

## **Money Talks**

From the rich in all things  
to the up-and-coming wealthy  
and to all those who aspire to the disciplines that  
prosperity brings. . . .

‘I have prayed for you that your faith fail not.’

Luke’s Gospel chapter 22 and verse 12

**Author’s Note** - Before this book can be written, the author confesses to wrongdoing and mistakes concerning money and the way it has been personally handled. This confession is undertaken in no light manner, in fact, true and deep repentance is more seemly. For years, even since becoming a totally committed Christian, there have been squandered resources, flipped-over bills, debts and an easy trifling with hundreds of pounds in an offhand manner. God’s wonderful provision for every possible need has been badly managed.

This attitude of carelessness is what is being repented of because it is in money matters that more of His faithfulness has been learned than in any other way.

**Introduction** - Money is important. It is important if we have plenty and it is more than meaningful if we have none. It is also a weighty subject with God. Wealth and means, or the lack of it, is mention hundreds of times in the Bible.

In the New Testament as well as the Old, in all places, circumstances and situations, it is used to show values of men, commodities and even the worth of whole cities and nations.

Affluence and riches are not despised by God and so they should not be despised by His people. Money and bartering power has always been a major part of this world of ours and is not to be thought of lightly. Neither is it to be abused or overestimated.

We ought to esteem money as God esteems it and give it the same emphasis as do the scriptures. Many times we read that when God had a purpose in mind there was never a shortage of means. For instance, God gave millions in cash and kind to David so that there would be no lack in the building of the temple.

Men have always been fascinated by money. Its significance and influence in world affairs is becoming increasingly dominant.

It has been hoarded, courted, sought after, given away, used for power, used for good, buried, undervalued, restricted, withheld, gambled and multiplied and a dozen other exercises including thought about and discarded.

If you are a Christian, with God’s plans uppermost in mind, what should you be thinking about it and doing with it - if anything? What is God’s intention for you and what can He demand of you concerning it, for yourself, for all of us, now and in the future? In one sense, what a man thinks of money is what he is but there is really no virtue in having it and no shame in not having it.

So, just for a minute or a lifetime, let us put everything connected with finance into a right perspective and look at it from His view.

### Chapter Headings

1. Top-Dog Money Maker
2. Rich Righteousness
3. Cash Crisis
4. How to behave without it
5. How to behave with it
6. Wealth Health
7. Give it or Keep it
8. Borrowing and Lending
9. Controlling Share Holding
10. Free Franchise

#### 1. Top Dog Money Maker

Power equals money and money equals power. That maybe what we think or scoff at but still the art of money management and making money work as a profession can be very fulfilling. It can even be exciting, not at all to be confused with money-grubbing.

To be delighted with figures is a gift direct from heaven, just as much as passing Grade 8 violin by the age of 12. To serve God and men by investing, gifts, loans, developing another's potential, using money given to charities to best advantage, these are all wonderful ways to spend a life.

If we have any disapproval of such and those who do love the exercising of finance, it may mean that we have an inability to comprehend it's real working power.

Understanding money adds a broader vision and a new dimension to life. And if, for instance, we put out faith to some extent in stocks and bonds, it is wonderfully exhilarating to succeed with profits. So climbing the ladder is good, but actually getting to the top is what life is all

about. Heaven is around the corner and reaching it just means working harder. This includes the art of money management.

The enthusiasm of youth with a realistic goal often brings happiness with it and sometimes the striving, in itself, is worth it all. So why not the same with cash and it's problems? Unfortunately, unlike most other professions, it is almost as though we can measure and control this world of ours by our wealth.

Ultra fine sensor beams estimate and appraise for us. Our cordless digitally-timed pocket calculators disengage us from secretaries and computers alike. We have no need actually to be bound by anything, let alone terminals. Our multilingual translators project us further than ever. All that is needed to contain the world is a touch of a button. We are free to roam the business jungle as we will.

Life is almost measurable and containable but not quite. We can circle and comprehend the globe but God alone created it, embraces and welcomes it and all that is in it. What is more, He loves it as it is and as it will be. He is Creator-Controller of the whole of it. The other side of the world is the same as this side to Him. His all-enfolding, computer-expendable, loving can never be sickened or erased. It is unbounded, interminable, infinite and without doubt there is no delete button!

So before going any further, if it is our fear that money will control us rather than the other way around, a few basics need to be checked by a subjective look at what the scriptures say. This is just to reaffirm cause and effect of our love of what we do and how far we will go to aspire to the boardroom, etcetera.

What do you think of the following verses from Scripture as applied to your inner desires and ambitions?

This has not a lot to do with finance, but everything to do with the Christian financier.

He is a Jew, which is one inwardly; . . .Whose praise is not of men, but of God. Romans 2:29

Do I seek to please men? If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. Gal.1:10

You judge not for man, but for the Lord, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

2 Chronicles 19:6

Master, we know you regard not the person of men. Mark 12:14

With good will doing service, as to the Lord and not to men. Ephesians 6:7

These are murmurers, complainers, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. Jude 16

Is it all too much?

With a necessary leap from thoughts of affluence to considering eternity, can we relate to these verses realistically? Can we do it before breakfast!?

Can we still say of ourselves like the wise man in Proverbs 22 verse 1, within this climate of have and have not in which we live, 'a good name is rather to be chosen than riches?'

Well, for heaven's sake, before going any further, let's instil the idea into our offspring and those we endeavour to teach and discipline. If you are Top-Dog so to speak, it is highly likely that

they will aspire the same way. Do we wholly agree with the thoughts expressed? We reveal it by our lifestyle; ambitions that cannot be hidden, our friendships and our actions. We don't need to keep all our giving a super-spiritual secret, for instance. We could let our children see some of the accumulated wealth being shared openly.

A deep sense of responsibility to the next generation will become a way of life because the stars who shine in your particular contemporary patch will be men and women with goals. Christians or not, you know them because their purposes are distinct and measurable. Relatives or not, drifting is not for them. Their eyes are set to the fulfilling of a dream. Their vision may or may not be from God but it will shape and mould them and, what is more, their peers too. If we can, we ought to steer them by the way of the cross of Jesus Christ then they will not only have a goal worth while but a sense of identity. They will go on in spite of the perplexing bitterness that staggers others.

God spoke to David and gave some of the most enlightening pronouncements about a son. There is no reason why He cannot do the same for you.

‘A son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about...I will give peace and quietness in his days.’ 1 Chronicles 22:19

David was home from war and becoming heavily involved in a building programme - the temple mainly. This was to be a place of great magnificence, unlimited expenditure and noted throughout the world. He was anxious to get on with the planning and lengthy preparations. He knew without doubt, that this was to be a project from God and he was the dynamic man of vision to see it through. But it was also to be a lesson in discernment and patience because it was actually after he had reached the heady seat of power that he had to wait. His son was yet to be born, grow up and become king before the building material David had prepared could be used. Although a high-flying, multitalented entrepreneur, David had to wait and leave it all to Solomon.

Solomon was the right choice despite the nepotism in David's make-up which can blind a man to the true characteristics and motives of offspring. Great David allowed his sons complete freedom, more than that, licence, to do as they wished and undue favouritism is not God's idea of ruling men with justice.

So . . . . If you manage a company or find yourself inexplicably nearing the top rung, or even chairman of all the companies, Brigadier-General of all the armed forces like David, plus head of the church and leader of nations; recognise your humanity and vulnerability constantly and that it is as much from God as is your spiritual side.

There are still things too wonderful even for us to understand. He does not have to justify everything that happens to you just as you do not have to justify everything that you do, to others. Your unpredictability may just be a strength.

Herein lies some dilemma. ‘How to Succeed’ may be at the top of your list of book titles and automatic and compulsive reading. It may be a constant reference after college if you did not actually write the book yourself. But Jesus teaches that the ‘I’ will not be first or used to step on others for arrival. How to work it out may take a lifetime. Anyway, we do not want two personalities, one in the office and one at home. Or one upward and one horizontal. The only

answer is to recognise your work as *métier* - a kind of mission. Your work of money making is not a frivolous secondary gift but a high calling.

A sense of God's purpose will mean that riches are not to be served or honoured or even overly respected but to be conquered and used and if you received a first class honours degree in higher mathematics, then is the time to ask Him to teach you about money and its management!! To do so is logically realistic.

## 2. Rich Righteousness

When the Holy Spirit finally conquers our stubborn wills and we hand over the rebellious reigns of our self-important lives to Christ, it may be a year or two before it occurs to us to allow our purse strings to be put into His hands as well. It can be a deliberate or unconscious area of neglect. We all know that we are against the deviants and wrongs in sex, anger, obsessional behaviour, etc., and as yet the crafts within power-handling may not have come our way but money and its misuse is a much more subtle matter, from our first fumbling with a piggy bank. The money is ours, isn't it? We saved it, earned it, so surely we can spend it as we please. The temptation is to use what we have, possessions or cash, in acts of selfishness. We take it as our right to assume that we always need more.

So, having become a new creation in Christ and understanding we are destined for eternity, we need a certain singleness of mind concerning this important aspect of our new lives. When we say that we are wholly available to Him - if we say it - then it must mean that the strings around the purse or pocket or wherever we keep it all, are free for Him to deal with, too. The ties around the tied-up money must become part of the outworking of our salvation.

Occasionally, therefore, it might be quite a good idea to consider the following statements to see if we rely heavily on any of them in their intrinsic ability to give a sense of security.

Is our placid, calm assurance, depending on:

- A. An ever-increasing Building society account?
- B. A steady, if not failing, interest rate on our overdraft?
- C. A quick recovery from Christmas, financially?
- D. Painless adjustment to the bank balance with a standing order?
- E. A constant wage packet with the inevitability of the yearly increments and earnings-related advances?
- F. An automatically deducted monthly saving?
- G. A guaranteed, popular perk - staff mortgage with ceiling on low interest rates, a company car, etc., etc.?
- H. The security of what is a fact of life - a significant number of plastics?

I. Does it give a foundational kind of solid standing, or exciting position in life to know you can really, actually, pay off the monthly balance of a gold/silver/platinum card? If you felt like doing it, of course.

J. Your spouse's earning power? Is it catastrophic, not bearing thought, if it fails?

Is this a simplistic approach to people like us who inherited numerous shares anyway? All of it lumped together perhaps, may give an overriding sense of basic peace in life's ups and downs.

Whether any of it is relevant or not, and with a devastating suddenness, or quietly and steadily, the cross of Christ will eventually touch everyday moments of unguarded normality with regard to your cash holdings.

As surely as light brings the routine of the day the cross will be vying for your affection and loyalty and it will probably be quite ordinary things that bring it's meaning into focus.

During your personal allotted span there will come a time for spiritual death.

This is a consciousness of being crushed, weak and futile, despairing of life itself. We all want to live with dignity but sometime or other the reality of it is like grasping hold of a shadow. Money and it's power over us may be more deeply rooted than we realise.

In every worthwhile enterprise, if God is in it, there will come a time when it is better to say, 'let it now die.' This is the only way to be sure that He will see to a resurrection. Like Easter, it may only take three days. Work, especially buying and selling that is so much part of the world's ungodly structure, needs to be cleansed. And dying and being buried and rising again is the only way for some of our self-directed enterprises.

All that is of self and self-motivated and self-centred will go. All our own plans and ambitions must pass through this extremity to be acceptable to God. Then we will know with absolute certainty that it is His will we are following.

We do not have to want to die with a knife in the back in the darkest possible bit of jungle to know the principles of death and resurrection -even for His sake.

Small experiences, which incidentally God Himself engineers and controls, will benefit life greatly if they can be accepted as from Him.

Remember Matthew? He was one of the tax collectors commonly known as swindlers and dishonest with money by nature and trade. But he had thrown himself on the mercy he saw in Jesus. He had a sudden change of heart. He began to see he failed even to come up to his own expectations and so he did not ask for his goodness and accomplishments to be recognised. The Pharisees, on the other hand, living in proximity, had their eyes on those around them. They saw their worth in relation to others. This is always a temptation. We tell ourselves we are more thrifty than the spendthrift; generous where we see others to be mean; hard working while so-and-so is an idle layabout. However, the truth is, we have all sinned and need forgiveness.

We must lay it all down and come to the foot of the Cross. Only there do we find He is ready to accept the Pharisee and the tax collector alike. There is no doubt that all through life from now on, even the thoughtless, heedless parts, God will be sending along circumstances and people

with an intent to open our eyes to a deeper meaning of all He has done for us, especially where hard cash is concerned. Eternity sometimes hangs in the balance because of it.

Could it ever be that, deep within, a tiny hope remains that something must be of some value in me that will enable me to buy my way to heaven? Could my own worth ensure me a small place? Well, the blessings may sometimes be earned by obedience, but not the salvation. There is absolutely nothing we can do about that. Jesus did it all.

But is there anything at all we can pay for this enormous privilege? Does worldly wealth have any equal to everlasting riches, with us or our family or our nation? The answer is no, of course, but only the Lord Himself may see these deep and murky, undisturbed waters of the soul. He will not reveal any of this to others unless that is the only way to cleanse it away. But our intrinsic pride of face and place in life has to be handed in before we can get up and go.

What is important to God is faithfulness and His meaning of the word and that is a steadfast reliability in small money matters. It is, after all, His purpose to entrust us eventually with the true riches of heaven. Somehow, with this life-compelling force, the money in the pocket, He has to begin down here.

Jesus, as so often He does, talks about money. It seems He frequently gave specific instructions as well as broad principles about this priority. He expects a careful trustworthiness when we handle it, that is certain.

There are one or two directions and injunctions in the New Testament made clear in the parables and other sermons of His.

1. We are to serve God and not money. Matthew 6:33 'seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added'
2. Our own are to be cared for first. 1 Timothy 5:8 'If any provide not for his own, and especially those of his own house, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.'
3. Owe nothing. Romans 13:8 'Owe no man anything but to love one another.'
4. Give to those who ask. Matthew 5:42 'Give to him that asks you and from him that would borrow, turn not away.'
5. Be trustworthy with the little you have. Luke 16:10 'He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.'
6. Expect God to hold you accountable when money is not yours; Luke 16:12 'If you have not been faithful in that which is another man's who shall give you that which is your own?'

We often behave with a kind of free hand with our cash as though we were accountable to no-one, instead of which we are definitely responsible both to God and to others. But we now have a completely changed life. We have a love for His word; want to be obedient to it; have changed desires; a deep confidence of eternal life and of His coming again and an anointing to understand spiritual things. We are full of faith in God and actually want to pray!

The Apostle John ends his first epistle by saying keep away from anything at all that might take God's place in your heart. Riches are a danger, 'Guard yourselves from idols.' he says in 1 John 5:21

Then there is this wise man, James, who expressed deep streams of thought about the rich and the poor. He knew that rich men think of their wealth as an impregnable defence, a high wall of safety. This is why the Spirit is watching over us, he says, with tender jealousy, to keep that which Christ Jesus died for alive in us. The Spirit is envious of us to give extra grace for humility, patience and doing good, knowing how easily possessions and money can make fools of us.

God may want you specifically to eat and drink with publicans and sinners as His son did so successfully. Jesus did not argue with this description of Himself neither did He confess to better things to do. He consorted with all kinds of low individuals. He loved them. It was much more than humanitarianism which can become hard and self-centred. Neither was it charity centred. He alone can reach to the roots of dealers in deceit, tax-collectors or not. Some of them will be pulled out like brands from the fire and you are there, right in the middle for Him to use. Prejudiced and influenced by others as we are, God can show how unrestricted is His grace and mercy to those around us and incidentally how unscripted His plans for us.

‘You are the world’s light, a city on a hill, glowing in the night for all to see. Don’t hide your light; let it shine for all; let your good deeds glow for all to see, so that they will praise your Heavenly Father.’ Matthew 5:16

### 3. Cash Crisis

Philippians 4:6 ‘The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.’

“I would like to thank you, Father, for that monstrous, inanimate object to whose terminals I am forever bound - my friendly, too-neighbourly computer.

Thank you for the unthinkable, scientific inventions that will no doubt yet come along in the future. Thank you for my bank, banks and building society clerks, managers and also assistant-managers (for whom I request extra love). Thank you for the time that everyone keeps me waiting for results. Thank you for the noon prices on the stock exchange network. Thank you even for the noticeable exception of the plus sign with the unit trusts I am particularly interested in. Thanks for the general, occasional malaise of my competitors. I also give you my heartfelt thanks for their obvious profit making, I think I do, anyway. I am thanking you Lord, for You are Lord of the whole moneymaking machinery, and also for my small part within it. You are at hand. You are nearer than the terminals, I really needed to know that, Lord.”

Apart from a few confusing disparities in life, a man’s work is his soul, his life, and all that he has and is. The life force within is inextricably wrapped up in what he does with his hands and his mind. The pay packet is an excitement, a quickening, an incentive sometimes, but the work itself is the heart.

It was a wonderful idea of God’s to give men work to do with their various abilities. It can be an offering both to God and to the community.

It makes a man believe in himself. Rightly performed it is to the end that we may not lack anything. But in itself it is enough.

God is very interested in a man being gainfully and satisfyingly active. However, high-flying monetary dealings, or any other sort for that matter, are a particularly slippery place to walk. David in the Old Testament was a king and had endless resources but was often at the point of disaster. His friends, acquaintances and guides who were his equal, all failed him at times. Sons deceived him bringing reproach, shame and mischief to the whole community. His own heart failed him. Still he could advise others to 'fret not because of evil doers' and to 'rest in the Lord'. (Psalm 37)

Compromising situations, troubles that shake the foundations, mountain-rumbling anxieties, can all find an antidote in David's Psalms. He had been through it all. His words are shields against the turmoil within, a counteraction for the taunts without. Men need God and His word even more than they need the pay packet or the contract. He knows how complicated life can be.

Even the wheels that are within the wheels that are within, however, are of Him, so all is well. And He can certainly deal with competitors. Their machinations against you can only go as far as the protection He has put around you. The hedge is already planted and being tended to full growth. If you still feel that there is a creeping underground vine which will in all probability come up on your side, He could give the discernment about that, too, knowledge of exactly what to do about it. He may be waiting for a simple, specific request so that you can stand still and watch him deal the next round. His desire is to make you strong in the fight as well as providing the answer. When we have that which lasts, that which can evaporate like a mist with tomorrow mornings early fax, can cause no trouble.

There is, however a psychological disease present and developing in large numbers of people today. Actually some of us seem to be born with it. It is called the poverty syndrome and we are stricken at the roots of our personality. It means that we fear to be without and chronically deprived. Let it never be said that all our gains can never be enough to enable us to give any away or to overflow to others.

Jesus said 'come to me.', so if we have our own thirst, hunger and feelings of drought satisfied, we have a supply from Him and more than enough to dispense to others.

Jesus approaches this problem from a different angle to one which we might think is normal. He says to sell what we do have and give some away. He seems to say it quite calmly! He even says it to affluent us who seem to feel that luxuries are equated with necessities. But it is a duty not an option to follow Him and to do as He says. Apparently we are to give some away first and then there is lots of room for His riches. He says plainly in Malachi 3:10 'You bring in the tithes, and just see if I will not pour you out a blessing, so much so that there will not be room to receive it.'

It may be a real, fiery trial to expose this privation we feel, almost an extreme hardship. It is a rich pleasure to Him, however, to have us both free from care and also to provide, Himself, all that we need.

Even with this matter dealt with we still have a great many fears and worries about money. Some feel that the higher we go the harder we fall. And we do not go far in life before we find

that for some it is all too much and they opt out of life itself. Ask yourself if you sleep soundly, or even enough. That will give you a very good idea of where you stand. Anxieties take away sleep and sound sleep is a necessary antidote to giving it all up. There are many reasons for sleeplessness found in the scriptures. Here are some of them.

### 1 Wrong attitudes

Fear - Proverbs 3:24 'When you lie down, you shall not be afraid; yes, you shall lie down and your sleep shall be sweet.'

Priorities out of place - Proverbs 20:13 'Love not sleep, lest you come to poverty.'

Sleeping in the wrong place - 'If I make my bed in hell, (reposing in, reclining, resting in or desiring) 'yet He is there.' So He may make you very restless until you get out!

Do you come to night hours with the joy and thankfulness and celebration with which you welcome the day or the light?

Too soon sleeping the sleep of death - 1 Corinthians 11:30 'For this cause (taking communion or the bread and wine in remembering His death, without examining yourself in the light of the cross) many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep - that is; the sleep of death before due time.

Tired before you start and when you wake - Isaiah 40:31 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall amount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.'

### 2. Natural Causes of Wakeful Nights.

Carpe Diem - seize the day. Let every minute count. It may just be that you do not have either enough to do or enough exercise. 'If you love sleep, you will end in poverty. Stay awake, work hard, and there will be plenty to eat.,' says Proverbs 20:13. Ecclesiastes 4:12 - 'The sleep of labouring man is sweet.'

The bible also tells us that sin lurks deep in the heart of the wicked. They lie awake at night thinking of evil deeds. They are devising mischief and their sleep is taken away except they cause someone to fall. Psalm 38

Let it not be that there is anything contrary to God's laws keeping us awake, not even the smallest plan to get the better of someone in honest business deals.

### 3. Deliberate cultivation of sleeplessness.

Over activity. Are you doing too much, especially late at night, mentally or physically.

Psalm 127:2 tells us 'It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He gives His beloved sleep.' Or in another words, it is senseless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night, fearing you will starve to death, for God wants His loved ones to get their proper rest.

Worry. Do you spend most of your waking hours worrying? Ezekiel 34:25 'I will make with them a covenant of peace; and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.'

This kind of peace is a gift of gifts, the kind that keeps the mind steady and the heart without fainting in the wilderness of trouble and the woods of overwhelming darkness, where no light shines at all. Sweet sleep even there where unknown dangers lurk.

Anxiety. Philippians 4:6,7 'Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God (last thing at night)

and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.'

#### 4. The Special Entrepreneur Disease - restlessness

Don't despise it. Restlessness in the middle of the night may be good. It is the only time that God sees you have to spare. He is seeking your company and longs to have communion with you but you are too busy. In which case there is a separation of interests between you and your Lord.

Song of Solomon 5:2 'I sleep, but my heart wakes: it is the voice of my beloved that knocks, saying 'Open to Me'. So get up and listen - make a cup of tea! Small boy Samuel got up three times and the whole of the Israelite nation profited because of it throughout a generation and more.

'Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still'. Psalm 4:4 Where the bedroom doors are shut legitimately may be the only place to be alone without interruption.

Serious talks by God can sometimes only be given there and at night. David, for instance, had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed. We still take note of his prophecy today.

Sleep is a gift. It has to be accepted. Psalm 127:2 'He gives to His beloved sleep.'

Is sin a problem? In 2 Kings 4:21 we find the scriptures say 'She went up, and laid the child on the bed of the man of God.' This bed was a holy place called significantly, 'the bed of the man of God.' There was pure air in the chamber where prayer was constantly made. Do you lie on such a bed to seek the blessing of sleep from a Holy God? Or is your bed not so holy? 'Marriage should be honoured by all and the marriage bed kept pure...' Hebrews 13:4

Job, however, was a very righteous man. He was also extremely prosperous with heavy responsibilities. He was a leader among men and every minute was occupied. But his sleep was taken away for a time. There was so much more for Job and God was intent on giving it to him.

To release the pressures with non-committed time is the aim. The body, mind and spirit cry out for rest. Driving competition can produce a weariness and fatigue that only God's resting periods can relieve. Restlessness and hyperactivity leave the physical side as well as the emotions embarrassed and exposed. The hyped-up, high-flying, global business man must find refreshment somehow. Relaxation and rest is for longevity as much as for quality of living. It is somehow very comforting to know that God is concerned about this. Sleep therefore, is not so much a waste of time as we might like to convince ourselves. We allow a kind of pushing-on feeling to dominate us and we have a must-get-finished mentality. Working hard is good but not from the fear of being left behind; of not having enough, not competing properly, etceteras.

Unless the Lord is building the house and protecting the city, those who watch out for it are wasting their time anyway, says David. And he should know. No-one worked harder or did more. Not many of us build whole cities and protect them as he did throughout his authoritative years.

Sleep, slumber, the eyes closed, lack of conscious activity is all on God's agenda. Sleep eludes us sometimes and must be dealt with. Otherwise a black hole awaits.

At one time the Lord wanted to take the disciples away from everything, especially, let's face it, away from people like us. So He said 'Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.'

Mark 6:31. Does that end bit sound familiar? They were to be alone with Him. This is the ultimate in rest. His intention was rest plus refreshment. The purpose was physical, spiritual and every other way. Sometimes we feel guilty about wanting to get away from people. People who might need us. Not so the Lord. Their inner resources needed renewing, their bodies strengthening and no doubt, His too. Vitality, health, vigour, cannot be maintained with it.

Can you make certain that you and all who work for you, have regular rest times; recuperation periods and well-defined, cycled dates, away from routine activity? Don't wait for the crack in the wall.

Radiating life that has nothing to do with age, has everything to do with this kind of lifestyle.

And to return to the thought of sleep, if it is not wearing you out contemplating it, we must realise that the inner or outer city man desperately needs it. It is not a word that should bring tears to the eyes or a wringing of the hands with great mental anguish attached! It is not an impossible accomplishment. God has a great deal to say about it and so it must be important. He also says a lot about the, sometimes, temporary withdrawal to balance things up.

Sleep is the sweetest of gifts and if the week leaves you slightly smut-covered, God has given a way to be completely refreshed. It is a full exterior cleansing and interior washing through reading and absorbing the scriptures.

Well, now you can go and have a good night's rest - providing of course, you have paid your taxes!!

#### 4. How To Behave Without It.

Watchman Knee said, 'The object of temporal poverty is eternal enrichment. All pressure shall lead to enlargement.'

Watchman Knee's pressures were sustained through years of imprisonment in China for his faith. So, if there is a comparative long-term, or sudden, unexplained restraint or stress in relation to your bank statement, do not lose heart. We are still living by faith especially regarding finances.

There was a time when God was standing quietly on the sideline watching one of the richest men in history, Job. He was probably the greatest in the East in his day. He had seven thousand sheep, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred asses and three thousand camels, plus servants, managers, consultants, buyers, sellers, and trainees. There was a second talking point about this man. He was perfect in God's sight and deeply spiritual.

Ezekiel 14:14 tells us he was one of the most righteous men. It seems that fabulous wealth and right standing with God can go together. However, he was quickly coming to his wit's end. Here was a man in the desert of life, absolutely devastated by circumstances and almost beyond help. It might be said that it was good that he was also nearing the end of all self-help but he did not feel like that when everything failed including his health.

At one point in his extremity, he saw death as the only way out. If finance and material gain is all and what we have of family and health fails as with Job, then yes, perhaps that is the only way out. Some take it. However, God had not finished with Job.

Trusted and honoured by God, loved and revered by men, Job is noted for severe and protracted testing. With wealth and prosperity increasing and honour on all sides, his substance and his family were inexplicably and without warning, removed. He lost everything. He had come to nought and God's protection was withdrawn.

'Does Job fear God for nought?' said Satan. Will he go on trusting God when there is nothing left? If his health fails too, will he yet remain faithful to his Lord?

One day, Job had the remarkable experience of knowing, long before Jesus' time on earth and in the middle of this catastrophe, that his Redeemer lived and he would see Him with his own eyes. Nothing else mattered then. That was the turning point in Job's history of troubles. Incidentally, when it was all over, Job became richer than ever.

Sometimes, it is worth considering, that your unexplained tribulations may have a great deal to do with weaning. It is the same weaning that children must go through. Isaac says in chapter 27 verse 9, 'To whom shall He teach knowledge...or give understanding...to them that are weaned.'

Weaning is a thing we do not like. But there are places, higher positions, mountain tops, where God will want to take us, that are, as yet, beyond our thinking. Things too wonderful. Therefore we must be weaned! Like breast feeding and its withdrawal, it comprises touch, closeness, comfort, seeing and feeling clearly and easily all that is necessary for sustaining life at the right temperature and the right consistency. It includes warmth and being held up and security. We know what we have and it is there when we need it and we never consider that it could not be there.

When we are weaned things we need are withdrawn. They are taken away. Suddenly or gradually, we find we are relying on that which is no longer a reality and readily available.

Surely, says David, I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is as a weaned child.' Psalm 131:2 He grew up, infancy was over. So we have to stop crying for what has been withdrawn. To stop longing and asking and do without. To be poverty stricken as it were, even to searching through the scriptures and still find nothing to help. To go through this experience should be thrilling!

For one thing, now, we no longer find ourselves emotionally wavering. We become oblivious to soft-soap and flattery. No longer worried by the sleight of men or thrown by disappointments. Decision making and discernment become finely honed. We will actually stand on our own feet financially and in other ways with a new independence emerging.

The pressures have a way of showing up the shaking reeds we have been trusting in, even if one of them is self.

God is the Rock foundation from start to finish. He is our life force and, as Job found out, He can do anything. He will not let us slide one centimetre off course, even if it feels like it and even if indeed the whole world-monetary system falls apart. He already accounted for the shaking of the earth when the stock market in four countries explodes into an abyss.

A poet wrote 'Nothing can shake your sure repose, He built the earth, His world He knows; You stand or fall on this.' (Anon)

By now we will be alert to the dangers of having our emotions tampered with by the ebb and flow of capital and accounting. Now that God has shaken us up and we have read the verse about not setting our hearts on increasing riches (Psalm 62:10) we could ask a few questions.

Have I advanced at all to a different level and a better evaluation of myself; a more constructive plan in life; a deeper spiritually-minded dealing with money or a more Christ like direction? Or are my ways and plans just the same as they were twelve months ago?

Have I increased my tithe in relation to the increases in my income? Or is that just the same? Have I thought through the possibility of giving away more to varying outlets with a wider aim or fresh purpose. Or do I stay with what I know?

Is there a different lifestyle needing less financial input than previously thought absolutely necessary? Or is there an intent on more exciting personal spending?

Is there even time to consider such possibilities of enlargement and do I actually want to?

If I have everything the world could offer - large pieces of ground in the centre of the world's capitals or able to purchase a Concorde for a granddaughter's christening present; if I could feed millions with the stroke of a pen, would it all be worth the ability to reach up to God in prayer and to know He hears? - to actually speak to the One who made the gold mines in Australia and the amethyst in Africa?

Suppose we could only have one or the other-answered prayer or solid gold chairs and thirty homes. Would we answer honestly?

All this may not be so much about money matters as about men dealing in finance and making mistakes. Not sins, they have been dealt with and forgotten but misjudging, wrong assessments, oversights and plain embarrassments.

Well, a good man falls but he doesn't stay down. God upholds him with His hand.

Don't try to escape as you may only have to go through it all again. Bide your time, let faith have a chance to rise. 'When He slew them then they sought Him'. Psalm 78. Well, why wait for a catalogue of disasters before we realise that we look for an answer in calamities in vain if we do not look at what God is doing in us and overall.

Does the broker send a warning fax?

Is the merchant bank doubtful about finding backers?

Has a hurricane flattened the source warehouse?

In his book 'The Fourth Dimension' Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho who runs the largest church in the world, describes a man who owned a fertiliser factory and it failed, putting him heavily in debt. Because of the loss of prestige, friends and all credit, inferiority overpowered him and he became extremely ill, mentally and physically. He came eventually to Pastor and was told he was not inferior and had all the power and resources of God waiting to be tapped. He became more and

more sure of God while reading the Bible and continuing to pray. He eventually became confident enough to start again on a small scale selling salt, eventually building a large storehouse right beside the river for easy transport. Here he placed 50,000 dollars worth of salt. One summer night it rained heavily, flooding the area. There was a rush to see how the man had fared. Of course, all the salt, having a great affinity with water, had been washed away! Sitting in the middle of the warehouse, his Pastor found the man, singing and praising God. 'I have lost everything, Pastor,' he said, 'God took it away but nothing can take away the total resources of the presence of God dwelling in me. You wait, give me time, I will rebuild my business again.' He was full of confidence with no inferiority complex showing at all. He is now a multimillionaire travelling the world and sometimes accompanying and assisting Dr. Yonggi Cho where he goes to preach.

You may not like the following! It is a quote from 'Of the Imitation of Christ.' By Thomas A-Kempis.

'Lift up your eyes to the riches of heaven, and you shall see that all the goods of this life are nothing to be accounted of.'

Despite the fact that we may be able to give thanks for rich rewards, honours, compensations and even, in the past, what is called a champagne lifestyle, we may still have a feeling of rejection and withholding from God. Then we just become rich losers. If I have great assets but am poverty-possessed inside, I have an empty property to deal with - myself.

I am distressed by great need. I feel a pauper with barrenness within. Sometimes we need to renounce a spirit of poverty and a feeling being of no account because of a simple lack in the purse. It is possible to feel this way with an outward and shining obvious need-of-nothing. There can be very great needs in the heart of men in the Jacuzzi as well as the local baths.

Don't let us deny God the pleasure, though, of taking us through the experience of the spoiling of all our goods and possessions. It may be heart-rending, but He knows that and He has His hand on the timekeeper and we might just feel really free if He takes it all!!

Isaac, in the Old Testament, had a problem. Although he dug deep twice over to build wells for desperately needed water, his competitors managed to plug his basic means of support. They were tricky and vindictive and very aggressive. Here was the opportunity for Isaac to see what the faith of his father's was worth. There was no discouragement from God and He gave him a fresh supply that this time would not fail. Isaac had done nothing in retaliation and that is the hard bit. You may not know such hardship as a man with thousands of head of cattle and sheep and no water but you may be able to equate with his experience.

When you read the book of Joshua you discover that there are clear borders for each man. There were defined boundaries to the property. They had fought for this at that time and could cultivate it and leave it to their descendants. Beyond the boundary they had no claim.

It was land, valleys, mountains, rivers and whole cities and they could build where and how they liked. It was all theirs. All that meant prosperity, riches, and a full life. There was nothing withheld whether for necessity or enjoyment.

But still they had their limits and boundaries.

It was said to Joshua, in chapter one, 'Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you.' It was meant physically and spiritually.

There are many things in life we could do having brilliance, ambition, finances and the spirit of God in our lives.

We need to make sure, therefore, before we move forward or attempt new ventures, that God has given us the land and that it is He Himself who means to extend our borders.

## 5. How to Behave With It

‘All your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia,  
out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made  
you glad...The king’s daughter is all glorious  
within: her clothing is of wrought gold.’  
Psalm 46

The king’s daughter was glorious without as well as within.

She is to be presented to the king and to the world as wholly desirable. Costly raiment of needlework painstakingly prepared and garments of gold were her right and proper clothing.

There is majesty and beauty and glory in God and His children, portrayed here to be seen. Royalty and riches go together. Strength and dignity in our presentation show our nobility and we are to look and behave as though we have just stepped from lofty and splendid ivory palaces.

When the king is in control and over all, this will not be ostentatious pomp but modesty and a pure simplicity. We are being trained as well. God is digging out roots; seeds have been dropped and shoots propagated in the soil of early years that are steadily growing into strong weeds. They have been entwining themselves into our thought processes, giving basic life principles. It has been regularly fertilised! In the dark recesses of the growing media we have imagined it is all essential to life. Most of the invaders have something to do with money; acquisitiveness; materialism; frivolous collecting; selfish ambition; comfort-spending; greed; and just plain lust.

In this rampaging couch-grass of our age and world, we can at least make sure we don’t willingly allow the weeds any encouragement now.

We can trample on the desire to feed them or to delight in them. Secular symbols like wealth and possessions are often put together in the scriptures to point out spiritual purposes.

Malachi says in 3:3 ‘He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver. He shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.’

Malachi talked money and possessions but deep down he was saying ‘take heed to your spirit.’ The coming of Jesus was very near at that time and although God lived among them, their worship was formal and insincere.

The hidden motives and reasons for acting in certain ways come to the surface in the world of work, especially in an area of commerce but our behaviour will have grown up with us. So how far now will you go in taking advice from ungodly men? Will the counsel given set others at naught? Will it take advantage of them? Or disparage them? Will it all mean compromising principles of mercy and honesty. If you walk in the advice of ungodly men you can just as easily walk away!

While you are making sure that the pay slip and the bank statement have not imperceptibly taken the place of your conscience, don't let your own financial responses be given to any one else. Keep a watch. While you are working hard at keeping another's books straight, your own accounts might be vanishing unaccountably. Early recognition is a vital weapon. Temptations always arrive. Unexpectedly, insidiously and unannounced they will try to take over. And usually they will be along the lines of a commonly accepted direction, money, sex and the control of others. These areas are normal, healthy and more or less, necessary. But there is inherent in them the possibility to go wrong or to flood the emotions overpoweringly. There must be someone close who knows you well and to whom you are always accountable. Prayer and faith will never be more needed than when you are successful

Jabez was a man who wanted to expand but he also had a tendency to depression and despair. He gave God the chance to enlarge him in spite of his name meaning sorrow. He was determined his attitudes and abilities would not limit God but he would not go ahead in his expansion schemes without Him. He was not afraid of gaining too much but afraid of not waiting for God in it all. Jabez was guarding against natural discouragement by following closely behind. So God granted him all that he requested and no questions asked.

Watch out too, because you are also being watched!

If you are management material and, of course, you are, the moguls are observing every move. There will be many small details they will be noting; subconsciously perhaps but vitally aware, nevertheless and ready when emergencies or management and directorship vacancies occur. Are you quick or slow to answer the phone or does someone arrive there before you?

Are you speedy to take control of a situation and sensitive to all it involves among the rest of the personnel..

Would you call yourself overweight!! Too interested in meal breaks or alternatively too stress-lookingly thin?

Can you make lasting relationships as well as making moony?

Do you arrive with yesterday's rejections weighing you down today?

Does wearing a suit frighten you to death and who exactly do you spend time with?

In Paul's second letter to Timothy he talks about young men and their bodily strength in work, mentally and physically. Work hard, like a farmer, he says, to get well paid. Follow the rules like an athlete, to win. Keep from being entangled in things of the world to be well disciplined. Be careful in other words, what you do or don't do with your body. There are those you will know who decline meals and legitimate times of relaxation and are only ready for briefing, reading reports, noting, amending, who would tap a laptop even on plane trips.

Some of this is indiscriminate abuse of the body, habit-forming and catching.

Don't neglect the body's needs not in any way at all. It houses the Spirit of God. Others will be looking, noting, comparing and drawing conclusions.

You will also be watched carefully by the archenemy, Satan. Your business may be lucrative and working well, or you may be just beginning, but because you belong to the Lord, it hurts the purposes of the opposition.

'If you are reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you; for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you,' says Peter in his first epistle (4:14). You may not be quite that happy, but don't be tempted to think you are superfluous to production because of criticism and misjudgement. You are not thereby unacceptable among the money marketeers. It may all rightly be called persecution and it may have only happened on a minor scale but one day it will be world-wide and there will be power behind it to force your expulsion perhaps from the financial affairs of men. Money, influence, prestige and high connections will make no difference. This kind of spirit of rejection comes from satanic forces directed at the overthrow of God's kingdom on earth.

Despite all this we would be seriously mistaken to think that God is not interested in enlarging our profit and loss schemes and also our cash-flow, daily perhaps. So watch for expansion in unexpected ways.

'I know my behaviour is very reserved and discreet, Lord, but I am obviously working to make money!! I do love you, however, and you have not called me away from all that I love doing here, to serve you abroad, nevertheless, I am raring to go further in your service if you will just let me know what it is you would like to see me doing.'

'Here is what I would like you to do. As you go home tonight, you will find a man knocked down. The ambulance men are on strike. Others will be pouring themselves into the underground. Never mind the spattered blood stains on your BMW. Help him into the car. Book in at the nearest hotel for both of you. Follow the doctor's instructions. Don't question the smell of his breathe or run when they do the blood tests. You will be forced to have a few days away from your desk. Care for his needs, feed him if necessary but do not leave him until he is able to give you his name and address and all expenses are paid. Phone the office. This man is Mine and he needs you.

## 6. Wealth Health

'The Lord delights in the prosperity of His servants.' Fancy!! Well Psalm 35 verse twenty seven says so, so you can believe it. And not only for other people but for you as well. Actually, God has denied us nothing. The wealth of the world is ours.

Penny pinching may be piously religious. It may even for a time be necessary. You may, of course, be living in the middle of a barren desert or among those, in the sight of whom, lavish spending would be unseemly. But the disciplines of living as a King'son/daughter must be worked out and sought after for His sake, if not our own.

Hoarding, or denying legitimate causes and amassing large amounts is not for us, but what if a million came daily, monthly, would we then act differently?

The Israelites came out of Egypt carrying Egypt's treasures. And God had still more to give. Suddenly they were no longer paupers and living on meagre national assistance but still their characteristic attitude was rebellion. They brought that out with them, too. It was nurtured through the desert and carried carefully across Jordan and into the milk and honey land of Canaan. Their wealth then became enlarged and accumulative. Whatever Jehovah did, however, they grumbled and complained. There was still no limit to the King's provision for them.

His generosity is boundless, so we do not need to be dowdy or down-at heel.

Inside and outside we aim at letting the rest of the world see that our Father is wonderfully liberal although we may be always in the middle of a dilemma because we live among people who like to emulate the good while making lots of money for themselves and appearing to be righteous with it by giving it away to charities.

However, if the world does see the outward signs of opulence in us we could, if we have a mind to, follow more of Solomon's words and 'let the eye be bountiful,' as he quaintly puts it. The soul would then be free of snares as generosity is always blessed although it does not have to be broadcast.

In our role of mutual dependence as members of one body in Christ, we become part of His great purpose for the whole of mankind. Even in a limited sphere we can be rich in good works and ready to distribute, willing to communicate, as the Macedonian's were in Paul's day. The Macedonians were generous to other churches although their poverty was well known. They gave beyond all that they could afford.

Our charge to overflow to the needy, hurting people of the world is rich and broad. Above all, Paul says in his first book of Corinthians (1-:23) 'Let no man seek his own but every man another's wealth.' He may not be actually talking so much about money as about the well-being of others. There is no greater contrast to 'Do whatever turns you on' - our prevailing western phrase - than Paul's words, quoted from the Old Testament, 'the insults hurled at my brother were hurled at me.' Psalm 69:9 and Romans 15:3. No-one should be looking to his own interests without concern for the interests of others. Consider the man who started the computer revolution and made so much and also gave so much away in thousands to help the Indian Aids program.

This is impossible on the shop floor, you cry; over simplified! Out of the question in a take-over and so on. We live at liberty by the grace of God but still, whether in money matters or anything else, our freedom to act is limited by another man's conscience so often.

The rich and wise men from the east, travelling to Jerusalem and Bethlehem to search for the new born baby Jesus, did not know the extent of all the death dealing traps they might encounter. Nor were they told much. But God had given them a desire to please Him, and the experience of listening for his voice and the way to recognise His timing together with a fearless sense of ready obedience. Are we as wise and spiritual? Are we as rich and influential.? We could begin as they did. They fell down and worshipped Him.

Now to put the screws on! Listen to this; ‘Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies’, and again, ‘Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain: but a woman that fears the Lord, she shall be praised.’ That’s the wise man in Proverbs 31 again. So if you are really good at your job and earning money quickly and steadily and have the capacity for a one hundred percent commitment, you better know that God does not want you burnt out in ten years. He would have you as a full-bloodied, well-rounded personality then just as you are now. He wants a Christian in the centre of the power houses without shame. So set yourself the task of seeking his provision in a Proverb-type partner. Be as ambitious about it as you are in business.

You may lose your heart but do not lose your head and not get the best wife going. This will certainly mean knowing how she handles money among other things. Is she faithful to God’s way of dealing with finance: Property? Savings? What is her lifestyle? Does she care for those near her with her resources - now? Is she energetic and hard working? Does she enjoy the giving involved with practising hospitality? Of course, she must attract you and be able to move you as well!

If you are putting everything you have, time, money, energy, into making the business a success but have not yet found a wife, stop. Turn things over to a colleague and spend time in searching for this most precious gift. It is probably being prepared and programmed just for you already. Your generous, caring Father has provided this way to take the toughness and brittleness out of life. It is hard making it to the top but Christians can do it without collecting a depressing materialistic attitude on the way up.

Actually, God’s way seems to be to bring to you the one of His choice, so stick around, keep your eyes and ears open and like Isaac, meditating in the fields, you will see her coming perhaps. A wife is one of the provisions that make a whole lot of difference. God is not, however, going to do it all for you. But you can tell Him what you want in detail, height, weight, colour!

‘A truly good woman is worth more than precious gems. Her husband can trust her and she will richly satisfy all his needs. She will not hinder him, but help him all her life.’ Proverbs 31:11.12. Having this matter settled, you can move on -- but not too hastily!! In early Israelite days God had them waiting a year before they went back to war. After taking a wife, cool it a bit and He will keep things ticking over.

Sometimes called the perfect woman, ‘She considers a field and buys it, She perceives that her merchandise is good, she makes fine linen and sells it and delivers girdles to the merchants.’ She was delivering very satisfactory work to men in commerce and doing it alone it seems. Her husband was not a partner in her enterprises nor was he running things. She was selling her own work to traders and dealers and she had to learn to take the heat and competition. All the deceits, the cover-ups, the disagreements over prices were her responsibility. She also had a household to care for. There were children and servants needing her love, hard work and time. All this did not make her ambivalent - having either or both of two contrary values or qualities. She was single-minded, doing her husband good. In spite of knowing all his wife’s daily

concourse and conference with others outside the home, the husband of this lovely disciplined woman was completely at rest.

There was no cry for equality from either of them. It was not hers to usurp her husband's standing and authority. He was the one to be known in the gates and to sit with elders of the land. She and he knew that there was an equality in status, just a difference in purpose and activity.

Consider this woman. She is a very feminine one. Twenty-one verses of chapter thirty-one in Proverbs are given to describing her perfections. Thirteen of the verses are directly taken up with her ability to handle wealth and the rest are used to praise her accomplishments with it. The point being that she used her money. It is not just spent, or saved even or exhausted. It is used; consumed; employed to meet need. She is practised in applying money to bringing comfort to the household and honour to her man.

Neither is there any neglect in hastening to employ wealth's power for her own desires. Utility and hoarding do not seem to be considered either. Cash is applied to everyday customs for profit and advantage. Everyone knew how she got it and everyone rejoiced. 'Give her of the fruit of her hands; Then let her own works praise her in the gates.' Why not.

We mostly remember Caleb from Judges 1:14 for being over eighty years old when he fought on and took a mountain. He was a man of great faith and had reached a good age to make a will! But he wasn't sure whether or not he could hand it all over to the next generation. Could his descendants be faithful with all the prosperity that has been given him by God. And where was the son-in-law he had expected all these years?

Could Achsah, his daughter, be unsure, too, supposing that the young boys around her would not be in quite the same mould as her father. There is no harm in setting a test for a future son-in-law and in Othniel, Caleb found a young man after his own heart; one who could and would fight the battles of the Lord. Achsah too, must have been delighted that she had been given to someone who would continue faithfully in Canaan as her father had done. So when she was given to Othniel she asked for an extra blessing - springs of water to go with the south land already given. Wisdom indeed from a woman newly betrothed.

Now find yourself such a one.

## 7. Give it or Keep it

It was John Wesley who said, 'Gain as much as you can, save as much as you can, give as much as you can.' It follows that what you do with what is yours, gives meaning and depth to possessing it.

But if you live surrounded by those who have more than they need you may find yourself with a desire to be an ascetic! The world's pomp can overwhelm a sensitive spirit and it is possible to

be deeply wounded by observing opulence and over-extravagance. It can be grossly sickening to the soul.

The young flower people of the '60's found it impossible for themselves to reconcile their parent's lifestyle when they saw the rich receiving so much more than they needed and the poor going without. They found life easier by turning away from it all.

But that rich young man St. Francis of Assisi did not opt out of life and choose to live without knowing about the rest of the world's needs. He busied himself with giving. And it is possible to balance the personal hazards of having too much by organised, or even disorganised, giving. It is hard work but still a God given ability to give and not to count the cost.

Jacob started his giving when he realised God was bringing him in line with the faith of his fathers. When God met him in an extremity, he said, 'If, (or as,) God will be with me...then shall the Lord be my God.. .And I will surely give the tenth unto Him. Genesis 28:20-22.

God knows our giving needs certain rules and standards and it is not too simple to say that in workable terms it means an account system we can easily understand and refer to readily. We keep a check thereby on ourselves as well as the cash.

The ten percent is a structure to rely on without constant hesitation or indecision. There is no limited ceiling but it does need a certain faithfulness in adding up, subtracting and generally multiplying. And He may require that account someday!

So really it should be written down and recorded - just as would happen with the company records. Every cent accounted for, debit and credit.

Jehoash said to the priests in 2 Kings 12:4,5 'All the money of the dedicated things that is brought into the house of the Lord...the money that every man is set at, (makes his own mind up) and all the money that comes into every man's heart...let the priests take it and repair the house.'

But that was not done. When challenged about the house of God still in disrepair they agreed to set up a special repair fund that would not go through their hands, lest it be diverted to care for their own personal needs. So the first ever recorded money box was made. A box you could put the money in but you couldn't take it out. Why didn't I think of that?!

But whoever gives money away? Just like that - almost without thought, carefree and for no personal benefit. For no visible or invisible returns? Well, David did. It was not a law in Israel but he made it one. He said, 'as his part is that goes down to battle, so shall his part be that tarries at home.' 1 Samuel 30:24. It caused a stir but it was done. If you want spice to life, a mind-explosion, an extra dimension to a predictably dull lifestyle, try giving for no reason. This is for life experience not reputation-after-death. David did not seem to be particularly aware that he was doing something at God's command or even trying to give God any special glory. It is repeated in Psalm 68 - 'They were sitting at home dividing the booty.' David thought of it in spite of opposition from colleagues but he enjoyed making a precedent. He would, of course, in the process, find men willing to be encouraged to become part of this national enterprise. He would make a lot of the next generation very grateful and he would also be remembered as one who knew how to deal with rebellion. That was a side benefit!

God had enlarged David's heart in a most unnatural way. He was an extremely generous and passionate man

A further incident recounts how they came to Ziklag during war and David sent gifts to all the friends and elders of Judah where he and his men had found refuge when they were outcasts and homeless. He made himself a kind of personal life-precept, a principle of giving away while he himself could enjoy seeing it enjoyed. And it was to be given to those who had succoured him during his rejection and times of distressing, physical need. They had helped while there was no possible prospect of repayment. What he did, the Bible calls a 'present'. This word translated from the Hebrew word 'Berakah' also means a blessing. Another thing worth noting is that David's death had long been on his mind before he was too frail to contemplate or care about changes in his will. Wise man. His kingdom's wealth was not going to be frittered away by others, not even his sons, without his vision attached. So he spent his money in God-given enterprises while he could and while his mind was sound. He made preparations for building the temple although he was not allowed to build.

There are many lesser projects but ones which may have just as far-reaching results in our own world. We can serve our generation in many ways with our extra cash. There are those who have grown less well off just by ceasing to be employed; those who have given simple loyalty in work to us or to our firm; the young in their need for education. We can give for no reason whatsoever or simply to encourage people in their search for God. Think of a sum and then double it.

God wants to move the hearts of families so that the accumulated wealth of past generations can be redirected. This is difficult and may only be possible through prayer. Expansive projects reaching into a future we may never see this side of heaven, cost money and it is not an easy thing to redirect funds. One of the reasons for prayer is to simply prepare the way. God's heart of compassion is far bigger than all the extended reaches in the foreseeable future of our particular lineage.

The suffering of others must also be relieved somehow. It is a pressed down, running over kind of giving that is needed, the kind of way God Himself gives. Not the lending and borrowing kind that is sometimes called community care; not fund-raising; organised eventing, but a simple pouring out of abundance.

The Egyptians gave to get rid of the Israelites. They had become a pestilential danger. Anyway, they could not do otherwise than give as it was God who had opened the gates and unloosed the slaves and they were not going to go empty handed.

There are many nations and people these days being released from tyranny and it is a penal kind of economy they find themselves in. It has left them destitute.

It is a wonderful talent to be able to be extravagant with the Lord's money. But it does take practise!

Could you go to Thailand if He asked you - or merely suggested it? You could visit the missionaries to encourage them and see their needs first hand instead of taking your usual

holiday. Don't wait for retirement to take that world cruise. There are people at the world's quaysides who need your prayers and largesse. Buy something you don't need for the sake of the family they represent. It's usually a big one.

We have programmed our thoughts so that we live in a compounded miscellany of potpourri spiritual gymnastics, where costs and needs are concerned. But the end is to justify the no-go areas of luxury spending.

Just by the way, do you really feel, for instance, that your son could not use some of your massed fortune judiciously? Or do you feel, not now, not yet, not quite as wisely as you could?

The Macedonians we spoke of were people who were overgenerous with their handouts. No-one opted out in this particular church activity. So enthusiastic were they, that they mixed their joy with deep poverty. 'Beyond their power they were willing of themselves; praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministry to the saints. (2 Corinthians 8:3,4.) Full of loving-kindness, they were proving to all that the Christian message is real. Urgent and urging, anxiously willing, and full of grave concern, giving more than they could afford.

Do you need a ministry? Do you need to know you are part of it all? Take a look at the ledger and adjust your priorities. 'Not that others might be eased and you burdened,' says Paul, but accepting an earnest care in your heart and a willingness of mind that there be no want in the body of Christ. The measure of the grace of God bestowed on these Macedonians was that they first gave themselves to the Lord and this, of course, was priority but they knew that it was their money that was needed. However, they were so immersed in the project they just had to become more heavily involved. Giving became a principle of corporal life. Consistent giving of money was so bound up with the whole church and individual personality it was a consecration of life itself.

True giving far surpasses our departmentalised way of thinking.

In a very real sense, if you cannot give your prayers, your emotional and physical energy where you give your cash, then it might be best to stop! We may not be directing our funds into the stream of God's will for us. It is a fundamental need to be able to give happily and gladly with overflowing generous hearts. It is so much more than an isolated act.

Will it mean touching my capitol? How much does it cost? Can I afford it? These questions should never be asked. They were never asked by the Macedonians and they may mean we have very little clear understanding of God's priorities in the realm of wealth-distribution for a needy world. It was unbelievably far-sighted, eternity-friendly giving; the 'laying up treasure in heaven' kind of giving. They didn't just hand it over because everyone else was doing it (and watching). No-one asked them to do it because they knew what a hard time the Macedonian church was going through. They were poor to poverty stricken. But they were generous to bountifully liberal. They were giving a slice of bread from one hand when all the other hand held was watery porridge. That is giving.

There was a true story written recently of a business man who wanted to give away money because he was quickly becoming a millionaire. Instead, the Lord made him into a preacher without any money. But he could not help continuing to invent useful articles. They were so

commercially profitable to a ready market that patents had to be applied. He fought it out with God many times on his knees because he wanted to serve God and not the nation's industry. In the end he fairly happily metamorphosed into a preacher who invented.

The thrilling discovery came one day when he realised that with this ability he could construct his own churches wherever the Lord took him. These places were always where there had been nowhere to meet and no necessary skills to direct men to work - third world to nowhere places. First the Lord bound the people's hearts into a community wherever he preached. Then the patents went on producing millions and the business man did what he had always wanted to do - give the millions to God in designing and building and providing work for men to construct churches and also homes around the churches. God had known what He was doing from the beginning.

## 8. Borrowing and Lending

'Love your enemies, do good, lend, hoping for nothing again.' Luke 6:35

This presumably means we are to lend when asked, but make sure we don't ask for it back! It sounds as though we are a soft touch. The Bible goes on to say that Jesus calls this being merciful and we have to be kind to the unthankful!! Just as He is. We'll know these easily as they never say thank you! They are probably very close in our own family or in the office. It will test how much resentment and bitterness there is left in us that we did not know about or chose not to remember. And 'hoping for nothing back' must be the same as giving. If Jesus is still speaking about enemies, this kind of lending will counteract having it taken by force or stolen. It is really comforting to read a verse that comes a bit later. 'Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over...' Great!! 'What you give shall be given (in like measure) to you.'

We might even be asked to lend to those who themselves could well afford to purchase the whole stock market or buy off the jury! This is not hypothetical supposition. Jesus was no pretender. It may turn into a very real situation. Put in another way, lend, expecting not to receive it back with interest. Not lending and forgetting, either, but lending and go on being gracious and loving. It all sounds a bit high-minded and complicated but in practice it must work

David had plenty of enemies but, he says, in Psalm 35 'I behaved as though he had been my friend and brother...' And another thing, 'if your brother becomes poor you are responsible to help him.....Don't charge him interest on the money you lend him...Give him what he needs at your own cost.' (Lev.25:35) Wow! Really?

When I was extremely poor and with no home or job and in circumstances in which I knew others had sunk without trace, my sister lent me the large sum of £500. It literally saved my life although she did not know the whole state of affairs. She asked no questions and expected no

return. That is mercy as I saw it in action. Almost daily we face the human extremities presented to us and sometimes flung at us by the media, but we still have to deliberately consider whether our own immediate relations lack anything. For some reason we sometimes find that harder than dealing with strangers.

Are any distressed or actually suffering poverty within the family circle? Is there anyone of them unable to continue with education? Are any silently trying to obtain all that they need from a single pension?

It is very easy to become overwhelmed and defeated by miserable finances. It is depressing in the extreme to continually be without enough money. The secular money lenders are on the doorstep with their exorbitant demands for almost dishonest interest rates.

Jacob found it worked wonders with his very sore brother. A gift went before him and smoothed the way to restored relationships.

On the other hand, the scriptures say, 'If you endorse a note for someone whom you hardly know, guaranteeing his debt, you are in serious trouble. You may have trapped yourself by your agreement. Quick! Get out of it if you possibly can! Swallow your pride; don't let embarrassment stand in the way. Go and beg to have your name erased. Don't put it off. Do it now. Don't rest until you do. If you can get out of this trap you have saved yourself like a deer that escapes from the hunter, or a bird from the net.' Proverbs 6:1-5

There must have been a lot of borrowing and lending in Bible days, just as there is now. But even if we don't understand all the implications, it is better just to follow the instructions.

There are many nowadays, as then, who have no home, no place of refuge, nowhere to go when it rains or worse. The minute our compassion is activated, God has something to show us. To visit men in prison as though it were Jesus Himself, as he tells us, may be even more costly, lucre-wise, than we think, and that is just the train fare. This is not a personality trait given to a few. Inherit the kingdom this way, He says. And do it with some of the stuff you save, add up, work hard for, jingle in the pocket, exchange, waste and gladly, happily give away. Lending and giving to people you may never see again, this is people-investment.

The description in the book of Revelation of coming famine on an unprecedented scale is worse than we already know of unacceptable hunger. At the same time, and living alongside the malnutrition, are the symbols of those who live in richness and plenty. We are not to destroy the oil and the wine,- Revelation 6:6 - symbolising lush plenty. So there will always be those who can lend to nations with a priority to feed the hungry.

If we don't, we are in danger as Sodom, which was destroyed partly because of the parsimony. Ezekiel says in chapter 16 and verse 49, 'This was the iniquity of your daughter Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness in her and her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.'

Mother Teresa once said, 'Always look for the poorest of the poor.'

The papers reported that a mild-mannered man could not make ends meet so he borrowed a total of £427,700 to keep things ticking over. The bespectacled accountant used one hundred and twenty accounts with sixty-five finance houses, kept sixteen visa cards. Banks described him as

an exemplary character. But the money had all gone, even though this mild 'exemplary character' did not gamble, did not live the high life and can only remember buying one present for his wife. 'I closed my mind to the future,' he said.

Ecclesiastes says 'He who loves money shall never have enough. What is the advantage of having more except perhaps to watch it as it runs through your fingers.'

Ecclesiastes makes fun reading unless, of course, you are slowly being smothered by an over abundant bank balance. There is a sore evil, he says, which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. But those riches perish... And he begets a son, and there is nothing in his hand. As he came forth from his mother's womb, naked shall he return...'

Our wealth unfortunately has no meaning for us at the time of our death and this is one common experience to us all.

## 9. Controlling shareholders

1. God's Crisis It seems that God loves to talk about money! Anybody's! And He has lots to say about it generally and also specifically. After all, we are His so it is His money too. He has a very personal interest in the overdraft, the profit, the loss and the balance. He also has direct clarity to impart for problematic trends. A pause before the Net share hook-up and speaking to Him first would be wise. He has sure command from Wall Street to Tokyo. However, complex and demanding things may seem He really does have complete and over-all control. Gods dilemma is that we do not seem to realise it. This is serious. It is not role play or a game with bartering. It is not monopoly or conjuring tricks that we are involved in, loaded with magical overtones and good luck signs. This is something God has designed and allowed and actually given to us for our benefit. We could at least have the courtesy to learn what He says about our assets and effects.

What we store up for ourselves in knowledge of what is relevant to Him about our treasures on earth or in heaven will all be revealed in public one day when the Lord of Glory comes. He looks now to see that we who deal in rupees, dollars, euros, yen and so on, are not possessed by them but earnestly controlled by His word concerning them.

Men of God, fearing His judgement only, or in basic Hebrew - judging judgement of truth,' are needed. We need leaders in money matters and they must be men upright or women of renown, not fearing opinions from any part of the globe; world citizens.

No wonder Paul says to Timothy (1 Tim.2:1,2) 'I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.'

We can earnestly and blithely in all sincerity pray for more of men in high places with the vast wisdom needed for economical intricacies. They desperately need prayer as they must have the moral fibre to stand the strain and we are including ourselves as we need this kind of peaceful life.

Those at the top are dealing in high finance in a way we may never know anything about, collecting and distributing billions. And they sometimes do not see God's view as clearly as he

would like! His view is, that 'He will have all men come to see their need for a Saviour, the One mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.'

If, therefore, God has given you big projects, and grand enterprises, large protracted visions of mighty things, He has a purpose. There is a reason

Another of Father's dilemmas is that the work pace will never slow up. Now is the only time for disciplined and regular zones in our work routine to renew what God has already said and to hear more but there must be someone listening.

God's people were at one time, if not now, so casually arrogant about His provision that it hurt Him deeply. In the book of Malachi, He says, I have loved you very deeply and the arrogant answer is 'Really? When was this? (1:2)

I am your Father and Master yet you do not honour Me.' And the arrogant answer was 'Who? Us? When did we ever despise your Name? (1:6)

You have robbed Me.' And the arrogant answer is, 'When did we rob you? (3:8)

So God outlines some of the criteria that He takes very seriously.

1. He deals with their wealth and possessions and their open dishonesty.
2. Their kind of idolatry stemming from leaders being lax in giving.
3. They casually dismiss the judgements of God. True repentance is a spiritual gift and, with it, His blessing can be restored.

Malachi 3:11 will always be true 'Bring all the tithes into the storehouse and prove Me now. if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.'

God's dilemma means to Him that however large the scheme He gives and however farseeing your dreams, it is certain that rapid promotion and salary rises will mean less time to seek the Lord.

The end for Him is always the same. His rational arguments, His considered debating, is so that we will know Him and His Son and believe in Him. This is life eternal. He says in one place 'I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honourable, and I have loved you. Therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life.

He gave the whole of Egypt's glory, riches, power and strength for His people Israel and their release. We are His new people. We walk with very minor currency by comparison with all He has done. God talks in terms of men, cities and nations, to gain us and far above all that, He gave His beloved and only son.

2. The World's Crisis Zechariah had a world vision. It was of four horns. They represented world powers with which to scatter Israel. The content and purpose of the vision was to show that God Himself was going to diminish and scatter those international powers Himself. Jerusalem and the nation would then be rebuilt. The horns, though, have authority. Behind them lies the machinations of the arch enemy, the Devil. His ruling principles in this world at present can be summed up by Materialism, Superstition, Atheism and Selfishness. The nations, even though thoroughly motivated by these four usurpers, will eventually come to nought in their objectives. The measuring line is already operating. At the same time there is a movement

abroad in monetary matters which is linked throughout the world and would bring all personal and individual thinking to one end.

Apparently aiming at common good, it does in fact, target on universal control, by any means available.

However, in His wholesome plan of salvation, God is concerned with each man - one to one. We are not to be swamped with a kind of global success or failure. He is a God of individuals. Personal good performance and output are still the criteria in business; never satisfaction with multiple ruling.

The Lord Jesus was one child from hundreds saved from destruction in babyhood. So was Moses. Jeremiah's life was planned from the womb. God can choose one man and sway a nation.

When an old order changes and other regimes come to power, men still expect success and a new prosperity. But it is only when His Son takes control can ultimate success be guaranteed. And one day He will indeed rule. Meanwhile God must teach us how to behave among our co-world users. He is still Lord of all, however corrupt and mismanaged the affairs of men. And He will overturn things continually until His Son is predominant so we better not plan a quiet life!

There is no anxiety in God's heart when gold and gold-plating is mentioned in the Bible over sixteen times when the building of the Ark is in progress. He is not troubled by the thought of being accused of ostentation or exhibitionism. He is clear in His motives. Men care about the expanding world trade and biting interest rates but God looks in men's eyes. Do they reveal a lack of a sense of caring and finding none to take pity and full of emptiness?

He hears the cry of the soul in the middle of weighty monetary matters and knows the extra dimension beyond the use of precious metals.

Money is not the world's crisis so much as the depression, despair, lack of clarity in guidance and a sense of worthlessness through it all.

3. Personal Crisis If you had been a Pharisee in Bible days, your life was made! Your reputation and standing, together with your living, were assured. Everyone knew you would be utterly reliable, read your Bible often and pray much and give much. You were someone to look up to in commerce, law and the church with the world at your command. You were sure of a place in society and full of goodness. This was your natural position. Not one to be despised, but honoured.

Our devotion and our sense of responsibility cannot measure up to the scripture-day Pharisee. He fasted twice a week and gave a tenth of all he possessed. The tragedy about it all was that he did not know any real need of God. He had enough. But Jesus said of them that they appeared like saintly men but underneath the pious robes there were hearts besmirched. 'Beware,' says Deuteronomy 8:11 'that in your plenty you do not forget the Lord your God and when you have become full and prosperous and have built fine homes (and are comfortable without God) that is the time to watch you do not become proud.'

A death blow may have been given to your special enterprise. All your resources were in it. Your heart and mind were set toward some great success and lo and behold - thieves broke in and

stole, either your work, your ideas or your cash and possessions. Something you had worked hard for and was rightly yours was all deleted by a virus at a stroke. It may amount to your name and standing among men, which is sometimes worse.

Isaac was a very, very rich man. He inherited quite a lot and also waxed great by his own efforts. In one year he made profits a hundred times over. But it all failed. His source of supply was destroyed over night. Perhaps because of his upbringing, his background and his own natural ability, prosperity was too easy. But he started again, not at the top, but in the valley and it was there that God gave him life and springing, fresh water, right there in the wilderness where and when he was lowest.

Samson's riddle was answered with the picture of a lion with a honeycomb producing strength with sweetness. To be strong without being sweet is not Godlike, even in the harsh dealings of the concrete jungle.

As a controlling shareholder, let there be fear and awe of God's presence in the boardroom even when lifelong associates you don't wish to offend put pressure on small people, or when large bribes are offered behind closed doors, or even when your own son wants your co-operation in industrial espionage.

In a passage about false prophets Peter speaks of 'false teachers among you ...and through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.' - 2 Peter 2

And Paul says to Timothy, 'They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith; and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.'

Covetousness can be interpreted as avarice or greed, or an old fashioned word, cupidity, which includes hankering and longing, amounting to lustful desire.

People are still aware of this mind-boggling phrase 'the love of money' as a threat to their motives, 2,000 years later. It could have been pronounced by the current Prime Minister!

Money in itself is not evil, it is just a bartering point of practical everyday living. But our possessions and our money may come between us and our longing to follow Jesus Christ and be wholly committed to Him.

When Jesus talked to the rich young ruler He knew there was a crisis along this line but He knew the man was honest. We are not told that he did not do what was asked of him. Lots of us have a great many possessions. It may or may not mean, like him, we would be asked to give them all up but it will certainly mean we must learn to hold them lightly. In parts of Africa and elsewhere, if you own a pair of shoes you are considered a rich man.

I was asked to do so once - to give the thing that I prized most away and it hurt! It was a small thing - a silver mug my mother drank her milk from before the 20th century - an heirloom passed down. It took a while to do it, and the right circumstances and to give it to the right person but it

was painful nevertheless. I have collected more valuable things since but none of them have such a hold any more.

The beggar man who cried out to Peter and John had nothing, not even his health. The disciples had nothing also so they could say 'Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I you; In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.' Acts 3:6 the difference being that the two disciples were full of the Holy Spirit.

There are many of us today, rich and poor, who may be afraid of the working power of the Holy Spirit. If I change, will it mean a lowering of my standards? Will I have to give up my livelihood? Would I always have to put concern for others first? Or how can I be fully committed like that without losing all I have now? Simple obedience is the criteria and God gives His Holy Spirit to those who are responding.

10. Free Franchise The rivers of God will not run dry. He prepares the earth for His people and sends them rich harvests of grain...showers soften the earth, melting the clods and causing seeds to sprout across the land. He not only does it for those who are rich in this world's goods but He does it for all men. We acknowledge all that is free.

Praise is one thing and the ability to do it is freely given. The sacrifice of praise is when we do not want to do it. It is when we can't; when there are burdens that it seems impossible to bear and there is every possible reason and excuse not to give thanks. However, when the world, as we know it, falls apart, God is still worthy to be praised. It cannot really be said that it costs nothing, because it certainly does cost. To concentrate on God and keep going, means He must give us more grace for the asking.

Let the soul be enraptured; captured with His beauty. There is absolutely no spot in Him. Have our eyes looked at the things in the world all week? Let them now be filled with visions of the Light of the world. The very real troubles, the enigmas and mind-engrossing problems are overwhelming but He will unravel it all while you are taken up with Him. This is a spiritual law and it works.

'Thou art my God, I worship Thee; I lift my hands and bow the knee,  
Thou art all together glorious unto me.' Anon

The Lord God is a wonderfully majestic Person. He is high in honour and power and shining in the greatness of His strength. He is amazing. 'When I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead,' says John in his revelation (1;17) He draws worship and because of the abundance of all things, He draws abundant thanksgiving and praise. Do we have to see and experience it before He gets the thanks? Not so.

The Israelites were told, 'Because you served not the Lord your God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things, therefore will you serve your enemies which the Lord will send against you, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and want of all things.' Deuteronomy 27:47,48.

You and I know that there are times in the staring, glaring face of rushing humanity when a new anointing is required on everything we do. We can reach and stretch and expand for so long. All effort becomes like pouring water into the sand. The world of work and temporal man struggling along without ever knowing God, needs us. But it needs us in touch with a 'God, who is our home.' (Wordsworth)

'All the people shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of you,' Moses tells his people. But this was something that did not come with moans and complaints. An attitude of praise and thanksgiving can also help deal with world dominating systems trying to control monetary transactions because these are part of the forces of darkness.

This is not a Sunday supplement, it is the whole thing! 'Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever and ever.' 1 Timothy 1:17

That is the vital, living breathe of our daily walk. It is the key to opening the treasure locked as yet within the rest of next week - worship, praise and thanksgiving.

If we are deeply conscious of the need for physical strength, mental awareness, chalk-white, plain guidance, or even just the ability to keep going, here is the answer and it costs nothing.

Take the small step of faith needed and let other things be silent. Music and praise will help bring the dew to counteract the dryness of a collective week. His presence is the real refreshing. You do not know (yet!) all that God thinks about the economy, nuclear power, the tax systems, all cultural finesse, science, technology and so on but He does. God is a mystery; an amazingly glorious energy and we began with nothing.

Joshua was the one who gathered the motley crew, straggling fearfully toward Canaan and formed them into a mighty fighting force; and a disciplined, conquering army.

In our particular battle field, preparation and direction will be different but the emergence of the week toward success is the same. Worship must come first.

'Are you for us, or for our adversaries?' asked Joshua when faced with a man with a drawn sword. 'I am come as captain of the host of the Lord,' said the man. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped.

Only after that in chapters 5 and 6 did the walls of Jericho fall. Is there a problem, something inconceivably mystifying or shut up to you, like Jericho? Worship will proved an answer. The angel of the Lord will draw his sword on your behalf. Swivel round in your executive chair and shut yourself up to God. Worship brings joyous tightening of our recognition that He is our heart's desire and the centre of our being and fights on our behalf.

It is, of course, much easier in the springtime of our life to say 'Lord, I love you...I am yours. You are my motivating force.' Then we can throw all other loves and commitments to the wind. It is sometimes not so easy forty years on. Does He see us now holding tighter to possessions, goods, people? Or are we continually loosening our grip on attitudes, thoughts and solid material things that detract from a thoroughly healthy love of praise and worship?

Is our sweetest communion with Him or with another? Is the anointing oil of gladness and joy, our living, vital breathe? Can we say as in Canticles, 'Yes, He is altogether lovely... This is my Beloved and this is my Friend.'? Song of Solomon 5:16

This is the phraseology of the Spirit that moved upon the face of the waters in the beginning of time. In His love for us, we have been freely given something extremely precious, everlasting and absolutely unassailable. And there is much spiritual treasure to be discovered from Him and in Him, yet.

There is a place in God for me and for you which no bird of prey can see and where wild and dangerous animal never trod. A path to walk where no-one and nothing can interfere or destroy. It is a secret, myrrh-scented pathway preserved for constant communion. Meeting God there before we enter again into a world of doubts and uncertainties and broken contracts, may mean a matter of life and death before the week is out.

Praise is really not an option. 'Whoso offers praise, glorifies Me: and to him that orders his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.' Psalm 50:23

If you have ever been a dealer or distributor of precious metals and gems, you will realise the glorious hues and dancing lights that they reflect in the sun. If you have you will know something of the Majesty and greatness of their beauty. How they flash fire and outshine even the stars. They are brilliantly translucent and dazzling with colour-scope like rainbows.

Eye has never seen all that God has prepared for us in heaven. There will be semiprecious and precious stones when the new Jerusalem appears but with no need of sun or moon to show their magnificence. The light that sparkles the stones will be the glory of God