

FACING YOUR GIANTS



FACING THE GIANT OF

**WORK &
UNEMPLOYMENT**

UCB UNITED
CHRISTIAN
BROADCASTERS



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When you hear the word 'work', what do you immediately feel? Does the thought of it make your heart leap or your stomach sink?

Some of us love our work; others loathe it. Some of us feel stimulated by it, others bored out of our minds. Some of us always seem to have too much of it, others never quite enough. But whatever you feel about work, there's one truth you can't escape: work is part of your life's purpose.

When we meet somebody new, the first question we often ask is 'What do you do?' but the Bible asks 'What is your life?' (James 4:14 ESV) Your life is so much more than work and your purpose extends far beyond employment.

As we were welcomed into God's creation, work – as He intended it – was gifted to us as a good thing (see Genesis 2:15). But just a few verses later, everything changed. As a result of sin, it was not only our relationship with God that was damaged, but also our relationship with everything He had given us. No longer in harmony with creation, work stopped being a joy and became toil (see Genesis 3:17).

Though we may have experienced reconciliation with God and a restored relationship with Him, many of us are still at odds with our work in one way or another. Yet the Bible says, 'we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do' (Ephesians 2:10 NIV).

This makes your purpose vital and your potential immeasurable! So wherever you're at with work, don't be discouraged. Instead, let us be reconciled to the true role of work in our lives and re-envisioned to live it out as God intended.

The Facing Your Giants series is designed to help people like you find God's help in dealing with the challenges that face us all.

Contained in these little booklets are big truths from God's Word, guidance on how to pray, and practical suggestions for change. There are 28 readings from Bob Gass, author of the UCB Word For Today, to help you practise new thought patterns and habits day by day for a month. As the Bible says, 'he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world' (1 John 4:4 ESV). With the help of our great God, you can face any giant in front of you.

Every Blessing,



David L'Herroux - Chief Executive, United Christian Broadcasters

P.S If working your way through this booklet raises any issues and you would like prayer, please do contact UCB Prayerline. You can find out more at ucb.co.uk/pray or ring us on 01782 363 000

DAY 1

Get cracking

'I keep working towards that day when I will finally be all that Christ... wants me to be.'

Philippians 3:12 TLB

If your goal is to become all God wants you to be, then more resolutions aren't the answer. Based on your track record, you know just about how long they last. But don't let past performance stand in the way of your future plans. Here's an important key: if you focus only on the end result, you'll get overwhelmed. Tackle one thing at a time. Start with a specific area, even a difficult one. Golfer Arnold Palmer said: 'The most rewarding things in life are often ones that look like they can't be done!' Here's a four-point plan to get you started: 1) No more excuses. By saying, 'That's just the way I am,' or 'Everybody does it,' you rationalise disobedience and diminish conviction. Don't say that anymore! 2) Set manageable goals. Approach your target with a rifle, not a shotgun. Instead of reaching for everything, grasp only those things that are important to your personal growth this year. 3) Be reasonable. It takes 21 days for a habit to take root. Setbacks are part of the process. If you get off track, just get back on again! Perseverance is the secret! 4) Be optimistic. Paul says, 'We are saved by hope' (Romans 8:24 KJV). Keep reminding yourself that 'with God's help I can do it,' and you'll discover you can! Change is painful; not changing is even more painful! Remember, Paul didn't say he'd arrived, he said, 'I keep working towards that day' (Philippians 3:12 TLB). So, what are you waiting for? Get cracking!

PRAYER POINT

Father, thank You for the opportunities You have placed in my life to serve others and to serve You. Help me, Lord, to see the benefit in the things that I do and keep a positive perspective about my work even when it seems to be going wrong. Thank You, Lord, for my abilities, my God-given wisdom and the confidence I have in You. Let me see Your Kingdom come. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 2

God has already gone before you

'The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you.'

Deuteronomy 31:8 NIV

Are you feeling anxious today because you don't know what you're walking into? Israel was going into a good situation, the Promised Land. They had just come out of a bad one: a back-breaking, soul-destroying, hope-extinguishing 430 years of slavery. Now they were going to be free to own their own homes, raise their own families, work at jobs they liked, and be well paid for it. But the Promised Land wasn't problem-free. There were enemy strongholds that had to be conquered one by one, and it would take time. 'The LORD your God will drive out those nations before you, little by little. You will not be allowed to eliminate them all at once, or the wild animals will multiply around you' (Deuteronomy 7:22 NIV). Question: is this a similar situation to the one you find yourself in today? You're embarking on a new relationship, a new job, a new ministry, or an unfamiliar area where you don't have all the answers? And because you don't know exactly what's involved, you're anxious? Don't be! Here's the word for you today: 'Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you...The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged' (Deuteronomy 31:6-8 NIV). Carry these promises with you. And when your confidence starts to falter and your faith fluctuates, read them, stand on them, and count on God to honour His Word.

DAY 3

When it's time to move

'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.'

Hebrews 11:1 KJV

When your passion for something fades, the grace to accomplish usually goes with it. Does that mean it's time to leave what you've invested so much in? Here are a few thoughts: 1) Get away and rest. Stress-filled minds are not noted for coming up with good answers. Spend time with God. He's already determined your future (see Isaiah 46:10). 2) You're not the only one involved. If you don't know how (or you're unwilling) to pass the baton to someone who can take things to the next level, you lose, they lose and the dream loses. When you've killed your giant, get out of the way and let the next person kill theirs. 3) Don't just focus on what you're leaving behind. Think also about what you're taking with you when you go; like self-worth, wisdom, faith for the next challenge and the joy of knowing you've done the will of God. Listen: 'I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do' (John 17:4 NIV). Faith is a 'substance'. You can take it with you wherever you go. It'll grow in any climate, thrive in any economy and move any mountain. It's the voice within you that says, 'I can't wait to see what God has for me next.' It's the greatest evidence that what you can conceive, by God's help, you can achieve!

PRAYER POINT

Lord, as I focus on pressing forward in the plans You have for my life, help me to really start to take steps towards making those plans a reality. When that means I need help, Lord, let me be humble enough to be a team player, and when that means I may need to re-evaluate things in my life, even if it means making new friends, give me the boldness to do that. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 4

Who are you following?

'Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.'

Hebrews 13:7 NKJV

Some people can take less and do more with it because they've got faith. Speaking of these people, God says, 'Follow them'. Let's break this verse down: a) 'Remember those who have the rule over you.' Are you willing to submit to authority? If not, your future's not very bright. b) 'Who have spoken the Word of God to you.' Who feeds you spiritually? Your hunger, not your talent, determines your future. c) 'Whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.' Who should your mentor be? Somebody whose faith produces the results you want. How did Elisha earn the right to wear Elijah's mantle? 1) By recognising and pursuing him, regardless of where the journey took him. 2) By honouring him, especially when others didn't. 3) By drawing water from his well, until he had some in his own. 4) By serving him, knowing that if you can't serve, you'll never qualify to be served. 5) By obeying him. 'Isn't that glorifying an individual?' You ask. No! Paul told Timothy to follow him as he followed Christ. You don't follow the man; you follow God in the man! You catch his mantle by receiving his instructions, standing on his shoulders and making his hindsight your foresight. Today, ask God to bring such a person into your life.

DAY 5

Seize the day

'Making the most of every opportunity.'

Ephesians 5:16 NIV

There's no 'magic age' at which excellence emerges or quality suddenly appears. With God, you're never too young and never too old! Thomas Jefferson was 33 when he drafted the US Declaration of Independence. Charles Dickens was 24 when he began *The Pickwick Papers* and 25 when he wrote *Oliver Twist*. Newton was 24 when he formulated the law of gravity. But if you think 'movers and shakers' can be found only amongst the young, think again: Verdi was 80 when he produced *Falstaff*. Goethe was 80 when he completed *Faust*. Tennyson was 80 when he wrote *Crossing the Bar*. Michelangelo was doing his best work at 87. And how about Noah? He was aged 500 when he preached his first sermon and over 600 when he came out of the ark and helped start the world all over again. Seize the day! Redeem the 'now' moments of your life! The time or the age you're waiting for may never arrive! James writes, 'a word for you who brashly announce, "Today – at the latest, tomorrow – we're off to such and such a city for the year. We're going to start a business and make a lot of money." You don't know the first thing about tomorrow. You're nothing but a wisp of fog, catching a brief bit of sun before disappearing. Instead, make it a habit to say, "If the Master wills it and we're still alive, we'll do this or that.'" (James 4:13-15 MSG). The once past will never return. So do it now!

PRAYER POINT

Help me, Lord, to realise the potential opportunities of today, and tell me, Lord, what would You have me do today? What should I put my energy towards? Show me, Lord, the matters of the Kingdom, that I could see what Your hand is touching so I can truly rejoice in what You are leading me to do for You. Lord, help me seize hold of all You have for my life. Amen.

DAY 6

Look for God's hand in it!

'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes.'

Matthew 21:42 NIVUK

Sometimes the rejection of others turns out to be 'the Lord's doing.' After Joseph had been betrayed by his brothers and slandered by Potiphar's wife, he said, 'You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good' (Genesis 50:20 NIV). How often has something happened in your life that you later realised was necessary? If you hadn't sustained this or walked through that, you wouldn't be ready for the blessings you're enjoying right now. It's when you see the hand of God in it that you begin to understand that what the enemy meant for your destruction, God used for your development. To be more than a conqueror means to stand up and say, 'Here's how I see it. It took all I've been through to make me who I am today and to teach me what I know. I choose to be better, not bitter. I trust the faithfulness of God more than ever. If faith doesn't move the mountain, it will give me strength to endure until tomorrow. And if it's not gone by tomorrow, I'll still believe that God is able and trust Him until He acts.' Rejoice!

Your steps (and your stops) are being arranged by God. They're also being observed by Him. When you get through this, you'll realise that 'the worst thing that could have happened' is, in reality, 'the Lord's doing,' and it'll become marvellous in your eyes.

DAY 7

Get a life!

'Well done, good and faithful servant!'

Matthew 25:21 NIV

Check out this advice given by novelist Anna Quindlen, at a university graduation ceremony: 'Don't confuse your life with your work. What you are will always be more important than what you do. There'll be many others with your same degree, doing what you want to do, maybe doing it better. But you have sole custody, not only of your life, but of your mind and of your heart. 'It's easier to write a résumé than craft a spirit or build a character. And a résumé is cold comfort when you're sad, broke, lonely or you've received back the test results and they're not so good. I no longer consider myself the centre of the universe. I show up. I listen. I try to laugh. I make my marriage vows mean something. I pray. I'm good to my friends, because without them I'd be a cardboard cut-out. Get a life, not a manic pursuit of the next promotion or bigger paycheque or larger house. Do you really think you'd care about those things if you had a suspected stroke or found a lump in your breast? 'Get a life in which you are generous. All of you want to do well but if you don't do good, doing well will never be enough.' Do it right the first time because life's not a dress rehearsal. Discover God's will for you and give yourself unreservedly to it. Live with the end in view; the final graduation when you'll want to hear the words, 'Well done, good and faithful servant' (Matthew 25:21 NIV).

PRAYER POINT

Lord, show me what life really is; show me the value of me in Your Kingdom. Your word says You know every hair on my head, and I believe it. Help me see the fullness of You in me, help me know the depth of Your character, the depth of Your grace, Your mercy and love, that I might one day hear You say 'Well done, my good and faithful servant.'

DAY 8

Recognise your calling

'It is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose.'

Philippians 2:13 NIVUK

By recognising and fulfilling your God-given assignment in life you free yourself from a sense of failure, and are able to stop worrying about what others think. Why? Because your self-worth no longer depends on people but God! However, you must do these three things: 1) Be honest about your gifts, and recognise your limitations. Don't go through life as a stranger to yourself. Honestly assess your strengths and limitations; ask the hard questions and be willing to live with the answers, even if it means letting some things go. Michael Novak writes, 'God knows what's in us for He put it there. And He intends us to do something with it.' Each of us has been given a calling in life, and happiness belongs to those who find and fulfil that calling. 2) Allow God to work on you. Sometimes amateur potters limit the potential of clay by seeing it only as a flowerpot. But a master potter sees much more - he or she knows what it can become. Watch them; they don't merely impose a shape on it, they release the shape that's already within. And that's what God does with us. 3) Recognise your source. Fulfilling your life's assignment begins with identifying the desires God has placed within you. 'It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.' Who's at work within you? God! Where do your desires come from? God! Where do your abilities come from? God! Make knowing God and walking in step with Him your highest priority.

DAY 9

Never compromise your integrity

'The integrity of the honest keeps them on track; the deviousness of crooks brings them to ruin.'

Proverbs 11:3 MSG

In what he calls a compromise of integrity, psychiatrist Leo Randall analyses the relationship between former President Richard Nixon and some of his closest confidants. He records a conversation between Senator Howard Baker and presidential aide, Herbert Porter. Baker: 'Did you ever have qualms about what you were doing?' Porter: 'Yes.' Baker: 'What did you do about it?' Porter: 'Nothing!' Baker: 'Why?' Porter: 'Group pressure. I was afraid of not being considered a team player.' Joseph said 'no' to Potiphar's wife, not because he couldn't get away with it but because he couldn't live with himself afterwards. Ted Engstrom writes, 'The world needs people who cannot be bought; whose word is their bond; who put character above wealth; who possess opinions and a will; who are larger than their vocations; who don't hesitate to take chances; who won't lose their individuality in a crowd; who'll be as honest in small things as they are in great things; who'll make no compromise with wrong; whose ambitions are not confined to their own selfish desires; who'll not say they do it "because everybody else does it"; who are true to their friends through good report and evil report, in adversity as well as in prosperity; who do not believe that shrewdness, cunning and hard-headedness are the best qualities for winning success; who are not afraid to stand for the truth even when it's unpopular; who say "no" with emphasis, even though the rest of the world says "yes".' Try weighing yourself on those scales!

PRAYER POINT

Father, help me be strong of character. Let my decisions be following Your character as laid out in Your Word. Show me clearly, Lord, when I make questionable decisions that hurt or hinder, and teach me the ways of Your Kingdom, that I might know what the right things to do are, and stop taking the easy routes ahead in life, so my gifting might be used to its full. Amen.

DAY 10

Use your gifts

'A man's gift makes room for him.'

Proverbs 18:16 NKJV

What you're struggling with right now is part of your preparation. Get ready; what the enemy meant for evil, God's about to turn to good (see Genesis 50:20). When God brought David to the palace he was a wild uncouth shepherd boy with sheep dung on his boots. But God said, 'You're about to be promoted. I saw you kill the bear and the lion; I was watching when you didn't even realise it.' Solomon said, 'A man's gift makes room for him' (Proverbs 18:16 NKJV). David's gift may have been only a rag and a stone, but it opened the door to his future as Israel's king. He also used his gift to kill Goliath. Any time you fight the enemy, use only what you're gifted in! Don't try wearing somebody else's armour; it won't fit. Even if what you've got to work with doesn't seem like much, if God's behind it, it'll be more than enough to do the job. When God spoke to Moses, He asked him, 'What is that in your hand?' (Exodus 4:2 NKJV). He answered, 'A rod.' Imagine: a regular old walking stick! But God used it to part the Red Sea. Know what? God's already equipped you to do the job too. Just recognise what He's given you and start using it. 'But I'm not trained,' you say. All God needs is a teachable spirit, a yielded heart and somebody who'll pray, 'Lord, if You'll make me able, I'm more than willing.' Remember, when you give God what you've got, He'll give you what He's got and that makes your odds unbeatable!

DAY 11

Are you giving it your all?

'The ultimate Master you're serving is Christ.'

Colossians 3:24 MSG

After spending years in Rome working on life-sized sculptures, Michelangelo went to Florence, where a huge block of white Carrara marble had been obtained for a colossal statue. Within weeks, he'd signed an agreement to complete a rendition of David, one of his most famous masterpieces. Contract in hand, he started working with such passion that often he slept in his clothes, resenting the time it took to take them off and put them on again. He faultlessly examined and precisely measured the marble to see what pose it could accommodate. He made hundreds of sketches of possible attitudes and detailed drawings from models. He tested his ideas in wax on a small scale and only when he was satisfied did he pick up his chisel and mallet. He approached painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel with the same intensity. Lying at uncomfortable angles on hard boards, breathing the suffocating air just under the vault, he suffered from inflamed eyes and skin irritation from the plaster dust. For the next four years, he literally sweated in physical distress as he worked, but look at what he produced! If you're not passionate about what you do, find something you can be passionate about! Don't just make money, make an impact! Significance should be your goal, not survival. Listen: 'Don't just do the minimum that will get you by. Do your best...Keep in mind always that the ultimate Master you're serving is Christ.' (Colossians 3:23-24 MSG).

PRAYER POINT

As I identify the passion You have placed in my heart, I pray that You would make room for it, Lord. Help me develop outlets for what I know I was born for. Show me clearly, Lord, what I can channel my energy into which will leave a legacy in Your Kingdom. When I know it, let me be determined and focussed, and give myself completely to see the gift You have created me to be.

DAY 12

You can become a leader

'I have increased in wisdom.'

Ecclesiastes 1:16 NIV

During a sales meeting, the sales manager was berating his staff for their dismally low sales figures. 'If you can't do the job, there are others out there just waiting to take your place,' he said. Pointing to a newly recruited ex-pro football player he said, 'Ask him. If a team isn't winning they replace the players, right?' 'No,' he replied. 'If the team is having trouble, they replace the coach.' Good news: leadership isn't something you're born with; the raw materials can be acquired. Link them up with desire, and nothing can keep you from becoming a leader. Think you're called to lead? Leaders are big-picture thinkers. They: a) see beyond the immediate crisis; b) place emphasis on vision, values and motivation; c) refuse to accept the status quo; d) develop the skills to cope with conflicting requirements; e) manage others well by first learning to manage themselves. Sandhill cranes are birds that fly great distances across continents. They've three remarkable qualities: a) they rotate leadership so that no bird stays out in front all the time; b) they choose leaders who can handle turbulence; c) when one bird leads, all the rest honk in support. Learn enough about leadership so that when God calls you, you're ready to take your place at the front of the pack. In every age, there comes a moment when leadership must come forward to meet the needs of the hour. So be encouraged, there is no potential leader who will not find his or her time!

DAY 13

Fourteen questions about your assignment

'For this cause I was born.'

John 18:37 NKJV

When you know what your God-given assignment in life is, and that God is on your side, you become virtually unstoppable. Will you make mistakes? Of course, but God loves you enough to correct you, redirect you, and get you back on track. 'How do I go about discovering my assignment?' you ask. Here are fourteen helpful questions to ask yourself: 1) What desires have been living in me most of my life? 2) What motivates me to work hard and be productive? 3) What keeps me going forward when I'm worn out? 4) What makes me refuse to quit when I meet with resistance? 5) What do I do that doesn't seem like work? 6) What do I do that brings a positive response and support from people? 7) What am I doing or what's happening in my life when doors seem to open automatically and effortlessly? 8) What do wise leaders and godly counsellors think about my work? 9) What makes me feel good about being who I am? 10) What makes my creative juices flow? 11) What am I willing to sacrifice in order to accomplish it? 12) What am I doing that I'd be proud to offer for God's approval? 13) What would I do without being paid for it if I could afford to? 14) What would I be willing to withstand Satan on in order to accomplish? Prayerfully consider these fourteen questions, and they will shed light on your God-given assignment in life.

PRAYER POINT

Thank You, Lord, for my place in Your Kingdom, and for the purpose You have assigned to me. Help me to be an effective servant in Your Kingdom. Help me grow in confidence when it comes to the vision You have placed in my heart. Lord, You are the Creator of the universe; if You have given me a vision, You believe I can do what You have placed within me. Thank You Lord. Amen.

DAY 14

Do you have a vision?

'Where there is no vision, the people perish.'

Proverbs 29:18 KJV

Refuse to let the word 'impossible' stop you. 'With God all things are possible' (Matthew 19:26 NIV). If the people who've changed the world had left every 'impossible' task undone, we'd still be living in the dark ages. For example: 1) German experts predicted that trains travelling at 25 mph would cause such severe nosebleeds that the passengers would suffocate going through tunnels. American experts added that we'd need more asylums because people would go mad when they saw the first trains. 2) When the YWCA first announced typing lessons for women, there was a furious backlash on the grounds that the 'female constitution' would deteriorate under such strain. 3) Experts insisted that iron ships would never float and that the iron would wreak havoc with the compass readings. 4) In 1797, New Jersey farmers denounced the first cast-iron plough insisting it would poison the land and stimulate weeds. So much for 'experts'! More of us are persuaded into believing too little than believing too much! Vision is essential for survival. It's spawned by faith, sustained by hope, sparked by imagination and strengthened by God's Word. It's greater than sight, deeper than a dream and broader than an idea. It encompasses things outside the realm of the predictable, the safe and the expected. No wonder we would perish without it!

A poet wrote, 'Beware of those who stand aloof and greet each venture with reproof. The world would stop if things were run by those who say, "It can't be done."' If God's given you a vision, pursue it with all you've got!

DAY 15

Get your approval from God

'Our eyes look to the LORD our God.'

Psalm 123:2 NKJV

It's always nice to be appreciated for the work you do, and when that doesn't happen, it can affect your sense of self-worth. That's why the Bible says, 'As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters...our eyes look to the LORD our God.' Your true worth comes from God, not your boss. And when you forget that, you set yourself up for frustration in the workplace. Taken to the extreme, you become less effective on the job because you're not willing to make decisions and take risks in case it negatively affects what others think about you. In essence, you become a 'yes' man or woman who nods and agrees with everyone just to please them and have them like you. Consequently, your value to the company plummets because you're not utilising your God-given gifts to the fullest. Whatever your position, it's only a small part of who you are, a spoke radiating from the centre of your identity as a son or daughter of the King of kings. You're not the hub turning the wheel. Knowing who you are, apart from what you do, is as essential to your success in the workplace as your credentials and your skill set. When others know that you constantly need approval, it empowers them to manipulate you, define you, and influence your self-worth. That's too much power to give anybody! It doesn't matter what your job entails, remember: 'Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God' (1 Corinthians 10:31 NLT).

PRAYER POINT

Lord, I realise that I seek approval from others around me instead of finding my approval from You. Thank You, Lord, that You value and love me. Help me to be a true servant of You and Your Kingdom. Help me, Lord, to do everything for Your glory rather than for human approval. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 16

Keep improving

'I fear that...I myself might be disqualified.'

1 Corinthians 9:27 NLT

Paul writes: 'Don't you realise that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified' (vv. 24-27 NLT). Unless you take control of your life, you will always live knowing that you don't belong to yourself. In other words, you belong to whoever and whatever is controlling you. In order to improve, you must keep these three things before you at all times: 1) Reading. David said, 'Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day' (Psalm 119:97 NKJV). Discipline yourself to read something each day that will help you spiritually, emotionally, relationally, and career-wise. And put the Bible at the top of your 'books to read' list. 2) Rewards. Author Mike Delaney remarked, 'Any business or industry that pays equal rewards to its goof-offs and its eager beavers, sooner or later will find itself with more goof-offs than eager beavers. What you reward, good or bad, in yourself and in others, you'll keep getting more of.' 3) Results. The next time you're facing a must-do task, and thinking of doing what's convenient instead of paying the price, change your focus. Count the benefits of doing what's right, and dive in. Instead of focusing on the 'work', focus on the 'reward'.

DAY 17

The can-do spirit

'Because...Caleb has a different spirit...I will bring him into the land.'

Numbers 14:24 NIV

Dr James Dobson says that for years he was afraid to tackle the computer. As an author and broadcaster he recognised its potential value to him but he kept putting it off until 'someday'. Finally, aged in his 50s, he faced his fears and took lessons. Today he wonders how he ever coped without a computer. What are the messages in your head saying each time you've an opportunity to add a new skill or take on a fresh challenge? 'You can't teach an old dog new tricks'? 'You never were any good at this'? 'You'll only embarrass yourself'? The ten spies Joshua sent into Canaan weren't defeated by the size of the giants but by their perception of them and by what they said about themselves. Listen: 'They are stronger...We seemed like grasshoppers' (Numbers 13:31-33 NIV). Such talk is terminal! Because Caleb had the 'can-do spirit', he saw his enemy and himself differently. Listen: 'We can certainly do it' (Numbers 13:30 NIV). Before achievement comes attitude. Always! If having to do everything right the first time is your prerequisite to trying, you'll accomplish nothing. Actually, you'll end up wondering what you could've done had you been willing to: a) take a risk; b) learn from your experiences; c) allow God to show you what He can do through you. Every time you face up to another fear, fear loses its hold on you and you take one step closer to success. Go ahead! You'll never know what God can accomplish through you until you step out in faith and make yourself totally available to Him!

PRAYER POINT

Lord, I refuse to live another day with a 'can't-do' spirit. Help me develop an enthusiasm to try the things I think I hate, to get beyond my smallest fear that my life would be a reflection of what I have overcome. Help me also not to get proud, Lord, so that even when I succeed, I would still know when it is time to serve and not lead, to join in and not stand apart, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

DAY 18

Don't just operate— co-operate!

'We have shared together the blessings of God.'

Philippians 1:7 TLB

Andrew Carnegie said, 'It marks a big step in your development when you realise that other people can help you do a better job than you can do by yourself.' (After all, you can't whistle a symphony; it takes an orchestra!) Your future is connected to certain people. Without them, your destiny will be incomplete. If you're humble enough to accept that, your possibilities are unlimited. A key player in the Billy Graham Association was his childhood friend, Grady Wilson. In 1948, Billy asked Grady to come and work with him. At first he said no. But Billy persisted: 'God's told me you're to come and work with me. I need an evangelist; somebody who knows me and my ministry, somebody I can trust.' 'I didn't want to come,' Wilson later recalled. 'After all, I already had a successful ministry of my own holding citywide crusades.' But after praying, he made the decision to follow Billy Graham (and God). He set aside his own dreams to be part of another man's. That decision made a huge difference, not only in his life but also in the lives of the multitudes they reached together. Sometimes you have to sacrifice a smaller dream in order to fulfil a bigger one. It takes both courage and humility to do that. But look at the results. Heaven alone knows the impact Grady Wilson and Billy Graham had together. And what was Wilson's view on his decision? 'I never regretted it!'

DAY 19

Be honest

'Provide things honest in the sight of all men.'

Romans 12:17 KJV

If you always tell the truth, you'll never have to worry about remembering what you said. Nothing's more important than credibility. Lose that and you've lost everything! George Jones started out as an assistant at a grocery shop. He quickly gained a reputation as a bright, ambitious employee, a man known for his work ethic, good manners and easy-going personality. But the foremost trait people referred to when praising George was his honesty. That's what later came to the attention of Henry J Raymond, the renowned journalist. Together they started The New York Times. Years later, when The Times waged a crusade against 'Boss Tweed' and his corrupt dynasty, Jones received an under-the-table offer of \$500,000 – a vast sum at that time. All he had to do was retire to Europe. 'You can live like a prince the rest of your days,' said the con man making the offer. 'Yes,' replied Jones, 'and know myself every day to be a rascal.' The poet wrote: 'I have to live with myself and so, I want to be fit for myself to know. I want to be able as days go by, always to look myself in the eye. I don't want to stand in the setting sun, and hate myself for the things I've done. I don't want to keep on a closet shelf, a lot of secrets about myself; and fool myself as I come and go, into thinking nobody else will know – the kind of man I really am.' Today, be honest!

PRAYER POINT

Father, I know keeping my integrity in every situation is very important to You, so help me even in the little things that come along to stay on a course that is based in truth and not deceit. Even when things change around me, Lord, help me to display and live out the highest level of integrity I can achieve that Your name might be glorified. Amen.

DAY 20

Dealing with change

'Be diligent...so that everyone may see your progress.'

1 Timothy 4:15 NIV

If you think accepting change is difficult, try introducing it to others! You'll have for enemies all those who've done well under the old system and only lukewarm defenders among those who aren't sure how well they'll do under the new one. Resistance to progress is universal; it seizes every generation by the throat and attempts to stop all forward movement. In 1553, Admiral Richard Hawkins recorded that during his career on the high seas, 10,000 men under his command had died of scurvy. He also noted that oranges and lemons (vitamin C) completely cured it. But his observations went unheeded for 200 years, during which time thousands more sailors died needlessly. In 1753, James Lind, a British naval surgeon, published a book saying that scurvy could be eliminated with lemon juice. He even cited case histories to prove it. But instead of being honoured, he was ridiculed by the Lords of the Admiralty and by the leading physicians of the day. In fact, his advice was ignored for another 40 years. Not until the year after his death in 1794 was a naval squadron supplied with orange juice before a voyage. On that voyage which lasted 23 weeks, there wasn't one case of scurvy. Even so, another 10 years passed and thousands more died before regulations were enacted requiring sailors to drink a daily ration of lemon juice. With that enactment, scurvy finally disappeared from the British navy. What a lesson! Don't let complacency, prejudice or the fear of change rob you of the joy of becoming all God intends you to be.

DAY 21

A word to leaders!

'Masters...no abuse, please.'

Ephesians 6:9 MSG

Ever take advantage of those under your leadership? There is no place in God's Kingdom for the domineering, the egocentric or those motivated by anger toward any individual or group, at any time, under any circumstance! Learn from Pharaoh; when a child of God is abused, the Lord will hear their cry, intervene on their behalf and the offender will pay a high price. To be a good leader, you must first learn to be a good follower. Only then will you understand the challenges of serving someone else 'as unto the Lord.' If you practise doing that when you're at the bottom, you'll have no trouble doing it when you reach the top. And that's important, for as a leader you must be able to hear, submit to, and obey the leadings of the Holy Spirit. Joshua was a great leader because he was first a faithful servant of Moses. He remembered the difficulties of submitting to a flawed human being when he himself became a leader. Any time you forget what it's like to walk in the shoes of those who serve under you, you can easily become insensitive to their needs and abuse your power. For God to trust you with a position of authority, you must first prove to Him that you can control your need for recognition. God-appointed leaders are servant-leaders. They never lead by threat or force. They lead through a compelling combination of love, vision and righteousness. Still think you're called to lead?

PRAYER POINT

Let me live life, Lord, with a perspective of building people up, not pulling them down; let me be an encourager and not a discourager. Help me, Lord, to always think the best of people rather than jumping to a negative assumption. Help me maintain a life of serving You, Lord, so that my ego is not fed to the point where I cannot see life beyond my own demands. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Serving

'So Joshua did as Moses said to him.'

Exodus 17:10 NKJV

Joshua served Moses but looked only to God for his reward. Your boss may sign your cheque but they don't determine your future; the Lord does that! If you really believe that, no job God gives you will ever be beneath you! When you pray 'God, use me,' He'll ask you to serve someone else. If you make the mistake of looking to that person for your reward and it doesn't come, you'll feel used and resentful. It's God who sets the rules for you. He's the one who requires you to honour Him on the job by performing with submission and excellence. He's the one who calls you to the highest standards of behaviour. He's the one who says it's not okay to use the company phone to call your grandma and pretend she's a client; or take 90 minutes for lunch, and say you were gone for only 30! Listen: 'Knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord' (Ephesians 6:8 NKJV). God balances the scales and rewards us according to our service; not what others think we're worth. Stop striving and get back to serving! Listen: 'God is not unjust; he will not forget your work' (Hebrews 6:10 NIV). Be encouraged; God records and God rewards; that should be enough for you!

DAY 23

More Joy!

'Think about all you can praise God for and be glad about.'

Philippians 4:8 TLB

When Mother Teresa was asked what it took to work in the streets of Calcutta, she replied, 'Hard work, and a joyful attitude!' She's right! And the second is harder to find than the first. To be happy, you've got to learn how to rise above the 'if onlys.' If only I'd more money; if only I'd more talent; if only I was better looking. Money never made anybody more generous, talent never made anybody more grateful and looks never made anybody more fulfilled. Settle it once and for all; things don't bring joy! The happiest people are not the richest, the most beautiful or the most talented. Instead of depending on externals for excitement, they enjoy the simple things in life. They don't waste time thinking that other pastures are greener. They don't yearn for yesterday or tomorrow. They savour the moment, glad to be alive, enjoying their work, their family and the blessings God has already given them. Their eyes always look upwards and outwards. They're aware and compassionate. They're adaptable. They bend with the wind, adjust to change, enjoy the contests of life and try to walk in God's purpose for them as individuals. Paul was one of those people. That's why he could write letters filled with joy from the most miserable prisons in Europe, while waiting to be executed. How come? Because he realised that unlike your news updates, which are delivered to you every morning, joy is a garment you have to put on! (Isaiah 61:3). Got yours on today?

PRAYER POINT

Lord, let my outlook be filled with joy, so that I might see life through the lens of the beauty of Your creation. Help me stop each day just for a moment to take in the great things about each day. Let my enthusiasm for life overpower the difficulties I sometimes face, so I can lift up Your name in any situation and have the drive and determination to reach the next great day.

DAY 24

Persistence

'Staying with it – that's what God requires. Stay with it to the end. You won't be sorry.'

Matthew 24:13 MSG

Abraham Lincoln said, 'Success is going from failure to failure, without losing your enthusiasm.' Elbert Hubbard wrote, 'There is no defeat, except in no longer trying; no really insurmountable barrier, save our own inherent weakness of purpose.' Charles Lindbergh said, 'Success is not measured by what a man accomplishes, but by the opposition he encountered and the courage he maintained in his struggle against it.' The University of Chicago conducted a five-year survey of the 20 top performers in various fields, including musicians, athletes, sculptors, mathematicians, physicians, actors, artists, scholars and chief executives. They also interviewed the families and teachers of these celebrated high achievers to find out how they did it. What they discovered was that drive and determination, not talent, led to their success! Imagine that! Just plain old stick-to-it-iveness! Anybody who ever did anything worthwhile had it. The Master Teacher Himself gave us the formula in these words, 'Staying with it – that's what God requires. Stay with it to the end. You won't be sorry' (Matthew 24:13 MSG).

DAY 25

Time Out

'And on the seventh day God ended his work...and he rested.'

Genesis 2:2 KJV

Are you having trouble keeping up the pace? Is the strain showing up in your family, your health and your attitude? Do you feel guilty and unproductive when you try to relax? If so, here are a few things you need to consider today: 1) Take time out when you need it. Refuse to be intimidated by the opinions of others. People have a tendency to think they know what's best for you. They don't; only you know when you need a break! 2) If your loved ones have to choose between having less or having you, they'll always choose you. The trouble is we don't give them a choice. Look out. Your lifestyle is your child's blueprint. If you neglect them now, don't be upset when they neglect you later because they're climbing the same ladder. 3) Don't use work as a narcotic. Workaholism, like any other addiction, only masks the real problem. There's emptiness inside you that only God can fill. And He will, if you let Him! 4) Effort without reward eventually destroys motivation. Whether it's you, your children or your employees, everybody needs time to recharge their batteries. If you work hard, play hard. The truth is rest time is the best time to assess your life, your dreams, your heartaches and your faith. The power of rest is what allows you to enjoy the journey and not just the destination.

PRAYER POINT

Give me the strength, Lord, to take time off without feeling guilty and without agreeing to fill that space to the point where I feel more drained than when I began. Help me, Lord, to use that time to rest, reflect and connect with You. Even in my work time, Lord, help me wake in the mornings, so that the peace that I gain there would have dominion over the tough parts of the day. Amen.

DAY 26

Become an early riser

'O God, You are my God; early will I seek You.'

Psalm 63:1 NKJV

How's your schedule these days? Do you crawl out of bed, shower, dress, gulp down your coffee and dash out of the door? Have you just enough time to make breakfast, pack the kids' lunches and get them off to school? At the end of the day, are you drained and exhausted? Want a suggestion that's guaranteed to make things better? Become an early riser! That's right; spending time with God before your day starts is an incredible way to energise yourself. Some of the world's most successful people have done it. Isaiah writes, 'My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you' (Isaiah 26:9 NIV). David said, 'early will I seek You' (Psalm 63:1 NKJV). Look at the life of Christ: 'Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up...and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed' (Mark 1:35 NIV). If you want to enjoy that kind of communion, you'll have to exercise that kind of control. That means you'll have to turn off the TV, get to bed earlier and rise earlier. But if you do, it'll be one of the most rewarding changes you'll ever make. Here are three things that will happen: 1) You'll experience a greater sense of peace because now you're no longer relying solely on your own resources. 2) Because you've opened yourself to God at the beginning of the day, you'll sense His guidance through it. 3) As you communicate with Him, you'll be instructed, empowered, refreshed and more successful at whatever you do!

DAY 27

Under the Gun

'As your days, so shall your strength be.'

Deuteronomy 33:25 NKJV

Have the daily pressures in life built to where you feel as if someone is constantly pointing a gun at your head, saying, 'Get this done or else'? Have you concluded that that's just how life is supposed to be? But is it? No! Your best work will be done when you're relaxed, not frazzled. Your best decisions will be made when you're at peace, not stressed out. It doesn't help when you a) force yourself to go faster b) to be somewhere else c) to be something you're not. Actually, it hurts. 'What's the answer?' you ask. Put down the gun! The job will get done, one bit at a time and your stress levels will subside too. When you decide to live this way, two wonderful things will happen. First, you'll enjoy whatever you're doing – even if it's just washing dishes or cleaning out a toilet – because now you're focused rather than distracted. Any moment you don't experience is a piece of your life you're throwing away. Don't do that! Stop and tell yourself, 'I'm exactly where I need to be, doing what I'm supposed to be doing, so the smart thing is to enjoy it and be as creative as I can in the process'. Second, by being present in what you're doing, your productivity will increase and you'll accomplish much more. And one more thing: the strength you need for tomorrow's challenge won't be given to you during today's chores. His Word says, 'As your days, so shall your strength be' (Deuteronomy 33:25 NKJV).

PRAYER POINT

Lord, I call on You today to help me keep my life in perspective, so that I'm not living out the demands of others. Help me find the enjoyment I have had in times gone by, where I could live through a day without being overwhelmed by stress; help me learn how to handle the situations that drive me crazy, in order to find a state of grace in this chaotic world. Thank You, God, for Your love towards me. Amen.

DAY 28

Seize every opportunity to learn!

'Become wise by walking with the wise.'

Proverbs 13:20 MSG

Surround yourself with people who compliment you, not duplicate you! If you're led by people whose insight is no deeper than your own, how far will you get? Jesus said, 'When a blind man leads a blind man, they both end up in the ditch' (Matthew 15:14 MSG). Limiting yourself to those who laugh only at the same jokes, who vote only for the same party and share only the same ideas, robs you of personal growth and leaves you living in a secure but shrivelled world. If you're going to progress to the next level, hang around those who are already there or at least know how to get there. Your development and in some cases your healing can take place only when you cross paths with people who challenge and stretch you. 'But what if they make fun of me?' you ask. Only the arrogant do that! The wise respond to seekers for they themselves are seekers. Risk asking. Refuse to allow anybody to keep you stuck in a world of ignorance. 'But what if I don't measure up?' you ask. If you don't stand near a measure, you won't know how much you need to grow or how much you've already grown. Having less information doesn't make you a lesser person. Life's a school and every new acquaintance is a teacher. Whatever others know, they haven't always known. The greatest indictment against not knowing is not learning. So today, seize every opportunity to learn!

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