the prophecy. But Jesus said to him, “You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.” In other words, Jesus made Peter realize that His imminent suffering and death was part of God’s plan.

Christ’s prophecy about Himself isn’t just about the suffering He had to experience. Most importantly, it also gives us a deep insight into how God operates. It is important for us to realize that God often takes advantage of the troubles that Satan throws our way. For every pain that life brings your way, God turns it into a gain. So, Peter shouldn’t have bothered about Christ’s death. Rather, he should have focused on His resurrection. Today, focus on how your life will be when the storm is over.

Prayer/Confession: Father, I know you will turn my pain into gain. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Mark 8:31-38

The Things of God – Part Two

“To gain anything worthwhile, be prepared to go through pain.”

When Jesus began to teach about His suffering and death, His disciples were troubled. Peter in particular, was so disturbed to the extent that he missed the better part of that prophecy. Although Jesus had said He would rise after three days, Peter ignored that part and instead, focused on the suffering and death. Possibly, what Peter had expected to hear was that Jesus would be a king in Israel, establish His earthly kingdom and then appoint his disciples as Governors. In other words, Peter wanted Jesus to enjoy a smooth ride to the top.

Peter acted like most of us usually do. Most people like to think of life as easy and blissful, all the time. So, we expect ourselves and our loved ones to succeed without going through hard times. For that reason, we prefer to surround ourselves with people who would tell us nice things about our future. No doubt, God wants us to enjoy the nice things of life. He also wants us to succeed in whatever we lay our hands to do. But He never promised anyone a life without hurdles. To gain anything worthwhile in life, be prepared to go through some pain.

Prayer/Confession: Father, strengthen me as I pass through the storms of life. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Mark 8:31-38

Overcome fear

“To overcome any crisis, you must first of all, eliminate your fears.”

The crises in our lives hurts. But sometimes, it is the not the crises that hurts us the most but the fear of it. I remember when my mum was ill and I had to take care of her, at a point, my health begun to fail as my blood pressure became so high. My doctor warned me that I was going to have a stroke if I didn't relax. I discovered that what made me hypertensive overnight wasn't caused by anything else other than the fear of losing my mother. So, I know exactly what fear can do to anyone in times of crisis.

In times of crises, the devil often uses “fear” as a weapon. To overcome any crisis, you must first of all, eliminate your fears. Unfortunately, fear isn't something you can eliminate with a drug. To overcome fear, fill your mind with God's word. In Isaiah 43, God said to His people, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you.” Then He said, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you” One remarkable thing about God is that He may not always prevent crisis from hitting us. But whenever we are hit by crisis, He rescues us.

Prayer/Confession: The Lord is my Redeemer. Therefore, I shall not be afraid. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Isaiah 43:1-2

Fight till the End

“Battles are won by those who never give up.”

Apostle Paul said to Timothy, his protégé, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” Paul used the letter “I” three times in that statement. That means, he wasn’t referring to a group fight. But the personal struggles he had to go through in life. Clearly, Paul wasn’t the kind of Christian who ran away from his problems. Though he experienced a lot of travails, He fought really hard and eventually won every battle that the enemy brought his way. Isn’t it interesting that even though he was highly talented and anointed, life still hit him hard with challenges?

I don’t know what you are currently going through. Maybe you are battling with an illness. Or perhaps, the crisis in your life has to do with marital issues or a financial crisis. Whatever it is, realize that your personal battles won’t go away until you fight to a standstill. Be strong-minded as you keep fighting with everything you’ve got. You are meant to fight your own battles. So, you must not give up on yourself, even if others give up on you. Remember, battles are won by those who never give up.

Prayer/Confession/: Lord Jesus, strengthen me so I can finish the race. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

2 Corinthians 11:16-33

2 Timothy 4:7

Goal Setting

“Many people fail in life, not because they didn’t set goals but for the reason that they set the wrong goals.”

Over the years, I have learned that setting goals do not guarantee **good** success. There are times you may set goals and then succeed in realizing them, but just as you are about to celebrate, you may suddenly discover the goals you achieved shouldn’t have been set in the first place. The scripture says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end, it leads to death.” This message is repeated twice in the book of Proverbs. The importance of this message cannot be overemphasized.

Many people fail in life, not because they didn’t set goals but for the reason that they set the wrong goals. They spend their entire lives pursuing the wrong thing. They never realize they are on the wrong path until they get to the end of their lives. To avoid such mistakes, always involve God as you set your goals. The Bible says, “Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the LORD’s purposes that prevails”. God has given us the right and the ability to make plans, but if we want those plans to be on the right path, we ought to seek His guidance.

Prayer/Confession: Holy Spirit, guide me. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Proverbs 16:3-21

Good versus Right

“Today, seek God’s guidance.”

When you have two options that are both good, but you have to determine which of them is right, you will have a hard time. While a good thing can be easily detected with our senses, knowing the right thing often requires us to make use of our *spiritual antennae*. Remember when David got the chance to kill Saul; his associate suggested they should kill Saul. That seemed like a good thing because Saul had been trying to kill David. But David realized that the right thing to do was **not** to lay a hand on Saul.

But there are times when the right thing may not even cross your mind or it may seem like the wrong decision and in the process, you may erroneously think that the good thing you are about to do is the only right decision. When Joseph discovered that the woman he was about to marry was found to be with child, he had in mind, not to disgrace Mary but to quietly divorce her. That seemed like a good decision, but when he got a revelation from God, he changed his mind and took the right decision. Today, seek God’s guidance as you work on your plans for the year.

Prayer/Confession: Holy Spirit, let my steps be according to Heaven’s will. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

1 Samuel 26:8

Matthew 1:18-20

Genesis 11:1-9

The Master Key

“When you know what God wants you to do, you will likely pray according to His will.”

Prayer is significant because it is one way through which we can build our relationship with God. I got to know more about God and discovered my purpose through prayers. While prayer has many benefits, it is also important to note that not every prayer is effective. You and I know that we’ve said certain prayers that God didn’t answer. There are many reasons why some of our prayers turn out to be ineffective. Let me deal with one of them. In the *Lord’s Prayer*, Jesus tells us to begin our prayers by aligning God’s will with ours.

When we don’t pray according to God’s will for our lives, our prayers become fruitless. Several years ago, I asked God to bless my business plan. Instead, He showed me visions of a different plan. Because I wasn’t comfortable with God’s plan, I ignored it and continued to ask Him to bless my own plan. But nothing changed until I submitted to His own will. When you know what God wants you to do, you will likely pray according to His will. The scriptures say, “If we ask anything according to His will, He listens to and hears us” (1 John 5:14).

Prayer/Confession: Heavenly Father, let your will for my life prevail over mine. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Matthew 6:9-13

The Wise King

“The only thing wrong with your prayer is that it isn’t in line with God’s will.”

God doesn’t always give us the things we lack. But He often gives us what we need. While you can survive without the things you lack, the things you need are usually essential. When God told Solomon to ask for whatever he wanted. Solomon said he was a little child who needed wisdom. And because he asked for what he needed; God answered his prayer. God was so pleased with Solomon’s request because he didn’t pray for long life, wealth or the death of his enemies (1 Kings 3:11). In other words, Solomon was more concerned with the gift that would help him fulfill God’s will.

If God isn’t answering your prayers, don’t think He isn’t there. Perhaps, you’ve left out what you need and have been praying for what God knows isn’t necessary at the moment. Maybe, the only thing wrong with your prayer is that it isn’t in line with God’s will. You may currently lack a job, a car or money to settle your debts. However, what you might need at the moment is to align yourself with God’s plan for you. Perhaps, God wants to get your attention so He can equip you for a great assignment.

Prayer/Confession: Heavenly Father, give me what you would like me to have. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

1 Kings 3:4-10

2 Chronicles 1:11

Bad Timing

“God will give you what you need when the time is right.”

Oftentimes, we fail to realize that God prioritizes our prayer requests according to His perfect plan. And that is often determined by **time**. That is, He responds to our requests at the time we need them. Recall that in the book of Genesis, we are told that the earth had no shrub, “for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground” (Genesis 2:5). In other words, because there was no man to till the earth, God didn’t send down rain at a certain time.

Timing is therefore important to God. For instance, you may pray for a car that may not be necessary at a particular time. However, the same car may be a priority at another time. When Solomon asked God for wisdom, God was pleased with his request because that was what he needed at that time. Perhaps, you are praying for the right thing at the wrong time. It could be that the only thing wrong with your prayer is bad timing. You may need all of the things in your prayer list. But God will give you what you need when the time is right.

Prayer/Confession: Heavenly Father, Your timing is right. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

1King 3:9

Genesis 2:5

Elijah's Secret

“Knowing God's will is more important than your personal needs.”

One of the most powerful prayers in the Bible is the one said by Elijah as at the time of his prayer challenge with the prophets of Baal. The prophets had begun the challenge by praying to their god from morning to evening. They shouted and danced as they asked their god to bring fire on their sacrifice. But despite their loud appeals, nothing happened, even after slashing themselves with swords. When it got to Elijah's turn, the atmosphere suddenly became calm. Possibly, his prayer didn't take more than five minutes but the response was instant.

We can learn from the way Elijah said his prayer. His prayer was straight to the point. He didn't try to embellish it with many words. Also, Elijah didn't try to impress God by screaming and dancing. Instead, he confidently talked to God. Clearly, his confidence was inspired by the fact that his prayer was said according to God's will. Recall that Elijah had asked God to answer his prayer so that it will be known that He is the God of Israel and that He was willing to turn the people's hearts back to Him. That was God's will. Today, pray according to God's will.

Prayer/Confession: Heavenly Father, reveal Your perfect will to your servant. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

1King 18:1-39

Stay there!

“Unless if God tells you to quit, stay there.”

After winning the prayer contest against the prophets of Baal, Elijah inspired a revival. When the Israelites saw how God responded to Elijah’s sacrifice they immediately repented. Elijah had seized that moment and ordered the killing of the prophets of Baal. Moments later, just as Elijah had prophesied, Israel had a heavy rain, after over three years of drought. But before he could celebrate the victory, Elijah found himself, once again in the wilderness, when he received a death threat from Jezebel. While he was on exile, Elijah became depressed and even prayed that God would take his own life. But as he rested in a cave, God asked him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

Possibly, God asked that question because Elijah wasn’t supposed to run away from his country, even though he was threatened by Jezebel. Maybe, you’ve found yourself in a similar situation. You’ve spent your energy on a cause. But instead of recognition, you’ve been rejected and misunderstood. You are now at a point where you are beginning to doubt and question your convictions. Unless if God tells you to quit, stay there. Oftentimes, God wants us to confront challenges and not to run from it.

Prayer/Confession: I will not quit by the grace of God. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

1 Kings 18:38-46; 19:1-9

Ask for help!

“Get down on your knees and ask God to do for you what you cannot do for yourself.”

Shortly after Herod had James, the brother of John killed; he proceeded and arrested Peter. Herod had decided to kill Peter because he figured it would make the Jews happy. This became a big problem to the Church because Peter was their leader. If he is also executed, then there would be a big vacuum. Since the Church knew they couldn't physically confront King Herod because of his influence, they resorted to prayers. In other words, they decided to use the master key to overcoming crisis.

The scripture says, “The church was earnestly praying to God for him.” I don't know the sort of crisis you are currently facing. You might be facing a problem that has already overwhelmed you. Or you might be at the brink of giving up. If you are at a point where you feel defeated and have lost the strength to fight back; then do what the disciples did by handing over the matter to God. Like the disciples, pray earnestly. Get down on your knees and ask God to do for you what you cannot do for yourself. And if you've lost the strength to pray, ask someone to pray for you. Ask for help!

Prayer/Confession: Heavenly Father, do for me what I cannot do for myself. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Acts 12:1-5

Suddenly!

“Most times, God responds to our prayers in unexpected ways.”

Prayer works. But it doesn't always work like a clock. While you can easily predict the hands of a clock, you can't predict how or when a prayer will be answered. You can glance at a clock and immediately know the exact minutes it will take the hands of the clock to reach the next hour. But you can't say a prayer and then predict the exact way it will be answered. I'm sure you've had incidences where God answered your prayers almost immediately. But then, there must have been times when the answers to your prayers were delayed.

After Peter was jailed by Herod, the Church prayed for him. The Bible didn't mention how long it took God to answer their prayer. But we are told that on the night before Herod was to bring him to trial, an angel suddenly appeared and rescued him. The deliverance took place at an unexpected time and in an unpredictable way. God's response was so remarkable that even Peter and those who were praying for him were surprised. The miracle happened at the eleventh hour! My prayer for you is that God will suddenly respond to your prayer in an unexpected way.

Prayer/Confession: Heavenly Father, I know you will answer my prayer at Your own set time. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Acts 12:1-7

Just Follow

“No need worrying over something that is out of your control.”

On the night that Peter that was rescued by the angel of the Lord, he was heavily guarded by armed men. Ordinarily, there was no way Peter could have escaped by his own effort. So, he simply slept. Peter probably realized there was no need worrying over something that was beyond his control. Possibly, as at that moment, Peter wasn't thinking of freedom. It could be, he had resolved to make the best use of that moment by having a good sleep. So, when the angel suddenly struck Peter on the side, Peter was dazed. He thought it was a vision. Peter followed the angel out of the prison, even though “he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening.” It was after he had regained his freedom that he realized that it was God who rescued him. As you hold on to God, you are going to get out of your troubles in the same way that Peter did. You may be feeling discouraged because you've exhausted all your strategies. Now that you are drained, God will come to your rescue. When that time comes, act like Peter; follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer/Confession: Holy Spirit, I am willing to follow your lead. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Acts 12:1-11

Testify

“You may never know who’s going to be inspired by your testimony.”

On the night that Peter was rescued by an angel, he went to the Mary’s house, where the people had gathered to pray for him. Notice that immediately after the angel left him, Peter thought of the people who had been concerned about his situation. Most likely, he knew they had been praying for him. And since he had been miraculously rescued, He went to them because he wanted to share the good news with them. Peter didn’t think of rushing home to celebrate alone. Instead, the first thing on his mind was to share his testimony with those who stood by him.

After Peter described how God brought him out of prison, he then instructed them to share his testimony (Acts 12:25). Too often, we fail to share our testimony after we’ve been rescued from a crisis. When we are facing challenges, we run to people for help. But when God eventually answers our prayers, we forget to return to those who stood by us. What we fail to realize is that testimonies are important because they serve as proofs to God’s faithfulness. You may never know who’s going to be inspired by your testimony. Share that testimony!

Prayer/Confession: I will testify of the goodness of the Lord. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Acts 12:11-17

Move on!

“Commit to focusing on what you can change, rather than dwelling what has already happened.”

When Peter told the brethren how the Lord had saved him from death, He said to them, “Tell James and the brothers about this,” and then he left for another place. The scriptures didn’t tell us where he headed to, but we know that Peter moved to another place. In other words, Peter didn’t hold on to his past. He moved on. Clearly, the main thing on Peter’s mind was how to further his work of spreading the gospel. So, he quickly moved out of the city, leaving his past behind.

One reason why many people fail to overcome the crises in their lives is because they often go through life feeling frustrated, even after they’ve been liberated. They fail to leave the past. Instead, they remain bitter after the adversity is long gone. To fully recover from a crisis, you would have to do what Peter did. Move on immediately! You can’t change the past, but you can work toward a better future. So, commit to focusing on what you can change, rather than what has already happened. Peter knew that the only thing he could control was his future. For that reason, he moved on.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, guide me as I move on from the past. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Acts 12:11-17

The Sweetest Revenge

“Allow God to deal with the enemy.”

There’s a saying that "revenge is a dish best served cold". This statement implies that revenge is more fulfilling when it’s carried out at an unexpected time. I strongly disagree because this statement opposes what the Bible teaches. To take revenge against your enemy is wrong, and the Bible condemns it. In his letter to the Romans, Paul warns us “not to take revenge”, but “leave room for God’s wrath” (Romans 12:19). That is, we are expected to leave vengeance for God because whoever troubles us is actually fighting God, not us. Allow God to deal with the enemy.

Recall what happened in the case between Peter and Herod. When Herod tried to kill Peter, God stepped in and rescued Peter by Himself because Herod was actually fighting God, not Peter. So, Peter acted rightly by not fighting back. He simply moved on. By that act, he left room for God’s wrath. Later, on a particular day, Herod was struck down with a blow by an angel. You might have been badly hurt by someone in the past. However, if God has already liberated you, move on and leave room for God’s wrath. God’s retribution is sweeter.

Prayer: Holy Father, I hand it over to you. Be the Judge. Amen.

REFERENCES/FURTHER STUDY:

Acts 12:17-24

January 2022

---Epilogue---

Since you've come this far, don't give up!

For the last thirty days, we've been focused on how to overcome crises. I believe you've been encouraged by God's word. If you've read every page of this booklet, then you've come a long way. While you were reading this devotional, day after day, perhaps, there were days you didn't feel like moving on. But thank God, you've been able to hold on to God's word even as you endured every storm. I believe you've grown and have become a tougher Christian. Congratulations! But don't think the devil will give up easily. He will still try to stop you.

Recall what happened to Christ. After He overcame the temptation at the wilderness, the devil still tried to stop Him through the opposition and criticisms He continually got from the Pharisees and Scribes. And after Jesus survived their criticisms, and even resisted the people's attempts to make Him a king, He was once again tempted at the garden of Gethsemane. Because He was "overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death." Jesus asked God to "take the cup from Him." (Matthew 26:36-39; Mark 14:34-36). In other words, He was tempted to quit. But, thank God He didn't. Now that you've come this far, imitate Christ. Don't quit!

I pray that the Almighty God, who has been with you will continue to shield you from evil, guide you and empower you with His Spirit, so you can overcome every hurdle in your life in Jesus name. Amen.

Thank you for reading this devotional.

If you would like to accept Christ as your personal Lord and savior, please say this prayer:

Heavenly Father, I come to you today in the name of Jesus. I believe that your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ died for me on the cross. I repent of my sins. Lord Jesus, come into my heart and be my personal savior. I am now willing to follow you. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

Congratulations!

For counselling and prayer; feel free to contact us. God bless you.

Shepherd Daily Devotional – Overcoming Crisis

January 2022

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About the Author

Ben Dankaka is the founder of Global Leaders & Readers Club (G.L.R.C), an NGO that promotes reading culture and leadership development. Since 2008, Dankaka has trained thousands through his NGO. He has over ten (10) years of work experience in social development. In 2008, he served as member of the Debate to Action, Nigeria (Kaduna Cluster), a British Council and World Bank Initiative aimed at youth leaders in East and West Africa and the United Kingdom.

Dankaka's ongoing efforts to support Nigerian communities have been recognized with two major international honors. One was an invitation to reduce the world's number of out-of-school children by serving as one of 500 "A World at School" Global Youth Ambassadors. The other was a prestigious Mandela Washington Fellowship through the US Department of State. The Fellowship supported Mr. Dankaka for six weeks of study in Public Management at Virginia Commonwealth University, in Richmond, in the USA. At the Fellowship's conclusion, Mr. Dankaka attended a Presidential Summit in Washington where he was honored by Barak Obama for his leadership.