

Six Biblical Keys to Release from the Yoke of Poverty

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Introduction

There are six biblical keys to understanding why Africa is hopelessly bound under the yoke of poverty, and how to break that yoke. The Holy Bible is the ultimate source of the truths that govern our lives, and it reveals God's solutions for breaking the yoke of poverty in Africa and elsewhere. The Bible clearly shows that the yoke of poverty is first and foremost a spiritual yoke. If we deal with Africa's poverty as merely a technical, educational, or governance problem, we are only dealing with the symptoms, and not the root cause. Symptomatic treatment of Africa's poverty will never break the yoke and set the people free from poverty. Unfortunately, biblical truth is not acceptable to many people. I trust that you are open to hear and receive what the Bible tells us about this most critical matter.

John 10:10 Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly."

Most nations in Sub-Saharan Africa are considered Christian nations, but yet they have the greatest number of poor and undernourished people in the world. Why is it that these Christian nations, possessing more abundant resources than other parts of the world, have the worst poverty in the world? This sobering fact seems to disprove Jesus' promise that you will have life, and life more abundantly. Abundant natural resources, favorable climate, and almost unlimited arable cropland have not been able to feed the people and bring prosperity to Africa. In the natural sense, Africa possesses all the necessities to be prosperous, so there must be another factor responsible for its crushing yoke of poverty. Could it be spiritual?

There are two kingdoms in this world, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Satan's ways contrast starkly with, and are opposed to God's ways. If we are not for God, then we are against Him, and thus are citizens of Satan's kingdom. The word of God is unchanging and so are His promises. If we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and abide in Him, Jesus becomes our king who gives us life, and life more abundantly. But if we reject Jesus' kingship, we live under the evil, abusive rule of Satan and his demons. God has ordained that there are consequences for people who reject King Jesus' rule.

Hosea 4:1-3 There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgement of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds and bloodshed follows bloodshed. Because of this the land mourns.

Psalms 107:33, 34 He turns rivers into a wilderness, and the water springs into dry ground; A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of those who dwell in it.

Jeremiah 23:10b For the land mourns because of the curse.

These are the six biblical keys for release from the yoke of poverty:

- 1) Worship God and God alone
- 2) Consider your ways
- 3) Understand God's all sufficiency

- 4) What you sow you will reap
- 5) Bring your tithes and offerings to God
- 6) Stake your claim

Each of the six biblical keys will be explored by describing why the problem has come about and then revealing the biblical solution to these problems. Please explore them deeper as you meditate on His word.

Key #1, Worship God and God Alone

Luke 4:8 Jesus answered him, "It is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only."

The people of Africa have enormous strongholds of witchcraft and ancestral worship. Witchdoctors and wizards are found in every village and are consulted at all critical stages of life, including births, sickness, adolescence, circumcision, weddings and funerals. Many farmers pay witchdoctors to pray over their land so that it will produce bumper harvests. In exchange for the payments, the witchdoctors perform pagan rituals including sacrificing animals, sprinkling blood and spreading bones on the land, preparing magic potions, and placing animal skulls on corner posts of the property. In most areas of Africa there are high places (hill tops and mountain peaks) that are strongholds of demonic activity. To this day millions of Africans, many professing to be born-again Christians, carry food offerings up to the high places, and make pagan religious sacrifices to appease their dead ancestors.

Ancestral worship is worshipping one's dead ancestors by offering sacrifices, performing pagan religious rites and making ceremonial oaths to them. This worship is not practiced out of love, but out of fear that terrible attacks may be inflicted on them by their dead ancestors. Often people are driven to attend funerals and other family gatherings by fear of being tormented or haunted by evil ancestral spirits. Many African pastors allow such pagan practices or turn a blind eye to them, justifying them as harmless cultural traditions. This compromising stand is a major reason why the church in Africa is living under the curse and forfeiting Jesus' promised abundant life.

The Bible clearly states that consulting witchdoctors and ancestral worship is witchcraft and demon worship. Even the Israelites were guilty of doing this on some occasions, and God judged them severely for it.

Isaiah 8:19-22 When they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter," should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. They will pass through the land hard-pressed and famished, and it will turn out that when they are hungry, they will be enraged and curse their king and their God as they face upward. Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be driven away into darkness.

The curse on those who practice these things is severe indeed; hunger, violence, sickness and disease, living in distress, depression and fear. These things testify to our communities that God has removed His hand of blessing, and the curse which comes from Satan's rule, has replaced God's blessings.

Leviticus 19:31 Do not turn to mediums (familiar spirits, ghosts, dead ancestors) or spiritists (witchdoctors, wizards); do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 18:10 let not any of these be found amongst you.

In 2003, a young Dutch woman vanished on Mt. Mulanje in Malawi. Despite rescue attempts for weeks afterwards with helicopters and sniffer dogs, her body was never found. The locals were so entrenched in their pagan practices that they said her body would never be found because the search parties had not offered sacrifices to appease the dead ancestors who dwell on the mountain.

In Mozambique there is a prominent mountain that is so feared, that the local residents won't even look at it for fear of the evil, demonic spirits that dwell on it. Besides routine food sacrifices, it is reported that human sacrifices are made on that mountain.

Children are most vulnerable to these abominable practices. Many adults report that their dead ancestors come to them as if knocking on a door. So children, who are considered sinless, are made to answer the door by going up to the mountain with the ancestral sacrifices. Some children never return home from the mountain, others are tormented by evil spirits for the rest of their lives, or until they come to saving faith in Jesus Christ. The witchdoctors advocate these evil practices to enrich themselves and to maintain their powerful influence over the local community.

Deuteronomy 5:7-8 You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing loving kindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

Matthew 6:24 Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other."

Psalms 24:3 Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully.

The Solution:

There is only one true God and we come to Him only through His Son, Jesus Christ, who died on a cross for us to receive the free gift of eternal life. When we are born again, we are no longer of this world's system and traditions. We have been adopted into God's family and we have the privilege of knowing God as our Father.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

Joshua 24:14 Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.

Matthew 23:37-38 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. This is the first and great commandment."

So we must worship God, and Him alone, at all times and in all areas of our lives, not just at Sunday morning church services. God is not mocked. We can't worship God **and** the demons who masquerade as our dead ancestors. According to Christian organizations, Christians in Africa number in the hundreds of millions. If that is true, then why is there almost no evidence of God's presence in Africa? Why is there no spiritual fruit, only bloodshed, poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance, and corruption? Could it be that not everyone who professes to be a Christian is truly a follower of Jesus?

Romans 7:21-23 Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Jesus is the incorruptible seed and nothing can contaminate or change His purity and holiness. That seed has the full potential to empower us to walk in His promised abundant life. However, if Jesus remains only a seed, He is only our potential hope. This seed must sprout and grow into every part of our lives so that the full potential of His Kingdom can be released in us. Jesus is the chief cornerstone, but if He remains only a cornerstone in our lives, what kind of building do we have?

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

This scripture gives us the guidelines to the breakthrough.

1) Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Africans have been trusting in witchdoctors and dead ancestors, not in the Lord Jesus Christ. If Africans trusted in Jesus alone, they would consult Him and not the dead. We consult with whoever we trust in. Properly placed trust is essential for the needed change. We must be fully persuaded and trust that God is for us and not against us. We must trust in Him as a loving and faithful Father whose word never fails. When we trust Him with all of our hearts, we will naturally walk in His ways obeying His laws and commandments. Then we will inherit His promises since we are members of His family.

2) Lean not on your own understanding. Our traditions, culture, and upbringing by our parents are what has formed our own understanding. Leaning on our own understanding has brought this yoke of poverty on us. To come out from under the yoke requires that we acknowledge that leaning on our own understanding is not working. Release from the yoke of poverty requires a great level of honest humility. In order for the power of traditions to be broken, we must humble ourselves and acknowledge that our ways and the ways of our ancestors have failed. Only then will God break the yoke of poverty in our lives.

Even in agriculture we need to acknowledge that God's understanding and wisdom are far higher than ours, and of our fathers and grandfathers. Pride says "My father and grandfather farmed this way, so I will not change." If you are a follower of Jesus, then who is your Father? God is! So, we must learn to faithfully implement the ways of our Heavenly Father, not the ways of our earthly fathers.

Traditional practices are a difficult stronghold to break. But that is the beauty about doing Farming God's Way. He gives us His power to destroy those powerful strongholds. Doing

farming “the way my earthly father showed me” only leads to poverty. Farming God’s Way leads us to abundance and prosperity.

Jesus’ dedication to do only do what He was instructed to do by His Father and to speak only what the Father spoke to Him, gives us an incredible insight into His humility and unselfishness.

John 8:28 I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.

John 8:38 I speak the things which I have seen with My Father;

John 5:19 Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.

Jesus accomplished all that He did, not through independence, but through total dependence on His Father. His Father showed Him what to do, so He did it and succeeded. Our pride and selfishness want to prove that we can do it better our way. So, we end up striving against the laws of God. Afterwards, we wonder why we failed. What a glorious life we could live if we just fulfill His every desire for us. Like Jesus, we should do only that which we see our Father in heaven doing, and only speak the things we have heard Him say. God knows best because He is the Creator of all. He’s been farming the longest, He knows the crops, the soils and seasons intimately since He designed and created them. He is the Master Farmer and we must follow His ways diligently, observing all that He has shown us to do.

3) In all your ways acknowledge Him. There must be a clear understanding of our Heavenly Father’s role in our lives regarding His sovereignty and Lordship. If we understand these concepts, they will stimulate faith in Him so that we have the full persuasion to change our ways. We need to forever renounce all ancestral worship and witchcraft in our lives. The curse is broken through Jesus’ blood and through His finished work on the cross. By them, we are set free from the bondage and torment of ancestral spirits. His precious blood has purchased us with an extremely great price. We have been adopted and have become God’s children. We are grafted into the lineage of Jesus by God’s grace through faith in Jesus’ finished work on the cross. We are now part of God’s family. If we become part of God’s family, how can God’s children dabble in ancestral worship or consult witchdoctors? We can’t! We are either for Him or against Him, either a member of His family or not.

In all our ways means just that – every area, work, word, action and thought. This means we acknowledge Him in births, transitions to adulthood, weddings, funerals, healings, pre-planting, rainfall, harvesting - everything. Jesus said the Kingdom of God is like leaven in dough, going to all parts of the dough – that includes agriculture. We should be doing what we have been shown by our Heavenly Father. He knows best how to farm, and He carefully watches over our gardens. We need to follow what we see Him do in creation as closely as we can. We must duplicate His ways in our gardens and farms, trusting that He will reward our faithfulness with abundant harvests.

Has anyone seen God plowing the soil He created? Has anyone seen God destroying the thick mulch layer that lies on the surface of the soil (which we call God’s Blanket) through burning it, removing it, or plowing it under? The answer is quite obviously no. God neither plows nor destroys His life giving mulch covering. So why do we lean on our own

understanding and not trust in the way He has shown us to farm? Do we presume to be better at farming than God?

My personal testimony is in 1987, the Lord spoke to me clearly to study agriculture to train the poor to come out of poverty. In 1993, I qualified with an honors degree in agriculture. Strange thing is, when I met Brian Oldreive, so much of what I had learned I had to forget, since the vast majority of things I was taught at the university were contrary to God's ways. At the university, the leading agricultural experts promoted the practice of deep plowing and removing surface litter either through burning or inversion. These were basic "truths" we were taught, and I had accepted them as true. The biblical agricultural techniques that Brian was teaching me had been dismissed by my professors as worthless "green do-gooders efforts." The experts said they were not as effective as the technologically advanced agricultural solutions they taught me. But, after intensive Bible study and meditation on the Word of God, I became convinced that God is the Master Farmer of the world, and that He really does know best. God's ultimate authority and lordship over His creation were the two things that convinced me, and caused me to have a change of mind to undo the teaching of the world's foremost agricultural experts.

4) And He will make your paths straight. When we fulfill this scripture in obedience to His word, we walk in the promise of God making our paths straight. In Africa we desperately need the Lord to straighten out our crooked paths, which have been taking people on a journey to poverty, hunger, and bloodshed. God's straightening will lead us into the fullness of His promised abundant life. God's word exhorts us to continually remain in this attitude of acknowledging Him in all our ways.

Deuteronomy 8:18 But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. It shall come about if you ever forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish.

This word "remember" is synonymous with acknowledge, to think of, be mindful of, or to keep in mind. The judgments for not acknowledging Him in all our ways are severe, but the benefits and blessings for those who acknowledge the Lord in all their ways will overwhelm them with abundance.

Deuteronomy 7:13-15 He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you. You shall be blessed above all peoples; there will be no male or female barren among you or among your cattle. The Lord will remove from you all sickness; and He will not put on you any of the harmful diseases of Egypt, which you have known, but He will lay them on all who hate you.

We have been saved by grace through Jesus Christ and we are now under the New Covenant, and not the Law. Jesus came not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it. Jesus never disobeyed His Father's laws, He fulfilled them as a faithful Son. He has shown us the way we should walk, keeping His unchanging laws. Our obedience to His will allows us to have the curse broken off our lives and our land, so that His unmerited favor and blessing can be poured out upon us. It is indeed time for God's blessings to be poured out on Africa. So, we must tear down the high places of ancestral worship and repent of witchcraft, which has kept

us in bondage. Then we can come and ascend the hill of the Lord with clean hands and pure hearts to worship Him alone, in Spirit and in truth.

Key #2, Consider Your Ways

You are the temple of the living God

Scripture tell us that David was a man after God's own heart. In the latter years of his reign, David purposed in his heart to build a temple for the Lord to house the Ark of the Covenant. Although the Lord had given David the detailed plans for the temple, God told him "you shall not build it, for you have been a man of war and have shed blood." So David commissioned his son Solomon to construct the temple, and he provided most of the materials to complete it before he died.

Solomon completed the work in seven years using only the best craftsmen and materials. The temple dimensions were 30m long, 10m wide and 15m high, made up of an outer court, several storerooms, a holy place and the holy of holies. Two pillars 20m tall with large brass capitals marked the entrance to the holy place. Most of the doors, beams, posts and even walls of the temple were overlaid with 23 tons of gold with fine inlay decorations. Inside the holy of holies there were 2 giant cherubim, with 5m wings spanning over the Ark of the Covenant that were plated with gold. There were 10 gold lampstands, 10 gold tables and 100 gold ceremonial washing bowls besides all the many gold, silver and bronze utensils. There was a bronze altar, which was 10m by 10m and 5m high, for the many sacrifices. There was also a bronze sea standing on the backs of 12 brass oxen holding 100,000 liters of water, which was for the priests to wash. There were another 10 bronze baths for the washing of the animal sacrifices.

It was truly an awe-inspiring temple where God was to be revered and worshipped. At Solomon's dedication of the temple, when the priests carried the Ark of the Covenant into the holy of holies, the temple was filled with such a strong presence of God's glory that the priests were unable to stand to minister to the Lord. The temple was a symbol of God's dwelling place amongst His people.

2 Chronicles 7:12-22 Then the Lord appeared to Solomon at night and said to him, "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place. For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that My name may be there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. But if you turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will uproot you from My land which I have given you, and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. As for this house, which was exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and say, 'Why has the Lord done thus to this land and to this house?' And they will say, 'Because they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers who brought them from the land of Egypt, and they adopted other gods and worshiped them and served them; therefore He has brought all this adversity on them.'"

Throughout the next 20 generations of Kings, the Israelites struggled to maintain a walk of purity before the Lord. They regularly strayed into the evil practices of idolatry and wickedness of the nations that were driven out before them. Despite the messages of God's prophets to call the people back to Him, they continued in their wicked ways. Eventually the Lord had had enough and used Nebuchadnezzar as His instrument to judge the people of Israel. The Babylonians laid siege on Jerusalem for 2 years until it fell into their hands. In 586 BC they broke down the city walls and took the Israelites as exiles into Babylon. They smashed the bronze pillars, the carts, the altars and the bronze sea. They took all the temple pots, shovels, trimmers, spoons, firepans, basins and all the articles of silver and gold. The temple, which had stood for 373 years, was then burned and completely destroyed, with no stone being left unturned. All the extravagance, artistry and craftsmanship of Solomon's work came to absolute ruin because God's people had turned from His ways.

47 years later, Cyrus the Medo-Persian conquered Babylon, and soon thereafter sent the exiles back to Israel with express instructions and resources for them to rebuild the temple of the Lord God. The Israelites went back and rebuilt the altar of sacrifice, but they did not rebuild the temple. The temple lay in desolate ruins for another 18 years.

God sent Haggai the prophet to rebuke Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the priest and the people of Jerusalem, saying:

Haggai 1:2-11 Thus says the Lord of hosts, "This people says, 'The time has not come, even the time for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt.' Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate? Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, "**Consider your ways!** You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes." Thus says the Lord of hosts, "**Consider your ways!** Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified," says the Lord. "You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; when you bring it home, I blow it away. Why?" declares the Lord of hosts, "Because of My house which lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own house. Therefore, because of you the sky has withheld its dew and the earth has withheld its produce. I called for a drought on the land, on the mountains, on the grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on what the ground produces, on men, on cattle, and on all the labor of your hands."

God's people clearly showed no interest in obeying His command for His house to be restored. His temple was lying desolate while men went about their own selfish ways and ambitions, making for themselves extravagant dwellings and status symbols to show their independence, skills and abilities. This showed that their hearts were not after God. Therefore, His righteous judgments were decreed on everything that would cause His people to prosper and comfort themselves, so that they would turn back to Him.

You may say to yourself, "**We don't have a temple lying in ruins**".... **Or do we?**

John 2:19 "Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" **But He was speaking of the temple of His body.**"

Jesus destroyed the functional role of the physical temple by tearing the veil at His crucifixion. In three days God rebuilt the temple, constructed of living stones, where God dwells in the hearts of men through faith in Christ's finished work on the cross.

John 4:21-23 a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem... when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

2 Corinthians 6:16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God.

1 Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

If we, the children of God, are the temple of God, then the condition of our temple is something to consider. Is the temple of God in you in desolate ruin? Was it once glorious but is it now defiled by disobedience to God's word? Does God's temple in you need repairs, or possibly a complete rebuild?

We find ourselves in the same predicament as in Haggai's day. Africa's poverty clearly displays a severe measure of God's judgment because of the poor state of His temple in us.

Daily poor Africans, like the Israelites, are crying out – Why?

Why, oh Lord, is Africa so poor?

Why do we not have enough grain?

Why do we never have enough to be satisfied?

Why do we never have enough rain?

Why should our children suffer?

Why do our clothes wear out?

Why do we labor in vain?

It seems so unfair that we should live in this abject poverty!

Twice in the passage from Haggai, God says “**consider your ways**” to emphasize the point that it is not His ways that are in error, but ours.

Ezekiel 18:25 Yet you say, “The way of the Lord is not right.” Hear now, O house of Israel! Is My way not right? Is it not your ways that are not right?

God's correction often seems very harsh. When we are expecting His sympathy, He confronts us with our sinfulness. When we cry, “the way of the Lord is not right,” He replies, “it is your ways that are not right.”

We need to consider our ways!!!

Considering our ways is not just a spiritual exercise, but also a practical matter. God told the Israelites to rebuild the temple. That was a practical resolution of a spiritual problem. Our ways are the causes for us being under the curse. Let's take a look at just a few examples of the curses we live under because our ways are not aligned to God's ways:

1) The Curse through Bloodshed and Violence

Genesis 4 records the account of Cain murdering his own brother, Abel. Cain and Abel had both brought offerings to God as an act of their worship. Cain brought an offering from his crops and Abel brought an offering from his flocks. Many Bible scholars speculate why God was pleased with Abel's animal sacrifice. Regardless of the form of the sacrifice, we know from Isaiah 1 that God doesn't delight in sacrifices.

Isaiah 1:13-15 Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.

God wants us to be blameless, to stop our evil ways, learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression, care for widows and orphans. Then we will eat the good of the land. Cain was merely fulfilling a religious duty to bring his offering to the Lord. Abel brought his offering to the Lord with a pure heart and with delight in Him. Man often looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart.

As a result of Cain's heart being corrupted, God rejected his offering. Then Cain became resentful and jealous towards his brother. The jealousy amongst Africans is carefully hidden in our culture, but it must be addressed if we are to break free of the curse. It stems from a sense of failure and results in people willfully preventing anyone else from succeeding.

Genesis 4:6-7 God said to Cain, "Why are you so angry? Why has your countenance failed you? Do good, and your countenance will be lifted up. But if you do not do good, sin is waiting at the door. You must master the temptation to sin or else it will overtake you."

The beginnings of sin are in the entertainment of temptation. God's warning to Cain fell on deaf ears. Soon he yielded to temptation and committed the world's first murder.

The history books of the nations of Africa are filled with stories of bloody battles, massacres, tribal antagonism, and a general disregard for the sanctity of human life.

- In the disputed Kenyan elections of December 2007, democracy and the dignity of one of Africa's most advanced countries was shattered by a light breeze of political unrest. Over 1,000 people were killed and 300,000 displaced in the post election violence.
- Between the disputed Zimbabwean elections of March and June 2008, 103 opposition party members were murdered, 5000 people were abducted, and there were medical reports of countless mutilations and amputations.
- In South Africa, xenophobic attacks in 2008 claimed the lives of 62 immigrants, while 670 were injured, and tens of thousands were left homeless.
- The Rwandan genocide in 1994 resulted in 800,000 Tutsis being killed by their fellow countrymen, the Hutus.
- Recently when I was in Benin, I heard a revolting report of how a chief massacred a neighboring tribe, collected the blood of his enemies, and mixed it with clay to make the bricks for his palace, instead of using water!

Can you imagine how God is angered with us?

“Why has your countenance failed you, oh Africa?” the Lord asks.

Isaiah 59: 3 “For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity.”

The blood of the innocents cries out to God from the land all across this continent. Abel’s blood, righteous, innocent blood, is being poured out upon the land daily in so many places in Africa. It is horrifying.

God’s judgment upon Cain was severe. Cain was cursed from the same ground which concealed his sin’s terrible secret.

- The first curse was agricultural - the ground would not yield its fruit or strength to him.
- The second curse was that he would be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth.

These curses are still a judgment of God for the shedding of innocent blood. Cain’s curse is hard labor with no fruitfulness, and being a refugee trying to escape bloodshed, drought, famine, hunger, disease, and natural disasters. Africa is a continent living under these very same curses, where the land cries out to God continually for the atrocities done against brothers and the innocent. Today millions of Africans find themselves as unwelcome wanderers with no permanent place to live.

This is a very sensitive issue. Many will excuse themselves by saying, “but I have not murdered or raped anyone.” In 2 Samuel 21, King David had the same complaint. The nation of Israel was being cursed for the sins that King Saul had committed against the Gibeonites. These sins had been committed many years before, and Saul was not even David’s father. Yet the land cried out to God over the shedding of innocent blood. As a result of the cry of the land, Israel had a famine in the land for three years. The Lord’s judgment for the shedding of innocent blood was that the land would withhold its produce. Upon consultation with David, the Gibeonites asked for Saul’s sons to be killed in Gibeah. Once this redemption blood was paid, then 2 Samuels 21:14 says, “God answered prayer in behalf of the land.” The land again yielded its produce after the curse had been broken.

Praise God that we are living under the New Covenant where blood no longer needs to be shed for redemption from the curse to take place.

Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”.

Jesus became the last and perfect sacrifice for our sin in the past, present and future. He became the curse through His hanging on a cross, so that we could be set free from the curse. He paid the price, which by the Old Covenant should have been paid by the killing of our sons. However, under the New Covenant Jesus requires that we repent of all of our sins and ask for His innocent blood to cleanse, heal and break the curse over our lives and land.

Once we settle this sin issue, then the Lord establishes a peace treaty with the land so that it will no longer withhold its produce. We are set free from the fugitive and refugee curse to dwell peacefully and contentedly in the land with His blessing. Jesus commissioned us to love one another as He has loved us. What a contrast to the selfishness and brutal disregard for the sanctity of human life we see around us.

Consider your ways!!!

2) The Curse of a Short Life

In Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique, the average life expectancy is only 37 years! We find very few people in their 60's, 70's or 80's in African communities. Often the village elders are in their 30's. This is a curse, not a result of poverty! Compare this to the average life expectancy in the developed world, over 70 in the USA, and 77 in the UK.

According to a United Nations AIDS survey, South Africa has 5.5 million people living with AIDS, the highest number of any country in the world. At the time of this writing, approximately 1.8 million South Africans have died from AIDS since the onset of the epidemic. In 2006, AIDS was estimated to be killing slightly less than 1,000 people per day in South Africa, resulting in over 350,000 AIDS related deaths annually. In 2008, 30% of women tested in prenatal classes were infected with AIDS, while the death rates for their children dying from AIDS was escalating yearly.

In contrast, South Africa has one of the highest GDP's per capita, and the lowest level of hunger in Africa. This information shows that South Africa is not an impoverished country. China has a similar GDP per capita as South Africa, but South Africa has a 600 times higher AIDS infection rate as China. This clearly exposes the myth that AIDS is poverty related. It is not poverty related, it is sin related! We must consider our ways. The sexual promiscuity of many Africans is the cause of the epidemic's rapid spread, with the resultant reduction in life expectancy.

When men seek the counsel of the worldly wise they come up with a myriad of solutions to the AIDS epidemic. Vast amounts of money have been spent on talk shops, conferences and advertising campaigns. Current solutions include anti-retroviral drugs, condoms and sex education, but the epidemic rages on.

1 Corinthians 3:20 The Lord Knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless.

God's ways are far above our ways. In love, He put His laws in place to govern the behavior of men so that they would live long and fruitful lives.

Psalms 34:12 Who is the man who desires life and loves length of days that he may see good? Depart from evil and do good.

God's way is so simple and pure. One man is to marry one woman, and they are to be faithful to one another all their lives as a demonstration of the way God is faithful in His love for us.

With God's ways, no AIDS conferences or sex education classes are required. Simply consider the error of our ways, ask for God's forgiveness and repent of our sins, then walk in His way. If we implemented God's ways in our lives, we would live in His blessing.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality.

Sexual immorality includes adultery, incest, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism and bestiality.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When Africans are living to only half their life spans, how can we expect our nations to grow in knowledge and understanding, or to be able to have a healthy, productive agricultural workforce? At 37 one is just starting to lose his youthful impetuosity and gain some wisdom. Short life spans prevent a learning culture from developing on our continent. If mentors, teachers, and preachers, are dying by age 37, who is left to transfer wisdom, understanding and knowledge to future generations of Africans? The result is that the transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next ceases. New generations of Africans are born, grow up in poverty, violence, and hunger, and die at an early age. They never learn that God has already given us the knowledge to live our lives in peace, health, and abundance. This harsh reality is lived out for us as babies are born and young men and women are buried every week all across Africa. Sadly, this cycle continues unchanged.

I trust God, and I believe His word. If we consider our ways, repent of all known sin, and change our ways to become obedient to His commands, then we will experience God's abundant blessings, rather than curses. That is true for my life and for your life. But, most importantly, it is true for the entire continent of Africa, if we Africans consider our ways, repent, and obey God. God desires to change this continent from being the "Begging Bowl" of the world to being the "Bread Basket" of the world.

Consider your ways!!!

3) The Curse on What the Land Produces (poor yields)

Scripture tells us that it is God who withholds the rain and the produce from the ground.

Haggai 1:11-11 Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the olive oil and everything else the ground produces, on people and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands.

The maize plant clearly illustrates this truth. Every single maize kernel (ovule) has an individual silk, a long golden brown thread which emerges through the top of the cob. During the pollination time, a single pollen grain is blown by the wind and lands on an exposed silk. It then moves down the silk until it reaches the ovule, fertilizes it, and begins to develop a maize kernel. The silks attached to the bottom row of ovules emerge from the cob first, so they get pollinated first. The maize cob then begins to progressively fill from the bottom row up to the top row.

However, if the Lord of the harvest calls for a drought on the land, this process is drastically affected. The silks must be moist in order for the pollen to stick to them and fertilize the ovules. When there is no rain and the temperature is very high, the silks dry out and pollen won't stick to them. In turn, that causes the maize ears to be small and under-developed, resulting in a greatly reduced harvest.

The average maize yield for African subsistence farmers is 350 kg per hectare. The world's record maize yield is 25,000 kg per hectare. So, the world's best maize farmers produce over

70 times as much maize per hectare as poor African farmers. That is another clear evidence that there is a curse on the land in Africa, as Malachi prophesied above. Because of the curse, over 25 million tons of grain must be imported annually to African countries to prevent their poor citizens from starving. This is an unnecessary tragedy because these African countries have enough arable land, rainfall and favorable climate to produce more than enough food to feed their citizens.

African farmers are under the curse that God commanded as judgment on the land. Yet, we born-again children of God can overcome this curse simply by considering our ways, repenting of all sin, and changing our ways. In a practical way on our farms, that means not plowing our fields, and not incorporating, burning or letting animals graze on God's Blanket on our fields. In return for changing our ways to follow God's ways, He enables obedient farmers to reap abundant harvests, even through times of drought.

Here is a great testimony of how God's children can be fruitful, even in the midst of judgment on the land. In 2004, the worst drought in decades withered the Lower Shire area of Malawi. 2004 was Dixon Shuwali's first year of farming with Farming God's Way. Because of the severe drought and because his field was depleted of nutrients from years of traditional farming, Dickson harvested only five 50 kg bags of maize from his field. However, Dickson's brother and his neighbors harvested nothing at all. Their maize had turned brown and died long before harvest time. Dickson was the only farmer in his village who harvested any maize. In 2009, another drought hit the Lower Shire region of Malawi. This was Dickson's sixth year of farming with Farming God's Way, so his field had become very fertile and was able to fully absorb all the rain that fell on it before the drought began. In the midst of this drought, Dickson harvested 30 bags of maize, while his most successful neighbor harvested only 1.5 bags from the same size field. So, Dickson harvested 20 times more maize than his most successful neighbor. That is God's abundant blessing in the midst of judgment on the land.

The Solution: Restoring the Temple

We, the followers of Jesus, must find godly solutions to the critical issues of life, like the abject poverty around us. We must begin by considering our ways, for we are the temple of the living God. The wonderful testimony of the story in Haggai is that Israel did eventually obey the Lord's command to restore the temple. Then God replaced the curse on the land with His blessing.

Haggai 2:9, 19 "The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former," says the LORD of hosts. "And in this place I will give peace," says the LORD of hosts. ...As yet the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have not yielded fruit. But from this day on I will bless you."

Even though the temple was a work in progress, God still blessed Israel with immediate relief and fruitfulness.

We may not be able to change our nation, but we can each change our own lives to obey God's will, and thus influence the lives of our families and communities around us. If many of us choose to do so, this can make a significant difference in our families and communities. When we rebuild the temple, giving God His rightful place in our lives, we begin to fulfill God's master plan that our lives should give Him glory in every way. As we consider our ways, we ascend the hill of the Lord with clean hands and pure hearts, His life in and through us begins

to bear much fruit to the glory of Jesus Christ. God is looking for a people He can call His very own, a people after His own heart, who love Him and walk with Him.

1 Thessalonians 2:12 Walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

In the temple of our lives, we choose daily whether to give Him His rightful place of Lordship and honor. This is an amazing privilege and something not to be taken for granted, but to be even more sincerely appreciated.

2 Corinthians 6:16 God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God and they shall be My people. Therefore come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord, "and do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you, and I will be a Father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me," says the Lord Almighty. Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

The temples of our lives are in ruins because we have been serving our own selfish ambitions and futile ways, not walking in God's ways. Let us, as His sons and daughters, be committed to rebuild the temple of God in our lives by considering our ways and aligning them to God's ways, not just spiritually, but in mind and body as well. The revelation of the fullness of His glorious church will come from each person rebuilding their own temple ruins and walking in the ways that Jesus has shown us. We must obediently follow Jesus in every area of our lives so that the latter glory of His temple in us will be more glorious than the former. In that way He will be pleased with His people and command His blessing.

2 Cor 9:10-15 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Key #3, Understanding God's All Sufficiency

Dependency

Sadly, a dependency syndrome has developed in Africa after decades of giving handouts to the poor. If you have received handouts, you have probably been affected in how you think of yourself, and also in your expectations for yourself and for those who have given to you. Urban activist and advocate for the poor, Robert Lupton wrote a book titled, *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (And How to Reverse It)*. In his book, Lupton described how most charitable giving leads to dependency.

- Give once and you elicit **appreciation**;
- Give twice and you create **anticipation**;
- Give three times and you create **expectation**;
- Give four times and it becomes **entitlement**;

- Give five times and you establish **dependency**

When a person or a community reaches dependency, they give up trying to support themselves, and they rely on wealthy donors, NGOs or government programs to provide for their needs. If the charitable giving is interrupted or reduced, the dependent recipients can become hostile and demand their rights to receive charity. This phenomenon is not restricted to poor Africans. Poor white North Americans and Europeans respond in the very same manner. So, the dependency syndrome is not a matter of race or culture, it is a matter of our sinful human nature.

Africa has countless charitable failures where, with good intentions, wealthy nations, NGOs, and even Christian ministries have given generously to help the desperately poor. Although their intentions were truly noble, history has shown that their charitable giving produced the opposite result from what was intended. So, responsible donors must learn to give with Godly wisdom to ensure that their giving does not become a curse to their recipients.

Isaiah 58:6 Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?

Isaiah 58 tells us God's priorities for helping the poor, hungry and oppressed. The yoke of poverty is broken by breaking the dependency syndrome.

How then do we break the dependency syndrome?

God's word says that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). But, how can we give if we have nothing?

First, we need to know our source of provision.

Who are you dependent on, man or God?

Through traditional charitable giving, the poor have been conditioned to look to man for their needs. They see government programs, NGOs, missionaries, white people, and their own schemes as the way to get what they want.

Corrupt **governments** around the world exploit the dependency syndrome to buy votes by distributing food, seed, and fertilizer shortly before elections.

As a **white man** in Africa, I am continually confronted with the dependency syndrome. People see my white skin as a potential source of money, fertilizer, seed, irrigation pumps, tractors, etc.

NGOs play a large part in perpetuating the dependency syndrome by freely distributing food and agricultural inputs to farmers. As a result, the poor recipients are conditioned to depend on the NGOs' assistance as they learn to expect ongoing handouts.

There are documented cases of farmers who have eaten the seed that was given to them, instead of planting it. Likewise, many farmers have sold the fertilizer they received, instead of using it on their fields. What a travesty. Many poor farmers don't plant because they know that the NGOs will come back later and check on the amount of their harvests. If they have good harvests, they will receive less aid next planting season. Such charitable programs

teach the poor that their greatest asset is their continued poverty. In these cases, well intended giving has resulted in permanent dependency.

Also, large donations to the poor do not bring positive, lasting change for them. Poor people haven't become productive and self-sustaining because they received much money and aid. History shows that they just squander these generous handouts, and soon are again poor and hungry.

Self-Sufficiency

Since creation, sinful man has strived to be self-sufficient, rebelliously doing things his own way, and relying on his own wisdom rather than God's. This has led to man's downfall in so many ways.

Self-sufficiency is rooted in humanism and has no place in the Kingdom of God. It is based on sinful pride, saying that I can do all things using my own ability and insight. However, God's word tells us that man has no ability of his own – that he is a dependent being with a beginning and end. Self-sufficient, self-made men are proud and arrogant.

James 4:6 God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Even if wicked men, selfish and proud, are successful for a season, soon they wither and are no more. But, the humble will inherit the earth.

The Solution: Knowing God's All-Sufficiency

God has charged His people to improve, not maintain; and to develop, not just to hold on to survive. God's ways are not to maintain the status quo - that is not His nature. He is creative and His kingdom is advancing all the time.

Genesis 1:27-31 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food"; and it was so. God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

God gave man everything he needed to live a full and prosperous life. He also gave man authority over all of His creation to rule over it. As we rule over the living creatures, they should not only be protected from destruction, they should flourish under our faithful stewardship. Along with our farms, the environment should prosper, not be destroyed or merely maintained.

In Farming God's Way, we do not advocate self-sufficiency, but rather embrace God's all sufficiency, which leads us to be profitable. He is our source of everything and in Him we find increase. God wants His children to be the light of the world, to prosper and to be called blessed by the world in which we live.

God's all-sufficiency leads to increase not decrease

God wants us to be reliant on Him only. His desire is that we would ask Him, and that He would answer us. He wants to care for us as a loving and faithful father would with his son. The fruit of God's all sufficiency in our lives is having more than enough. God's all sufficiency will lead us to prosper in every way. God's all sufficiency is never ending, with no limits to His reserves, since He has no limits.

2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

Breakthrough comes as we repent for depending on man, including ourselves, lay aside our pride, humble ourselves and acknowledge that He truly is the source of everything we need.

Knowing God's All-Sufficiency Shatters the Dependency Syndrome.

Knowing God's all-sufficiency shatters any dependency we may have on man, governments, aid organizations, or financial institutions. All of these are merely temporal and will pass away, but God is eternal. Those who depend on the provisions of men will be disappointed, but those resting in God's provision will never be disappointed. Those depending on man's provisions will live under man's yoke. But, God's all sufficiency allows us to be free from every yoke.

2 Chronicles 14:11 Then Asa called to the Lord his God and said, "Lord, there is no one besides You to help in the battle between the powerful and those who have no strength; so help us, O Lord our God, for we trust in You, and in Your name have come against this multitude. O Lord, You are our God; let not man prevail against You.

King Asa prayed this prayer when an army of a million men and 300 chariots from Ethiopia had come up against them. Shouldn't we carry this same level of confidence and trust in God's name and supernatural power to be all-sufficient in our battle against poverty?

Farming God's Way has no dependency outside of God. Our provision is completely founded upon Him and His word. He is the precious cornerstone of our lives and everything gets its alignment, level and square from this precious cornerstone, Jesus Christ our Lord.

What do you have in your hand?

God's all sufficiency is not limited to supernatural interventions. He has provided everything we need to prosper and has a solution to every crisis. All we need to do is open our eyes to see what is available to us.

1) God's All-Sufficiency in YOU

Deuteronomy 8:18 But remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth.

One of the greatest limitations in turning to Farming God's Way is actually the mind of man. It limits the boundaries of our progress and opportunity. I have found that if I ask a farming community, "Which of you are farmers?" only 10% will raise their hands. The poor have such a low self-image that they are embarrassed to admit that they are farmers. They feel if they could only move to town, they would move up in the world, which is in fact quite the opposite.

Self-image is not something that is determined by our work, income, or social status. Rather it is something that emanates from deep within us. A good self-image comes from being

secure in our sonship with our Father God, through having a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, and a life lead by the Holy Spirit. This is the starting point of knowing God's all-sufficiency. It is founded in Him. When we know how amazing, wise, wealthy and powerful our God is, and we know that He is on our side, it sets us up to succeed.

Farmers need to have their minds renewed so that they can believe that they, in partnership with God, can actually succeed. Farmers need to be taught that if they trust God and His word, live every aspect of their lives in obedience to God and His word, and work diligently in concert with God and His word, that God will then provide the sun, the rain, and the increase. That is the essence of the spiritual, management, and technical aspects of Farming God's Way.

The land is given to us to steward and be faithful custodians of so that it can be passed down as a bountiful, living inheritance to future generations. We have to believe that God has indeed given US the ability to produce wealth.

2) God's All-Sufficiency in Agriculture

Our opinion of the value of the agricultural production of a people is critical to understanding God's all sufficiency. On a macro scale, many well-educated people disregard the importance of abundant, productive agriculture to a nation's well-being. Instead, they focus on manufacturing and services. Likewise, many of the poor have given up on the land's ability to provide for them. So, they leave their lands to run to the lights of the cities, where they hope for better lives. For nations, or individuals, to ignore the great importance of agriculture is to jeopardize the profit or better life that they hope for.

Nations' economies are founded on an agricultural foundation. Through the centuries, agriculture has proven to be the solid foundation that prospers and sustains nations through good times and bad. Adam Smith, in his *Wealth of Nations*, wrote that the production of the land in agriculture and natural resources is the sole source of wealth and income of a nation.

If a nation is agriculturally secure, it has a firm foundation for its other industries to build upon. If a nation can't feed itself, it can't support other industrial sectors of its economy. This is fact not simply because of the need to feed their citizens, but because it is God's plan for ordering men's lives.

God's first work assignment for man was regarding agriculture, and it remains true today.

Genesis 2:15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

A good example of the value of the agricultural sector is the collapse of the Zimbabwean economy. In 2002, the government enforced an often violent land redistribution plan in which 6,000 commercial farmers, who were the backbone of the agricultural sector, were displaced from their farm land. That was the beginning of the end of the agricultural foundation of the nation. Zimbabwe's currency went from 42 Z\$ per US dollar in 2002 to literally trillions by the end of 2008. When the nation's economy finally collapsed in 2008, a loaf of bread cost 12 trillion Z\$. Zimbabwe is an example of how important agricultural production is to support the rest of the nation's economy.

By contrast, consider Joseph W. in Malawi. Joseph was a down and out farmer well acquainted with poverty and hunger. He traditionally harvested only 7 bags of maize from his field. In his first year of doing Farming God's Way he increased his yield to 70 bags, a ten-fold yield increase in just his first year. At the same time, he got his life in order with God, got married to the woman he was living with, and was soon able to buy his own land and build his own house. Today, Joseph is a prosperous small farmer, and a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. What a testimony of God's all sufficiency.

The fruit of God's all sufficiency is redemption, restoration, increase, and His glory revealed.

3) God's All-Sufficiency in the Land

The land has been given to us by God to steward, cultivate and to care for. It doesn't belong to us, it is His. We are just to care for it on God's behalf.

1 Corinthians 10:26 The earth is the Lord's and all it contains.

Leviticus 25:23 The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me.

According to the above scripture verses, the title deeds we may have for our land are not a part of God's plan for His people. From a Biblical perspective, the land belongs to God, not to you or me. But in this world, land is such an important thing to many people that it causes much violence, killings, wars, political manipulation and family feuds. We should simply look at land as God's land and adopt an outlook of stewardship rather than ownership. In this way we are working as unto the Lord, and working and caring for His garden. He is the owner who will ultimately come back and assess our workmanship and stewardship of what belongs to Him.

An African Parable

There was a very wealthy man who lived in the rural areas of Africa. He had many cattle, goats, chickens and vast tracts of cropped lands. Although he had started with little, he had been a very faithful and successful man. As a result, his children were able to go to good schools and even attend university. Many people lived off of his wealth and he was very generous in helping widows and orphans in the village. When he was old, he became very sick and called for his family to come to his bedside so that he could bless them. He blessed each one and then told them about their inheritance, which they were all eager to hear about.

After he completed each one's blessing, he started to say, "Your inheritance lies hidden in the field..." But, before he could finish the statement, he died. All his children were eagerly waiting to hear exactly where in the field the inheritance was hidden, but they didn't hear any clues.

So, after the burial and mourning period were over, the siblings got together to plan a strategy for finding their hidden inheritance. They concluded that their inheritance must be hidden very close to the house as their father was old and would not have ventured very far away. So the first day they spent digging in their chosen spots close to the house. But their digging was to no avail.

The second day they got up early and planned again. This time they decided it was pointless to dig randomly like they had done previously. So, they methodically began digging from one

side of the field to the other to a depth of 20cm. They all worked extremely hard, but found nothing.

The next day they again discussed their plan. This time they decided that since their father was a very wise man, he would not have buried their inheritance too shallow in the field and risk that a neighbor or stranger might stumble across it. So, they decided to dig to a depth of 60cm throughout the field. Once again, they methodically began digging from one side of the field to the other. After two full days of very hard work, they found nothing.

They were now very, very discouraged and slumped down together over the evening meal. After a long silence, they looked up at their mother. She told them, "Your father meant that your inheritance is hidden in the soil of the field, and in order for you to find your abundant inheritance, you will have to work the soil as your father did."

This is Africa's parable – we need to appreciate the great value of our lands and use God's wisdom to unlock the land's potential as our living inheritance. There are no hidden treasure boxes on your land, and there are no get-rich-quick schemes that will make you rich. There is no replacement for hard work, and in agriculture that truly means hard work. You need to be fully persuaded that your inheritance lies in the soil, and that by working it God's way, you will discover the abundant inheritance God has hidden in your field. Full persuasion of this truth will lead you to work as unto the Lord, knowing full well that your land is a part of God's all sufficiency for you.

4) God's All-Sufficiency with Seed

In the beginning God created everything in its order according to its kind. God is a God of order, reproduction and multiplication.

Genesis 1:11-13 Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them;" and it was so. There was evening and there was morning, a third day.

From the above Scripture verses, we understand that when God created vegetation He created it containing seeds capable of reproducing its own kind. However, man in his wisdom has invented a new kind of seed called hybrid seed. Through a process of cross-breeding two varieties of plants, the hybrid variety is able to cause a significant increase in crop yield. This boost is due to the best qualities of both gene pools stimulating growth, and is termed hybrid vigour.

However, this benefit is offset by a major problem. The hybrid seed is unviable and is a poor performer if replanted. So, farmers who plant hybrid seeds must buy new hybrid seeds for each planting season. With hybrid seeds, God's all-sufficiency with seeds is negated by man's desire to improve on God's plan.

Man's inventions are frequently at odds with God's creation. Man can produce seed types which produce food, but not seed. Like Esau who sold his birthright for a bowl of stew, man often thinks only of immediate gain, with no regard for future generations.

God created plants and trees yielding seed after their own kind. These natural seed types are called open pollinated varieties (OPV) and can be replanted for many years in succession.

God's All-Sufficiency Is Available in Natural Seed

The bold truth is that seed companies produce hybrid seed not because they are able to produce more food for the farmers, but because the farmers will have to buy seed from them every year. They know that if they convince farmers that hybrid seed is better than open pollinated varieties (OPV) then they will increase sales and profits, ensuring repeat sales year after year.

Hybrid seed produces very well, up to 25% better than OPV's. However, the increased production is only achieved in optimal growing conditions, which are rarely found in poor African farmer's fields. To achieve the advertised production levels, growing conditions must provide maximum nutrient availability, good soil pH levels, well managed moisture levels, and farm management done to very high standards. This is not the case on most of the African continent. So, seed companies are selling hybrid seed which is not beneficial for the majority of the poor African farmers that use them.

This is a part of the yoke of poverty that is over the continent where greedy men will take advantage of even the poorest of the poor. Once farmers make the transition to hybrid seeds, they are forced to buy hybrid seed every year from the seed company, paying up to twice as much for hybrid seed compared to OPV's.

God's way is that farmers should select and keep back the best seed of their harvest to plant next season. Usually a hectare of maize will require a 25 kg bag to be retained for the following season. This OPV seed will be able to be replanted according to God's sovereign plan and the laws of His creation, where it will produce a new harvest after its own kind. Instead of buying new seed, the farmer produces his own seeds for the next planting season, saving from himself the cost of the new hybrid seed. This will liberate farmers to be free to plant at the optimum time, not when they have enough money to buy new hybrid seed.

God desires for us to be free of all dependency, whether to seed companies, governments, NGO's, or any other source. He wants us to be free indeed, no longer subject to the yoke of slavery, but instead liberated to walk in His all-sufficiency.

5) God's All-Sufficiency with God's Blanket

God's Blanket is such an amazing gift from Him that brings with it so many wonderful benefits, which are covered in other sessions. Unfortunately, this gift from God is so often rejected through clearing fields by burning or by being plowed under.

6) God's All-Sufficiency with Inputs: Manure, Anthill Soil, Compost, Fertilizer

In order to reap a good harvest, a farmer must be determined to utilize the best inputs available to him. What happens when a poor farmer has no inputs for his field? God's word is applicable in all areas of His Kingdom, including the farmer's field. Discovering and being fully persuaded of His all sufficiency is necessary when a poor farmer considers what inputs to use in his field.

Often poor African farmers look to governments, politicians, churches and NGO's for their inputs of fertilizer. But, God has already provided His all-sufficiency for them if they will just trust Him.

The inputs available for use in sowing are manure, good quality compost, anthill soil, and even worm castings. Manure often stands up to a meter high in animal night camps where it has been piling up for many years. This is a readily available input resource which is very effective and yields great results. If animals are left to roam freely, the manure is impossible to collect, but by night camping them, it allows for the manure to come to one collection point.

We conducted a test in Harare, Zimbabwe in April 2008, comparing the maize yields obtained using manure with the yields obtained using chemical fertilizer. The same amount of God's blanket was present on both test fields. The results showed that the field using manure yielded the same as the field using chemical fertilizer. This is astonishing considering the published yield potential of chemical fertilizer. In 2008 there was poor rainfall late in the growing season which affected the field using chemical fertilizer worse than the field using manure. Manure has a very high organic matter content, and thus is able to retain much moisture. After 4 years of using manure on the trial field, the soil had a better water holding capacity than the soil on the test field using chemical fertilizer.

Chemical fertilizer is a salt which dissolves and washes away in heavy rainfall. So, frequently the nutrient value in chemical fertilizers is leached out of the farm lands and flows into the streams and rivers during heavy rainfalls.

Since it contains no organic matter, chemical fertilizer has a negative effect on the soil's moisture holding capacity. After 4 years use on the test field, the soil which had been using chemical fertilizer was able to retain much less moisture than the field that had been using manure. So, in a dry time at a crucial growth period (at tasseling), the soil which had the higher moisture holding capacity proved to be much more drought tolerant.

Compost, consisting of organic materials that are readily available to all farmers, is another excellent example of God's all-sufficiency. Compost is an excellent alternative to chemical fertilizer. Compost builds up not only the organic nutrient levels in the soil, but also helps to restore God's natural biotic balances in the soil profile.

God's Word is true. He has made a way for the poor, even those who can't afford fertilizer and who don't have livestock, to make the best quality soil through utilizing compost as a superior substitute for chemical fertilizer. By putting good quality compost back into the soil, poor farmers can have equal or better profitability in the long term, as compared to using chemical fertilizer only.

Anthill soil is another incredible part of understanding God's all sufficiency. Jesus said that not one sparrow falls to the ground without the Father knowing about it. The love that God shows for the poorest and weakest in this world is astounding. There is none poorer or weaker than the widows, orphans and elderly in rural Africa. Many of them do not have any form of inputs for their fields. Yet, God in His wisdom and compassion makes a way for them to know His all-sufficiency as well. Solomon taught us saying:

Proverbs 6:6 Go to the ant you sluggard, consider her ways and become wise.

I always thought that Solomon was referring to the industry, government and order of the ants. But, now I realize that many ants are collecting God's Blanket for a living. They bring it into their anthills where there is an ideal cool, moist environment for bacteria and fungi to

decompose it. Anthill soil is more fertile than the surrounding soil because it contains bacteria and numerous beneficial fungal spores. It has a higher soil nutrient level than surrounding soil (up to 25 % higher). It has a higher clay and organic matter content which will allow it to hold more moisture. All of these beneficial factors combined result in significantly increased yields when very poor farmers use anthill soil in place of chemical fertilizer. Simply breaking up anthill mounds and applying the soil in the planting stations can be a ready solution for the poorest of the poor. There are amazing testimonies from poor widows who have utilized anthill soil and have had amazing crop yields. God demonstrates that His all-sufficiency is available even to the poorest of the poor.

There are other solutions for providing the soil's nutrient requirements such as using worm castings. Farmers make good quality compost and feed it to earth worms in controlled environments. The worms in turn digest the compost, producing a quality fertilizer called worm castings. Some commercial farmers grow crops solely on worm castings because of the excellent nutritional and biological value they add to the soil. Because of the excellent nutrient content, worm castings require only 1/3 the volume of the other fertilizers. However, caring for the worms requires a high level of management in a precisely controlled environment. Poor farmers usually aren't able to provide this on their small farms, so worm castings aren't practical for them.

7) God's All Sufficiency in Tools

Exodus chapters 3 and 4 tell of God's commissioning of Moses at the burning bush. In Exodus 4:2 God asks Moses the question "What is that in your hand"? Moses replied "a staff". Moses was then instructed to "throw it down".

This is a crucial element in breaking the yoke of hunger and poverty. We must throw down all the things we thought were the correct methods passed down from generation to generation. If we hold on to the old staff, or methodology, we will continue in the same abject poverty our fathers have walked in. Escape from the oppression of hunger and poverty will require us to trust in God's all-sufficiency alone. That trust will cause us to throw down what we and our ancestors have practiced for generations. When thrown down, the old staff became a snake supernaturally. When God instructed Moses to pick up the snake, it became a staff once again. Not just a staff, but a supernaturally powerful staff able to break the yoke of captivity and set the captives free.

Can God's words to Moses apply to African farmers today? Most certainly! What do we have in our hand? The answer is a hoe. The hoe is God's chosen instrument to break the yoke of poverty and hunger in this continent!

1 Corinthians 1:27-29 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him.

Throwing down our hoes represents a whole-hearted trust in God's ways. Once thrown down, our hoes are transformed into powerful tools with supernatural power to break the yoke and set us free from hunger and poverty. Our simple hoes then become instruments of God to abundantly provide for our needs, in God's way.

So what is different with Farming God's Way? No longer is a hoe used for ploughing but merely for the incorporation of inputs and good seed into the soil through minimal soil disturbance.

Frequently, African farmers are looking to get loans, grants or handouts from governments or NGO's for tractors and other heavy equipment. Sadly, there are many cases of handout tractors lying around in rural areas, sitting on blocks with their wheels and other parts stripped from them. The poor farmers didn't know how to care for and repair the tractors, so when they stopped working, they stripped off the parts and sold them. Although the tractor donors had good intentions, the donated tractors didn't bring a permanent release from the yoke of poverty and hunger. When the tractors stopped working, the poor farmers were again in bondage to the yoke of poverty and hunger. Donating tractors seemed like a good idea by men's wisdom, but it doesn't work in the long term.

What the the poor farmers need to realize is that they already have everything they need to prosper right in their hand. In time, faithfulness with the hoe may enable a poor farmer to expand his farming operations so much that a tractor may become useful, but that is not the starting point. We need to exercise faithfulness with the first talent, the hoe in this example, in order to have the breakthrough to where God entrusts the once poor farmer with a tractor or other equipment.

Brian Oldreive farmed up to 650 hectares with hand hoes very successfully before he began using tractors and farming implements.

8) God's All-Sufficiency in Rain and Increase

In His provision of rain, God blesses His children, and brings seeds to life and increases the harvest. Rain is also a measure of His all-sufficiency. Many farmers are crying because of poor rainfall patterns, long periods of drought, and even extremely heavy rainfall. However, these complaining farmers are the very ones rejecting God's gift of rainfall. Because of their poor stewardship of God's provision of rain, the complaining farmers often experience rain runoff as high as 90% due to plowing and the destruction of God's Blanket. Faithfulness with the first talent will ensure that the soil is in a condition that allows for deep penetration of moisture with minimal runoff. Also, being a good steward of God's provision of rain will retain the moisture absorbed into the soil by reducing evaporative losses from the surface. This is achieved simply by doing what we see God do in creation – minimal soil disturbance and heavy mulch covers. The best water retention scheme is not a dam or soil pit, but the soil itself.

Farmers looking at irrigation systems as the ultimate solution should start with what God has put in their hands, knowing that irrigation systems may come to profitable working farms where faithfulness to God's provision of rain has led to sustainable increase over several years. We have seen countless times that as farmers turn to God, He supernaturally turns to them and blesses them far more abundantly than the science of the soil allow for. The yield increases come from His provision as people honor Him by turning fully to His ways. Look to God as your provider knowing that He has given you all-sufficiency to prosper in every way.

Conclusion

A farm is a viable business with wonderful benefits in being able to provide food and housing, a beautiful outdoor working environment, a safe and usually healthy place to raise children,

and also a wonderful business inheritance to pass from one generation to another. This Godly all-sufficiency has been instituted with a promise to become the all-sufficiency for the next generation as well. It is a kingdom based principle of working faithfully with what God has put in your hand while trusting in His abundant provision.

Key #4, What You Sow You Will Reap

From Begging Bowl to Bread Basket

Africa is known as the begging bowl of the world. I believe that God desires to turn that around so that the begging bowl can be transformed into a bread basket abundantly providing food for itself and for other parts of the world.

Once we understand that God is our source and that His all-sufficiency is truly available to us, we can look at giving our way out of dependency and into His promise. As followers of Jesus Christ, we have His mandate in the Word to give to the poor. But, we need to use wisdom in our giving so as not to perpetuate the dependency syndrome. There is a time to give and a time to withhold material giving.

Many communities in Africa are in areas that have no opportunities for any development at all. These people have settled for less simply because of the availability of free food, and for that reason, they never leave the impoverished areas. They have become comfortable in the security of knowing that their provider will be there when they are in need again. In a small township near Port Elizabeth, South Africa, there are 11 soup kitchens operating. The poor residents move from one soup kitchen to the next, never even attempting to find work to support themselves and their families. If we continue to perpetuate dependency on man, we encourage the poor to look to the wrong source of provision, man and not God.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 if a man will not work then neither should he eat.

Strong words indeed but they are there for good reason. In communities such as the above, there is an indescribable amount of evil practiced. In areas of great poverty, there is no standard of godliness or good moral conduct due to the residents' idleness. They don't need to work to survive because they receive free food for just showing up at the soup kitchens. They quickly learn that work isn't necessary to survive. They find that they are entitled to free food and other handouts by reason of their poverty. So, poverty and idleness become cruel friends to the poor in such areas. However, the Bible teaches us that work is not a curse, rather it is a blessing. Surprisingly, we have found that many of these urban poor own land in the rural areas which is lying idle.

Farming God's Way teaches Biblical knowledge and understanding to the poor without locking the poor into the dependency syndrome. God is the source of all good things, and when we turn wholeheartedly to Him, He turns to us with His lavish blessings. If we assume that man has the answers to the poverty crisis, we are horribly mistaken as man is the very cause of the problem. God's way is that people should develop and prosper according to His principles, where He rewards men based on His principles of sowing and reaping, on stewardship, and being faithful with what He has entrusted to us.

The Solution: We Need to Give in Order to Receive

Acts 20:35 it is more blessed to give than to receive

When we give, His irrevocable laws come into play once again and He will cause an even greater measure to be given back to us.

God's solution is well balanced and produces life giving results. His laws are true and will remain forever. If we give, then we will be blessed and it will be given back to us in good measure. The transition from a receiving mentality to a giving mentality has far reaching effects, for people and even for nations. Giving is an integral part of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you."

What a beautiful upside down kingdom we belong to. God in His wisdom has established an irrevocable law that we need to give and then we will receive far more extravagantly back from Him. This verse has been often used to promote the giving of tithes and offerings to churches, but it is actually referring to giving in all areas of life.

If we look at God's outlook on our work, or labor, His word says

Proverbs 28:19 Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty.

This is a very important principle. If we farm diligently we will have much to eat. If we do not work, then we will be poor, and hungry. In farming there is no greater example of this spiritual principle than when we give to our land in order to reap an abundant harvest from it. We must sow our seed, fertilizer and other inputs, labor, time, management, and capital if we are to receive a harvest. There is risk in giving so much in advance of receiving the harvest. Yet the risk should in no way limit the giving or sowing farmers do, but rather encourage them to have more faith in God.

God's ways are truly amazing! Take a maize seed for example. Sow it at the right time, give it the right nutrients and the right amount of water at the right time it will probability reproduce of itself over 600 times. Farming God's Way records show that 25 kg of seed planted on a hectare can yield 13,900 kg maize harvest, which is a 556 times increase. This is truly running over and poured into your lap! Where can a businessman find a financial investment that will yield this kind of amazing return?

Sowing and the dependency syndrome are at constant war in the minds of farmers. The current practices of the UN, African governments, and NGOs actually discourage farmers from sowing. The farmers must be a fully persuaded to sow the best they can, utilizing the talents available to them, knowing that God has made a way for them to succeed.

Consider the testimony of Fanny, a 70-year old widow from a poor village in Malawi. She attended Farming God's Way training and decided to go all out to plant to Farming God's Way standards. She learned that if you don't have money for fertilizer, then use manure. But, she was too poor to purchase fertilizer or manure. She knew she had to sow something in order to receive something back, so what could she do? Then she remembered what she

learned about the value of the nutrients in anthill soil. If a farmer is so desperate he can't get fertilizer, manure, or compost, then he can use anthill soil, placing it in the bottom of the holes in the same way as manure. She swallowed her pride and decided to give it a try.

Fanny collected the anthill soil near her small farm and planted using the Farming God's Way techniques. She had a very good harvest, while everyone around her had a complete crop failure. Fanny's experience confirmed that God's laws are irrevocable. She faithfully sowed everything she had and God responded with a great blessing. However, if farmers don't sow, they won't reap. God doesn't mind what you sow, even if it is anthill soil. As long as you do your best in obedience to His Word, God will bless your obedience. Farmers can't keep on taking from their land without giving back to the soil.

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived; God can not be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

The Bible says we will reap what we sow. Zero times zero equals zero, zero times 100 equals zero, zero inputs in 22,222 planting stations equals zero. If you give nothing to even good soil you get nothing in return.

1) Sow Bountifully

How much we give or sow in our soil determines how much we will reap.

2 Corinthians 9:6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Bountiful is synonymous with generous or lavish and in this context speaks of a reverential giving out of a desire to give back to God.

For example, if you have manure as your input, but have enough to plant only one hectare, don't halve the recommended quantity in the holes in order to plant two hectares. Your effort will be twice the amount for one hectare, since the majority of time and labor is spent in hole preparation and weeding. With Farming God's Way, it is reasonable to expect a harvest of perhaps 5 tons /hectare of maize. So, for 2 hectares you could expect a harvest of 10 tons total if you sowed to Farming God's Way standards. But, since you halved the manure so you could use it on 2 hectares, your harvest will be only 2 tons/hectare, or 4 tons total for your 2 hectares. Halving the manure input produced less than half the expected harvest with twice the amount of work. Remember, scripture tell us that he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly.

The lesson learned from this example is clear. Apply your inputs to 100% of the Farming God's Way standards, or be aware that you are **not** farming God's way. It is far better to plant a smaller portion of land to the recommended standards of excellence than to plant a larger portion of land to a low standard. Be faithful with the little you have so that God will bless your farm. After you were faithful the first year, you can expand your farm as God provides inputs for the second year. Again, remember that scripture tells us that he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly.

Recently a missionary couple were excited to implement Farming God's Way, but they didn't have enough manure to plant their whole field to 100% of standards. They were advised by local farmers to mix soil with the manure to make it go further, resulting in a diluted input

level. They took the advice of the locals and were very disappointed with the results. Remember, if you sow sparingly you will reap sparingly! Your inputs must determine the land area you plant. It is far better to farm a small area to 100% of Farming God's Way standards than to do a larger area to a low standard.

2) Sow Knowledgeably

I have found that in most of Africa, it is not a case of idleness or apathy that is causing the dire poverty levels, it is often a lack of knowledge.

Hosea 4:6 My people perish for a lack of knowledge.

We need to sow knowledgeably or else we can sow as bountifully as we like and still not break the yoke of poverty. God has shown us how we must faithfully follow His ways by first transforming our hearts, then renewing our minds, and then redeeming our lands. We must simply humble ourselves and repent from our former ways, come and learn from Him, and then obey Him. Hard work and inputs are not a recipe for success on their own. We must also sow the wisdom which comes from above.

Many poor farmers say they don't need any fertilizer since they believe their soils are fertile enough. However, when yield assessments are done, they reveal that their yields per hectare are shockingly low and are declining each year. But, unless the farmers are confronted with facts of their poor yields, they won't believe it. These farmers have been deceived into believing a lie. This deception comes from a lack of knowledge, and choosing to believe the lie that their soils are fertile enough without having to sow anything into it.

You cannot take, and take, and take without giving something back. If we do not sow, neither will we reap. We need to give in order to receive. If we don't give to our soil, all that will happen is that the soil will get less and less fertile as the nutrients are removed from the soil by each crop. Soil does not have an unlimited reserve of nutrients. Once the nutrients have been used up, the soil is dead.

3) Sow Faithfully

If we are faithful, even with a little, God promises to add to us. In Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus taught the parable of the talents. A master was going away on a long journey, and before he departed, he gave 5 talents to one of his servant, 2 to another, and 1 to another, each according to his ability. In the same way, God gives to us according to our abilities, since He doesn't want us to squander His talents that He has entrusted to us.

In the parable, the servant who received 5, went out and traded with them, making 5 more for his master. When the master returned, he praised and rewarded his faithful servant saying, "Well done good and faithful servant, you were faithful with little, so I will put you in charge of much. Enter into the joy of your lord."

The servant who received 2 talents, traded with his 2 talents, making 2 more for his master. When the master returned, he praised and rewarded this servant in the same way as the first.

However, the servant who received only 1 talent, hid it and didn't have any increase to present to his master. When the master returned, he said to the third servant, "You wicked and lazy servant, you could have at least given your talent to the bank where I would have

received interest. So, be cast out into eternal darkness.” The master then took the one talent and gave it to the servant who had received 5 talents.

God detests unfaithfulness and laziness. If we are unfaithful or lazy, even what little He has given us will be taken away and given to another. You can't complain that God is not fair because He gives more to one person or nation than to another. It is God who decides the amount that He gives to each of us. Note that the above parable doesn't teach that the more you get the more you will be faithful with. Rather, it teaches that God gives more of His all-sufficiency to faithful men. At a future time He calls each of His servants to give an account to Him, regardless of the amount He initially gave them. God expects a good return on His investment, whether He gave us 5 talents, 2 talents, or 1 talent.

Be certain that God requires us to be faithful stewards of His all-sufficiency. If we are faithful, we will receive praise and reward, be put in charge of much, and enter into His joy. If we are unfaithful and lazy, He will judge us harshly, what little we have will be taken from us and given to another, and we will be cast into eternal darkness.

The key to God's praise and rewards is to be faithful stewards of whatever God has entrusted to us, be it little or much.

Luke 16:10 He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much.

An example of being unfaithful with what God has entrusted to us is shown in the alarming levels of soil erosion from farm land. African farmers have not been caring for God's land that He has entrusted to us. Soil erosion in Africa is estimated to average 55 tons per hectare per year. In some worst case situations, it is as high as 250 tons per hectare per year. Considering that a hectare is 10,000 m², this means that soil erosion washes away 2 to 4 mm of top soil each year. When soil erosion becomes severe, it can produce huge gullies up to 20 meters deep in places.

When we consider that natural soil forming processes form only 0.6 mm of top soil per year in Africa, we realize that current rates of soil erosion wash away top soil 3 to 6 times faster than God's natural processes replace it. No wonder that Africa is a begging bowl, and the hunger problem is getting worse. African farms are on the way out – on the way out to the oceans. Our rivers are muddied with silt from our farms, and this sediment ends up in the ocean where it destroys natural coral reefs and coastal sea life that could feed millions of Africans. This is certainly no way for man to watch over and care for God's garden. This is shameful neglect of God's all-sufficiency that He has entrusted to us.

When we turn to doing Farming God's Way, a dramatic decline in soil erosion rates is seen, from 55 tons per hectare per year, to less than 1 ton per hectare per year. This demonstrates a dramatic shift toward faithful stewardship of the land and soil. When a people are capable of stewarding God's garden faithfully and successfully, they can manage other responsibilities as well. Where the land is abused, the agricultural sector will be in disarray and unproductive. With no solid agricultural foundation, a nation can't have healthy industrial and commercial economic sectors. Faithful stewardship of the land equips men to be able to develop their nations in a manageable way, which allows them to improve their standards of living and social infrastructure. Skills learned through faithfulness on the farm are essential for the building a healthy, prosperous nation.

4) Sow with Joy

The attitude with which we give is also crucial.

2 Corinthians 9:7 Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Our attitude towards our work is also part of what we sow. If we sow begrudgingly, we will also reap begrudgingly. But, if we sow with joy, we will also reap with joy. God delights in our sowing with joy.

No beggar receives a gift with real joy. If they smile, it tells their next customer that they are doing well, and so they won't give. There can be no joy in the labor of their hands.

Nehemiah 8:10b For the joy of the Lord is your strength.

Our joy is firstly founded in the Lord, and that same joy should move through every part of our lives and into the work of our hands. It is interesting to note how much of our joy is directly connected to the other areas of our relationship with God.

If we sow God's all-sufficiency, as unto the Lord, we will reap in joy. This joy comes from a contentment and deep satisfaction in the things of God, and following through with this relationship into all areas of our lives. It may be possible to have the joy of the Lord, but no joy in our farmland if we have not let the Lord be Lord in this area of our lives. If He is given the place of Lordship on our farmland, we will want to glorify Him in all that we do there. We will sow bountifully, and with joy, and in turn reap a bountiful and joyful harvest. As you turn wholeheartedly to Him, He will turn and bless you according to His Word and promise. Let us purpose in our hearts to sow bountifully and with joy as unto the Lord.

Key #5, Bring Your Tithes and Offerings to God

God is sovereign and He governs everything He created. Job chapters 38 to 41 give such a humbling account of God's ability, resourcefulness and wealth.

Psalms 97 tells us of an awe inspiring vision of God's power.

Psalms 97:1-6 The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice. Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. Fire goes before Him and consumes His foes on every side. His lightning lights up the world; the earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of all the earth. The heavens declare His righteousness, and all peoples see His glory.

We can also ponder God's heart toward us in Psalm 8:4 where David exclaims, "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him".

Even with all of His divine power, mighty works and sovereignty God still loves and cares for man. He delights to know that men, of their own free will, choose His ways over the sinful ways of the world. He longs for men to walk with Him in the garden as it was in the beginning with Adam, in a sincere heartfelt relationship.

Considering God's character, power and resources. How is it possible to steal from Him? According to the scriptures in Malachi 3, it is possible to rob God through our tithes and offerings. This scripture was written to an agricultural society about the hearts of the people in their giving back to God. It has significant agricultural consequences.

Malachi 3:7-12 From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, 'How shall we return?' Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, "How have we robbed You?" In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes, says the Lord of hosts. All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land, says the Lord of hosts.

The tithe, given to the local church, or however God directs you to give it, is actually a giving back to God. He really doesn't need your money or wealth. But your giving to the Lord shows Him where your heart lies as you acknowledge Him first in your giving.

Zechariah 1:3 Return to Me, declares the lord almighty, and I will return to you.

We clearly need to return to Him wholeheartedly. An accurate measure of our returning is our giving back to Him by way of our tithes and offerings.

Matthew 6:21 for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Giving of our treasure to Him demonstrates our hearts toward Him and our faith in His provision. God is less interested in the amount or percentage that we give, than in our heart attitude in giving back to Him. After all, He is the source of all things that are good in our lives, and is the owner of it all anyway. He has provided everything we have and own, and we are simply stewarding His resources. This mindset helps us to give to God freely, without any percentage calculation required.

The African church in general is extremely poor. Many pastors can't feed their families, let alone care of widows and orphans out of the church's storehouse. If they have a building, it frequently is in very poor condition. And, they have no resources to expand the Kingdom of God through evangelism and disciple making. Sadly, these poor churches are not a reflection of the glory of God in their neighborhoods. They need to be transformed in order to display God's glory in the local church, and in turn to transform their nation. This can happen through Farming God's Way!

Consider the millions of farmers who have been coming to church for years. In every service they hear their pastor verbally beating the sheep about bringing in their tithes and offerings. These farmers walk away from church feeling guilty, knowing they have not fulfilled this instruction. They also know full well that if they did tithe, they would not be able to feed their families.

God's expectation for us to give back to Him is an exercise of our faith in Him. But, He is not beating up the sheep about this. Instead, His word speaks of a judgment on the shepherds for this. If the shepherds would take up their God given mandate to lead and guide their sheep to green pastures and clean water, while protecting and discipling them, the sheep

would know and cherish God above all else. Shepherds would gain naturally from the increase as the church's storehouse becomes more and more blessed. From the increase of their harvests, the farmers would then willingly sow into the storehouse.

Many pastors, when preaching on giving, use the story of the widow of Zarephath giving bread to Elijah (1 Kings chapter 17) as an encouragement for their members to give more to the church. However, this was truly a special time in Israel and God used the widow to affirm His prophet to the nation. In our everyday lives, God's word is what governs us. God's word clearly says that we should give back to God from our **increase** as evidence of our delight in walking in His ways. God delights in our increased harvest as much as we do, and He wants to be honored as the source of that increase. Giving out of our lack is not a normal request from God.

Imagine if the church in Africa would take to heart the teaching of the gospel of the kingdom, wholeheartedly teaching and implementing Farming God's Way in agricultural communities. In addition to preaching salvation by grace through faith in Jesus, pastors would be leading by example, showing God's people how to redeem their lands from the desperately low crop yields of about 350 kg per hectare to 3,500 kg per hectare. This is a ten-fold yield increase which has been achieved many times. Up to a 20-fold increase has also been documented. Ideally, the local pastors - the shepherds - should be implementing Farming God's Way on their own fields, thereby leading by good example.

Dickson Shuwali was a poor village farmer from Mapelera in Malawi. His father was a subsistence farmer and historically got an average yield of 3 bags from one acre he farmed. Dixon adopted Farming God's Way and in his first season got a harvest of 5 bags. But this was a year of terrible drought where neighboring farmers had total crop failures. In his second year using Farming God's Way, Dickson achieved a yield of 45 bags. In His third year he achieved 54 bags and in his fourth harvest, 69 bags. That is a 23 fold increase!

This example, multiplied several times over in a church congregation would provide a significant yield improvement for the church. It would significantly increase the amount of grain given to God in the church's storehouse, so that it could truly be filled with food. This would allow for the care of the pastor and his family, widows, orphans and elderly in the church, as well as building maintenance and improvements.

Once this increase becomes substantial, the church can then start to become the community changer it was meant to be. The church can then provide teachers to start a Christian school in the already existing church building. As the church continues to prosper, it can even provide for health care workers to treat members of the church and surrounding community. At this point, that the kingdom of God really starts to advance in the community at an accelerated rate. It all started with faithful farmers giving back to God from the increase in their yields.

To see this transformation of the church with its current dependency on handouts from governments, the UN, NGOs, and Westerners would be the most powerful witness for those living in darkness. They will see that God's ways, and only His ways, lead to life and life more abundantly. This is the fulfilment of Christ's promise in John 10:10.

John 10:10 I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Whether we give a widow's mite or millions of dollars is irrelevant to God. He knows how much we have and our attitude of heart when we give it. Often times a widow's mite is more costly to a poor giver than a multi-million donation from a very wealthy man. The Lord knows the state of our hearts before we give, and He will determine His blessing based on our heart attitude, and not the amount.

I recall hearing an amazing testimony of a super wealthy businessman who was tithing 90% of what he earned into the kingdom of God. This is a dramatic act of obedience to what God had directed him to do. But, does this testimony reveal a spiritual secret for others to give 90% so that God will give them great success in their businesses also? No, God simply wants our obedience to His instruction. So, the percentage is not the point. It is the act of obedience to give back to Him wholeheartedly, and with delight. Unfortunately, the above example is quite the exception most of the time. The wealthier people are, the more difficult it is for them to give back to God.

Malachi 3:9-12 Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob Me. But you ask, "How are we robbing You?" In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse – your whole nation – because you are robbing Me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this, says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe, says the Lord Almighty. Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land, says the Lord Almighty.

Pastors often make the mistake misinterpreting Malachi 3:9-12 as being for the benefit of the church's storehouse. However, God is speaking to Jewish farmers about their need to give to Him. The tithe is giving back to God, and it must not be motivated by the storehouse's needs or requirements. Where God's people are faithfully following the Lord, you will not find a storehouse lacking, because people are giving to God and not to the storehouse. Their motivation is putting God first in their giving. They don't give because the church building needs iron sheets for the roof, or even for the pastor to feed his family. These needs are taken care of out of God's abundant increase poured out on faithful farmers.

For farmers, how we give is important, because we don't want to rob God of the whole tithe. Often farmers convert their crop to cash and then give to the church a portion of that cash as their tithe. However, in the transfer from maize in the bag, to cash in hand, to cash given to the church, there is a great temptation to keep back some of the tithe for ourselves. If we do this, we rob God, and we will not be blessed because we are not putting Him first in our giving. We are putting our personal desires first.

Let me illustrate this with an example. John changes to Farming God's Way and yields a bountiful harvest in his first season of 50 bags of maize. He keeps 10 bags at home for his family's food requirements. He takes the remaining 40 bags to the market to be sold. He gets 10 US\$ per bag, so he has 400 US\$ in his pocket. On the way home he buys a new bicycle for himself for 80 US\$, and a new set of pots for his wife for 20 US\$. John has spent 100 US\$, so he has only 300 US\$ in his pocket when he returns home. On Sunday, John pays his tithe at church. John pays 10% of the remaining 300 US\$, or 30 US\$.

Was John faithful to pay the whole tithe to the Lord? No, he robbed God of the whole tithe. John kept back for himself 10 bags for food, and \$100 to buy things he wanted. John should

have paid his tithe to church with 10% of his total harvest of 50 bags, or 5 bags of maize, or the cash value of the 5 bags, 50 US\$. This shows that John stole 2 bags of maize or 20 US\$ from the Lord. This example clearly shows why God said to bring the whole tithe to the storehouse so that we will not be tempted, even unknowingly, into robbing Him of what is His.

The incredible part of this giving back to God is that it is all for our benefit. God didn't ordain tithing for the storehouse's sake, but rather for the giver's blessing. God's blessing comes to the giver threefold.

1) God promises He will open up the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing until it overflows.

Proverbs 3:9 Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine.

Surely this is the blessing that God has commanded, and a blessing we desperately seek in this continent where we are so impoverished and living in such desperation. When God truly pours out His blessing from the floodgates of heaven, the blessing will be so enormous it will be uncontainable. We need to have this blessing at individual, family, church, community, nation and continental levels. However, it starts with the individual's response to God.

2) God Himself will rebuke the devourer so that he will not destroy the fruits of the soil. How many times have you rebuked Satan in your lifetime, unsure whether what you are saying is just meaningless words? When we bring the whole tithe to the storehouse, God Himself takes care of Satan for us so that our fruit is well protected. The devourer has been hard at work destroying the fruit of the land for too long, and it is time to get back what has been stolen. God Himself gets involved when we obey Him through paying our tithes. God then responds by rebuking Satan, and restricting his boundaries. Satan comes to steal, kill and destroy. By honoring God with a tithe on the increase God gives us, we give Satan no room or authority to take what belongs to God.

3) God will cause all nations to call you blessed because yours will be a delightful land. Africa is mocked with names like the begging bowl, the dark continent, and the epicenter of corruption, violence and dictatorial rule. When we, the people of God, start giving back to God what is His in the first place, He will take care of the rest, including restoring our nations from the curse to the blessing. This has nothing to do with our abundance, but everything to do with His abundance. Collectively, even a 10-fold yield increase in farm yields will not turn the economics of this continent around. But, if God's people who are called by His name turn to Him, then His supernatural laws of blessing are obeyed. There will be no explanation for God's great blessings, except that He alone is the God who promises us life more abundantly.

Giving to the Lord brings Him honor and acknowledges Him in a way we can't understand. Giving to the Lord forces us to consider a cause outside of ourselves, and begins the journey into selflessness where we put His Kingdom before our own selfish end.

Key #6, Stake Your Claim

Many Bible scholars would know and understand the incredible importance of prayer and spiritual warfare. However, only a few utilize them in a real and tangible way. This section

doesn't offer a complete study of the topic, but rather an exhortation to apply spiritual warfare in the agricultural domain. Spiritual warfare and prayer are not restricted for use in evangelistic crusades, mission thrusts, and other church ministries. The Lord has given this tool to His children for us to be able to exercise spiritual authority in all spheres of life, so that the Kingdom of God may be firmly established.

James 5:14 The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

Every year, Africans cry out to their dead ancestors to come and watch over their lands and make them more fertile, so they can yield a good harvest. These occult practices are performed by witchdoctors sprinkling the blood of slaughtered animals, or by placing animal bones or magic potions on the land in strategic locations. These are current practices today, even among many church going "Christians". This spiritual double-mindedness does not go unnoticed by God. Can you sense Him withdrawing His hand of blessing and say, "Well now, lets see what those bones and magic potions can do for you"? Or, "You asked the dead for their help, so let's see how they will help you, if they can."

Proverbs 15:29 The Lord is far from the wicked: but He hears the prayer of the righteous.

The desperate cries of the wicked will go unnoticed by God because He is far from them. Those practicing witchcraft, ancestor worship, voodoo, and other sinful activities cannot have their requests heard by Him. The only way God will hear and answer their prayers is if they first humble themselves, confess their sins, repent of them and forsake their former evil practices.

God rules all things, and Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and on earth. But, God created man with a free will to choose who he wants to rule in his life, in his family, in his home, on his fields, in his communities, and over his nations. As followers of Jesus, we must take Jesus into all areas of our lives, including our farms. We can talk with Him about our problems on the farm and pray and ask Him for His blessing on our crops and families, even in desperate times.

However, our land still needs to be reclaimed from the spiritual forces of darkness that have ruled it for centuries. This reclamation of our land can come about only in God's way. It will come through us acknowledging our idolatries, witchcraft, shedding of innocent blood and other evil ways which have resulted in our living under the curse.

2 Chronicles 7:14 If My people who are called by My name shall humble themselves, and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

How can our land be healed? In the above verse, God gave 4 conditions for His people.

1. humble ourselves
2. pray to Him
3. seek His face, not His blessings
4. turn from our wicked ways, that is repentance

When those 4 conditions are met by God's people, then:

1. God will hear our prayers
2. forgive our sins

3. heal our land

That seems very simple, but it is very difficult to live out in our lives when we are surrounded by others who live by the ways of our ancestors. Can you be faithful to God's ways when your family, friends and neighbors criticize you, mock you as stupid, publically denounce you as trouble maker, have witchdoctors put curses on you, or even do harm to your house and crops?

We who are followers of Jesus have become the righteousness of God through Christ Jesus. We should pray without ceasing, believing God's word and His promises, so that our families, our farms and our community can prosper under God's blessing.

We stake our claim as sons of God by taking Jesus into every area of our lives. Jesus taught us to pray "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." The Kingdom of God is a glorious kingdom with the full blessing and provision of the Father in all regions where godliness and peace abide. There children grow in health and wisdom, where truth and righteousness prevail. God's word establishes the boundaries, and His Spirit brings gifting, fruitfulness, life and love.

How to Stake Your Claim

Staking your claim is like pegging out your field in preparation for planting. (see Field Scale Layout – Section 12: Small Scale Implementation).

1) Humility is the Starting Point of Staking your Claim

Humility is acknowledging that God's ways are superior to ours, and that we have been mistaken. This is such a powerful tool to break the curse, and its power should never be underestimated. The fullness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus (Colossians 2:9), yet He was the most humble of all men throughout His amazing life. Jesus never exalted Himself above His Father, instead He continually made reference to His Father as the source of His every word and deed.

John 12:49-50 For I did not speak on My own, but the Father who sent Me commanded Me to say all that I have spoken. . . . So whatever I say is just what the Father has told Me to say.

Jesus didn't speak or act on His own. He only did what His Father commanded Him to do. That is humility like no other man has ever displayed. So, for a poor farmer, a practical sign of your humility is to get down on your hands and knees, to take the soil in your hands as you pray over it.

2) Seek His Face and Not His Hands

God desires His children to have a love relationship with Him where you will adore Him and know Him intimately. But, often our prayers are limited to pleading with God for particular requests to be met. In that kind of prayer there is no real relational communication, no requests to know Him better, or to love Him more. In this regard, the church at large are like infants who cry and fuss when we don't have what we want. Young infants have little or no real personal relationship with their parents, because they aren't yet able to communicate with their parents. As a result, they don't express love to their parents, they just cry and fuss when they need something. God wants His children to grow and mature in our ability to

communicate with Him, so that we can truly desire to fellowship with Him and express our love for Him. Jesus has made a way for that to be a reality, we just need to walk in it.

Deuteronomy 4:29 ... seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul.

3) Confess and Repent

Confession and repentance are the starting point to bringing God back to His rightful place in our lives and land. God wants us to walk with Him as faithful sons, honoring Him in all our ways so He can make our paths straight. When you pray to claim the land back, remember that no measure of screaming or shouting will have any effect on the spiritual strongholds that hold our lands in bondage to sin, poverty and hunger.

2 Corinthians 10:4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

This divine power is through Jesus' finished work on the cross, and in His name which is above every name. Instead, Jesus has taught us how we should pray, not as the hypocrites do, but in Spirit and in truth, as recorded in Matthew chapter 6.

Matthew 6:5-13 "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. This then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we also have forgiven those who have trespassed against us, but deliver us from the evil one."

4) Ask and You Will Receive

How many farmers do you know who ask God for rain before there is a drought, before all their neighbors start complaining about not having enough rain? Even for Christian farmers, there has to be a regional drought declaration before farmers actually come together and pray to God for His blessing and for rainfall.

Matthew 7:7 Jesus said, "ask and it shall be given you."

James 4:2. You do not have because you do not ask.

God desires for us to come and ask of Him, even though He knows what we will ask for before we ask Him. In doing so we acknowledge His divine power, sovereignty and authority over all things. This too is an act of worship.

5) Pray

How should we pray then?

- Humble yourself and pray before God on your hands and knees on the land with sincere reverence, taking the soil in your hands.
- Ask for forgiveness for the witchcraft, ancestor worship, and any form of idolatry that has taken place on the land, asking for the blood of Jesus to redeem it and sanctify it, even if you are unaware of such practices having taken place there.

- Ask God for His sovereign Lordship to be established over your farm.
- Repent for the shedding of innocent blood on the land, even if you aren't aware of any such crimes taking place there.
- Repent for your pride in which you have been leaning on our own understanding by doing farming man's way for so many years, and you haven't acknowledged or even considered that God has a way that He expects you to follow.
- Repent of not being a good steward of what God has entrusted to you by allowing high rates of soil erosion and soil degradation to take place on your (actually His) farmland.
- Repent for taking greedily from the land and not sowing bountifully back into it, asking God to improve it over time as you faithfully follow His ways.
- Repent for your dependency on man and man's handouts, and for not looking to the Lord, who is actually your provider and all-sufficient one.
- Repent for your poor management standards, and commit yourself to doing everything as unto the Lord.
- Ask Him to heal your soil. Yes, it can be done! With Farming God's Way, your soil can improve noticeably in fertility, color, and moisture holding ability in as few as 2 years. But, the full restoration of your soil may not be achieved until 5 years. But, God is all powerful, and He has the ability to speed up the restoration process as you are faithful to His ways. So, you must pray and work in faith.
- Ask for His blessing in rainfall, sunshine and protection from pests, disease and fire.
- Commit your farm to His Kingdom and ask that He will use your farm as a launching pad for the Kingdom of God's expansion. This shows your commitment to be unselfish with what you are stewarding.

6) Stand Firm

God is for us not against us, and He desires for our farms to be blessed. Take back the ground that has been in enemy territory. Stake your claim firmly in the ground for the cause of the King and His kingdom. As leaders, we should be serving the sheep by going to their farms and assisting them in these types of prayers of repentance and dedication.

When we are finished, we need to stand firm and walk boldly, even in the face of opposition. I know of farmers, who after changing to Farming God's Way, have come under intense attack from their family and neighbors. Curses from witchdoctors and evil voodoo practices have made them so fearful that they have turned away from God's promises and His rewards. Stand strong in His might, resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Be assured that greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world.

Ephesians 6:10-18 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.

The Kingdom of God is governed by principles that are the opposite of the principles that rule the kingdom of this world. Each of us must choose which kingdom that we will be citizens of,

then live our lives by the laws of that kingdom. The Kingdom of God is governed by righteousness, peace, and joy. The kingdom of this world is governed by sin, corruption and fear. As citizens of the Kingdom of God, we are invited to walk in the Lord's victory that He has already accomplished, and in the quiet confidence that comes from knowing and possessing His peace. Do not fear, but be on your guard by walking in the Spirit and the protection of His blood.

Romans 8:37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.