

CREATE

the world
you want
to see



Kenneth W. Hagin

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Chapter 1

Raising the Bars

Did you know that God wants you to walk in victory in every area of your life? Have you tried to break through to the next level of victory, but it seems to be just beyond your grasp?

As I travel all over the world, I see people searching for victory. I also see people living defeated lives. They know that God wants them to have victory over every circumstance, but they don't understand how to win. They don't quit—they keep on struggling—but their battles are ongoing. Others have given up. They've decided, "Well, I guess this is the way it's going to be."

Rising Above the Average

It's so important for us not to accept an average, routine life as the norm. God does not intend for our lives to be routine or average!

When we think of an average life, we probably think of someone who is enduring the daily grind. Living an average life is like talking on a cell phone when it only has a couple of bars on the screen. It isn't receiving a very strong signal. The phone is operating, but it keeps cutting in and out or even drops the calls completely.

God wants all of us to raise the bar in our lives. He wants us to come up higher. He wants us to know that He has a way for us to live with full bars, spiritually, as well as physically.

You see, we are living two lives at the same time—the spiritual life and the natural life. To operate on full bars, we need to know how to let the spiritual life dominate the natural life.

If we want to operate from the spiritual side, we must allow the supernatural power of God's Word to become the dominant force in our natural lives. You see, God has given those of us who are born again authority to rule over the circumstances we encounter here on this earth. He never intended for us to be defeated by our circumstances. He doesn't intend

for us to be changed by our world. He intends for us to change our world.

God wants to do some wondrous things in our lives. He wants to take us to the place of victory where He has planned for us to be. He wants us to have everything that His Word says belongs to us. And His Word tells us that Jesus came to give us an extraordinary life of abundance!

JOHN 10:10 (AMPLIFIED)

10 The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows).

Actually, the Gospel teaches a simple message of faith. But we live in a world that is controlled by our enemy, the devil. And one of his primary goals is to complicate our lives and confuse our thinking so he can keep us focused on the circumstances around us instead of on God's Word. But the key to our victory is staying focused on the promises God has for us.

Now I'm not denying that people have problems, and the problems of life can be complicated. Mountains of difficulties are inevitable and they come to all of us. The devil will try to raise everything he can against us, to limit us and keep us from rising to the next level of victory the Lord has for us. But God has a plan to empower us to rise to a new level!

Life Unlimited

God wants all of His children to experience life unlimited, but there are many obstacles we encounter in our physical lives that try to limit us. The circumstances of life try to limit us. The economic problems in the world today try to limit us. The more we talk about those natural circumstances, the more we will keep our eyes on them. When we begin to focus on the natural circumstances, we take our eyes off God's promises. And His promises tell us He will keep us, take care of us, and meet all of our needs!

To walk by faith, we must focus on the promises of God. The more we do this, the more we can change the circumstances and situations in the natural realm. We no longer have to conform to the natural world that we see around us. Romans 12:2 says that we can be transformed by the renewing of our minds to God's Word. That means we can change. But in order to do so, we must stay focused on God's Word.

The Bible tells us that God wants us to prosper in every area of our lives, just as our souls prosper.

3 JOHN 2

2 Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.

Another translation gives us a little different insight into the meaning of this verse.

3 JOHN 2 (NIV)

2 Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.

This verse is a promise God has given us as believers. But even under the Old Covenant, God had only good plans for His people. If you remember when the Israelites were living in captivity in a foreign land, if they focused on their condition in the natural world around them, they had no hope. But God assured them through the prophet Jeremiah that He had good plans for them.

JEREMIAH 29:11 (KJV)

11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

God told them he had “an expected end” for them—a future and a hope! He was saying, “I haven’t forgotten you, and I want you to know that you have a future.” Praise God, He is saying the same thing to us today in His Word—we have a future and a hope!

God wants us to live in the Promised Land while we’re here on earth. The Promised Land is a land of more than enough. It represents security, provision, safety, and a better life. It means that we’re operating on full bars!

Sometimes people think of Heaven as a type of Promised Land. They sing songs about the sweet by-and-by, the happy day when we reach Canaan Land and all of our struggles will be over. They are actually deferring the promises of God to sometime in the future!

If we look at the characteristics of the Promised Land and of Heaven, we

see that the Promised Land couldn't be a type of Heaven. The Israelites had enemies in Canaan Land. They had to fight battles. Thank God, we won't have to do any fighting in Heaven! The fighting we do is here on this earth. We fight faith battles to obtain the promises of God. The Bible teaches us that the Promised Land is a type of life that's available to us here on earth. It's a life of victory and blessing—a life of operating on full bars!

Think God's Thoughts

Through incorrect religious thinking, many people have a wrong picture of God. They've been taught that God makes us sick. They think that He causes not only sickness but all sorts of other difficulties to teach us something. They've been deceived by the devil to picture God in the wrong way. They see Him as sitting up in Heaven just waiting for them to make a mistake so He can swat them down like a fly.

Do loving parents act horribly to their children, or do they make them sick to teach them something? No! Any parent who does those things is guilty of child abuse. Think about this for a moment. If God were physically on earth today causing horrible things to happen to His children, He would be accused of child abuse too. But God is not a child abuser!

The devil loves to convince us that we have to go through life with barely enough to get by. He tries to trap us into thinking that if we can just make it through this world and reach Heaven, we're doing pretty well. And, yes, if we're born again by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will make it to Heaven. But if our thinking is limited, we will never experience the life that God says belongs to us here on earth.

We may know that God wants to bless us but we may not have any idea how to receive those blessings. Or we may have simply grown weary waiting for our circumstances to turn around. So we lower our expectations and think, *Well, I should just be satisfied with what I have and where I am.* We lower our bars.

Some of us settle for living below God's standards because we think that's what it means to be thankful for all He has given us. Yes, it's important to be thankful for all God has done for us. But that doesn't mean we should be

satisfied with living below the level of victory and abundance He desires for us. When we discover what God has for us in His Word and understand how to receive it, we can live on full bars all the time!

As we become more and more involved with the truth of God's Word, we can be set free from any wrong, religious thinking we might have. God wants us to read and study the Word, believe it and speak it, so we're ready when the devil brings circumstances to try to take our focus off God's promises.

God has blessings upon blessings for us. But before we can receive His abundance, some things have to change within us. We can begin by changing our thoughts. Proverbs 23:7 says, *"For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."*

The average life is a reflection of the way we think, and so is the extraordinary life! If we view ourselves as average, we will probably have an average life. But when we begin to think thoughts that are in line with God's Word, then we begin to add bars of strength in our thought life.

If we want to experience the extraordinary life God has for us, we need to start thinking His thoughts! What does God think? Matthew 19:26 says, *"With God all things are possible."* And Philippians 4:13 tells us, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*

If we want to think like God thinks, we need to let this thought dominate our thinking: *I cannot be defeated, and I will not quit!* The Lord will do amazing things in our lives when we change our thinking.

Thinking God's thoughts gives us the kind of attitude we need in order to succeed in the spiritual *and* natural realms. This kind of attitude keeps us going when the cares of the world, the pressures of life, and the economists' reports try to limit and defeat us. It keeps us going when everybody around us is saying that we can't have what God has said in His Word we can have. This attitude says, "When I look at what is going on around me, the only thing I consider is what the Word of God says!"

The enemy will tell you, "Just be satisfied with where you are. Just be thankful that God has let you get this far." He will say, "Your dreams will never come to pass. You're not going to make it." When he does that, you

can declare, “Mr. Devil, according to Isaiah 54:17, no weapon that’s formed against me shall prosper! I am not going to be satisfied with second best. I will receive all the promises God has told me about in His Word.”

God doesn’t want us to be destitute. He doesn’t want us to be sick. He doesn’t want us to live a beaten-down life. He is a miracle-working God, and He wants to do supernatural things for us. His Word shows us the way to live an abundant life. If we read His promises, believe them in our hearts, and speak them out of our mouths, we will see the spiritual dominate the natural. And we will begin to operate on full bars!

Chapter 2

The Natural and Supernatural Working Together

God wants to make use of the natural abilities He has given us in combination with His supernatural ability. That's what will launch us into the next level He has for us—because the natural and the supernatural coming together make an explosive force for God!

Ross McCready was an architect who designed several buildings on the RHEMA USA campus, as well as other church buildings. He used his natural ability in combination with God's supernatural ability to produce extraordinary results. As he was drawing plans for the RHEMA Bible Church building, he began to talk to God about the details of those plans. The result was the intricate design God gave him for the ceiling and roof of that building. This plan was so successful that it was featured in a widely read architectural magazine.

In our church we have attorneys, bankers, engineers, businessmen, and others in various walks of life that use their natural abilities in combination with God's ability. When God's supernatural power comes together with our natural abilities, He will help us become successful. And we will stand head and shoulders above everybody else around us!

Let's look at an incident in the life of Peter that illustrates what I'm talking about here.

LUKE 5:4–7 (NIV)

4 He [Jesus] said to Simon [Peter], "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

5 Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.

7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

First, let's look at the natural realm. Notice that Peter and his crew had

already fished all night. That was their pattern. They went out in the evening because that was the best time to fish. It's possible to fish anytime, but there is always a best time to fish. Here in Oklahoma, the bass fishermen get up early if they want to catch more fish in these freshwater lakes.

But notice Peter and his crew had worked all night and caught nothing! Have you ever done something like that? Have you ever worked and toiled but you didn't seem to have anything to show for it? For example, in the financial realm, many people have worked with their natural skills alone to invest their money, but they ended up with nothing.

Man often encounters impossibilities. So many times our knowledge is not enough, our strength is not enough, and our resources are not enough. We need help! And God has help for us.

LUKE 18:27 (KJV)

27 And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

When Jesus told Peter to go into the deep water and let down the nets, Peter and his crew had already returned from doing that very thing. It would have been easy for Peter to have said, "Wait a minute, Jesus. I'm the fisherman. You're the Preacher. We don't fish in the daytime around here. The night is when the fish are running."

Instead, Peter believed the Word Jesus spoke to him. But in order to respond to that Word, Peter had to do something in the natural. He had to take action!

Be Willing to Take Action

If we want to experience the blessings God has for us, we have to be willing to do what He tells us to do, even if it doesn't make sense in the natural. We need to be willing to respond and take action. Like Peter, we need to step out and obey. Our obedience gives God something to work with. And our obedience gives God room to work in our lives.

Too many people are walking around on a spiritual high, and yet they never get involved in the natural realm. They don't do what they need to do in the natural to receive God's blessings. In other words, they're too heavenly

minded to be any earthly good. On the other hand, some people are too natural minded to be any heavenly good. And yet there is a middle-of-the-road where you bring the natural and supernatural together.

What would have happened if Peter had said, “Now, Master, we’re too tired right now. Let us sleep for a little while and then we’ll go back out there and fish”? What would have happened if his crew had said, “Look, Peter, we’ve already worked all night, and we’ve almost finished putting the nets out to dry”? What if they had said they didn’t want to go out again because they didn’t want to work overtime? What kind of haul would Peter and his crew have had then? None! No haul—no fish.

Many times in order to receive the blessings of God we have to do something extra—something a little bit out of the way. In our humanity, we don’t always like to do anything that causes us to go out of our way. One thing I’ve learned is that if we are going to enjoy life, we need to be flexible. We need to allow for some give and take. Doing something extra in the natural and being flexible so that we’re ready to obey can set the stage for God to do something in the supernatural realm.

It’s important to stand on the Word, but it’s also important to take action. Every time my wife, Lynette, and I have believed God for extra money, we have also looked for opportunities He might send for us to earn that money. Very seldom do I get a letter in the mail with a check in it. But I do receive phone calls and letters for speaking engagements. God blesses us, but we also work for the blessing.

You may have had similar experiences when you started believing God for some extra money. Perhaps God blessed you by opening up jobs in your area of expertise. Then the extra money came! When we do a little extra, God adds a bigger blessing. Many times when I’ve done something extra, I’ve received a greater blessing even beyond the one I expected.

Now let’s look back at the story of Peter letting down his nets for a catch. The first clue that the explosive force of God was beginning to work was when Jesus said to Peter, “*Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.*” Jesus gave Peter a word to obey.

For the supernatural to come together with the natural, we need to know what God's Word says. And we need to be quick to obey!

Even though obeying Jesus was contrary to everything Peter knew about fishing, he did as Jesus said. But just think about the amount of effort it took to obey Jesus.

Peter and his crew were tired from fishing all night. They had already unloaded the nets from their ship. They had stretched them out, washed them, and hung them out to dry. They had cleaned the boat and prepared it for the next night's fishing. Then Jesus told them to go back out on the water.

When we think about this story, we usually just think about the huge catch. But before the huge catch, Peter and his crew put a huge amount of natural effort into preparing to obey Jesus. This was the natural and the supernatural coming together to make an explosive force for God.

If we want to connect with the supernatural, we have to be willing to make a large effort in the natural. The architect, Ross McCready, and the attorneys, bankers, engineers, and other business people in our church underwent extensive training to prepare to enter their fields. It took a great deal of work in the natural for them to excel in order for God to be able to use them in their area of expertise.

In the natural, Peter's crew hadn't been able to catch any fish that night. But in the supernatural, when Jesus told them to go out again, the fish were there waiting. To receive that supernatural manifestation, they had to make an effort in the natural. They had to put everything back into the boat—load the nets—then push the boat off, get in, and go back out on the water.

Notice that Jesus hadn't said to go just a little way out from shore. He said, "Put out into deep water." The deep is some distance from the shoreline. The crew had to put more toil and effort into going out on the deep waters than they would have to fish along the shoreline. But when Peter obeyed the Word Jesus gave him, the natural met the supernatural. Of course, the supernatural was there waiting for them all along. But when the natural and supernatural came together, the catch was so great they filled two boats, almost sinking both!

Know, Believe, Say, Act

If we want the explosive force of God to be unleashed in our lives, we need to know how to cooperate with the supernatural. We can do this by taking four simple steps. First, we need to know what God's Word says. Second, we need to believe what it says. Third, we need to say what His Word says. Fourth, we need to act on what it says. This is a simple message, but it has powerful results.

When Abraham was waiting for the promise of an heir to be born, God changed his name from "Abram" to "Abraham," which means "father of many nations" (Gen. 17:5). Abraham didn't have any descendants, but everywhere he went, he introduced himself as "the father of many nations." He knew the word God had given him. He believed it, said it, and acted on it. The natural met the supernatural, releasing the explosive force of God, and the promise came to pass. Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age (Gen. 21:1–3).

When we put our hand to something in the natural in accordance with God's Word, His supernatural power becomes available to us. If we have a need and sow a seed by putting money in the offering plate as it comes by, we have put the supernatural power of God at our disposal. Even if we believe we should pay our tithes and give offerings, we must *do it* if we want the power of God to be there to meet our needs. Obedience to the Word means putting action to our faith by doing something.

When we read about Jesus healing people, in so many cases we see that He told them to do something: take up your bed and walk; go wash your eyes in the pool of Siloam; stretch forth your hand (John 5:8, 9:7; Matt. 12:13). In other words, He told them to act on their faith.

It took the natural and the supernatural working together in order for the RHEMA campus to come into existence. In July of 1976, we started out by buying one building and half the building behind it on six acres. My dad, Kenneth E. Hagin, said to me, "It's yours. I'm going out to preach and teach. You make it happen."

It took blood, sweat, and tears—a huge effort in the natural—to add all the

land and buildings we have now. I had big windows put in my office so I could watch the school develop. One time when we were in the middle of several building projects, there was a huge pile of bills on my desk and we didn't have enough money to pay them all. So I actually stood on my Bible as I looked out across the campus and said, "All right, God, I'm standing on Your Word and believing for You to show me how to pay these bills."

Then God told me to do something in the natural. He said, "Go over to your desk." So I went over to my desk and sat down. Next He said, "Pick up that pile of bills."

After I picked them up, He told me, "What did they say that you have in the bank?" So I looked at the amount. Then He said, "Now look through those bills, find the ones that you can pay with that amount, and pay them. And do that every day."

I did exactly that every day for several months. And at the end of those months all the bills were paid, and we were still going.

In the natural, I had to find out how much money I had to spend each day and I also had to thumb through those bills. Sometimes I had to find two bills to add up to the available amount, and I would have to look hard to find the right combination. But I kept the natural and the supernatural working together until it was done!

When we know what God's Word says, believe it, say it, and do it, the explosive force of God will begin to work for us and it will change our lives. It will change our community. It will change our world!

God wants us to be successful, but we will never achieve the success He desires for us by operating strictly in the natural *or* strictly in the supernatural realm. It will only happen when the natural *and* supernatural come together. Then we will ignite God's power and rise to the next level in our walk with Him!

Chapter 3

Rising to the Next Level

We often hear news stories about people who inherit a great deal of money or win the lottery, and only a year or so later they're already broke. If they've never had much money in the past or never learned the principles behind handling money, they don't know what to do with it. Their thoughts are usually focused on how to spend money, not on how to invest their money and receive a good return. They may end up having more material goods, but financially they go right back where they were before! They lose all the money because they never learned how to handle finances properly. Their thinking about money needed to change.

New Thought Patterns

Each new day we are poised on the brink of possibilities. If we grab hold of the promises of God, we can rise to a new level of living. Of course, breaking into a new level requires new thought patterns and new ways of doing things, because people at each level operate according to a distinct set of thoughts, ideas, and principles.

For example, many times there's a conflict between employees and employers because they are operating at different levels and have different thought patterns. Employees see things from the perspective of their own area of work. Employers see things from the perspective of the whole picture. The employers' level of thinking is different because they see the way all the areas work together to be effective.

For the same reason, sometimes people in a church don't understand why a pastor is making certain decisions. The pastor is thinking about the whole picture, but the people may just be thinking about their own personal group. They don't have the overall information that he has in order to give them understanding about how their group fits into the big picture.

We saw some of the Eastern European countries struggle to establish a free society after their transition from communism to democracy. They didn't know the principles involved in living on that new level. Changing their

thinking in order to know how to how to operate in a democratic society required a major mind shift.

We are all at different levels in the natural. As we grow, we change our way of thinking. An adult has a different way of thinking from a 6-year-old. The 6-year-old doesn't understand how to operate on the level of an adult. But an adult who uses higher level thinking skills will see things about the way the 6-year-old operates that the child doesn't see.

I like race cars, and one time when I was in Florida preaching, I had the opportunity to go to Daytona and ride three laps with a driver in one of the cars. I could try to explain the rush and what the g-force felt like when we were flying around the track at 165 to 170 mph, but it wouldn't do any good! People can hear us talk about something that happens on a certain level, but until they live and experience it, they won't truly understand what it feels like.

The people driving on that race track think on a different level from people who are driving down the street. There aren't any side mirrors on one of those dirt-track cars. There isn't any glass in the windows either. The wall outside my window was only a hand's length away. I noticed that I became really aware of sight and sound. In fact, all of my senses became heightened. Without a mirror to see what was happening, I began to feel and hear people coming up behind or beside us. I was thinking on a higher level. For the next few days on the highway, I was still thinking at that level. I knew where other cars were before I even looked! I had come up to a new level because I was thinking a different way.

God's Thoughts Take Us to Another Level

We know that God's thoughts are different from man's thoughts. They are thoughts from another level! As we read God's Word, we form new thought patterns. This will cause us to see things differently and rise to a new level both in the spiritual and natural realms.

ISAIAH 55:8-9 (NIV)

8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord.

9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my

thoughts than your thoughts.”

God wants us to think His thoughts so that He can speak to us—to our spirits. He has designed us to think His thoughts in order to move on to the next level, spiritually and naturally. If we operate only according to our own thoughts, we will stay where we are. You see, man’s thoughts are dictated by the limitations of our physical, earthly environment. But God’s thoughts are not.

In the story of Peter launching out for a miracle catch, we saw that God’s thoughts don’t always make sense to man’s natural mind. The world doesn’t understand God’s thinking because His thinking and man’s thinking are on two different levels! God doesn’t think in terms of 24 hours in a day and 365 days in a year. He thinks in terms of eternity.

People sometimes think the Word teaches us mainly about the Spirit, but it also teaches us a great deal about the mind. We looked briefly at Romans 12:2 in a previous chapter. Let’s look at that verse in the *King James Version*.

ROMANS 12:2 (KJV)

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The Bible also instructs us to use our minds to meditate on God’s Word.

JOSHUA 1:8 (NIV)

8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

It’s one thing to know what God’s thoughts are by reading the Bible. It’s another thing to meditate on those things and begin to put them into action in our lives.

Of course, we don’t have to wonder what God thinks about us. All we have to do is look in His Word. His Word tells us we’re healed (1 Peter 2:24). His Word tells us we’re blessed (Eph. 1:3). His Word tells us that He meets all of our needs (Phil. 4:19). His Word tells us we’re more than conquerors in every area of life (Rom. 8:37)!

The Battle of the Mind

If you continually struggle in a certain area, your thoughts may be holding you captive. We see an example of this when God was ready to take the Israelites into the Promised Land. They knew God wanted them to go in and possess the land. But they didn't do it because they believed their own thoughts over God's thoughts! Their thoughts held them captive and kept them from receiving the promise God had for them. They had a slavery mentality they had brought with them from Egypt instead of the conquering mentality God wanted them to have.

Moses sent 12 spies to look at the land, one man from each tribe. When they returned they reported their findings.

NUMBERS 13:26–27 (NIV)

26 They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land.

27 They gave Moses this account: “We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit.”

But then all the spies, except for two, gave what the Bible calls “*a bad report*” (Num. 13:32 NIV). The *King James Version* calls it “*an evil report.*” Any time we don't believe in line with God's Word, we believe an evil report. The 10 spies looked at the circumstances instead of God's promise and they were overwhelmed.

NUMBERS 13:28–30 (NIV)

28 “But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there.

29 The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan.”

30 Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, “We should go up [at once] and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.”

The 10 spies told the Israelite community that they had indeed found a great land, one flowing with milk and honey. But then they went on to give the evil report. The cities were large and walled. Powerful people, even “descendants of Anak” (which refers to giants) lived in the land. The 10 spies looked at the circumstances and said, “We can't do it. We can't take the

land!” Even after Caleb responded by speaking in line with God’s promise, the 10 spies continued with their evil report.

NUMBERS 13:31–33 (NIV)

31 But the men who had gone up with him said, “We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are.”

32 And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, “The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size.

33 We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.”

The people must have gone into an uproar when they heard that negative report because Caleb had to silence them! They had come all the way from Egypt, and just as they were on the threshold of entering the land God had promised them, they received this terrible report. But Caleb encouraged the people according to God’s thoughts. He told them, “We can take the land!” To Caleb, this was a fact. There was no question in his mind. He didn’t say, “Let’s have a prayer meeting to see if this is really the will of God.” No, he *knew* it was God’s will for them to have the land!

The 12 people Moses selected to spy out the land were all considered leaders (v. 2). They were chosen to help Moses direct the affairs of the people. The two spies who kept their eyes and thoughts on God’s promise instead of the circumstances were Caleb and Joshua. They followed their convictions.

JOSHUA 14:7–8 (NIV)

7 “I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions,

8 but my brothers who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt with fear. I, however, followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly.”

Joshua and Caleb gave the people a good report, one in line with God’s thinking.

NUMBERS 14:6–9 (NIV)

6 Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes

7 and said to the entire Israelite assembly, “The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good.

8 If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us.

9 Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them.”

Joshua and Caleb knew the promise God had given them and were determined to receive it. They kept their minds focused on it. They had faith, they believed, and they went in and possessed the land God said belonged to them. But they had to wait 40 years to do it because the rest of the people let the evil report influence their thinking. Because Joshua and Caleb said, “We can!” they were the only two from the first generation who went in and possessed the land. And God chose one of them, Joshua, to be the leader.

JOSHUA 1:1–5 (NIV)

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ aide:

2 “Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites.

3 I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses.

4 Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Great Sea on the west.

5 No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

This generation of Israelites thought differently from the previous one. Before they could possess the Promised Land, they had to exchange their slavery mentality for a conquering mentality. The slavery mentality says, “I can’t do it. I can’t!” The conquering mentality says, “All things are possible. I can conquer. I *will* have all God has promised me.”

Many people in the midst of the battle are like the 10 spies who based their thinking on the circumstances around them. The spies said, “We saw the giants, and we were as grasshoppers in their sight. We can’t attack those people and win. They’re too strong for us, and the cities are well fortified. We can’t take the land!” Like the Israelites, many people today are defeated by their own thoughts. “Oh, my God—what am I going to do now? Why is this happening to me?”

God told the Israelites that He was going to give them the land, but He never promised they wouldn’t have to fight any battles. When Caleb said,

“We should go up [at once] and take possession of the land . . .” (Num. 13:30 NIV), he was saying they were going to have to exercise some authority to take possession of what they knew belonged to them. Once they crossed into the Promised Land, they faced taking Jericho, probably the greatest walled city ever known to mankind. Then they had to fight to take the rest of the land.

Canaan, with all of its good and abundance, represents to us a type of the faith walk. God has given us many promises in His Word, but we will have to fight some faith battles if we want to possess those promises. And when we keep our thoughts focused on the good plan God has for us and believe His Word, we’ll come through every test, trial, and battle victoriously!

Like Joshua and Caleb, we need to have a report of faith. Instead of saying, “Oh, God—what are we going to do now?” we need to have a conquering mentality. We need to say, “I will not let the devil defeat me! I will not let the devil have my family or my marriage or my health. There’s nothing that can destroy me because God is on my side!”

We need to change our thinking! Our thinking is not supposed to be based on what we see, feel, taste, touch, or smell. Right thinking produces right believing, and right believing produces victorious results. Wrong thinking produces doubt, unbelief, and wrong action which gives us nothing but defeat and death. I don’t know about you, but I choose victory!

The greatest battles ever fought are fought in our minds. It’s our mentality that conquers us, not the enemy! Crises come to all of us, and when they do, we have to be so full of God’s thoughts that when we’re squeezed by the enemy, what comes out of us is the Word.

It’s like dipping a sponge in water. When you squeeze that sponge, water will come out. When the enemy comes against you and starts squeezing, what will come out? “Oh, my God! What are we going to do?” Or will you square your shoulders, stand strong and courageous, and let the Word come out of you?

Strong and Courageous

Going to a new level takes some courage.

JOSHUA 1:6–9 (NIV)

6 “Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.

7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.

8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Notice that the Lord told Joshua three times to be strong and courageous. The weak of heart never accomplish anything. We must be courageous—willing to step out by faith with nothing underneath us but God’s Word!

When we meditate on the Word of God and think in line with His Word, it gives us the strength and courage we need to possess the next level. And as we’re going to the next level, it’s good to remind ourselves of the blessings of God. *“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits”* (Ps. 103:2 KJV).

Many times, thinking about God’s blessings keeps our minds off our circumstances. Singing praises to the Lord keeps our minds focused on Him. Those of us who have been in the military know that singing a cadence as we march along keeps our minds off our sore feet, our aching backs, or anything else that’s hurting.

The Israelites from the first generation certainly weren’t thinking about God’s blessings. They were completely focused on the giants, the fortified cities, and all the other circumstances that were keeping them from possessing the land.

Time and again, they had seen God’s miracles. The Lord had shown them His power. He had taken care of them in the wilderness. But instead of stirring up their faith by remembering His blessings, they simply said, “We can’t take the land!” And they died in the wilderness, without receiving God’s promise.

But the second generation refused to follow in their footsteps. Because they focused on God's blessings and allowed Him to change their thinking from a slave mentality to a conquering mentality, they were ready to go to the next level. They were able to go in and possess the land!

It's very important to keep your mind focused on the blessings of God if you want to go to the next level. You may be facing all kinds of negative circumstances, but keep your thoughts in line with God's Word. Give Him praise that the devil's plans for you can't come to pass. As you begin each day, fill your mind with the Word. Instead of saying, "Oh, no, it's another day. I wonder what's going to happen?" begin to declare, "This is the day the Lord hath made; I will rejoice and be glad in it. Lord, send somebody across my path who I can tell about You."

One of our RHEMA graduates once said that courage comes when the cause is greater than the circumstances. Joshua and Caleb had a cause and a purpose that motivated them to go into the new land.

Our cause and purpose is to go out and tell people about Jesus and set them free from the chains of sin, sickness, and disease. But sometimes we're enjoying our blessings so much that we forget our cause. Thank God for His blessings! But it's important to guard ourselves against the temptation to just sit back and enjoy His blessings and forget our purpose for existence.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:16 (KJV)

16 For which cause we faint not. . . .

Many people quit. They stop, faint, or give up because they either don't have a cause or they have forgotten their cause. If we're going to go to the next level, we must remember and live for our cause and our purpose. When our priority is Jesus Christ and serving Him, courage will come.

It's time to get ready to go to the next level. Find out the ideas and principles that work at that level. Renew your mind to God's Word and meditate on it so you can think the right thoughts to take you there. Get the right mindset—a conquering mentality. And refuse to let your thoughts hold you captive. You can win the battle of the mind and possess your Promised Land!

Chapter 4

The Desire to Achieve

How badly do you want to live the extraordinary life God has for you? Often the difference between people who excel in life and those who don't isn't in their ability. The difference is in their level of desire.

When you have a strong desire for something, you will reach down inside yourself and give out more effort than you ever thought you could. That's what desire does. It pushes you beyond what you think you can do.

All of us can accomplish and do more than we think we can. It's a matter of how much desire we have.

When I played sports, there were a lot of people who might have been better players than I was, but I had a deep-down desire to play. I would do whatever it took to get on that playing field. Many times the coaches would play me in front of somebody else because I had such a strong desire. I had the want-to. They would say to me, "Hagin, this other guy is better than you, but when you get on that field I know I can depend on you!" The other player was there just to be on the team.

I didn't care about just being on the team—I wanted to make a difference. I wanted to help the team win! That comes from a desire, a want-to. Some people call it "being hungry." Sometimes when a team loses in a game, people will say, "They just weren't hungry enough." There are a lot of people who, in their spiritual and natural lives, are there just to be on the team. That's where their want-to ends!

As we look across humanity, we see people who wish for something but never get it. That's because they never put forth the effort required to achieve what they want. Many people say they would like to do various things, but the desire is not there. The want-to is not there. It isn't strong enough to push them to do what they need to do in order to succeed. They aren't hungry enough! They may want something, but without desire, they will never accomplish it.

The question you need to ask yourself today is how much do you really want to go to the next level with God?

I played on the RHEMA softball team for years. When we were behind and the team came into the dugout, I would start hollering, “How bad do you want to win? How bad do you want it?” And we would go out there and win!

You may want to lose a little weight. But if your desire is not strong enough to cause you to eat the way you need to eat, you won’t lose weight. I don’t eat dessert at mealtime very often, but I do like ice cream. More than that, I love to eat cheese. Before I go to bed at night, I take a root beer and two or three pieces of cheese to snack on while I play a game on my computer to get sleepy. Eating ice cream, or eating cheese and drinking root beer at night is not a good idea if I want to lose weight. To lose weight, I need to have a stronger desire for that goal than my desire for root beer, cheese, and ice cream!

Success takes desire! Desire is the fuel that is necessary to achieve in life, both naturally and spiritually.

Desire Is Your Fuel

I went to my first dirt-track race when I was 15 years old. I’ve been hooked on racing ever since. In fact, I used to drive race cars. Some of my grandsons drive now, and they’re pretty good at it.

You can have the best race car in the world, but if the fuel is not getting from the fuel cell to the engine in the proper amount, that car won’t be worth anything. One time my grandson Cameron came in from driving and said, “This car runs good for about three laps, and then it starts spitting and sputtering.”

Pretty soon we found out what was happening. The fuel pump wasn’t working right. The carburetor bowls were full, but the minute they ran out of fuel, they weren’t getting enough fuel pumped in to make the engine operate properly. The engine was still running, but it wasn’t running like it should because it wasn’t getting the right amount of fuel!

When we plugged in the computer and looked at our fuel levels, we saw that one minute the fuel level was up, then the next minute it dropped from 3.5 down to 1.5. The level is supposed to stay at 3.5, but it was constantly dropping. Why? Because our fuel pump was going out.

Always remember that desire is your fuel! If you don't have enough desire, you won't have enough fuel to do what you desire to do.

Desire and Talent

For a car to function at its maximum performance, it has to have the right amount of fuel and air mixture in the carburetor. (Cars with injectors are a whole different story.) You can have the best race car on the track and the strongest desire to win, but if either the amount of fuel or the amount of air mixing with it isn't right, you won't get anywhere in the race.

There are many people today who have the desire to do something, but they don't have the talent to do it. Or they may have natural talent, but they haven't developed it. If they are missing either the desire or the talent, they won't accomplish their goal.

What do you do if you have the desire to do something but not the talent? You can learn how to do it by studying it. You can take a class or have someone teach you.

I was always a fast runner, but when I began to learn from someone who could give me instructions on the proper way to run, I was even faster! Before that, I had the desire and some talent, but I didn't have the know-how.

You can develop your talent by practicing it. A person doesn't become a singer just because he or she has a good voice. A person becomes a singer by practicing and practicing. Someone who plays the piano really well has probably put in thousands of hours of practice.

My grandson Cameron had a desire to drive a race car and to be really good at it. When he was 12 years old, he moved up from driving the little cars to the full-blown big cars. Practice was on Saturday from noon until 5:00 p.m. Cameron wanted to be there the minute the gate opened. He strapped

himself in the car and ran 10 or 12 laps with the first group. When that group went off the track, most of them pulled their cars back to the trailers, got out, drank water, and stood around and talked. But Cameron pulled right back around in line with the next group. He did the same thing with the group after that. In three Saturdays, he ran over 400 laps. He was one of the youngest drivers there, yet he became Rookie of the Year! Why? Because he had the desire to excel and he was willing to do what was necessary to become what he wanted to be.

There are some people who have talent and know-how, but they don't have the desire. Have you ever noticed that your energy level goes down with your level of desire, and that can affect the amount that you actually accomplish?

We usually have more energy to play basketball than we do to take out the trash. "Take out the trash? I'm too tired. I'll do it later." The next thing you know, you're outside playing basketball with the kids. It wasn't a matter of being too tired. Your level of desire wasn't there. You didn't want to take out the trash.

Your kids usually have more energy to go to a movie than to do their homework. You have more energy to tinker with your hobby than to fix the kitchen sink. "Fix the kitchen sink? I'm too tired." The next thing you know, you're out working on that old car you've been trying to fix up.

It isn't that we don't have the energy to take out the trash or fix the kitchen sink. We have energy to do what we want to do!

If you have the ability and skills to do what you want to do, how big is your desire? Your desire to make something happen means that you will do whatever is necessary for it to become a reality.

When I was called to preach, I did whatever I needed to do to make preaching become a reality. I was in Bible school. I was doing what I needed to do in the natural to have the know-how. But I needed to learn how to minister and preach by actually doing it. I knew that a church of 500 wasn't going to let me learn on them! So I looked for opportunities wherever I could find them. We can have the know-how and the desire, but we also need to pray for the Lord to give us opportunities.

Sometimes I went way out in the country to a church that didn't have a preacher. Another church where I could sometimes preach was a Church of God in Christ congregation down in the city. Some of the other Bible school students used to go to that church with me on Sunday nights, just to see if the pastor would let us preach. When he saw us come in, he would usually say, "Oh, here are my Bible school boys. I want them to share a little bit with us tonight."

That church had a spiritual "mother." She was the one everybody looked to so they would know how to react to the message. If she was moved, everybody was moved. I figured out pretty quickly who the spiritual "mother" was in the church. She was always dressed nicely with her hair fixed up pretty, and she always wore a pretty hat. She sat in the same place every service. As soon as she was moved, she would stand up and start waving the white handkerchief she always carried. Sometimes she would shout so much that her hair fell down. When I was preaching, that woman inspired me, and we would have a real stem-winder, as we used to say in Texas.

Your desire is the determining factor for the level on which you will live, both spiritually and naturally. You can have the talent and the know-how, but desire is the fuel that will fire you up and drive you to achieve. Fuel fires an engine. Unless there is fuel, the engine is not going to run!

Let's look at an example from the natural standpoint. Some families desire for the wife not to work outside the home. That's their choice. Their desire for her to stay at home is greater than their desire for a larger income. But they shouldn't be surprised or complain when they see other families living on a different level when both the husband and wife work. The other families have the desire to live on the higher level that two incomes can give them.

Let's look at an example from a spiritual standpoint. People who really want all the blessings of God are at church every time they can be there. These are the type of people who delight in pursuing the Lord and applying God's Word to their lives. They have the desire *and* the know-how to receive the blessings of God. They're always involved. They give regularly. They're faithful and consistent. In our church, we have people who have worked in the children's department for years and years. We have one person who has

greeted people at the door with, “Appreciate you!” ever since the day the church began.

Then there are people who don’t have the desire to do what they need to do to receive the blessings of God. They complain that they don’t have enough money, but they haven’t given tithes or offerings for months. Some of them sign up as children’s workers but they get offended and don’t show up or they call in sick over something minor like a hangnail!

Friend, this is where the rubber meets the road! This is what reveals how serious people are about God. People who aren’t involved in doing things at church usually don’t have a strong desire for the things of God. Yes, they’re born again, but they don’t have the desire that will take them to the level God wants for them.

People who have the desire to get ahead in their jobs are people who are involved. They don’t call in sick if they have a little cold or a headache. They are there and are dedicated because they want to be promoted. They don’t want to stay at the same level. They want to advance to the next level of benefits and pay scale. If there is an opportunity for advancement at their place of work, they have a desire to push themselves forward. There are other people who are satisfied with where they are and never advance. They may have the ability and the qualifications to move up in the ranks, but they have no desire to do what is necessary to get there.

Just as applying these principles in the work world will bring the results we desire in the natural, applying the principles from God’s Word will bring results in both the spiritual and natural worlds. The same principles that make us successful in the spiritual area will make us successful in the natural area.

The Desire of Our Hearts

If the desire of our hearts is to live on the extraordinary level God has for us—if we’re hungry for it—Psalm 37:4 shows us the way to achieve that desire.

PSALM 37:4 (NIV)

4 Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.

The key to receiving our desires is delighting ourselves in the Lord. How do we do that? By seeking Him. By reading His Word. By praying. By learning to think His thoughts. By acting on His Word. We delight ourselves in Him when we have a willingness to say, “Lord, here are my desires, and this is specifically what I desire to do. I’m seeking You to show me what to do and how to do it.”

When we delight in Him—in His ways and in the knowledge that He has good plans for us—our desires will line up with His desires, and we will begin to expect and receive the level of blessing He has for us. The good things of God will come to us when we have a desire to delight ourselves in the Lord!

Some people pursue desires that are detrimental to themselves or to others, or they have desires that are out of control. Their desires are not in line with God’s Word, and it costs them.

However, if you have a desire that you know is from the Lord, start doing what you need to do to accomplish it. Delighting yourself in the Lord will give you the push you need to begin to see things happen.

Becoming successful in the spiritual and natural areas depends on your level of desire. Do you want it badly enough to do what you need to do to make it happen? If the answer is “yes,” begin to develop your natural abilities and talents. While you’re receiving the training you need, practice. Grab hold of the opportunities God gives you, and thank Him in advance for good opportunities. Above all, continually delight yourself in the Lord and worship Him. The desires of your heart will come to pass when you delight yourself in the Lord!

Chapter 5

Favor—Expect to Be Preferred

In the middle of the baseball season, the annual midsummer classic all-star game is played. Only players who are a cut above the others are chosen as all-stars, and they are chosen by a process that involves the fans and managers.

The manager is interested in choosing all-stars specifically for what they can do. He may choose players for particular positions based on their defensive skills. They may not be a home run hitter or a really strong hitter at all, but they are chosen because they are great with the glove. All-stars are chosen because they play on a higher level than other players. And they are chosen to play a certain position because they have the particular abilities and skills to excel in it. Above everything else, all-stars have a great deal of favor.

Chosen for a Purpose

Let's compare our lives as Christians to the life of an all-star. As Christians, we have been chosen by God. This doesn't mean that God chooses or predestines only certain people to be Christians. He has chosen to make it possible for everyone in the world to live with Him. But each of us must choose whether to accept being chosen by Him. To do that, all we have to do is accept His Son Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

We have been chosen to live on this side of the cross in the realization that Christ paid the price for us. He took the sin that was separating us from the Father upon Himself to restore our relationship with God.

1 PETER 2:9

9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

I like how *The Message* Bible reads in this verse.

1 PETER 2:9 (MESSAGE)

9 But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others

of the night-and-day difference he made for you.

Why did God choose us? He chose us because He has something for each of us to do that only we can do. He has given each of us abilities and skills to develop and use in a particular way to reveal Him to others. He appointed each of us to serve Him.

1 TIMOTHY 1:12 (NLT)

12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength to do his work. He considered me trustworthy and appointed me to serve him.

We're not chosen because God loves us any more than He loves anybody else. He has chosen us and given us diversities of gifts and callings, unique to each of us as members of the Body of Christ. As we have seen, when we use those talents and skills in combination with the supernatural, we can operate on a level that's a cut above the average. In other words, we can become God's all-stars, living on a different plane, a different level, from the rest of the world.

Many people go through life thinking they don't have a purpose, that they are simply here—existing. It's important to understand that God has called each one of us. Christ died for each one of us.

Remember, He died for you and He chose you, personally! He chose you to be an all-star for Him!

Favor

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, all-stars have favor. People give them preferred treatment. In a close play involving an all-star, who gets the benefit of the doubt? The all-star.

I started playing fast-pitch softball when I was 16 years old. It's a very fast game. Good fast-pitch softball pitchers throw at 90 or 95 mph, some even at 100. For years I played center field because of my speed, and I was also the leadoff batter.

In one of the churches where I ministered years ago, we had a fast-pitch softball team. We would enter the big tournaments in Dallas. The players on

the other teams were big, experienced guys. They would come in with their bags and uniforms. Then we would come in as a little church team in a T-shirt type uniform. But we won! And we were playing for the championship.

At RHEMA, I started playing slow-pitch softball because there was no fast-pitch team here. And we won championship after championship. We even played at the all-star games. We were pretty good.

One night I was playing first base and we needed a double play. I was 50 at the time, and even though I could still run fast, I couldn't run like those young guys could to catch up with the balls.

I don't know who fielded the ball—the shortstop or third baseman—but he fired it across the field. I had learned when playing first base to put my foot against that bag and stretch out as far as I could when the second or third baseman or the shortstop was throwing the ball. That night I stretched out so far that I had to put my hand on the ground to keep from falling over, but I caught the ball! That ball hit the glove—pow! Then I heard the umpire say, “Out!” I had stretched out so far that I actually had to fall over on my back and roll over in order to get up.

As I was getting up, I asked the umpire, “Was he really out?” because I didn't think he was. The umpire answered, “It looked so good he had to be!” He knew me from when my team had played there before, and he gave me the benefit of the call! Somebody else who hadn't played on the all-star team might not have had the benefit of that call. But all-stars have favor!

The all-stars in the midsummer classic game are the players who are offered the big-money advertising contracts. We see their pictures on the ads for the big sports-related brands for shoes, or we see them advertising cars or other high-end items.

All-stars have favor! All-stars are chosen! We can see an example of this in the life of Daniel.

DANIEL 6:3

3 Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm.

The Message gives us another view of this verse.

DANIEL 6:3 (MESSAGE)

3 But Daniel, brimming with spirit and intelligence, so completely outclassed the other vice-regents and governors that the king decided to put him in charge of the whole kingdom.

Daniel had so much favor that the king put him in charge of the kingdom!

The Bible mentions favor numerous times. God's favor on our lives means that we can expect things to turn out right for us! We can expect benefits and blessings. Sometimes when favor causes things to go our way, other people can't understand why.

When others aren't able to take out loans due to the economy, our loans are approved. We receive raises. Other good things unexpectedly happen to us. People watch all of this and can't figure out why we are so blessed. They say, "How did you do that?"

They don't know that the same favor is available to them, and they are often receptive to hearing us explain how they can receive it. The reason is that we are chosen of God and we chose to say yes to Jesus. We're chosen to be all-stars, and all-stars have favor!

All-stars have favor when no one else does. One time when I was sitting on a plane waiting for takeoff, I was unexpectedly upgraded to first class! There were many other people there, probably more qualified than I was. But the flight attendant walked up and tapped me on the shoulder.

"Mr. Hagin?"

"Yes," I said.

"You have been invited to sit in first class," she said.

"What?"

"Yes. The captain saw you get on the plane, and he wants you to sit in the first-class section."

Upgraded! Favor! When you understand that you're an all-star for God, you can begin to expect favor. You can expect to receive benefits when people living the average life are not.

Once when I walked up to a rental car counter and gave my name, the agent pulled out my paperwork to look at it. Then she pointed to something on the computer screen. She said, "Oh, you get a free upgrade today."

The man who was next in line behind me said, "How did he get that free upgrade?"

"I don't know," she replied. "His name just appeared on the screen for an upgrade." Favor! We need to expect favor because of who we are—chosen all-stars for God!

Another time when my ministry team was coming back from Africa, we were clearing customs and it was late. We were praying for favor because sometimes going through customs can be a two- or three-hour ordeal when everything has to be taken off the aircraft.

One of the customs agents started talking to us, and when he saw where we were from, he said, "Broken Arrow! I know where that is." His father was from our area. So he pushed us through customs quickly. We had just walked off the plane, and in a few minutes we had cleared customs without him looking at anything. That's favor!

Favor has been called God's cologne. It makes Christians attractive to people in the world, and they make good things happen for us!

God has already chosen us to be all-stars. But His favor also causes us to be esteemed in the eyes of man, as we see in the verses that follow. People who belong to God should expect to be preferred. They should expect good things to happen to them.

PROVERBS 3:1-4

1 My son, do not forget my law, But let your heart keep my commands;

2 For length of days and long life And peace they will add to you.

3 Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart,

4 And so find favor and high esteem In the sight of God and man.

The Heart of an All-Star

An all-star is willing to pay the price to become an all-star. In baseball or softball, the all-stars come to practice early and stay late. They take extra batting and fielding practice. They work out off season.

When I was playing center field in fast-pitch, I used to take a bushel basketful of softballs to the center field fence, stand there, and throw for second base. My goal was to hit that base. Then I would stand against the fence and throw to third base. Then home. And my goal was to pop the ball into the catcher's glove on one bounce. I was doing what it took to be an all-star.

I watched other players to learn how to do things better. I learned how to throw the ball so that when it hit the ground it jumped straight up. When I grabbed the ball out of my glove, I put two fingers underneath and three on top and popped my wrist down to twist the ball a certain way. Some of the people throwing the ball put a side twist on it so that when the ball hit the ground, it shot off to the side.

I would also practice having somebody hit fly balls to me. I would go to center field and say, "Hit it anywhere." My goal was to run and catch that ball. Whether I was standing dead center field, right field, or left field, I went after the ball. I watched other players catch the ball and take a crow step to throw the ball. That one little hop would keep them from putting a guy out at second base. I learned to camp underneath that ball with one foot out in front of me so that when I caught it, all I had to do was take one step.

All-stars are willing to put in the work to keep their edge. Even if the season was over, but we still had play-offs coming up, I would go out to the field to hit the ball—to practice. If you're going to be good, if you're going to be an all-star, you have to pay the price.

When I was running track, after the coach said practice was over, I stayed out on the track. I ran five or six extra 220-yard dashes. I knew the locker room and showers were going to be crowded. So I waited a few minutes until

they were clear by running those extra sprints.

At the state track meet, when I came off the curve on my second leg of a 220/880-yard relay, I began to feel my body scream at me. But those extra 220s that I had been running suddenly began to kick in. I put us in first place and then I handed the baton off to one of our other guys who hadn't been running extra sprints. He lost it for us. He hadn't put in the extra effort to keep us at the level of an all-star team.

The attitude of your heart has a lot to do with how far you go in life and how much difference there is between you and other people who are not living on the level of an all-star. The people who don't work hard and go the extra mile don't go to the all-star game. The ones who work the hardest are the ones who stand out.

There is an old adage among pastors, "If you want something done, find the busiest member of your church and give it to that person." Why? Because the busiest person knows how to be an all-star and he or she will get it done! It isn't enough to know that God has chosen you or to simply know that you have favor. You have to do what is necessary to be an all-star.

Staying an All-Star

Some people have been chosen as all-stars several times. They've kept paying the price to be at that level. But there are others who are all-stars only once. They say, "I'm an all-star. I don't have to do anything else. I'm in." And they are never chosen to come back to another all-star game because they won't put in the extra effort to stay an all-star.

When God sent the prophet Samuel to find and anoint the next king of Israel among Jesse's sons, the all-star the Lord had selected wasn't there. The future king, young David, was doing what was necessary—he was paying the price of being an all-star by being faithful to his given task—tending sheep.

1 SAMUEL 16:1, 11–12

1 Now the Lord said to Samuel, . . . "Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons."

11 And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all the young men here?" Then he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and

bring him. For we will not sit down till he comes here.”

12 So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the Lord said, “Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!”

When Samuel went to Jesse’s house, probably every young boy there wanted to see the prophet, including David. But even though David was out tending the sheep, he didn’t miss seeing Samuel. Samuel’s very reason for coming was to find David. God’s favor was upon His young all-star.

You’re chosen by God—you’re an all-star. You should expect favor. But to stay an all-star, you have to keep paying the price. Some people desire the good things of God and His promises. They desire His favor and want to be an all-star. But they don’t go the extra mile to continue being an all-star for Him.

To remain an all-star on God’s team, there are certain things you have to do. One of them is to pray. This is more than just starting off the day with, “Lord, thank You for blessing me today, amen.” It means spending time in prayer. Let’s look again at Daniel’s example.

DANIEL 6:10

10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

After the king put Daniel in charge of the whole kingdom, the governors and satraps tried to find some charge to bring against him. But because Daniel was faithful, they couldn’t find any fault in him. Instead, they convinced the king to sign a decree forbidding anyone to pray to someone besides the king for thirty days. The penalty for disobeying that decree was to be thrown into a den of lions.

When Daniel heard the decree, he continued to be faithful to the Lord God by praying as he usually did. And God delivered him by sending an angel to shut the mouths of the lions (see Dan. 6:4–10, 22). Daniel was faithful in his prayer life, and he remained an all-star for God!

The second thing a person must do to remain an all-star for God is read and meditate on the Word.

ROMANS 10:17 (KJV)

17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

As my dad used to say, faith comes by “hearing and hearing and hearing God’s Word.” We need to understand the power of hearing the right things. What we hear will either build our faith or weaken our faith. It’s so important for us to continually hear the Word of God!

The third thing we need to do to stay an all-star is treat people the way we want to be treated.

PROVERBS 3:3–4 (NLT)

3 Never let loyalty and kindness leave you! Tie them around your neck as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart.

4 Then you will find favor with both God and people, and you will earn a good reputation.

Treating people with loyalty and kindness brings favor.

COLOSSIANS 3:12–13 (NLT)

12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

13 Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

Many people don’t want to make allowances for other people’s faults. They would rather accuse other people instead of forgiving them. We need to forgive those who offend us. Remember that the Lord forgave us, so we must forgive others!

The fourth thing we need to do to stay an all-star, which actually is above everything else, is to clothe ourselves with love. The verses below tell us how to let love fill our lives.

COLOSSIANS 3:14–17 (NLT)

14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.

15 And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

16 Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.

17 And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

One last thing we need to do if we want to be one of God's all-stars is to serve in the church and serve one another.

MATTHEW 20:26–28 (NLT)

26 “But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant,

27 and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave.

28 For even the Son of Man [referring to Jesus] came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Some people have a selfish attitude when they think about serving others. They ask the question, “How is this going to benefit me?” They’ll say, “What will I get out of it?”

If you want to be an all-star for God, you need to learn how to serve. Baseball all-stars aren’t on the team to serve themselves. They have to fit into the team. It doesn’t make any difference to them who gets the glory as long as the team wins.

To walk in favor and preference, you must do the things that are necessary to stay an all-star. Keep yourself in position for God’s favor and blessings to flow in abundance to you. Pray, read the Word, treat people the way you want to be treated, be loyal and kind to others, serve in the church and serve one another, work hard and go the extra mile, and above all, clothe yourself with love. Then you will be an all-star for God!

Chapter 6

Do You Want to Be a Runner or a Reigner?

The life of David was often like a roller coaster ride. At times he was up on the mountaintop and victorious. At other times, he was down in the valley. And David had more than his share of trouble in life. He was pursued relentlessly by King Saul. He barely escaped assassination several times. He spent a lot of time hiding in the wilderness.

On one occasion his entire family was kidnapped and his friends turned against him and were ready to kill him. He suffered the shame of having committed adultery and murder. One of his sons, Absalom, killed another son. Absalom later led a revolt against him. Then Absalom himself was killed, causing David a great deal of grief.

Even though David was anointed by God's prophet to be king of Israel, he experienced many problems and much turmoil in his life. Yet he was able to survive and was called a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22).

David began as an unknown shepherd boy taking care of the sheep out in the fields. The youngest of eight children, he often took a backseat to his seven older, stronger, and more qualified brothers. He was even brushed off by his father, Jesse, when the prophet Samuel came to anoint one of Jesse's boys to be king! As we saw in the last chapter, Jesse didn't even bother to bring David in from the field. Yet, this boy of simple beginnings became one of the greatest men in biblical history.

Everybody including Saul knew that David was to be the king. Jonathan, Saul's son and David's friend, acknowledged this.

1 SAMUEL 23:17 (NIV)

17 "Don't be afraid," he said. "My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this."

Saul was jealous and afraid of David, because he knew that the Lord was with him. David, who as a boy overcame the lion, the bear, and a giant named

Goliath, spent years running from King Saul. It was no wonder that David sometimes became discouraged.

1 SAMUEL 27:1 (KJV)

1 And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines.

During the years that David ran from Saul, sometimes he was up, and sometimes he was down. But there came a point in his life when he crossed over into a new realm. He crossed over from being a runner to being a reigner—from being an individual who was led by his emotions to being an individual who was the person God intended for him to be!

David Affected His Situation

God has a destiny for our lives, both corporately and individually. The enemy sends storms to try to keep us from fulfilling our destinies. He sends winds, waves—whatever he can come up with—to try to stop us! The New Testament gives us an account of the disciples in a boat which they thought was going to go down in the winds and waves. But then they looked up and saw Jesus walking toward them on the very same waves they thought were going to destroy them (see Matt. 14:22–27).

Instead of being overtaken and overwhelmed by the waves of negative circumstances that come our way, we need to walk on top of them like Jesus did and like David eventually learned to do. God created us to be reigners, not runners, and He will empower us to reign in life!

To fully understand how discouraged David had become before he crossed over to the new realm of reigning, let's look at more of his amazing story.

When David was running from King Saul, he fled to the Philistines for protection. The same man who, as a boy, ran out to meet the champion of the Philistines in battle is now running to the people he defeated that day for protection. He's bargaining for his life, saying, "I will fight with you, on your side." And he did fight with them. This same man said, "I will even fight with you against my own people."

The Philistines gave David the city of Ziklag where he and his men and

their families could live. For 16 months David dwelled in the land of the Philistines (1 Sam. 27:2–7). When the Philistines went out to fight against Israel, David went with them—to fight against his own people. But the commanders of the Philistines, in so many words, said to the king, “Wait a minute. We don’t want these people here. They may turn against us in the middle of the battle. Send them home.”

As much as the king really believed in David, he had to go along with the opinions of his commanders. So he told David to leave the next morning (see 1 Sam. 28:1–2, 1 Samuel chapter 29). That’s exactly what David did. But when David and his men reached Ziklag, they found that the Amalekites had raided their city. They had burned it to the ground and taken the women and children away!

1 SAMUEL 30:1–6 (KJV)

1 And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire;

2 And had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way.

3 So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives.

4 Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep.

5 And David’s two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite.

6 And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

All of their possessions, wives, and children were gone. David’s men turned on him and said, “Let’s stone him!”

David had been a runner, but he suddenly hit the wall! If you’ve ever done any running, you know what it means to hit the wall. That’s the point where you make up your mind whether you will keep going. You decide whether you’ll be a winner or a loser. That’s where you choose to go on no matter what—no matter how badly you hurt—or to give up and quit! It isn’t any fun to hit the wall. But if you make up your mind to go on, it won’t be long until you get your “second wind.” Then you can stop being a runner and become

the reigner God created you to be!

David reached the point in his life where things couldn't get any worse. There was no Jonathan to pat him on the back and say, "Hey, David—come on, buddy. It's going to be all right." There was no Samuel. David's men, who had always stood with him and supported him, suddenly turned on him and wanted to stone him! He was all by himself. Maybe for the first time in his life, he felt completely alone. Have you ever felt that way?

What do you do when you come to this point in life? You only have two choices. You can give up in discouragement and quit, or you can do what David did. He didn't wait for a prophet to come. He didn't wait for someone to pat him on the back or tell him it was going to be all right. First Samuel 30:6 says, "*David encouraged himself in the Lord his God*" (KJV). The *Amplified Bible* says, "*David encouraged and strengthened himself in the Lord his God.*" The *New International Version* says: "*David found strength in the Lord his God.*"

David Encouraged Himself in the Lord

When David discovered that he would have to encourage himself in order to be victorious, he learned one of the most important facts of his life. He realized that he had come to the place where he and God were alone together!

Maybe you can identify with the roller coaster ride David experienced in his life. You prayed, you believed God, but when things didn't happen the way you thought they would, you may have thought, *Oh, my goodness. I'm going under—God isn't going to meet my need. He has forgotten me!* If you've ever reached the place where David was at this time in his life, then you needed to do what he did—encourage yourself in the Lord!

David was saying: "My circumstances will not destroy me! My circumstances are not going to change me. I'm going to change them, in the power of the Lord! I'm going to encourage myself because the Lord is with me. I'm going to make it through, and with the Lord's help, I'm going to change the world."

When David hit the wall, he crossed over into that new realm. At that

point, he stopped being a runner and became a reigner! He simply decided, “I’m going to have victory no matter what the circumstances look like. I’m going to succeed no matter what the enemy is doing. I’m not going to be trampled by circumstances. I’m going to walk on top of them. I will encourage myself in the Lord!”

Let’s see what happened after David decided to encourage himself in the Lord.

1 SAMUEL 30:8 (KJV)

8 And David enquired at the Lord, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.

Praise God, David attacked the Amalakites and recovered all!

1 SAMUEL 30:18–19 (KJV)

18 And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives.

19 And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any thing that they had taken to them: David recovered all.

I’m always grateful for people who encourage me, aren’t you? Actually, the Bible tells us that encouraging each other is exactly what we should do. We should encourage, exhort, comfort, and strengthen one another (1 Cor. 14:3 KJV and NIV). But the fact remains that there are times when the situations of life put us in a position where we feel all alone. There seems to be no one to encourage us or pat us on the back. Nobody calls. Nobody comes to visit.

Instead of hearing words of comfort, all we can hear are the words of the enemy, telling us, “This is it! You’ve had it. You’re not going to make it this time. It’s all over!” The devil has put too many people on the run. They’re runners. You can tell when you listen to them. All they talk about is, “The devil has done this and the devil has done that.” But when you are a reigner, you are always talking about who you are in Christ and what you can do in Him.

In the time of trouble, David received strength from the Lord, and he was able to deal with the situation that was in front of him. How did he strengthen

himself in the Lord? He often composed a psalm or a song to the Lord. He talked to his God. He meditated on the Lord and praised Him.

When David was being pursued by King Saul, he wrote Psalm 59. When he was in prison in Gath, he wrote Psalm 56. When he was fleeing from his own son Absalom who wanted to take his life and become king, he wrote Psalm 3. Hiding in the wilderness of Judea he wrote Psalm 63. He gained his strength as he poured out his heart to God.

In Psalm 56, David directed all of his thoughts toward trusting in God. He expressed so many times, “I trust in God—I’m trusting in Him.”

PSALM 56:3–4, 9, 11

3 Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.

4 In God (I will praise His word), In God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?

9 When I cry out to You, Then my enemies will turn back; This I know, because God is for me.

11 In God I have put my trust, I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

When David wrote Psalm 59, we can see that he was determined to continually praise God and call upon Him for help. He declared that God was his refuge in time of trouble. Then he began to sing praises to God for Who He is!

PSALM 59:16–17 (NIV)

16 But I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress [a fortress is a place of safety, a place to flee to for protection], my refuge in times of trouble [a refuge is a safe haven, such as an animal refuge, a sanctuary, a place where no harm can come].

17 O my Strength, I sing praise to you; you, O God, are my fortress, my loving God.

In Psalm 63, David strengthened himself in the Lord by seeking God.

PSALM 63:1–2

1 O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water.

2 So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory.

Later in that same Psalm, David talked about meditating on the Lord.

PSALM 63:6–7 (NIV)

6 On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night.

7 Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings.

All of these passages give us a picture of the way David strengthened himself in the Lord. In the day of trouble, doing what David did will always change things.

When David was alone with no one else but God, he experienced a change! Spending time alone with God changes us. In those times, we allow the Lord to shape our character. In those times with Him, God takes the selfishness out of us and instills Kingdom principles in our hearts.

None of us likes to reach that point of hitting the wall. None of us likes to go through the hard times when no one is there to encourage or help us. But it's at that point that we are either made or broken. It's at that point that we can determine we are going to reign with God, not run! God changes our attitudes in those alone times. He reveals His power to us and makes us stronger.

Things might have been different for David early in his life if he had stayed still, knowing that God was with Him, instead of running. But when he was up against the wall and all alone, he finally stopped running and took the stand: "My God will see me through."

All of us come to those points in life, just as David did. Unless we make the choice to encourage ourselves in the Lord and go on with God, we will never live in the realm of reigning in life that we desire.

I encourage you today, don't be a runner. Be a reigner! Things will begin to change for the better. Everything around you will change. Your life and your lifestyle will change. You will begin to receive the blessings God wants you to have and change into what He wants you to become. Then you will be strong in the Lord's power and able to overcome every obstacle you face!

Chapter 7

Focus on the Unseen Promises

Have you ever noticed when you're walking down the street, if something catches your attention, you somehow find yourself drifting in that direction? Suddenly someone yells at you, "Hey, look where you're going!" But the problem is, you're going where you're looking!

The same principle is true in every area of life. Whatever you're looking at, that's where you're going. That will be your destination. This is why God wants us to focus on His Word and not our circumstances. Whatever we continually focus on in the Word of God, we can have.

The Apostle Paul tells us not to fix our eyes on the things we see around us. Instead, we need to fix our eyes on the unseen promises of God.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:18 (NIV)

18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Paul is telling us to look at the unseen things of God, the things that are eternal. You see, you're a product of what you continually look at. If you look at evil long enough, you will go in that direction. If you begin to gaze at the Word of God long enough, you will become what the Word says you are.

That's why it's so important to get hold of the scripture verses that tell us who we are in Christ. We need to look at those "in Him" scriptures so we can go in the direction of who we are in Christ and what we have in Christ. Then we can become what the Bible says we are!

Remember, whatever you look at or set your heart on is what you will do. What you continually look at and think about is what you will receive. When you walk by faith, you don't focus on what you see in the natural world around you. You keep your eyes on the things that are not seen—the eternal things of God's Word.

When I was younger, if I saw a car I liked as I was driving down the street, I stopped and looked at it. I'm sure many people, especially young men, can

identify with doing this. You pull into a car lot and get out and look at a particular car. You like the color, the interior, and everything about it. You open the door and sit down behind the wheel. You say, “Man, I really like this car!” Then you look at the price tag, and the next thing you say is, “Oh, no way!” You get back in your car and drive on.

But in a few days you go back and look at that car again. If you’re a woman, you may go back to look at a dress or new appliance you saw in a store window. When you’re not in the car lot or standing in front of the store window, you can still see yourself driving that car, wearing that dress, or using that new appliance. And if you keep looking at that car or that dress or that television, or whatever else you desire long enough, you will find a way to buy it.

You are going where you’re looking, whether it’s in a positive or negative direction. Negative things are packaged attractively to grab our attention. The devil wants to capture and divert our attention from looking at what the Word of God says. He knows if he can cause us to look at all sorts of other things besides God’s Word, he can stop us from receiving what God said is ours.

God’s words are life. Keeping our eyes on God’s Word brings life to us in every area—life unlimited!

PROVERBS 4:20–22

20 My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings.

21 Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart;

22 For they are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh.

Looking at Scripture passages in different translations can help us better understand the meaning. Let’s look at those three verses in another translation.

In the *New Living Translation*, verse 20 says “*My child, pay attention, to what I say. Listen carefully to my words.*” If you have children, you know how many times you say to them, “Listen to me!” You want them to listen because you’re saying something that’s important to them. You’re telling them something that can keep them out of trouble or lead them in the right direction. If you’re like me, you have probably said this also: “Do you hear

what I am saying? And, furthermore, do you understand what I am saying?” You’re trying to get their attention so they will understand that what you’re saying is for their own benefit and protection.

Through the writer of Proverbs, God is trying to get our attention. He’s trying to make an important point to us. “My child, pay attention!” He is saying, “This is important now and for your future!” He is making the point that it is very important for us to listen carefully to His words.

Verse 21 continues, “*Don’t lose sight of them [my words]. Let them penetrate deep into your heart*” (NLT). Whatever we are looking at is what we are going to do. That’s why God is telling us not to lose sight of His words. As long as we keep looking at them, they will penetrate us and take us to the place we want to go. His words will take us to a place of life and healing.

Finally, verse 22 says, “*for they bring life to those who find them, and healing to their whole body*” (NLT). We need to get hold of the fact that if we can see something in the Word, we can have it! We can have whatever the Word says belongs to us: salvation, protection, prosperity, healing, and life more abundant. Looking at the Word of God sets our destination on what the Word says we can have.

God’s Word is to us in the spiritual realm what a GPS navigation system is in the natural realm. Most of the new cars today have a GPS system. You can program your destination into it, and as you’re driving down the road, a voice gives you directions to guide you. The GPS system takes you to the exact place you want to go.

The GPS system on my car not only talks to me by giving me step-by-step directions, but it also shows me all the roads on a screen. There’s a little arrow that moves along the road where I’m driving to show me where I am and where to go. If a slight turn is coming up, the system actually shows that the road has a little turn in it.

Friend, we have the best navigational system there is—God’s Word! That navigational system will take us wherever we need to go in life. It will bring us whatever we need. And it will keep us safe in the midst of a storm. If you

keep the Word of God in front of you, you will reach the place you want to go!

Every Obstacle Is an Opportunity

It's important for you to be aware of what you are looking at. If you're focusing on the problems or obstacles in life, you need to change your focus to God's Word. His Word will take you to your destination.

We saw how the generation of Israelites who looked at the giants and the fortified cities in the Promised Land went where they looked. Their focus held them captive. They stayed in the wilderness. If they had changed their focus to God's promise that He was giving them the land, they could have entered in with Joshua and Caleb. But instead of looking at what God had said, those Israelites looked at everything else. They looked at the obstacles instead of looking at the opportunities. They focused on the circumstances and they received nothing.

Every time an obstacle comes across our path, we need to say what my dad used to say—"This is just another opportunity to prove that God's Word works!" Every obstacle is an opportunity, and looking at the obstacles in life that way will change our whole perspective—it will change how we feel and how we talk—it will change everything!

In Joshua 1:8 we see that Joshua learned the secret to being able to see things that nobody else could see—the unseen things of God's Word. The secret is in meditating on the Word. God told him, *"Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do"* (NLT).

Seeing things that no one else can see is what Paul was talking about when he said to look at the unseen realm (2 Cor. 4:18). When other people are looking at all the obstacles, you're looking at all the opportunities. What other people don't see, you see!

Joshua and Caleb saw themselves living in the Promised Land and they eventually possessed the land. I encourage you to begin to see yourself with the promises God has for you! I've heard my dad say thousands of times,

“See yourself with what you need. See yourself healed. See yourself with no lack. See yourself blessed.” In other words, see yourself possessing what is yours according to the Word of God.

When the next generation of Israelites, led by Joshua, went in to possess the Promised Land, the circumstances and obstacles had not changed. There were still giants in the land. There were still fortified cities. But this new group looked at God’s words to them instead of looking at the circumstances.

When the Israelites crossed the Jordan River, the first obstacle they faced was the great walled city of Jericho. But God told Joshua that He had given Jericho into their hands.

JOSHUA 6:1–2

1 Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in.

2 And the Lord said to Joshua: “See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor.”

This generation of Israelites listened to God’s instructions and obeyed them. He told them to march around the city once every day for six days. Then on the seventh day, they were to march around the city seven times and seven priests were to blow the trumpets. When the people heard the trumpets, they were to shout and the walls of the city would fall down.

The Israelites looked at the unseen thing that God had told them would happen if they obeyed His instructions. When they obeyed, they saw the walls of the city fall down flat. Then they went in and took possession of the city (vv. 3–20)! They didn’t look at that large, walled city as an obstacle. They focused on the opportunity God had given them by looking at the unseen, and they went on to take the land.

When Caleb was 40 years old, Moses promised him as an inheritance all the land where he placed his foot. Forty-five years later, Caleb said to Joshua, “*Give me this mountain of which the Lord spoke in that day*” (Joshua 14:12). The mountain he wanted had giants in it, but he didn’t focus on the giants. Instead, he looked at the opportunity of having that beautiful mountain as his possession. He looked at all the fruit that was growing there and he thought about how nice it would be to build his house overlooking the plains where

his other relatives were living.

All of those years, Caleb had meditated on having his mountain. Forty years of wandering in the wilderness with that group of unbelieving people did not change his way of thinking or the unseen promise of God. He didn't become discouraged. He kept looking at the promise all of that time. He saw the situation the way God saw it. And God gave Caleb his mountain (Joshua 14:6–14)!

Let me give you another example of what I'm talking about here. After God changed Abram's name to Abraham, which means "father of many nations," Abraham began to see himself as a father of nations. Why? Because he believed in a God who *"calls those things which do not exist as though they did"* (Rom. 4:17).

ROMANS 4:17–21 (NLT)

17 That is what the Scriptures mean when God told him, "I have made you the father of many nations." This happened because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing.

18 Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, "That's how many descendants you will have!"

19 And Abraham's faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah's womb.

20 Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God.

21 He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises.

These verses show us that Abraham didn't look at the circumstances—the fact that he was 100 years old and his wife Sarah was 90. He didn't even take those things into consideration. God had changed his name, declaring that he was the father of nations.

I imagine many people said, "That old man has lost his mind." It didn't matter to him what people said. When we really see things the way God sees them and believe things the way God says they are, then we don't worry about what other people say. We're only concerned about what God says. We're going to look at things the way He does, and He calls those things that He desires into existence.

The *King James Version* says Abraham “*considered not his own body*” (v. 19). To “consider” means to observe fully. Abraham refused to fully observe the fact that he was 100 years old and couldn’t have children. The Bible says he “*never wavered in believing God’s promise*” (v. 20).

Abraham and Joshua and Caleb did not look at anything except the promises God had given them. They didn’t look at any circumstance, or any situation that conflicted with God’s words, as obstacles. And they never wavered.

See Yourself the Way God Sees You

What are you facing today? Begin to see yourself with the answer, according to God’s Word. See yourself healed. See yourself delivered—the Bible says you are! See yourself with plenty, not lack. See yourself possessing the promises of God!

Joseph was a young man who believed the promises of God. He believed the visions God had given him when he was a young boy (see Genesis chapter 37). Joseph was in prison but saw himself free, and he eventually became the prime minister of Egypt. Although Joseph went through all kinds of negative circumstances, he never wavered. And he saw the visions God had given him become a reality!

It’s important to see yourself the way God sees you. See yourself walking in the promises of God. See yourself protected, surrounded with God’s favor. Look at the Word and believe and say what it says. You will receive what you look at according to the Word of God.

I learned at an early age to see myself the way God sees me. In 1959 when I was going to Bible school, I was working on a freight dock in Dallas, Texas, loading and unloading the city trailers when they came in. We were called “break-out boys.” Most of us were Bible school guys. We could go to work at two o’clock in the afternoon and work until they decided to let us off. It was hard work, and we made really good money. I worked around 32 hours a week and made more money than some guys who were working eight hours a day, six days a week!

We had an old foreman who rode that line. We were working ourselves silly, but he still used to scream and yell at us. One day I could hear him coming down the line, asking people if they could do certain jobs. One person at a time, each one answered, “No, I can’t,” or “No, sir.”

Then he asked the guy next to me, “Can you do it?”

Once again, the reply was, “No, sir.”

When he came to me, he said, “Hagin, can you do this job?”

“Yeah!” I replied.

Then he told me, “Tomorrow instead of reporting here, report over to this particular area.”

“Okay, I will.”

A guy loading next to me who went to the same Bible school I did said, “Hagin, you don’t know how to do that job.”

“I will by tomorrow at two o’clock,” I told him. “The Bible says I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

We didn’t have Internet back then. But I told him, “I know where the library is, and I know another guy, a friend of mine, who did a similar job. I’m going to call and ask him about it. When I get here tomorrow, I’ll be able to do it.”

As a result, I was promoted when others weren’t simply because I said, “I can.” I saw myself the way the Word of God says I am. It says I can do all things—not just spiritual things—through Christ Who strengthens me!

Many people miss out because they say, “I can’t do that.” If you see something the way God sees it, you can! Man puts so many limits on things, but with God there are no limits. Whatever we can see in the Word of God we can have.

It’s so important for you to see yourself the way God sees you. See

yourself differently and talk about yourself differently. Don't talk about how tired you are. Talk about how good you are. Don't talk about what you can't do. Begin to talk about what you can do. "I can do all things through Christ. I can do whatever I need to do." If you'll look at things the right way—the way the Word says they are—you can have whatever you see.

When we look into the Word and let it get inside and penetrate us, instead of looking at everything that's coming down the road against us, we can begin living not just the abundant life, but a life of overflow. It's good to have a life full of blessings, but it's even better to have a life that's overflowing with blessings!

Designed for Victory

1 CORINTHIANS 15:57 (NIV)

57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's also important for you to realize that you were designed for victory. Today so many people are caught up in merely trying to survive all the obstacles and the opposition that life brings us. But we were not designed to be defeated! God's original design for mankind was for us to be victorious and triumph and live above the limitations of life.

Many people have defied the odds. They've fought battles and triumphed. They've climbed mountains, explored the unknown regions of the world, and broken records. They have risen from living in obscurity to achieve great places of influence. They have started businesses on a shoestring—with very little capital—and developed Fortune 500 companies.

People have fought great battles and done things that are sometimes beyond the imagination. However, the most important battles that man will ever face are spiritual. There's the battle to escape the sinful nature. There's the battle to triumph over Satan, the enemy of our souls. These are battles we cannot win on our own.

Yes, through training and hard work, we can break world records in many different fields. We can train hard and give our best effort to achieve. But we cannot extract ourselves from the grip of sin without the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is futile to attempt to win these spiritual battles on our own! Thank God, over 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ won the victory for us. We have to learn how to accept the victory He died to give us. We need to learn how to follow our Lord and Savior into that victory through the instructions in His Word.

In the Old Testament, we see that God always led His people to victory, no matter how impossible the situation looked. In the natural realm, it was impossible for David to overcome Goliath. But with God, it was possible. Just as God delivered David, and all the other people we read about in the Old Testament, He will deliver you, if you put your trust in Him.

God caused the Israelites to triumph when Pharaoh's army was pursuing them. He made a way of escape by dividing the waters of the Red Sea so they could walk across on dry land. When the Egyptians tried to follow them, they were swallowed up by the waters of the sea (see Exodus chapter 14).

Daniel triumphed over all the people who had him thrown into the lions' den, and God sent His angel to shut the lions' mouths. Daniel had so much favor with the king that he threw the people who had plotted to destroy Daniel into the den. Before they reached the bottom of the pit, they were devoured by those hungry lions (see Daniel chapter 6).

God will take care of us. Time and again throughout the Old Testament, we see that God's people triumphed over every challenge and every impossible situation they faced.

But in the New Testament, our victory is through the Lord Jesus Christ. He shed His blood for us on the cross at Calvary's Hill. He suffered the stripes on His back for our physical healing. He took on our sin and shame and He arose from the dead with the keys of death, hell, and the grave.

The Lord Jesus Christ dealt with the enemy for us. Through His death, burial, and resurrection, we can have victory! Christ has won all the important battles for us! He defeated sin so we could escape a sinful existence. He defeated Satan, "*the god of this world*" (2 Cor. 4:4 KJV), and delivered us out of his dominion. Christ won the victory. All we have to do is accept what He has already done for us.

Get a firm grip on knowing that you were designed for victory! God wants you to triumph. You may be surrounded by every kind of difficulty that you can think of in the natural, but remember: God is *greater*! Praise God, if you will believe that and act upon it, it will become a reality in your life!

Chapter 8

Removing Mountains of Difficulties

Man was created by God to rule and reign in life, not to be dominated and reigned over. Christ won the battle for us by defeating Satan so that we can live in victory instead of being bogged down by difficulties we can never rise above. But if Christ has won the battle for us, why do we have to deal with all the terrible things that exist on this earth?

The answer is that we must “*fight the good fight of faith*” (1 Tim. 6:12) to receive the victory God has for us. The fight of faith involves three basic areas.

1. You must fight to believe something.
2. You must fight to say something.
3. You must fight to do something.

First, you fight to *believe* what Christ did for you at Calvary. Why is it a fight? It is a fight of faith because the devil will do everything he can to try to get you not to believe what the Word says. He will tell you, “Come on now, you don’t really believe that do you?” You fight for what you believe by continually feeding upon God’s Word until it’s a part of you.

Second, you fight to *say* what the Bible says. When the devil comes along and whispers something in your ear, you need to immediately refute his words or thoughts by saying what the Word says. Refuse to say anything except what you believe and what the Word says.

Third, you fight to *do* what the Bible says you can do. For example, as we mentioned previously, Philippians 4:13 says, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*” That verse doesn’t say, “I can do all *spiritual* things.” It doesn’t say, “I can do all things through Christ except when I don’t feel good,” or “except when I don’t know how to do something in the natural.” It says, “*all* things.” There are no qualifications on that verse, no exceptions. Philippians 4:13 declares that there isn’t anything you can’t

accomplish through Jesus Christ. But you have to believe it and say it. And you have to fight to do what the Word says you can do.

It's so important for us to act like the Word is true. God wants us to act like the victors He created us to be—not cast down or defeated. Remember, the battle has already been won. God wants us to rejoice and choose to live in the victory we were designed to have!

Believe the Word and Confess It

You have to learn how to say what God is saying about the situation, not what somebody else is saying or what the circumstances are saying. You have to believe it in your heart and then confess it with your mouth.

HEBREWS 10:23 (KJV)

23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised).

Hebrews 10:23 tells us to hold fast to our profession of faith, which is our confession. We're not talking about saying something one time! We're talking about continually, on a consistent basis, saying what we believe, saying what the Bible says. And we must do it without wavering, without being up and down.

Do you know believers who are ruled by circumstances and reflect that in their words? One day when you see them, they say, "Oh, praise the Lord. Everything is going great." The next time you see them, they're saying, "I don't know whether I'm going to make it or not."

If they feel good, everything is great. If they don't feel good, things aren't going right. Whether we feel good or not, God's Word is still the same. He never changes, and His Word never changes! When we start saying what God says in His Word, we will start feeling good again. Most people want the feeling first. No, the feeling comes after we believe and speak the Word. Then victory comes.

When we listen to the news, fear will try to come in and grip us. So much of the time the news gives us the impression there isn't any hope. But we need to believe and say what the Bible says. We need to base our confession

on Second Timothy 1:7 and say what God says: “I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and a sound mind.”

Believing and confessing the Word causes us to live a lifestyle that’s in line with God’s Word. Some people say, “Confession may work for somebody else, but it won’t work for me.” And they will get exactly what they are saying. Confession won’t work for them. But their results would be different if they would begin to confess the Word and believe it in their hearts. If we believe what the Word says and begin to confess it with our mouths, what we are saying will become a reality!

Your Victory Is in Your Talk

If we want to move up to that extraordinary, victorious level where God intends for us to live, we must do what Jesus talked about in Mark chapter 11.

MARK 11:22–24 (NIV)

22 “Have faith in God,” Jesus answered.

23 “I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.

24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”

Not many of us are going to talk to a literal, physical mountain made out of rock and dirt and tell it to move. But figuratively, we do have mountains that rise up in our lives. We have mountains of difficulties—problems, hardships, trials, sickness and disease, and other impossibilities. Jesus is using “this mountain” as an example to show how powerful our faith can be. He is telling us that if we say what we believe in our hearts, it shall be done!

Let’s look for a moment at the verses preceding Mark 11:22–24. Jesus and the disciples were leaving Bethany to go into Jerusalem. Jesus was hungry. In the distance, He saw a fig tree that had leaves on it, and He went to find out if it had any fruit.

MARK 11:13–14 (NIV)

13 When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs.

14 Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it.

Jesus cursed the tree because it didn't have any figs, yet it wasn't the season for figs. Once when I was in Israel, I learned that a fig tree with leaves on it normally has fruit. It was as if the tree was saying, "I have fruit," but there wasn't any fruit.

The next morning as Jesus and the disciples walked by the tree again, they saw it was withered from the roots!

MARK 11:20–21 (NIV)

20 In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots.

21 Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"

It was at this point that Jesus said, " '*Have faith in God*' " (v. 22). The literal translation is " '*Have the faith of God*' " (YLT) or have the God-kind of faith. In verses 23 and 24, Jesus gives an explanation of what the God-kind of faith is. In other words, "Here is the way it works: you believe in your heart and you say with your mouth and it will be done!" This is exactly what happened when He spoke to the fig tree and it withered and died.

Jesus uses the illustration of the mountain to show us what we can do to get rid of a difficulty so great that it looks like a mountain to us. He tells us how to handle the problems and impossibilities that rise up in our lives.

Some of the settlers going west who came to the Rocky Mountains saw those towering peaks and decided to go no further. Instead of trying to cross over them, they settled on the eastern side. They just didn't want to deal with the mountains! But some of the settlers rose up and said, "I'll conquer you. You can't keep me from receiving what I want to receive." And they found a way to go through the mountains.

Praise God, Jesus has given us a way to remove the figurative mountains from our lives! We must believe with our hearts and say with our mouths. It isn't about calling different prayer groups or getting a big group of people together to pray, although these are good things to do in some circumstances. Don't just think about the problem or meditate on the mountain being removed—*say it!* You tell your mountain what to do. You tell it to get out of the way. It has to obey the person who dares to speak with faith. The

mountain has to obey!

Just Another Opportunity to Prove That God's Word Works

My father was raised off a bed of sickness at the age of 16. Because he learned the secret of believing and saying, he walked away from that. He not only defeated death, but he also overcame in other areas.

He came from a broken home to overcome circumstances of poverty and lack. And he rose from the obscurity of a Texas Blackland preacher to become known as “the Father of the modern-day faith movement.” Now he didn’t like that title. It was given to him because he touched a generation with God’s Word.

Many people, thousands in fact, called him “Dad.” He was “Dad Hagin.” But the principles that he taught and lived by, the principles that delivered him just as they will deliver you, are very simple. You have to learn how to believe and say God’s Word.

When I was growing up, we lived by the principles Dad taught. I will never forget the day in 1957 when my mother looked at my dad and said, “Hon, this is the last food we have.”

He told her, “Fix it.” Then my mother, dad, sister, and I sat down at the table, and he prayed over that food, saying, “Now Father, in the Name of Jesus, I call food in.” That was Saturday night.

Before we went to church on Sunday, Dad said, “Don’t you kids say anything to anybody about this. This is our mountain. We speak to it, and God will take care of it.” Thank goodness the pastor took us out to eat that day. I was a 16-year-old boy, and Monday morning when I got up, I was hungry. There was no food that day. Tuesday there was no food. I said, “Dad!”

But he said, “Son, we talked to the mountain, and it will be removed. Food is coming.”

“Yes, I believe that,” I replied. “I just wish it would hurry up and get

here!”

Around three o'clock the next day, which was Wednesday, I was sitting there reading a book. I looked out the window to see a guy pull up in a pickup, with paper sacks full of something in the back. I hollered, “Daddy, a pickup just pulled up, and it’s got sacks in the back of it!”

“Oh, that’s our food,” he replied. “Praise the Lord.”

The man knocked on the door. When we opened it, he said, “Brother Hagin, ever since Sunday afternoon the Lord’s been telling me that you needed food. But I argued with myself and said, ‘Naw, Brother Hagin, doesn’t need food. He hasn’t said anything about it.’ Finally this afternoon I was hearing it so strong, I couldn’t resist. I went and bought some groceries for you. Is that all right?”

Dad never did tell him we didn’t have any food. He just said, “Yeah, that’s fine. Praise the Lord. God bless you. I really appreciate this.”

There has probably never been a 16-year-old anywhere who has ever unloaded groceries so fast! As soon as the man left, I was in the kitchen, ready to help mamma unpack sacks. She cooked a meal, and we sat down and ate. We had food because Dad kept speaking to his mountain. He told me, “Don’t worry about it, Son. God is bringing us food. It’s just another opportunity to prove that God’s Word works.” He believed it in his heart and said it with his mouth. Things like this happened many, many times as I was growing up. All of my life I have lived by these principles and have seen God prove His Word over and over.

David Wasn’t Moved by the Circumstances

Did you know that David followed these same principles from God’s Word when he defeated the giant Goliath? He believed in his heart and said with his mouth that God would help him defeat the champion of the Philistines. Let’s look at that amazing story from the Word.

When David went out to face Goliath, he picked up five stones. One of those stones was the giant’s downfall! Goliath saw David running toward him

and he disdained and ridiculed him. Sometimes we experience this type of thing today. When we start to live for God, some people don't like it and they make disparaging statements. But notice that David was unmoved. He stood his ground. Just like David, we don't need to be moved by circumstances that come against us. We should only be moved by what we believe.

So David started talking to the giant.

1 SAMUEL 17:45–46

45 Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.

46 This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.”

Notice that David said, “*the Lord will deliver you into my hand.*” David wasn't going in his own strength or power, and neither do we. We're no match for the enemy in our own strength, but in the power of God we are!

1 SAMUEL 17:47–48

47 “Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands.”

48 So it was, when the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, that David hurried and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

David is saying in verse 47 that the battle is the Lord's. He isn't fighting in his own power. And in verse 48 we see that David didn't wait for Goliath to come to him. He hurried and ran toward the problem. Many times when we have difficulties and situations, we try to run *from* them to see if we can get away from them. But when we know who we are in Christ, we can face the situation head on with the Word of God on our lips!

1 SAMUEL 17:49–51

49 Then David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone; and he slung it and struck the Philistine in his forehead, so that the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the earth.

50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. But there was no sword in the hand of David.

51 Therefore David ran and stood over the Philistine, took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it.

David said ahead of time what was going to happen. Some people say, “Well, you never know—you can never tell what might happen.” But that’s not true! We can tell exactly what will happen when we believe and say something according to God’s Word.

When we face obstacles and situations, there are many things we could say. We could wring our hands and speak an evil report out of our mouths: “Oh, what am I going to do? I knew something like this was going to happen.” Or we could run in the opposite direction from what the Word tells us to do.

No, we need to face the situation with the Word of God. We need to ask, “What does God say?” and then we need to say what He says. We need to declare by faith, “This is just another opportunity to prove that the Word of God works.” We don’t run from the problem. We run toward it like David did, with the Word of God coming out of our mouths. Why? Because His Word is our weapon which defeats the devil every time!

More Than Conquerors

Paul said, “*We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us*” (Rom. 8:37). He didn’t say we were *mere* conquerors, but *more than* conquerors. This puts our victory on another level—an extraordinary level like David’s victory over Goliath. And David won that battle by declaring the victory he knew God wanted him to have before it ever became a reality! We need to learn how to declare the victory with our words, call it into existence, and believe God for it before it ever comes into manifestation.

The Roman centurion who came to Jesus for his servant to be healed declared that Jesus could heal the man in a specific way.

MATTHEW 8:8–9

8 The centurion answered and said, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.

9 “For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

Notice that this centurion understood authority. If you’ve been in the

military, you know that when authority speaks, somebody jumps. When someone in authority speaks, the people under the authority obey.

The centurion also said something specific—“Only speak a word.” We must learn to fight our battles by speaking specifically rather than in generalities.

Whatever your need is, you need to speak to it specifically. If it’s healing, then speak healing specifically. If it’s financial, then speak to that specific need. The centurion’s victory was in what he said. And his servant was healed when Jesus spoke only a Word!

Keep Saying

MATTHEW 9:20–22

20 And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment.

21 For she said to herself, “If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well.”

22 But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, “Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.” And the woman was made well from that hour.

The woman with the issue of blood had been sick for twelve years. Evidently, she had heard that Jesus was healing people. Then she kept on saying what she believed according to God’s Word, and she received a healing from the Lord!

When the woman decided to go to Jesus, she had to go against the Mosaic Law. Anyone who had a blood condition was considered unclean and was not supposed to go out in the general populous. If the person did get close to someone else, they were to call out “unclean” so the other person could get out of the way. When this woman reached the area where Jesus was, there was a crowd to deal with. Not only did she risk the rabbis’ wrath for being out in public, but she also had another obstacle to overcome to reach the Lord. She had to press her way through the crowd.

The *Amplified Bible* says in verse 21: “*For she kept saying to herself, If I only touch His garment, I shall be restored to health.*” This woman stayed motivated by consistently saying the same thing. “*She kept saying. . .*” She didn’t say one thing one time and something else another. She didn’t say, “If

I can touch His clothes I'll be well," but then later say, "Maybe I can get healing some other way."

She didn't change what she was saying. She kept consistently speaking her faith, and this helped her fight her way through the crowd. After she touched Jesus' garment, He turned around and said her faith had made her well.

Just as the woman with the issue of blood received her healing by continually speaking her faith, when we continually say what we believe according to God's Word, it puts us in a position for His Word to become a reality in our lives!

Words Are Powerful

Let's look again at Mark 11:23, which emphasizes talking to remove the mountain. "*Whoever SAYS to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he SAYS will be done, he will have whatever he SAYS.*" Talking is referred to three times in this verse and believing only once.

It's important for us to believe in our hearts. But we can see from this scripture how important it is to speak in line with our believing. That's what moves us through all the obstacles and circumstances to the place of victory. In other words, keep on saying what you believe. Your victory is in your mouth!

PROVERBS 6:2

2 You are snared by the words of your mouth; You are taken by the words of your mouth.

One translation says that you "*are caught by what you said*" (NLT). We need to be sure that we are saying the right words. What are the right words? Saying what God says!

Words are containers. They're filled with something. They are filled with belief, hope, and faith, or they are filled with unbelief. Our words have power, and they create an atmosphere!

Have you ever walked into a room that you could tell was charged with strife? You didn't know what had been said, but cross words had been

spoken. When you begin to talk on the negative side, you create an atmosphere of unbelief. What happens when you have an atmosphere of unbelief? Nothing happens! And everybody who comes into that atmosphere starts to be pulled down by it.

On the other hand, when you continue to say what God says, you create an atmosphere of faith. Speaking words of faith creates an excitement, an expectation. It creates an atmosphere of "God said I'm a victor!" When you start saying, "I always triumph in Christ Jesus," those words create something. You can get up in the morning feeling bad, but if you say, "This is the day the Lord has made. I will rejoice and be glad in it!" your entire attitude will change. Speaking words of faith is important. Your words are one of the most powerful weapons you have. What you say releases God's power to work in your life.

Often we set limits for what we will experience by what we say. The enemy is constantly trying to set limits in our spiritual world to keep us from receiving all that God says belongs to us. And one way he does that is by using our own words against us.

You can take the limits off by speaking in agreement with the Word, or you can keep the limits on by saying things that are contrary to the Word. People who say things such as, "I just thank God that He saved me, but I can get by without being healed," are putting limits on themselves with their own mouths. God wants to heal them and do other wonderful things for them, but He can't because with their words they have put up a stop sign that says, "No, I don't want healing."

It's so important for us, as believers, to grab hold of the truth of God's Word and begin to think right, believe right, and talk right. Then we will begin to receive all that He has for us! And remember, we can't ever stop saying what God says because the enemy will keep trying to trap us with our words. But when we continually speak God's Word, the victory will be ours!

Chapter 9

Create the World You Want to See

God is the One who created the earth, the planet we live on. But each of us has something to say about the world we live in, personally.

Abraham used his faith to release God's power to create the world he wanted to live in. And his faith created a world of blessings and abundance. As with Abraham, God wants us to create our own world today.

Abraham is called the father of our faith.

ROMANS 4:16–17

16 Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all

17 (as it is written, “I have made you a father of many nations”).

Abraham is the father of all who belong to Christ.

GALATIANS 3:7, 29 (NIV)

7 Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.

29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

These verses are saying that we are part of the family of God through Abraham. Abraham has set the example for us of believing God—and then speaking in faith, acting in faith, and receiving by faith. Abraham acted like God acts. God told him to believe in the impossible and call the things that were not in existence as though they were. And Abraham did it. He created a blessed world to live in by his faith.

What kind of world do you want to live in? I grew up in a world of peace, and a world of love and faith. That was the world my father created for us by the words he spoke. Every time problems came along or when anything came against us, I would say, “Dad what are we going to do now?” and he would speak words of faith.

How many people have looked around and said, “This is not the kind of

world I want to live in.” Circumstances come in and try to create a world for us. Sickness and disease try to create a world of problems and oppression. Crime and violence try to create a world of fear and uncertainty. Financial crises or a job loss try to create a world of poverty. But the Word of God says that we don’t have to live there.

How can we create the world we want to see? We can believe God and speak what the Word of God says. We can declare by faith, “No weapon that’s formed against me will prosper, and no job loss will prevent me from living in the world that God has for me.” People experiencing a situation like that need to say every day, “I thank God that He’s creating a job for me.” And while they are out looking for a job, they can believe God. They can say God’s Word and keep saying it until they see their world change.

In 1964, I was in the United States Army and stationed in Taipei, Taiwan, working in the Army Security Agency. One day several of us went riding down the island on motorcycles. We were coming back at night, and I was on the tail end of the group trying to stay up. I was riding a 150 Honda, and I had it wide open. If you’ve ridden in the mountains when the wind is blowing, you know that when you ride between two mountains, sometimes there will be a strong wind. And when you really get going on one of those motorcycles, gravity is not holding you as much as it did before.

I came around a corner and the wind hit me and thrust me sideways toward a thousand foot drop-off! I could feel that motorcycle sliding across the pavement. I was kicking gears, doing everything I could to straighten back up, but I was still sliding. All I had time to say was, “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!” And the next thing I knew, I hit the middle of the road and stopped. I just sat there for a minute, straddling the bike.

When the guys realized something was wrong, they turned back around. We could see where the broadside of my tire slid right over the edge! We could also see the mark from the back wheel where it went squealing up the side of the mountain and then came back down.

The other guys said, “Man, Hagin, you’re really lucky. That tire hung on the edge and shot you back across the road.”

“That tire didn’t hang on the edge,” I replied. “It was the hand of God that put me back on the pavement.”

I didn’t have time to pray that night. I didn’t have time to fast. I was on a motorcycle about to slide over a thousand-foot drop! All I had time to do was to cry out, “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!” But those words activated a power that’s always available to us. And the Lord pushed that motorcycle away from the edge. I created the miracle I wanted to see by speaking the Name of Jesus in faith!

Don’t let anybody else tell you what kind of world you’re going to live in. Even if you make mistakes, God is still on your side, and He is waiting for you to create the world that you want to live in! You can live in a world of love, faith, peace, abundance, health, and success. It all depends on you. If there are some things you’re not willing to live with, you can create a different world.

God created the world He wanted to see, and He has given us the ability to create our world too.

GENESIS 1:2–4 (KJV)

2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

God did not want a world of chaos. He did not want a wasteland. So He created the world He wanted to see with His words and His power. How did He put His power into operation? By speaking words. He said, “Let there be . . . and there was!”

The power of God was available then, and it’s available to us now. When we speak God’s words, we release His power. But it’s important for us to realize that His power doesn’t work until we activate it with our faith.

Let’s look at this example. If I had a stick of dynamite with a fuse in one hand and a match in the other, I would have the power available to create a huge explosion. But nothing would happen until I struck the match and lit the fuse. In the same way, God’s power is always available, but there has to be

another ingredient, an activator. Something has to activate that power. His power is released when we speak words of faith!

Of course, we can speak and not believe and nothing will happen. It takes faith to release the power. Luke chapter 5 tells us that the house where Jesus was preaching was full of people “*and the power of the Lord was present to heal them*” (v. 17). The power was present to heal *them* but only *one* person was healed—the paralytic whose friends let him down on his bed through the roof (vv. 18–25).

Jesus saw their faith and the man was healed. Although the power was there to heal the rest of the people, no one else was healed. No one else had any faith in action.

There are two things you must understand if you want to create the world you want to see (in line with God’s Word). First, it takes the power of God, which is always available, and it takes your faith speaking that world into existence.

When God created the world, he didn’t create everything at once. He took it one step at a time. Genesis chapter 1 tells us the steps God took. First He spoke the firmament into existence. He spoke the waters and the dry land into existence. He spoke the plant life, sun, stars, moon, animals, and flying creatures into existence. And finally, He looked at all that He had created and saw that it was good. He created a world that was filled with order, and He created it with His words. And we can also create the world we want to live in through the words we speak, according to God’s Word.

The Voice of Faith

Many people do not realize how important our words are. Our words will open the door for God to move in our lives, or our words will allow the enemy to come in and steal, kill, and destroy us.

People say many things that affect their lives without realizing it. Some people are always joking around. There’s nothing wrong with a good clean joke or having fun in life. But sometimes people joke so much that their words don’t line up enough with God’s Word to carry any power.

Some people speak lies and untruths. Others speak mean and hateful words. Some people growl all the time. Every time you see them, they're finding fault with something—to them, nothing is ever right. Then some people gripe and complain all the time. Others whine and beg. Instead of having faith, they cry out, “Oh, God, please. Oh, God!”

We don't have to beg God for anything. He's already made everything we need available to us through Jesus Christ. Instead, we need to learn how to speak the right words to receive the things He has promised.

In the account of the Syrophoenician woman, we see can the importance of speaking with the voice of faith and the effect that it has upon a person's life.

MARK 7:24–27

24 From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden.

25 For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet.

26 The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. [Notice that “*she kept asking Him.*”]

27 But Jesus said to her, “Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.”

In this day and age, Jesus would have probably gotten this response: “Who do you think you are anyway, calling me a dog!” But instead of getting upset, look how she responded.

MARK 7:28–30

28 And she answered and said to Him, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs.”

29 Then He said to her, “For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.”

30 And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed.

In verse 29, “*this saying*” implies that the Syrophoenician woman expressed her deep-rooted sentiment by the words she spoke. She declared what she believed in her heart. Our words express what we believe in our hearts. And those words will either produce something good and positive, or something that is negative and not of much value.

Look at the result of her giving voice to her deep-rooted faith. Jesus said because of her words, the demon had gone out of her daughter. She could have reacted another way. But she didn't. She didn't start whining. She didn't cry. She didn't complain or get upset! She just said that the dogs get the crumbs. She was persistent. She knew that Jesus could utter one word and the demon would be gone. And that is exactly what happened.

If people would get hold of the importance of speaking the right words in line with God's Word, they would be surprised at how their lives would begin to change. A right word spoken in due season will produce good results. A wrong word spoken in due season will produce death. Right and wrong thinking are very important. Right thinking will produce right believing, and right believing will produce right talking. Of course, the opposite is also true.

When we speak with the voice of faith from a deep-rooted belief, from a conviction deep in our hearts, we will be rewarded.

MATTHEW 12:34–35

34 “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

35 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.”

How does God define evil? According to Hebrews 3:12, God defines evil as “*an evil heart of unbelief.*” This verse is referring to the Israelites who believed the evil report of the ten spies rather than God's words. Jesus is saying that it is impossible for a person with an unbelieving heart to speak words of faith. Our words and our heart condition are connected.

The following verses show what happens when we speak with the voice of faith.

PROVERBS 18:20–21

20 A man's stomach shall be satisfied from the fruit of his mouth; From the produce of his lips he shall be filled.

21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.

From these verses in Proverbs chapter 18, we can see that we are filled or satisfied by the words of our mouths. When we talk, we are going to

experience the consequences of our words, one way or the other. Our talking will produce either nourishment for us, or it will destroy us. Say this aloud: “My words will give me either all the good things that God has for me, or my words will destroy me.” Death and life are in the power of the tongue. It’s that simple.

Romans 10:9–10 carries a similar message.

ROMANS 10:9–10

9 If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

The more we believe and speak the Word, the more our life will be filled with the things of God. Death and life are in the power of the tongue—in the power of our words. The type of life we lead has to do with the type of words we speak. Our words have the ability to influence, control, direct, and guide our lives. When we receive the revelation of the power of the words we speak, we will begin to reap the benefits of it. When we boldly declare with the voice of faith what we believe, we will receive.

The voice of faith—the words we speak out of our deep-rooted convictions and beliefs—is our ticket for receiving. If we don’t like what is going on around us, we can change it by the words we speak. We can create a world with our words, if they are based on the Word of God. Of course, as we saw before, there are some things we need to change in the natural realm if we want our world to change.

For example, if you’re stuck in a rut and want to advance, you can take some courses or get further training. You can do something to set yourself on a new course! In this day and age, you can become and do whatever you want if you put your mind to it. Study in the areas where you need to study, and then take hold of the Word of God to help you advance.

And remember, through Jesus, God has made us kings and priests in our world. He has created us to rule and reign over the circumstances of life.

REVELATION 1:6

6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

How does a king rule in his world? With words! He makes decrees. What kind of world do you want to see? Decree it!

I challenge you to create the world you want to see. Create it with the words you speak in line with God's Word. If you do, I believe you will find that you can live a life of joy and happiness—and oh, what a life it will be!

Chapter 10

Stay Fully Persuaded

Doubt, unbelief, double-mindedness, and wavering are brothers. They all go together. Hanging around with them will keep you from advancing to the next level God has for you.

JAMES 1:6–8 (NIV)

6 But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

7 That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord;

8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

The Bible is very clear about staying in faith in order to receive the promises of God. As we have seen already, Abraham “*did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God*” and he was “*fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised*” (Rom. 4:20–21 NIV).

Are you fully persuaded about God’s promises? Or are you just accepting them in your mind? There is a difference. When you’re fully persuaded, nothing will draw you away from His Word. When you just accept something in your mind, almost anything can separate you from your confession of faith. This is a serious matter. It’s very easy to mentally agree with something. It’s another thing to be fully persuaded.

Mental Assent or Full Persuasion?

You find out if you’re really persuaded about the promises of God when you’re facing real danger. You find out if you really believe what God says, as I did, when your son is lying in the operating room from seven o’clock in the morning until seven o’clock at night, having surgery for a tumor on the brain.

You find out if you really believe what God said in His Word when your pilot has landed on a grass strip, kicked you out of the airplane, and said, “I’ve got to beat this storm back to Nairobi. There’s the road. Catch a ride into town to your hotel.” You find out if you’re fully persuaded when you’re standing on the side of that road and all of a sudden a girl comes out of the

bushes on the other side, starts pointing at you and screaming, and other people start coming out of the bushes, as well.

You find out if you really do believe what God says when somebody finally gives you a ride. You crawl into the back of their little old vehicle and see three big guys sitting there, eyeing you up and down, eyeing your cameras and your luggage. You have enough sense to know what's going through their minds, and it isn't good.

When this happened to me, the person we were going to see told us, "Oh, my Lord—I don't know how many people have gotten rides like that, and nobody has ever seen them again." In fact, he said when he heard that we had been kicked out of the aircraft, he called his church people together and they had a prayer meeting until we finally arrived around 2:30 that morning.

You find out if you really believe God when you're staying in a motel on the shores of a lake where the mosquitoes are everywhere and malaria is rampant. You can see swarms of mosquitoes up in the corners of the room, and you don't even have a net to sleep under. You find out if you are just mentally accepting what you know about God or if you're really believing it.

I had already made a confession of faith after we got off the plane in Nairobi. I grabbed the hand of the guy I was with and said, "While we're here in this country we will not be bitten by any insects." But when you lie down in the bed at night and hear the mosquitoes buzz by your ears, your mind starts telling you, "You're in big trouble." That's when you find out if the promises of God are just something you're merely agreeing with, or if you're fully persuaded.

It was too hot in our room for any cover. Besides, we didn't have any cover—not even a sheet. But I knew I was persuaded, and I stayed in that motel room for a whole week without one mosquito biting me.

Did I have an opportunity to become separated from my statement of faith? Oh yes! All kinds of thoughts came to my mind. *Hey, you know good and well that those mosquitoes can bite you. If they land on you they're going to bite you.* And I did have some land on my arm, but they didn't bite me! It was a matter of whether I really believed the promises of God in my heart or just

accepted them in my mind.

Focus on God's Promises

Let's look again at Abraham's example. How did he stay fully persuaded that God's promise to him would come to pass?

To stay fully persuaded that he would receive from God, Abraham stayed focused on the promises.

Some people start out believing God, but if you question them about where they stand, instead of coming out with a direct statement, they dodge the issue. We need to be direct. We can't beat around the bush and expect results. We need to go straight to the point and make a clear confession of God's Word.

We've probably all been around people who talk in a circle so that when they're through, we don't have any idea what they said. If you've ever had a boss who talked in a circle instead of being direct, when he finished talking you didn't know whether you were supposed to do something or not.

Instead of talking around the circumstance, go directly to the problem and speak right to it with the voice of faith. Declare that you can accomplish whatever it is you are believing for and that you will not be defeated. Say that you are more than a conqueror in Christ Jesus and begin to declare the victory! Say that you believe it and that settles it.

Abraham would not allow himself to waver in unbelief in any way, shape, form, or fashion. He grew stronger with his confession of faith even though he couldn't understand how the promise would come to pass. Abraham realized that the only way the promise would take place is if God did it!

God gave Abraham some words of encouragement to help him keep his faith focused on the promise. He said that Abraham's descendents were going to be as numerous as the stars and the sands of the sea (Gen. 22:17 KJV). So every time Abraham looked up at the night sky or saw the sand on the seashore, he was reminded of the promise God had given him. Because Abraham stayed focused, the age and appearance of his own body and the

deadness of Sarah's womb had no effect on him whatsoever.

We need to continually remind ourselves of the promises of God and realize that we cannot let outside circumstances have any effect upon what we believe. We cannot let them draw our focus away from what God says.

Many people start believing God, but when the promise doesn't come to pass within a few days, they begin to ask cautiously skeptical questions. "Wait a minute. Did I really hear from God? Or was it just me thinking that?"

Because of outside pressures, they allow themselves to start asking those cautious questions. They think they won't be drawn into unbelief. They think they are being practical by saying, "Just a minute. We need to look at this situation and think about it for a little while." No—if we start to examine the situation from the mental realm, we will be pulled back into the arena of doubt and unbelief. To stay in the arena of faith, we need to stay focused on what the promise of God says.

Really, we need to plunge into the promises with abandonment like people who jump into the water to go swimming. When people go swimming, sometimes they test the water with their toe first and then gradually slide in. That's the way many people are with the promises of God. They just poke around the edges. But when we go swimming, whether we test the water first or simply jump in, the temperature will be the same.

If we're going to receive the promises of God, we need to just jump in. We need to show that we are committed and mean business! If God said it, we believe it. There is no other alternative—no ifs, ands, or buts. Receiving the promises of God in our lives is dependent upon keeping the Word of God in front of us.

When the pressure's on, read the promises. If outside circumstances say, "It's not going to happen," begin to declare, "It *is* going to happen because the Word of God says it is." When lack looms over you, read the promises. When sickness and pain pound at your body, read the promises. When fear tries to invade your life, read and speak the promises. When impossibility is staring you in the face, stare at the promises instead.

That's not the time to look somewhere else. That's the time to stay focused on the Word of God. If you want to receive what the world has to offer, just focus on what the world says. Focus on what you feel, see, and what everybody around you is saying. But if you want to receive what God has to offer, then focus on what He has to say. Don't allow anything else to come into your mind, and you will receive the answer you're seeking.

Confess Your Faith

To stay fully persuaded that he would receive from God, Abraham confessed his faith. He showed no hesitation. And he maintained his confession.

It's easy to make a statement of faith, but it's another thing to live it, especially when all the circumstances start pushing in on us and even our close friends and relatives begin to question us. When the pressure is on, we can become separated from our statement of faith. But if we want to stay fully persuaded, we must not become separated from our faith!

We may realize that the economy isn't good, but we must decide not to focus on that. This doesn't mean that we ignore the facts in the natural realm. It means that we aren't going to let those facts control us. We are not going to let them make us sad or upset about the situation. God said that He will take care of those who are called by His name. We may have no earthly idea how He will do it, but we do have a heavenly idea. He will do it by His power! If He took care of millions of Israelites wandering through the wilderness, He will take care of us. They never went hungry or without water. They never went without the things they needed.

In order to confess God's promises, we must have a clear understanding of what they are. It's impossible to have a direct, specific confession when we don't see the promises of God clearly. We must keep reading the Word until we have a clear understanding of it. Then we can take our stand and make a confession based firmly on what God has told us is ours.

Do Not Grow Weary

To stay fully persuaded that he would receive from God, Abraham focused

on believing God. He focused on God's faithfulness and on knowing that God had the power to do what He had promised. Abraham was completely assured and convinced. And he refused to grow weary in believing.

Faith may not bring the answer right away, but faith will always (not maybe, but *always*) bring the answer. Galatians 6:9 tells us to not grow weary.

GALATIANS 6:9 (NIV)

9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

We will reap the harvest at the proper time if we don't give up. We need to maintain our confession of faith and realize that it takes time for the manifestation to reach the point of harvest. First the field has to be prepared. Then the seed has to be planted and have time to grow. Then there's a period of time before the harvest. A spiritual field is no different. We need to prepare our hearts, believe God, and stay fully persuaded. If we refuse to grow weary, we will watch the harvest come!

Chapter 11

Get Ready for the Blessing

Have you ever been to the place where you knew that what you've been believing for was just about to happen? When the Israelites were on the threshold of entering the Promised Land, Joshua and his army commanders gave the children of Israel the following instructions.

JOSHUA 3:1-5 (NLT)

1 Early the next morning Joshua and all the Israelites left Acacia Grove and arrived at the banks of the Jordan River, where they camped before crossing.

2 Three days later the Israelite officers went through the camp,

3 giving these instructions to the people: "When you see the Levitical priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, move out from your positions and follow them.

4 Since you have never traveled this way before, they will guide you. Stay about a half mile behind them, keeping a clear distance between you and the Ark. Make sure you don't come any closer."

5 Then Joshua told the people, "Purify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do great wonders among you."

Joshua and his commanders made two especially important points to the Israelites: "You have never traveled this way before," and "Purify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do great wonders among you."

This was the next generation, but they knew about all the great things God had done for the previous generation. They all knew the story of their miraculous escape out of Egypt and how God had sent Moses to lead them to the Promised Land. They knew about the parting of the Red Sea, the water that was supplied for them when they didn't have any water, and the manna that came down from Heaven. They knew about the quail that came when they wanted meat.

They knew about the people not being feeble or sick and their clothes not wearing out. They knew about God meeting with Moses on the mountaintop and speaking to them at Mount Sinai with loud thunderings and lightnings. They had heard the stories of the ways God had fought for them when they were outnumbered and outmanned, and they still won!

As great as these things were, they were just a foretaste of what they were

about to experience in the Promised Land. In the wilderness God performed great miracles, but in the Promised Land He surrounded the Israelites every day with His blessings. In the wilderness the people could not possess the land, but in the Promised Land they could possess all the land that God had said was theirs. In the wilderness they had wandered for 40 years, but in the Promised Land they could dwell securely in their own houses. In the wilderness they had just enough to get by, but in the Promised Land, they would have more than enough. God's miraculous supply was going to be even better in the Promised Land.

Do you feel as though you have been in the wilderness, like the Israelites were? You've experienced God's provision, even though you've been in the midst of difficulties, negative circumstances, and hardships. Are you ready to step into God's Promised Land so you can experience the level of abundance He has for you? If so, it's time to get ready for the blessing. God always has a new level of blessing for us to occupy.

Joshua told the Israelites that they were going to a new level of living. They were going to a new level of blessing, a new level of provision, and a new place to live. This was a new day—the hour they had been waiting for. No more wandering in the wilderness or traveling through a land they didn't own. No more living with just barely enough to get by.

This was a pivotal moment for them. And when we are standing at a pivotal moment, on the threshold of moving into the greater blessings of God, we are the ones who will choose whether we will receive those blessings. The Israelites could choose to go where God was leading them, or they could stay and be satisfied where they were.

Are You Ready?

We can be satisfied where we are, or we can choose to move to a new experience with God. We are still God's people, no matter which direction we take. But we will need to decide whether we will move to a new area—that new level with God—or not.

We all face this choice. We need to realize that this is our time. God is always providing opportunities for us to learn to trust Him more and move up

higher. We now have the tools to help us move from an average life to the extraordinary one God desires for us. We must decide to either stay where we are or cast off the darkness of the past and rise to a new level with God. The dawn of a new day is here!

2 CORINTHIANS 6:2

2 Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Let's read this verse again from *The New English Bible*.

2 CORINTHIANS 6:2 (NEB)

2 The hour of favour has now come; now, I say, has the day of deliverance dawned.

“Dawn” means a new beginning. Dawn means the old darkness has faded away and the light of a new day has come. Let us rise from the darkness that we've been in—the darkness of hardships, trials, tribulation, and all the other difficulties the devil is throwing at us. Let's enter the new day!

Sometimes it seems as if there is no way out. But it's time to wake up and realize that God is not only with us—He's ready to deliver us and set us free! He is ready to bring the blessing. He is always ready. The question is, are we ready to receive?

Joshua told the Israelites to purify themselves. The *King James Version* says, “*Sanctify yourselves.*” God was saying, “Get yourselves ready. Prepare yourselves.” Under the Old Covenant there was a cleansing process that God's people went through to prepare themselves. But under the New Covenant, the blood of Jesus was applied to our hearts and we were cleansed by that precious blood. Joshua was telling the people that they needed to *do* something before they could *receive* something. They needed to get ready for the blessing.

Today, how do we get ourselves ready for the blessing? One way is to begin to believe God—to believe what He said in His Word. Another way is to begin to serve in our local body, the local church, to become involved in giving of ourselves with our time, talents, and skills. Another way is through Bible reading and prayer. There are certain things we need to do to be ready to receive the blessing.

In the natural, if we promise our children we will reward them if they make good grades, then it's up to them whether the blessing happens. It's not up to us as parents.

God has given us all the direction we need in His Word for receiving His blessings. We have already examined many of those instructions in this book. When we know what to do to receive His blessing, it is up to us to take action and receive it!

This is what Joshua was telling the Israelites when he urged them to get ready. He was saying that God had done what He was going to do to bless them and give them the land. Now it was up to them to receive it. He was telling the new generation that they were in the place where their grandfathers, grandmothers, moms, and dads had been so many years before. The next level of blessing had been available to that generation, but they chose not to go in!

To this new generation, He was saying, "What are you going to do about the blessing? Are you going to decide to go in?" Praise God, they got ready for the blessing and they went in and possessed the land!

Sometimes we see people who have been believers for a long time, and they wonder why the new believers receive blessing after blessing while they stay on the same level for such a long time. Usually they have the "elder brother" syndrome. In the story of the prodigal son, the elder brother was angry when his younger brother returned home after riotous living, and their father celebrated by killing the fatted calf. But the father told the elder brother that everything he had was already his—it had always been there for him (Luke 15:21–31).

When I was growing up, I used to go out to Grandma's old farmhouse. Early in the morning she served a big breakfast before everyone who worked on the crops went out into the fields. After breakfast, she left the sausage and biscuits on the table. At five and six years old, I always wanted to eat. So around 10 o'clock in the morning, I would say, "Grandma, I'm hungry."

And she would answer, "Son, it's in there on the table. Go get a biscuit and sausage." That reminds me of how it is when we go to God and say, "Oh,

God bless me!” and He is saying to us, “It’s already on the table—go get it!” God’s blessings are available for all of His children. We are the ones who need to prepare ourselves, get ready, and then go in and receive them!

HEBREWS 11:6

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

There are many people who are not willing to do anything to receive the blessing. They want it to fall on them like ripe apples or cherries falling off a tree. But when the fruit begins to fall off a tree, it is usually overripe—not in a condition that is particularly valuable. There is a proper time to go out and pick the fruit and receive it as the delicious blessing God intended for it to be.

We do something to receive that blessing when we gather the fruit at the right time. If we wait for God to drop it on us, it will be too late. We need to get ourselves ready and go get it. Now is the time for us to believe God and speak His Word in order to receive the blessings He has for us!

In the Old Testament, God’s people had to wait for Him to move. In the New Testament He has already moved. He is waiting for us to receive what He has already provided. Of course, there are divine appointments with God. If you are ready, prepared, and believing, you will be at those appointments and receive from Him. God deals in abundance. He is ready to bring us, individually and as the corporate Body of Christ, the maximum, superabundant, over-the-top blessing—not just barely-enough-to-get-by tokens of provision.

Joshua told the Israelites, “Get ready.” God has been ready to bless us abundantly ever since Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Are you ready to receive? Receive the new level of blessing that God has for you!

Chapter 12

Rise Into God's Best

Sometimes when we begin to talk about God's desire for us to move to a new level in spiritual growth, people start asking questions. They say, "What's going to happen to us now? Is this new level really going to be better than what we already have?" Let's look at Moses' answers to some of the questions the children of Israel asked when they were on their way to the next level.

EXODUS 14:10–17 (KJV)

10 And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord.

11 And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?

12 Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.

13 And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

14 The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

15 And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:

16 But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.

17 And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

Moses had led the people of Israel out of Egypt, and they headed for the Promised Land. They were excited, because Moses had told them to rise up and get ready. They were going to the better life God had for them. They left rejoicing, leaving a life of slavery. Then, all of a sudden, they found themselves in an extremely difficult situation. Pharaoh was behind them, pursuing them with his army. The Red Sea was in front of them. They had no way out. They were trapped, or so they thought.

Rise Up Into God's Plan

There were three areas where God wanted the Israelites to rise to a new level, and He showed them exactly how to do it. This is an example of the way God wants us to rise up into all the blessings that belong to us.

First, we must be willing to rise up into the *plan* God has for us. He has a plan that is big enough to take care of us, whether we can see it or not. The Israelites moved out to follow God to the next level. But all of a sudden, they encountered hardship. At that point, they didn't focus on God's plan. When we start out to follow God, we will encounter obstacles and opposition. The Israelites encountered the opposition of the Egyptian army and the obstacle of the Red Sea.

God had given the plan to Moses, their leader. He had told Moses that He was going to deliver them to the Promised Land. The people listened and followed Moses. God's plan is not only for individuals, but there is also a corporate plan for the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice that as the corporate plan is put into effect, the individual plan also goes into effect.

For example, track is an individual sport, but it is also a team sport. What you accomplish individually goes toward points for the team, and when the team wins, all of you win. The team gets the championship and the individuals also get first place.

If the corporate Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is going to rise to its full potential, then the members individually have to rise to their full potential. When we learn how to rise up to life unlimited as individuals, then the whole Body of Christ rises up.

In First Corinthians chapter 12, the Apostle Paul uses the analogy of the human body to show how the different members of the Body of Christ work together. He talks about how each member has a function and when each member is functioning properly, the Body of Christ as a whole functions properly. When we begin to realize the relationship of the corporate plan to the individual plan, we realize that the individual believers and the corporate Body are designed to rise up together!

God showed Moses how to handle the obstacles that were blocking the Israelites from rising to the next level. Moses told the people to "*stand still*,

and see the salvation of the Lord.” Then he did what the Lord told him to do. He stretched out his rod and the waters parted. There was solid ground, not treacherous ground, for the Israelites to walk across in safety. As God reveals His will to us and we begin to speak His Word, He will show us how those obstacles can be removed from our lives.

There were actually two miracles that happened when the Red Sea parted. The first one happened when the waters rolled back. The second one happened when the seabed became dry. When you begin to follow God to the next level, there is no need to become alarmed if obstacles appear in front of you. God’s way is sure and safe. As you follow His plan for your life, the obstacles will have to go.

Rise Into the Place God Has for Us

To go to the next level, we must rise into the *place* God has for us. As we obey His Word, His plan for our lives will unfold before us, and we can step into the proper place and position. Sometimes people pray for God to take action in some area, but when He starts to move, they start backing up. They say, “Wait a minute. This isn’t what I had in mind!” They may even go right up to the point of blessing and then draw back!

The Holy Spirit guides us in different ways. Some people want Him to move in the same way every time, but He doesn’t do that. It’s better to move with God on unfamiliar ground than it is to stay where we are and just survive. If we move with God, we will thrive, not just survive! It’s very important that we keep moving forward in the direction God is taking us. We can walk in the confidence that His plans for us are good and that He is always ready to bless us.

God made a way for the Israelites to step into their victory. If they had not been willing to step into the Red Sea, they would have been devoured by their enemies. Instead of looking at the parted waters and thinking, “*What are we doing? This is really scary. It’s so far to the other side. How can we be sure that we’ll make it across?*” they marched across the dry land. When God makes a way for us, we can’t let ourselves be overcome by fear. We need to go into the situation confident in God’s Word. We’re not moved by anything we see or feel. We’re moved only by what God says.

If we are going to rise up with God into the position He wants for us, then we need to study and continue studying the Word so we will be ready when the time comes to rise up to that position. Many people are taken advantage of by the enemy because they haven't been studying the Word. But we must not be ignorant of Satan's devices (2 Cor. 2:11).

Even if you have already stepped across the line to victory, you cannot let your guard down. I remember something a football coach used to say along those lines. He told us, "When you step across those lines, always be ready to hit or be hit. Even if the whistle blows, you still need to be ready to take a hit." Actually, it's a known fact that more injuries happen after the whistle blows because someone was hit when they weren't ready.

If you go out on a Friday night and win a ball game, there will probably be a celebration that night. But the last thing the coach says to you before you walk out of the locker room is to enjoy that night because the next day you will start all over again, preparing for the next Friday. In athletics, when you win the victory on Friday night, you have one night to rejoice. Then you have to turn your attention to preparing for the next game. If you rejoice all week, you won't be ready to play on Friday night and you'll be defeated.

This same thing happens to us as Christians sometimes. After a big spiritual victory, some of us drop our guard and the devil comes in and attacks us. We have a victory, and then we turn around and are defeated because we were not prepared for the enemy to come in. Remember, he goes around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). He doesn't relax. Yes, it's okay for us to shout and rejoice when we have the victory, but we still have to stay vigilant at all times.

Rise to the Promise

To move to the next level, we must rise into the *promise* that God has for us. If the Israelites hadn't moved forward, the enemy would have never been destroyed. Again, Exodus 14:13 (KJV) says, "*Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.*"

We need to wholeheartedly move forward with God and His promises. As

we do, the enemy will be destroyed. Sometimes people are waiting for God to take care of the enemy. Instead, they need to grab hold of God's promises and start moving in His direction. Then the enemy will be taken care of.

The Egyptians tried to follow the Israelites across the dry land when the Red Sea parted. But when the Israelites moved forward into God's provision, the whole Egyptian army was destroyed. The people of God saw the Egyptians "*again no more forever.*" If the enemy is hounding you and breathing down your neck, get hold of God's promises and start going forward. The enemy will be destroyed.

At the Red Sea, God told Moses to tell the people three things. First, fear not. Stand still and see the salvation, or the deliverance, of the Lord. In other words, don't turn and run; hold your ground. Second, Moses told them, hold your peace: the Lord will fight for you. In other words, he was saying, "Don't get upset and throw in the towel." And the third thing he told them was, go forward. In other words, take your place; march in the direction God is showing you.

Boundaries

To rise into God's best, we need to go beyond the boundaries that are hemming us in and keeping us from fulfilling everything God has for us. Many boundaries are good. If you play football, baseball, basketball, or a similar sport, the boundaries are there so the game can be played the way it's supposed to be played. These boundaries are good because they help facilitate the game.

Spiritually, there are commandments of God that are boundaries which enable us to receive His blessings. Our spiritual walk has to stay within the boundaries for our own benefit. And remember, God's boundaries never change! When we stay within the boundaries, we're in the right position for victory.

Every relationship needs healthy boundaries so that people can enjoy life together. We have traffic laws to keep us within certain boundaries to enable us to drive safely. We have rules and regulations that are acceptable boundaries for our work so we can be productive. But there are some

boundaries that keep us from receiving the promises of God. They keep us from living at the level God desires for us. We need to identify the undesirable boundaries and eliminate them so they won't limit our possibilities in God.

Don't let the devil hold you in captivity through fear, doubt, and unbelief. Don't let unforgiveness and bitterness cause you to live in the past. Unforgiveness and bitterness will bind and paralyze you. Your faith will not work when those two negative forces are present. If God's possibilities are going to be available to you, then you must learn how to forgive.

Matthew chapter 18 gives us an account of the unforgiving servant. When the servant could not pay his master the large sum he owed, he begged for mercy and forgiveness. The master was moved with compassion and forgave him the debt. Then the same servant went out and demanded that one of his fellow servants, who owed him only a small sum of money, pay him. When the fellow servant begged for mercy, the first servant had him thrown into prison instead of forgiving the debt.

When the master heard about this, he called the first servant and said:

MATTHEW 18:32-33

32 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.

33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?'

Then the master threw the man in prison. God is reminding us through this story that He has forgiven us of so much. We need to learn how to forgive others as He has forgiven us.

Put the Past Behind

People who only talk about what happened in the past are not experiencing what God has for them today. They dwell on yesterday to keep from having to face the present. By continually talking about the memories of the past, they won't move forward to what is in front of them.

Too many people say, "Oh, remember the good old days." But I heard someone once say, "There's no point in looking back unless that's the

direction you want to go.” We must refuse to look back at the past!

HEBREWS 10:38–39 (KJV)

38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

The *New International Version* makes these verses a little clearer and easier to understand.

HEBREWS 10:38–39 (NIV)

38 “But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.”

39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

The Israelites who drew back from what God wanted to do for them by not entering the Promised Land, were destroyed. We don’t want to shrink back. We want to move forward and live on that extraordinary level with God.

Paul tells us to forget the things which are behind.

PHILIPPIANS 3:13–14 (KJV)

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

The word “forgetting” here carries with it the connotation of “to neglect willfully.” This means choosing to forget. When Paul said this, he had to forget that he had established the greatest churches that had ever existed. He had to forget that he had preached to more people and was responsible for more people receiving the Lord than anyone else at that time. But he also had to forget that before he was saved, he stood by while Stephen was stoned and killed. He had to forget about being shipwrecked and beaten. He had to forget about being stoned and left for dead on the side of the road. But he said (in so many words), “This one thing I do, forgetting everything that’s in the past, the good and the bad, and I press toward the prize for the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Press on! Reach forward to those things which are before. We have to

choose not to remember some of the things in our lives. They are under the blood of Jesus. They don't exist anymore. We must forget them and go on. And we cannot let the devil bring those things up to keep us from rising to new levels in God.

Expect the Best

Earlier, we saw that David said, *"I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul"* (1 Sam. 27:1 KJV). In this particular instance, he had an unusual lapse of faith and he expected the worst to happen. But it never did. So many times we expect the worst and are tormented by thinking that something is going to happen that never actually materializes.

By contrast, when Daniel was cast into the lions' den, rather than expecting the worst, he was living by faith. Daniel 6:23 states: *"Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God."* Daniel was expecting the best.

Faith lets us anticipate the victory. I encourage you to anticipate the best. God wants you to have His promises fulfilled in every area of your life. They are waiting for you. Just rise up and possess them. You *can* create the world you want to see!

About the Author

Kenneth W. Hagin, President of Kenneth Hagin Ministries and pastor of RHEMA Bible Church, seizes every ministry opportunity to impart the attitude of “I cannot be defeated, and I will not quit.” Rev. Hagin has ministered for 50 years, beginning as an associate pastor and traveling evangelist. He has organized and developed RHEMA Bible Training Centers around the world and is the founding pastor of RHEMA Bible Church. He hosts the annual *A Call to Arms® Men’s Conference* and with his wife, Lynette, cohosts *RHEMA Praise*, a weekly television program, and *Rhema for Today*, a weekday radio program broadcast throughout the United States. They also conduct *Living Faith Crusades*, spreading the message of faith and healing to the world.

To fulfill the urgent call of God to prepare the Church for a deeper experience of His Presence, Rev. Hagin emphasizes key spiritual truths about faith, healing, and other vital subjects. He ministers with a strong healing anointing, and his ministry helps lead believers into a greater experience of the glory of God.

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